ON THE ROAD

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Jesus is the centre of our Faith!
Community is the centre of our Life!
Reconciliation is the centre of our Work!

(Above l-r) Sally and Jim Longley, Ed Love, Jarrod McKenna, Mark Barnard, Ian Packer, Margaret Young, Doug Hynd, Mark and Mary Hurst, Gary Baker, Paul McMahon, Doug Sewell

On The Road

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

THE VIEW FROM EPHESIANS FOUR

MARK AND MARY HURST

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

"The only good in the world comes from Christians." Ever heard a view like that expressed? It starts with the idea that all of humanity is in a state of total depravity and only when people get right with God and get "saved" can they do anything truly good.

George Ellis is an eminent mathematician and scientist – and a Quaker. He presented the Backhouse Lecture for 2008 to the Australia Yearly Meeting (recently published by Quakers Australia as ***Faith, hope and doubt in times of uncertainty***). He said "I propose there is a moral reality as well as a physical reality and a mathematical reality underlying the world and the universe...I suggest the nature of that moral reality is centred in love, with the idea of kenosis ("letting go") playing a key role in the human, moral and spiritual spheres because of its transformational qualities." (Back Cover) He says this self-sacrificial giving up on behalf of the other is "somehow inbuilt into the nature of reality in some deep way." (30) God's creation was good and even though humans mucked it up, goodness is still part of creation. Quakers remind us that there is that of God in all of creation.

We saw this illustrated in a recent letter on the Oceanswims website. Mark is a proud member of the ocean-swimming community and in a recent swim at Dee Why, he experienced the bane of ocean-swimmers -bluebottles. Read what one swimmer wrote:

"To complete an ocean swim always leaves me with a great sense of personal achievement and contentment. Today was remarkably different. I did not complete a swim for the first time but in retrospect it left me feeling rewarded on many levels and privileged for the experience. During the course of my adventure I encountered bluebottles on five occasions, as did many other participants. I have a minor allergic reaction to stings but the number and the severity of the "hits" overwhelmed me. Despite resorting to backstroke and breaststroke the nausea, stomach cramps and severe pain left me wallowing and waving for assistance.

"I recall the whole experience vividly. I was aware of a powerful free flowing swimmer alter his course by about 50 metres to come to my aid. I convinced him that I would survive. He then revved off in pursuit of the distant peloton. I would like to thank that anonymous swimmer. To me this typifies what Ocean Swimming is all about. I believe that it is more about the spirit of shared participation than the personal performance result. I would like to also extend my gratitude to the Dee Why Surf Club water safety personnel, particularly the 'rubber ducky' crew who plucked me, and two other like sufferers in close proximity, to safety. On the beach the attention to my plight was swift, efficient and very professional. All thanks to the local patrol members involved.

"A lot of familiar ocean swimming faces came into my vision with words and gestures of support...All the while and during my precautionary ambulance transfer to hospital I would like to acknowledge the 'Heroic' support given me by my cherished swimming companion whose light humour made the traumatic 'experience' all the more enjoyable. On my emergence from the Casualty Department at Mona Vale Hospital approximately one hour later I was amazed to find patiently waiting for us 'Glistening' Dave, the famous photographer and 'fleet' swimmer from my age category, wanting to check on my wellbeing and offering to drive us back to Dee Why surf club. What a magnanimous gesture and typical as I recall of my experience of the day.

"On my long drive home this evening to Bundanoon Beach I came to the conclusion that the Ocean Swimming Fraternity is really an all encompassing, empathetic extended family. This thought became conviction when I walked in the door at 9 pm and answered a call from Paul Ellercamp, the Patron Saint of Ocean Swimming, who rang from Perth to check that I was okay. Wow!

"I have been very fortunate with Ocean Swimming and made new friends. Today my swim was incomplete but as I said at the outset it had many rewards. It is perhaps my most 'complete' swim."

(Leander http://www.oceanswims.com/nsw78/feedback78.html)

All of this took place on a Sunday morning when some would argue that all goodness dwells in Christian churches.

There is that of God in all of creation. Let us find it and rejoice.

Another ocean image shared with us by a Kiwi member of the AAANZ executive committee is that of catching a wave. What God is doing in the world is like a wave and our task is to catch it and ride it for all it is worth. Happy wave-riding!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

DOUG SEWELL

Clear Directions

The AAANZ Executive came together in February for a weekend retreat at Bundeena south of Sydney to do some future dreaming for the network and set some clear directions for 2008 and 2009. Bundeena House, a large rambling weatherboard cottage, borders the Royal National Park and looks across a long beach and the blue waters of Port Hacking. Sulphur crested cockatoos screeched overhead and there was a wedding party on the sand nearby.

For some of us, it was the first time that we had met face to face. We spent Friday evening giving time to some dreaming: What could the Anabaptist Association look like five years from now? The following morning we unpacked some of the dreams. We reflected on images of complex interactive webs that resemble our networking, a wave that we ride when the timing is correct and how in the future our reach will not be constrained to physical place as new technologies emerge.

Our international connectedness with a strong New Zealand representation has been our recent area of growth. Paul McMahon and Margaret Young came from Christchurch and Mark Barnard from Auckland. Anne McMahon and Stephen Young who helped with our meals accompanied them. Jarrod McKenna joined us from Perth, Ed Love from Launceston, Doug Hynd from Canberra and Gary Baker from Armidale. Ian Packer, Sally Longley along with Mark and Mary Hurst and myself rounded off the team. Jim Longley provided valuable input as well. Each of us had encouraging stories to tell from our regions about growing partnerships, new table fellowship groups and a home base for Mark and Mary Hurst on the north side of Sydney.

As our Saturday progressed we moved on from our dreaming to consider the realities and listed the opportunities and constraints that affect our life and mission as a network. We face major challenges of sustainability. The temptation is to try to do too much. We set ourselves the task of defining 12 achievable objectives for the next two years. The objectives were grouped into three main areas with strategies and time frames developed for each. This was our list of objectives:

Articulating and Communicating our Story

1 Upgrade AAANZ website by:
- Web-based Anabaptist stories, pod-casts
- Members' only section
- Communities (regional) section
- Brochures downloadable & up-to-date

2 Develop Speakers Bureau
3 Attend Parihaka peace festival (NZ)
4 Develop Anabaptist history and spirituality resources

Growing and Sustaining our Network

5. Increase membership and 'friends' of AAANZ
6. Adopt fundraising strategy objectives
   - we will be writing to members
7. Increase ongoing monthly support
8. Increase members' ownership of network through benefits:
   - Members' prayer and hosting directory and diary
   - Host regular local table fellowships in each region
   - Guest speakers via table fellowship teleconferences
   - Launch AAANZ House in Sydney

Building Relationships and Partnerships

9 Tom and Christine Sine in Australia
10 AAANZ Melbourne Conference, January 2009
11 Passionfest in NZ, February 2009
12 NZ Mini-conference in Onuku, early 2010, as forerunner to AAANZ 2011 Conference in NZ

We acknowledged that there are other groups in our part of the world who share a similar passion for a Jesus centred faith with community as its life and reconciliation at the heart of its work. We listed new partnerships that we wished to forge. The list is too long to repeat here, but we were encouraged that we are a part of an emerging movement within the churches.

We spent Sunday morning following a bush track that led to a wind worn sandstone clifftop poised above

(above) Sally leading reflection (right) Paul McMahon contemplating

waves rolling in from the Pacific Ocean that crashed below us. There we mulled and prayed and reflected on our life's story as being like a journey in a boat. What kind of boat were we? What new shores are we to explore? The future though unknown is made more liveable in the company of good people who place their faith in a God who holds the future. We looked forward to journeying on together.

Will you join us?

The following is a compilation article written from reports of conference participants Gerry Guiton, Dale Hess, Jarrod McKenna, Sieneke Martin, and Jo Vallentine and Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford's article "Historic peace churches commit to healing in a violent world" http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/6525.]

The Third Historic Peace Churches International Conference

The Third Historic Peace Churches International Conference met in Solo, Indonesia 2 – 7 December 2007 to consider injustice, religious pluralism and poverty in an Asia context. These churches - which see peace and nonviolence as central to the Christian Gospel, rather than an "optional extra" - include the Church of the Brethren, the Mennonites and Brethren in Christ, and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Jarrod McKenna and Doug Sewell represented AAANZ. Gerry Guiton, Dale Hess, Sieneke Martin and Jo Vallentine represented Friends from Australia.

This was the third in a series of international conferences of the peace churches, invited by the Decade to Overcome Violence program of the World Council of Churches. Previous gatherings had been held in Beinenberg, Switzerland, in 2001 (from which emerged ***Seeking Cultures of Peace: a Peace Church Conversation*** ed. Fernando Enns et al. Cascadia and WCC, 2004); and in Kenya in 2004. (From Nairobi came the book entitled ***Seeking Peace in Africa: Stories from African Peacemakers***). There will be a fourth conference in Latin America in 2010. Each gathering has been funded and planned by the peace churches themselves.

Paulus Hartono Presentation

Organizing committee (above) Local steering committee (below)

The Solo gathering included participants from Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, New Zealand, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Representatives came from a wide array of backgrounds in professions and industry in addition to church work.

The first ever meeting of the Historic Peace Churches took place in Kansas in 1935 to plan a strategy for conscientious objection to the looming threat of World War II. After the war there was a series of meetings in Puidoux, Switzerland, on Lake Geneva in which Don Durnbaugh and John Howard Yoder played key roles. Don edited the papers and published the results from these meetings in a book, ***On Earth Peace***.

Presenters in Solo told stories of the poverty and injustices of their specific contexts, and how the church was responding. Christians are small minorities in many countries in Asia, so in every case religious diversity was a factor. Poverty also undermines peace in these societies. The Church of the Brethren group observed that a government role can be relevant in peacebuilding, sometimes as an instrument of fairness and inclusion and at other times fostering injustice and conflict.
Some of the stories of struggle also gave cause for hope. Loving and courageous actions by churches in very difficult settings were a challenge and witness. It was reported by some that Christianity in the East often is seen as a foreign religion, and is associated with the worst aspects of the West. This perception creates a credibility challenge for Asian churches.

In addition to speakers, plenary sessions, and small group discussions, the conference integrated visits to Indonesian churches, and also included cultural events and short trips that helped to ground discussion in the local reality. The sermon at the opening worship service by Dr. Mesach Krisetya, Indonesia Council of

Churches reminded participants that they should engage in “Worship”, not “Warship.” Expanding on the “swords into ploughshares” theme, he reminded them that wealth, prestige, power are all swords and that they should use worldly benefits to witness for peace, to be prepared to sacrifice wealth and comfort for others’ sake. He strongly emphasised the importance of service to others, and humility. In response, Jeanne Jantzi, a young Mennonite woman working for Mennonite Central Committee, commented “Some of us are burdened by poverty; others are burdened by affluence.”

Hansulrich Gerber, a Mennonite who heads the World Council of Churches Decade to Overcome Violence Program, gave the keynote address. He drew upon the first-ever world report on violence and health conducted by the World Health Organisation. It has some startling conclusions: An estimated 1.6 million people lose their lives each year due to physical violence; 50% is self-directed (suicides and self abuse); 30% is interpersonal (family/partner, community); 20% collective (social, political, economic, armed conflict). This challenges us to think about the causes of violence, and what we can do to offer hope to those in despair, to learn and teach nonviolent ways to transform conflict and to address gender equity.

(above)Welcome of Officials (below) Welcome at Solo Palace

Differences within the region emerged by the end of the week. Australian and New Zealand participants felt free to speak out and confront their governments while others sensed a real risk of such expression in their nations. As a result, a slower, relationship-building approach to peacebuilding is used by most Asian churches within their communities.

Dale Hess, a Quaker participant from Melbourne, said he was moved by the stories shared during the conference. A sampling of these stories include:
- The Mennonite Central Committee is reaching out to Abu Bakar Bashir and Jemaah Islamiyah, and Hezbollah. This has required persistence over years.

Darryl Sankey Presentation

- We heard of churches being closed and difficulties of surviving as a member of a tiny minority religion.
- A young woman who retreated into depression because of discrimination.
- We heard about the large number of suicides by farmers unable to pay back money-lenders when their crops failed because of lack of rain.
- We were inspired by young people giving blood and making it available to all who need it, regardless of religious faith.
- Stories of wage poverty and discrimination in the workplace brought another dimension to our understanding of poverty.
- Violence to brides-to-be because of their parents’ inability to pay a dowry for them.

Dale also comments on changed lives. At least three young men were clearly changed during the conference with the Spirit broadening their understanding and outlook; one man, who had never considered the peace dimensions of the Gospel message before, is going to pursue a Master’s Degree in Peace Studies.

A conference statement was produced that included the following: “It is clear to us that the Rule of Love or “Kingdom” that Jesus set up is antithetical to war and to the manner in which nations and groups prepare for it. We understand war as the greatest of human scandals, the greatest of human sins, a deliberate blasphemy on the precious gift of life.”

As we listened to the stories we shared from our experiences in working towards reconciliation and healing, we came to know other forms of warfare. There is the inner war which we recognized through our common worship, the necessity of looking closely at ourselves, the need for metanoia. In the words of St. Francis of Assisi: “If you desire peace with your lips, make sure it is written first on your heart.” Do we hear this? Do we truly love our enemies? Do we pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:43-44)? How well do we live the Sermon on the Mount? Indeed, how well do we enact the fifth chapter of Matthew? Have we forgotten that Jesus meant it to be taken seriously? Each one of us must ask ourselves these questions, continually guarding against defiling the Kingdom that is within and among us (Luke 17:21). There is the war within our homes and neighbourhoods. There is the war that separates us from those who are members of different denominations or religious traditions; the Peaceable Kingdom is inclusive of all who come to God for the Christ cannot be divided (1 Corinthians 1:13).

"The outer wars that traumatize our region include a regional conventional arms race, nuclear proliferation, and terrorism. But they also include the ravages of globalization that result in deepening poverty, the degradation of women, and the exploitation of children on a massive scale. HIV/AIDS, dictatorship, religious conflicts and religious oppression, civil wars, destruction of our environment, and bloody warfare continue to mock our simple desire for human flourishing.

"These are not mere words to us; we in Asia live through these realities each and every day. In our listening and sharing, our tears unveiled our unity and compassion; our joy affirmed the fruits of the Kingdom, the omnipresence and omnipotence of Love, its Life and Power (Galatians 5:22).

"And hovering above us and more fundamental than all the ills that beset our region is climate change. It is not a theory but a spectre that promises ecological and social collapse on a scale unimagined in human history. Our anxiety and sense of urgency determined a plea to world leaders whose meeting on the Indonesia island of Bali coincided with ours...

"Our devotion to the peace that Jesus taught and practiced leads us to urge nations to organize for peace as enthusiastically as they currently prepare for war, and to further work to remove the causes of war. We speak our truth with love when we say to those in authority that the amount of money spent on armaments and arms transfers, which reaches record levels as each year

Conference Banner

passes, is nothing short of disgusting. Better indeed to divert the expenditure for the wellbeing of humanity—to reducing the cruel effects of climate change, to ridding our planet of the nuclear industry and the weapons that inevitably are linked to it, to developing peacekeeping capacities, to building genuine restorative justice systems away from existing punitive institutions, improving the health of all the children of God, to reducing and eventually eradicating illiteracy—in short, food for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and drink for the thirsty."

-For the full text of a "Message from the Third International Historic Peace Churches Consultation," go to www.brethren.org/genbd/newsline.

A photo journal is available at: www.brethren.org/pjournal/2007/AsiaPeaceConference%26IndiaVisit.

Historic Peace Churches International Conference Peace in Our Land

Solo, Java, Indonesia

A Personal Reflection by Doug Sewell

The Asian reality has been described as a vast interplay between religiosity and poverty born from endemic injustice. More than three quarters of the world's poor live in Asia, which is also the land of origin of many of the world's great religions. Addressing the causes of injustice, ethnic conflict and religious intolerance are enormous aspirations for Christian peacemakers. Big stuff, I thought, and well beyond me. Yet here I was at a conference in Indonesia called Peace in Our Land.

In December 2007, Solo city located in the middle of Java provided a common ground for a meeting of the regional Historic Peace Churches - the Mennonites, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and Church of the Brethren. The Conference was part of the onward rolling momentum to generate a Decade to Overcome Violence, sponsored by the World Council of Churches. www.overcomingviolence.org.

Imagine one week together with almost 100 people from peace churches around the Asia and Pacific region, each representing diverse cultures with quite different perspectives and histories to explore peacemaking. What do you expect? I wondered what, when I arrived in Solo scorched by a steaming sun after a sweaty two hours on an overly crowded train from Yogyakarta.

I had come from Sydney along with Jarrod McKenna from Perth. Whereas Jarrod has close

Doug Sewell at Borobudor

connections with Quakers and empowering peacemakers in schools, I came with no alliances other than a badge, Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand, and a strong desire to listen.

I also felt a little out of place talking global peace...it had been a long time since I had waged peace, having once been an activist of the 1980's peace movement and an advocate for a nuclear free Pacific. Family, work and local church issues were much more pressing and consumed most of my energy. But now I was in Java. Selamat Datang! The smiling welcome and Javanese hospitality endeared me from the outset.

The Mennonite churches that hosted the conference were from Semarang, Yogyakarta and Surakarta - three cities that form a strategic triangle

Indian Group and Jarrod at Borabodur

in central Java. Though a minority in Indonesia, the churches, youthful and energetic, exhibited a strong desire to relate to their communities. The conference opening ceremony was attended by a number of Muslims, including the mayor of Solo and prince. The work of FPLAG, Forum for Peace, Inter Religions and Ethnics in Solo started a place for Christian dialogue and peace initiatives with radical Muslims. I was inspired hearing their stories of how relationships slowly began by simple acts that build trust to distance misunderstandings, one on one. I was pleased to hear that it did not need to be grand or spectacular. Even I could possibly do that, I pondered.

The Japanese Mennonites were thoughtful and sensitive when they talked about their war heritage, especially to the Koreans present. They shared openly and deeply about how both the victim and the aggressor can know suffering in different ways. A commonality of suffering can provide an opportunity for shared stories that bring reconciliation and restoration. Insightful and touching!

The Quaker delegates, mostly from Australia and New Zealand, brought experience from a long-standing engagement with peace activism. One of the New Zealanders had been in Israel with Christian Peacemaker Teams living in conflict-torn Hebron. Impressive and humbling! I agreed. Some Australian Quakers have been in conversation with former military officers, fertile ground

Jarrod McKenna presenting

as Generals for Peace to provide training in nonviolence. The greying Quakers, bless their hearts, brought what they called grey women power...the ability to get behind closed doors because they were not seen as a threat to the powerful elite. I was encouraged to think my hair too was shading that way.

The Aussies laughed and joked around a lot. Poverty and Injustice are so big, to be able to laugh disarms their power...but then again, I was from a country where I could afford to laugh. Where I live, I am one of a majority. I felt guilty, then realised that the ability to laugh was a way to break down the barriers, to not only weep with those who weep, but also say we can get over this together and laugh at the face of predicament. We found by laughing together across our cultural divides we could erase our differences. Hey, I can do that too, I laughed.

The Indian group, and they were a large contingent, mostly came from Gujarat State. They were Church of the Brethren who has been in India for generations. Nevertheless, the peaceful Brethren were a tiny part of the church in India, which of itself is a small drop within the total population. The Gujaratees spoke, at times with a translator, of their experience of being at the

sing along

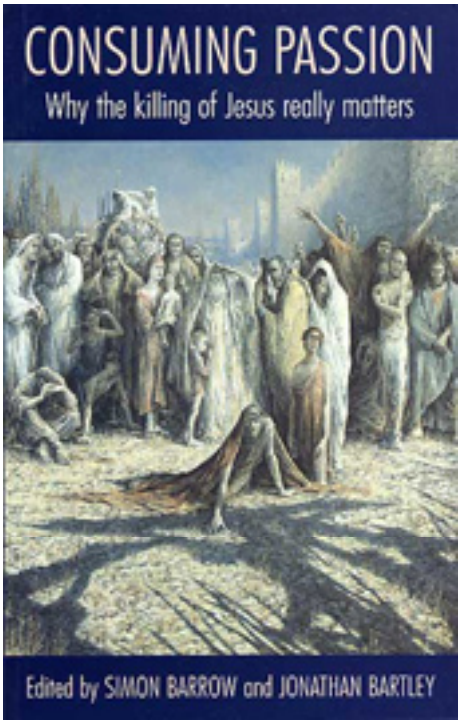
bottom end of the social hierarchy. To venture ambitions for religious tolerance and dialogue are tough when you are the victim. As the conference reached mid point I felt there was a growing gap between the expectations and language of the progressives talking a global peace theology and those who were plainly hurting. When under threat of on-going discrimination or attack people instinctively build walls to defend their beliefs and values. This can sometimes be seen as a reverse prejudice and unwillingness to dialogue. What changed the mood of the entire week was when the whole Gujarat group led the conference in a rousing worship. Worship takes our eyes off ourselves and looks beyond our situation to God with humbled hearts. The whole gathering began to clap and sing as one and I could see the walls come a tumblin' down. The singing men of Gujarat, and sadly there were no women there, went home I felt with a new sense that peace comes when we shift our focus and look at one another. They were talking about their church members donating blood (in India you sell blood) to set a pattern of giving that could overcome the cultural prejudices between neighbours who have tolerated conflict for centuries.

I came home feeling and believing that peace can come to our lands.

BOOKS

Consuming Passion: Why the killing of Jesus really matters

Edited by Simon Barrow and Jonathan Bartley, Darton, Longman & Todd, 2005



Why this book will be a best seller or not

Consuming Passion has some of the elements that should just about guarantee good sales figures. It's about Jesus, violence and how the church has got it wrong. Unfortunately, one critical element is missing. The editors didn't get round to including a big conspiracy theory and a romantic interest. Seriously though, the editors have pulled together a timely and challenging book that deserves sustained attention across the divides between pulpit and pew, between church and seminary and between the faith community and the world in which it is inextricably engaged.

The contributors come from a variety of ecclesiastical affiliations including Baptist, Catholic, Anglican and Mennonite. The editors from the Ekklesia think tank and web site, while denying any easy labelling of their own theological stance, admit that 'Anabaptist-influenced' is probably a fair description.

The back cover to **Consuming Passion** is provocative in its message.

> *Does the death of Jesus really matter in the modern world? How is it related to the conflict, division, suffering and violence we see around us?*
>
> *It is the extraordinary contention of Consuming Passion that many Christians have got it wrong about the central meaning of Jesus' killing – and the consequences of this misunderstanding are explosive.*

I need to acknowledge that I came to this book in a frame of mind that was strongly sympathetic to the case that the editors and contributors were making. Over the past few years I have become ill at ease with the taken for granted accounts of the significance of the death of Jesus, as expressed in many of our hymns, prayers, theology and preaching. Sympathy is one thing. This book pushed me much further. I came away from this book convinced that the need to challenge popular theological understandings of the death of Jesus was far more pressing than I had previously been prepared to acknowledge.

Why language matters

In shifting from the language we use about the passion of Jesus from 'death' to that of 'killing', as the editors have done in the subtitle, in itself is to make an apparently simple, but deeply significant theological move. Think about the difference that replacing the word 'death' with the term 'killing' makes. The change brings to our attention that the crucifixion was a judicial act by agents of the Roman empire and took place in the context of Jewish longing for liberation from Rome and for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Our discussion has shifted into the world of empire and oppression, the world of history from the realm of theological generalisation and abstraction.

Social and political context and its influence on theology

Why have we been so slow to recognise the difficulties posed by current theological accounts of the killing of Jesus? The reality that social and political context can influence our theological formulations, our questions and the way we go about answering them, has formed the basis for reductionist critiques of the Christian faith by secular critics in recent centuries starting with Karl Marx. For those of us who reject the reductionist form of this analysis, but agree that there are significant linkages from social context to theological formulations, there are a couple of consequences of such linkages that help explain our blindness on the one hand and suggest why a reassessment might be on the agenda now.

The first consequence is that the reality of social influence on theology has mostly been applied as an argument against one's opponents in debate within the church around social and ethical issues. See, we say to our opponents, your position on this issue is simply a result of letting your interpretation of Scripture be shaped by the spirit of the age. To which they reply, wrong, you are the ones who are letting the world unduly influence you. And the theological ping-pong match continues. Regardless of the difficulty of getting agreement on the way that the influence is working, and on whom, the issue is that the influence is there. The real question is whether we are willing to go back and assess the impact of context on our theology and seek to make adjustments where necessary to bring us back toward the path of faithfully following Jesus.

The possible relevance of this form of critique to more fundamental theological formulations from the Creeds onward has tended to escape our attention. Recently Stuart Murray has addressed the relationship between the emergence of Christendom and the content and rhetoric of the Creeds, an account to which I have drawn attention in "Listening to the Silences in the Creeds" in a previous issue of this journal (No 27, June 2005). A helpful summary account of Murray's critique of the impact of Christendom on theologies of the atonement appears as one of the essays in this book.

The second consequence is that changing social and political contexts provide us with an occasion for a review of our theological accounts of what God as

manifested in Jesus is up to in the world. As a rubric for this task we should note Paul's assertion that we see as through "a glass darkly" while keeping in mind that John reports the promise that there is yet more to learn and that the Spirit will guide us.

Critiquing penal substitution

The editors of this volume have taken up the task of reviewing theological accounts of the killing of Jesus, particularly those that fall under the heading of penal substitution through a critique that, among other things, draws attention to the social contexts in which this theological account emerged. The occasion for such a review has been provided by the widespread public debate and engagement with Mel Gibson's film narrative of Jesus' execution in The Passion a debate that has taken place against a background of renewed interest in the relationship between religion and violence, particularly since 11 September 2001.

In their Introduction to **Consuming Passion**, the editors pull no punches.

> *While by no means agreeing on everything, the contributors to this volume think that many Christians have seriously misconstrued the central components and narratives of Christian talk about the death of Jesus and how this offers hope and life to the world. And they say that this matters a great deal whether you are a Christian or not, because theories of religious conviction that depend upon dividing the world into victim and victimiser and then using the language, assumptions and tactics of the victimiser – are positively dangerous. They lead to suffering torture and death, both physically and psychologically.* (p3)

This is a strong and highly disturbing claim. The argument runs something like this. The currently accepted account of penal substitution is that God becomes the victimiser and Jesus becomes the victim. Human salvation comes to depend upon the torture and murder of an innocent life with consequent implications for the way society views punishment more generally. A specific example of this process is the pressure that is put on those who are victims to simply accept their situation – women who are subject to domestic violence comes to mind as an example.

The secular world has suggested that the Church has the choice of either accepting the claim of fundamentalists and some evangelicals that their interpretation of the significance of the death of Jesus, penal substitution, is the "biblical" one or giving up on discussion of the issue. The contributors refuse to accept the claim that the fundamentalist interpretation of the killing of Jesus is the only option for Christians who wish to follow Jesus. They do not want to give up on discussion of Jesus' killing and argue that there are good reasons for reclaiming the framing of such discussion from service to the cause of violence, to the cause of God, understood not as a tribal deity but as "...the nonviolent, inviting, transforming and...non-manipulative love made available to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth." (p.4)

While the book is not devoted exclusively to Mel Gibson's movie, several of the essays pick up themes that specifically relate to The Passion. Vic Theissen uses the movie as the focus for his chapter on "The Passion and God's Transforming Love". Ched Myers in "The Gospel of Christ confronts the Powers" provides an alternative reading of Marks Gospel in which, contrary to Gibson's movie, the God who is involved in the horrific torture and execution of Jesus is not a God who inflicts or justifies suffering and oppression but one who endures it. Anne Richards' reflects in a powerful and confronting way on "Being Delivered from Gibson's hell".

The significance of resurrection

Other essays deal more directly with various doctrines of the atonement, how these doctrines have developed within the church, their social context and why they are problematic in the light of Jesus' life and teaching. Despite the relative brevity of these essays, the contributions of Denny Weaver, Simon Barrow, and James Allison, in particular, on these themes are underpinned by substantial theological scholarship and cannot be lightly dismissed.

While not directly highlighted by the editors, the issue of resurrection lurks throughout the book as the key theme that is hinted at but not addressed at any length until the last chapter by James Allison. However, the discussion by James Allison on the resurrection does not stand alone. I would argue that the essays by David Wood, at a personal level and ecclesiastical level, and Michael Northcott at a structural political level point towards a range of possible meanings of the resurrection and its significance for trying to articulate the meaning of the killing of Jesus.

It is relevant in drawing attention to the presence of the theme of resurrection in **Consuming Passion** that since the book was published, Simon Barrow, has subsequently published two extensive editorials on the Ekklesia website (www.ekklesia.co.uk) that pick up the issue of what it means to talk of resurrection – 'Easter as Regime change' and 'Threatened with Resurrection'.

What options are on offer here to begin developing a fresh understanding of the significance of Jesus being killed? Because all the authors approach this issue in differing ways, to keep this essay within reasonable bounds, I want to highlight specifically the argument of just one of the authors, Giles Fraser, in his chapter "The Easter of Hawks, Doves, Victims and Victimisers" who has made his case perhaps more directly and pungently than other contributors.

Fraser argues that there are two fundamental ways of understanding the theology of Easter – retribution or forgiveness. Retribution requires that sin has to be paid for by pain. Anything else is the equivalent of being soft on crime. Fraser's argument is that any account along these lines is fundamentally at odds with Jesus' teaching and practice of forgiveness.

Jesus' teaching and life

This is the point of the essay that really got through to me. When we look at Jesus' practice and teaching of forgiveness in his life, in his teaching and in his words from the cross, forgiveness and healing is etched deeply through everything he says and does. How then can we have lived so comfortably with an account of the significance of his crucifixion that stands so much at odds with his life and teaching? There is no sign of Jesus being committed to an ethic of retribution. As Fraser notes:

> *Jesus does not oppose the brutality of his treatment by an equal and opposite show of force. And in not returning violence with violence he initiates a fragile and vulnerable community of non-retaliation known as the kingdom of God*. (pp.17-18)

It seems clear then that any account that we give of the significance of Jesus being killed will need to be consistent with how he lived and taught. The doctrine of penal retribution and its predecessors clearly fail that test. Steve Chalke coming from a very different theological tradition to that of Fraser is in fundamental agreement with him on this issue.

> *... in Jesus' own parabolic account of his Father's relationship with humankind, the prodigal son, the father is not presented as angry or vengeful, or as seeking justice or retribution, - instead he simply runs to greet his wayward child, showers him with gifts and welcomes him home. The father in the parable is wronged, but chooses to forgive to restore a broken relationship – there is no theme of retribution. Instead the story is one of outstanding grace, of scandalous love and mercy – how different it would read if penal substitution was the model of atonement offered.* (p.23)

While the case against much of the existing theological accounts of the significance of the killing of Jesus is well made, the direction we should take in providing an alternative account is less well marked out. Denny Weaver provides the most ambitious attempt in his chapter "Jesus' death and the nonviolent victory of God" with an approach which has the merit of trying to point forward to the resurrection as an integral element in any such account.

However, I am uneasy about how we should go about the task of providing an alternative doctrine of the atonement. In fact I am highly dubious about whether development of doctrine as it has been traditionally done is the way to go. It may well be that what is needed are a variety of re-narrations of the killing of Jesus and his resurrection. A well told story is more powerful that a 'doctrine'. Doctrines privilege the intellectual caste and those with control of ecclesiastical institutions who then become the authorities on doctrine. Doctrines as intellectual formulations tend to suggest that if we can get our categories right we can bring God under a measure of human control.

Ched Myers' chapter offers a partial example of the sort of re-narration that is needed in moving beyond traditional atonement theology. While he makes some intellectual moves to justify why he can retell the story the way he does, for much of the chapter Myers simply retells Mark's account of Jesus life, and how and why he was put to death. The account of why Jesus was killed contrasts sharply with Mel Gibson's narrative. Myers is clear. "The way Jesus died, from Mark's perspective, cannot be understood apart from the way he lived." (P.72)

In conclusion

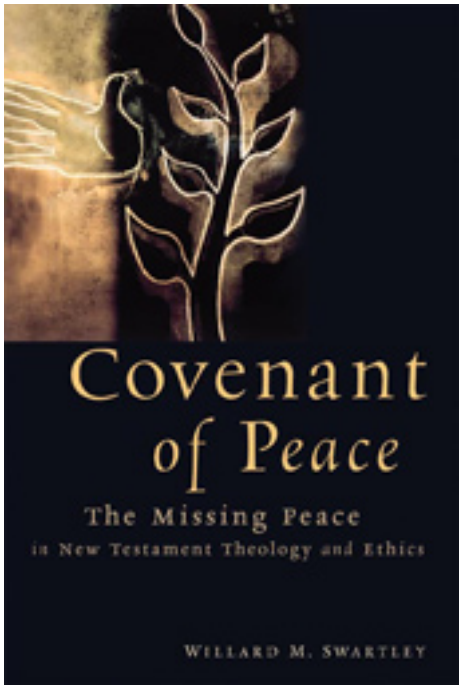
The essays in **Consuming Passion** are relatively short and are not overly academic in style. Go out, purchase it and read and argue about it with your friends. But be prepared to have some assumptions challenged and sacred cows put to the sword as you tease out the consequences of this new understanding for worship, church life and social engagement.

The implications of the questions raised by this book run deep and go wide and are more easily avoided than confronted. Which is perhaps what we should expect as we begin to recover the threat of resurrection.

- REVIEWED BY DOUG HYND, CANBERRA

Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics

Willard M. Swartley
Eerdmans, 2006



Willard M. Swartley is professor emeritus of New Testament at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana. His other books include ***Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels***, ***The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*** and edited with Perry B. Yoder ***The Meaning of Peace.***

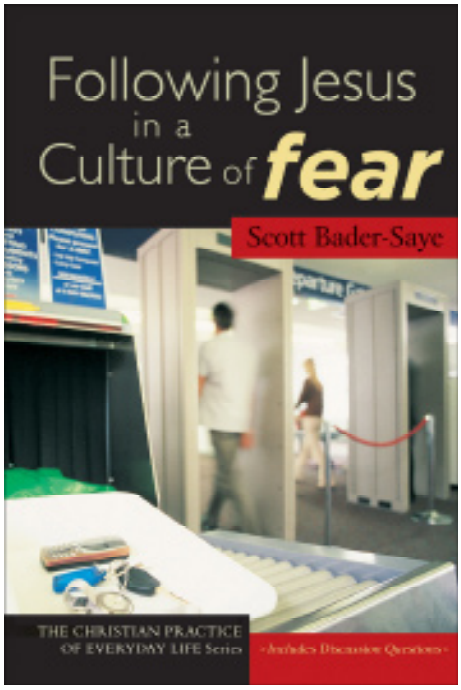
One would think that peace, a term that occurs as many as one hundred times in the New Testament, would enjoy a prominent place in theology and ethics textbooks. Yet it is surprisingly absent. Willard Swartley's ***Covenant of Peace*** remedies this deficiency, restoring to New Testament theology and ethics the peace that many works have missed.

In this comprehensive yet accessible book Swartley explicates virtually all of the New Testament, relating peace — and the associated emphases of love for enemies and reconciliation — to core theological themes such as salvation, Christology, and the reign of God. No other work in English makes such a contribution.

Swartley concludes by considering specific practices that lead to peacemaking and their place in our contemporary world. Retrieving a historically neglected element in the Christian message, ***Covenant of Peace*** confronts readers anew with the compelling New Testament witness to peace. **-MSH**

Following Jesus in a Culture of Fear

Scott Bader-Saye, Brazos Press, 2007 [The Christian Practice of Everyday Life Series]



Fear has been a major theme in political campaigning and public debate across Europe, North America and Australasia since 11 September, 2001. Yet only a few churches and an occasional theologian have taken on this issue in any explicit and direct way. I have long been convinced that this was an important theme for the Christian community to address, and in the preparation of a statement on the issue of following Jesus today I pushed for the issue to be included. The final statement included the following affirmations:

> *'For freedom, Christ set us free' (Galatians 5:1, 13). Jesus Christ calls us to freedom – freedom to serve one another and freedom from fear, whether generated by terrorist activity, media frenzy or government rhetoric. Jesus' own freedom was expressed both by caring for those at the margins and by challenging authorities and institutions motivated by self-interest and the maintenance of power. Authentic Christian freedom is demonstrated by treating those at the edges of society as neighbours and by challenging authorities and institutions that prevent them from living life in all its fullness.*
>
> *For this reason, we deny that Christian freedom is merely a 'spiritual' or 'religious' experience detached from the reality of bodily and communal life. Conforming to a culture of fear that ignores or tramples upon the needs of those who are different sabotages Christian freedom. (Following Jesus In a World of Deception, Violence and Fear, May 2006)*

It is with real enthusiasm therefore that I welcome an accessible, yet challenging book, in the Christian Practice of Everyday Life Series addressing at length the question of what following Jesus in a culture of fear might look like. Scott Bader-Saye has made a great contribution to charting a considered theological and practical response to the miasma of fear and its exploitation in the prevailing culture. Bader-Saye in his discussion draws on examples from everyday experience, provides substantial biblical reflections, engages with sociological analysis and introduces us to a variety of resources from the Christian theological tradition, including such heavy hitters as Aquinas, particularly Aquinas, Calvin and Augustine. Each chapter concludes with a set of discussion questions that could make the book a useful resource for a study group.

Bader-Saye's agenda is summarised neatly in the closing section of his opening chapter with his observation that:

> *Politicians, the media, advertisers, even religious leaders, have a profit motive for exacerbating and sustaining our fears. This profit may come in the form of money, viewership, filled pews, influence or power, but in each case we are encouraged to fear the wrong things, or to fear the right things in the wrong way. Our anxiety, then drives us to act in ways that override other moral concerns. We spend our money based on fear rather than stewardship. We make political decisions based on fear rather than the common good. We participate in religious life based on fear rather than love. (p.21)*

What we need he concludes are

> *... some clear sensible reflections on fear – how to acknowledge it without being manipulated by it, how to resist it without assuming we should (or could) be fearless, how to receive it as a gift (if it can be a gift) without letting it dominate our lives. This is especially important among Christians who seek to follow Jesus, for Jesus' words, and more so his life, do not promise safety. Following the teachings of Jesus will involve us in risky practices like clothing the naked, visiting the prisoner, caring for the sick, welcoming the stranger, and feeding the hungry (see Matt.25:31-46). Following the life of Jesus will mean walking in the way of the cross ... Such risky discipleship can hardly be described as "safe". (Pp21-22)*

After the introductory chapter the book falls into three broad sections, though the author does not formally draw our attention to this structure in the way the contents page is constructed. The first section, comprising Chapters 2-4 focuses on the place of fear in the moral life. This exploration of fear includes a discussion of why fearlessness is a bad idea and concludes with a set of questions to help us assess our fears.

The middle section, Chapters 5-7 articulates and reflects on a series of explicitly theological themes commencing with a discussion of the importance of the community as an enabling context for the display of courage. The author then moves on to consider how we can provide an account of the providence of God in the face of violence and death. Here Bader-Saye makes a significant theological move in choosing to refigure the Christian doctrine of providence in narrative terms and with respect to the good end to which we journey. Belief in divine providence is now difficult. Bader-Saye summarises his approach to this critical issue in the following terms:

> *Our response to these changes, to this "liberal" shift that no longer sees God in the world need not be a return to premodern thought, to a "conservative" belief that God is everywhere and the cause of all events. Rather, we need to find a third way that gets beyond the liberal/conservative divide. I would suggest we do this by approaching providence through a narrative*

lens, focusing on the ways the stories of our lives intersect with the stories of scripture. Thus, narration becomes more important than explanation, and purpose becomes more important than causality. In other words we may come to see providence as a way of narrating our lives in light of God's larger purpose rather than a way of explaining every event as caused by God. This will help us, first to avoid the problems that come with attributing evil and suffering to God's will, and second to reclaim the importance of providence as a way of story-ing the world that gives us hope and courage in fearful times. (Pp75-76)

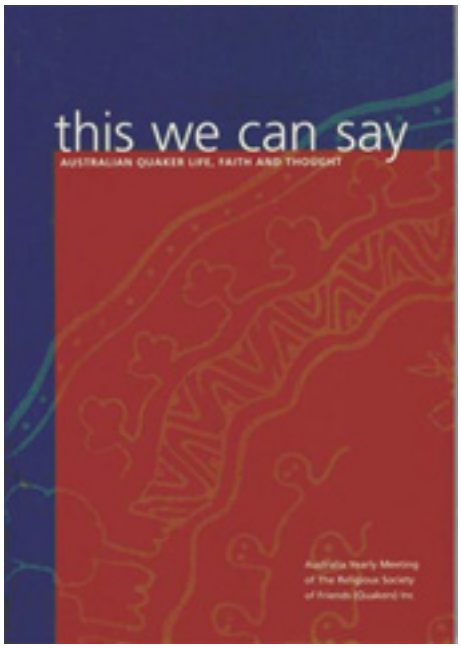
The final three chapters tackle issues of ethics and lifestyle around the themes of hospitality, peacemaking and generosity. These themes are explored in the light of the risks that they entail. The author uses stories from contemporary culture to pose the issues and draws on theological reflection and scripture to chart responses that move us beyond the constriction of fear to live out the virtues of peacemaking, hospitality and generosity. Each of the last three chapters is rich in suggestions for responding to the culture of fear. Each chapter provides rich resources for opening up person and communal reflection on practical responses. An appendix offers us a more substantive discussion of the historical and philosophical roots of the culture of fear.

Scott Bader-Saye has provided us with a great example of a theology that is down to earth, connected to the issues that press on us everyday and that draws on scripture and tradition in a way that helps us to discern what is going on and how following Jesus makes a difference. This is theology in service of freedom.

- REVIEWED BY DOUG HYND, CANBERRA

This We Can Say: Australian Quaker Life, Faith and Thought

Shona Verity and the Australia Yearly meeting Faith and Practice Committee (Eds.), Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc, 2003



I should declare at the outset that I have only had limited contact with the Quaker community. I visited on one occasion with the Friends over a decade ago and it was a powerful experience, the memory of which has stayed with me. I can claim some further, though slight connection. I grew up in a church tradition that shared with the Friends a commitment to listening for the leading of the Spirit in gathered worship. It has to be said though that this was combined with a high Anglican practice of sharing the bread and wine on a weekly basis. I am talking here about the Christian Brethren. I also share with the Friends, arising out of a commitment to the Anabaptist tradition of discipleship, an understanding of peacemaking as an essential element individually and communally of those follow Jesus' life and teaching.

There is something initially curious and yet entirely appropriate in handing this book of Quaker testimonies and experience to be reviewed to a person whose theological engagement has largely been with that field of Christian Social Ethics. Let me explain. The book under review functions as a guide to the Quaker tradition, worship and practice. Its contents are in part ecclesiology alongside liturgy, ethics and reflective theology. And that is the point. The Quaker tradition does not encourage any sense of separation between worship and life. In this I think they have it exactly right.

The account of the genesis and production of ***This we can say*** suggests some interesting comparisons that could be made in terms of process and the time involved to the development of recent Anglican prayer books in Australia. The idea for the volume was first mooted in 1993 and moved forward to completion through a process of consultation, workshops and working papers. The Introduction acknowledges that *'... this first Australian version will be revised from time to time. Its focus is perhaps more contemporary than we had expected. It includes inspirational writings and personal stories about challenge and opportunity, which reflect on the geography and social history of this land. Nevertheless, traces of the history of Quakerism in Australia are evident in some much older writings, and a special chapter gives a fuller account of this history'* (vi).

This volume falls within a Quaker tradition of faith and practice books and is intended to serve as an introduction to the beliefs and practices of the Friends as they have developed within Australia. What is left unclear is the exact nature of the balance that was intended between providing an introduction to those seeking guidance on what the Quakers are on about and the outsider who may be simply curious as to what this community is on about. Some comments in the introduction relate this work to the existing books of faith and practice derived from the United Kingdom with their internal focus while the following comments suggest an assumption of an external audience:

Our purpose is to introduce the reader to our faith: what inspires us; our images of God; our ways of conducting our work and worship in community, in unity. Quaker practices revolve around the importance of meeting quietly

together in worship, waiting for the guidance of the Spirit within each of us. Sometimes we feel prompted to share how we experience the Spirit working in and through us (vii).

The final chapter provides an historical perspective on the movement within Australia. This is really the only chapter of the book that is laid out in narrative form and it can be read to advantage straight through. Anyone not familiar with this tradition would be advised to commence here and to consult the glossary before engaging with the rest of the volume.

Apart from the concluding chapter, the remaining chapters are broken up into numbered paragraphs with the author and date attribution provided. The number for each contribution can then be used to find the details of the source of the quotation in a list of sources at the end of the volume. Historical quotations are shaded to clearly identify them. This layout makes it useful for meditation. The book as a whole seems to have been designed for reflective and meditative reading.

The book commences with a chapter entitled 'Inspiration: our faith', followed by 'The Religious Society of Friends: our practice' and a chapter on 'Living our faith'. The subheadings in this third chapter cover prayer, faith in action, service, justice and Quaker testimonies to equality, truthfulness and integrity, community, caring, healing, simplicity and peace. Chapter 4, 'Finding our way through life', deals with life's stages and challenges, and chapter 5 is concerned with 'Facing the challenges of time and place'. Chapter 6 comprises 'Advices and queries' from the Britain Yearly Meeting 1994, a checklist for personal and communal examination that serves as a reminder of the insights of the Spirit.

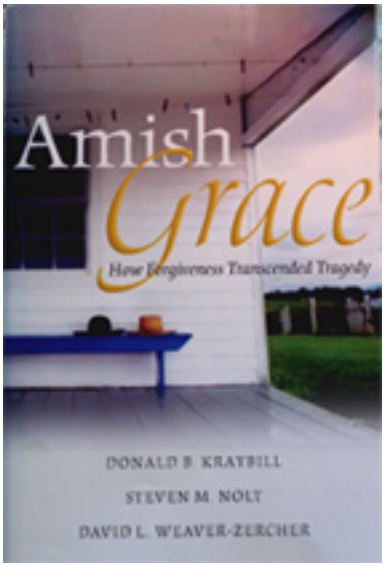
The book is beautifully designed and printed, and it includes several hymns and a large number of poems and meditations laid out in poetic form.

From the angle of ecclesiology what emerged for me from the book was the sense of a distinctive community with a strong internal culture, that is driven and sustained by an emphasis on the individual waiting on the spirit and the need to listen to that discernment together. The balancing of strong individual and communal elements along with the rejection of a formally constituted hierarchy poses an ongoing question to traditional ecclesiologies.

From another theological angle there is clearly an ongoing tension within the movement as to the exact nature of its connections to catholic Christianity and how this relationship can best be described. Many of the contributions to the book are couched in a style that expresses a form of spirituality that is tolerant in style and non-particularistic in character, though some unselfconsciously speak in very direct language of evangelical orthodoxy.

One might have thought that tolerance and inclusiveness would have made the movement very attractive to many in the prevailing culture. Yet the hard edge of the Quaker commitment to a way of life that remains at odds with significant elements of the prevailing culture remains and perhaps prevents them being flooded by those on the vaguely shaped 'spiritual quest' that seems characteristic of our time.

REVIEWED BY - DOUG HYND, CANBERRA

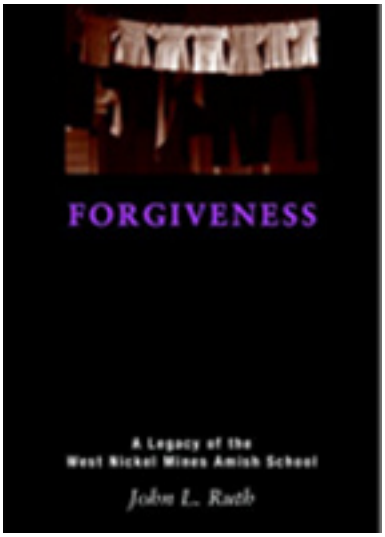


Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy

Donald Kraybill, Steven Nolt, and David Weaver-Zercher, Jossey-Bass, 2007

Forgiveness: A Legacy of the West Nickel Mines Amish School

John L. Ruth, Herald Press, 2007



These two books will be added to the list of books and videos on forgiveness on the AAANZ website. They are the latest contributions to a growing field of excellent books on forgiveness. They both examine the tragedy of the killings at an Amish school in Pennsylvania on 2 October 2006. In the year since the killings, the Amish choice of the path of forgiveness instead of revenge still generates interest around the world.

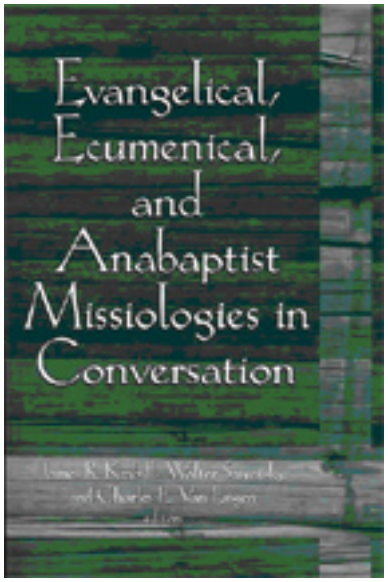
Ruth's book is a small volume that reads like one continuous meditation on the event and the Amish response to it. Amish Grace is the work of three Mennonite scholars and gives a fuller treatment of the tragic events and the Amish community affected.

Both books try to answer the question "Where did the response of forgiveness come from?" They examine Amish beliefs and practices as an answer. All of the authors know the Amish well so do not treat them as an idealised community but as real people trying to follow Jesus in the midst of a horrific tragedy. The Amish practice of "shunning", which at first glance seems opposed to forgiveness, is examined in its context. Both books are not only good at examining the theme of forgiveness but also excellent introductions to the Amish.

-MSH

Evangelical, Ecumenical, and Anabaptist Missiologies in Conversation: Essays in Honor of Wilbert R Shenk

James R. Krabill, Walter Sawatsky and Charles Van Engen, Orbis, 2006



In 2002 I attended the conference, near Chicago, of the Gospel and Our Culture Network and found myself at breakfast with a quiet man in a suit, who said his name was Wilbert Shenk. I find it hard to say things such as "I love your work and use your books" without sounding like a breathless fan, but I tried anyway. He, on the other hand, went straight on to ask lots of questions about my interests and missiology in Australia. My admiration only grew.

Wilbert Shenk is well known amongst Mennonites and in North American missiology circles. He was a Mennonite missionary in Indonesia, a mission agency administrator for many years (Mennonite Board of Missions), and founder of the journal Mission Focus. Shenk is a missiologist, a founder of the American Society of Missiology, and a seminary teacher (AMBS and Fuller). He is also a key figure in the Gospel and Our Culture Network and a member of the founding group of the ecumenical Overseas Mission Study Center. Among his books are Transfiguration of Mission (1993), Write the Vision (1995) and Changing Frontiers in Mission (1999).

This book of essays in his honour shows the esteem in which Shenk is held, because it includes an impressive list of contributors, including Andrew Walls, Paul Hiebert, Alan Roxburgh, Alan Kreider, Darrell Whiteman, John Driver and more than twenty others.

Like most festschrifts the quality and interest varies, but this is a solid collection and I found nearly all of the essays stimulating and informative. The scope is wide, and the chapters are grouped under five headings, mirroring Shenk's interests: mission history, issues in global mission, the church, mission to the West and conversations between ecumenical, evangelical, Catholic and Anabaptist approaches to mission.

The book is substantial (336 pages) and well produced, with a bibliography of Shenk's works as well as the usual endnotes, bibliography and index. The first chapter, by Walter Sawatsky, outlines Shenk's missiological pilgrimage, showing how significant Shenk was in a time of great change in approaches to mission and how important he was in keeping conversations going between different groups. It is clear he was an able administrator, too. I have always felt that good administration is under-rated as a ministry; at its best it is visionary, empowering and pastoral.

It is difficult to review a book of twenty-seven chapters, but here are a few of the essays I found to be good reading. Willard Swartley analyses how the Gospels use Isaiah 52:7 ("How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace") to argue that peacemaking is central to the message of Jesus. Charles Van Engen offers a nuanced perspective on the challenges of contextualising the gospel. Lois Barrett defines "missional church". Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger summarise findings from their book Emerging Churches by listing characteristics of postmodern churches.

Much of the book is concerned with Shenk, his Mennonite world, the specifics of Mennonite global mission and the development of ecumenical mission studies in North America since the 1970s. As a result, I learned a great deal, though sometimes I felt I was reading about someone else's world. The focus is, of course, appropriate for a volume of essays in honour of a major overseas figure.

To see the legacy of Wilbert Shenk laid out like this is to be encouraged to continue conversations between Christian traditions, to work even harder to discern trends in the West and globally, and to appreciate again what the Anabaptist perspective can bring to the table.

- REVIEWED BY ROSS LANGMEAD, MELBOURNE

Jesus the Warrior? Historical Christian Perspectives on the Morality of Waging War and Waging Peace

Michael W. Slattery, Marquette University Press, 2007

This book, by Roman Catholic peace activist and international relations specialist Michael Slattery, covers the well-trodden ground of Christian attitudes towards war and peace. After a brief review of current debate over the causes of war (which unsurprisingly concludes that "a host of factors cause war"), there are chapters on lethal violence in the Hebrew scriptures, Jesus' advocacy of nonviolence, early patristic opposition to Christian participation in war, and the shift of thinking that occurred following the conversion of emperor Constantine in the 4th century, modern defences of the Just War Theory, and chapters on Christian peacemaking and responsibility in the 21st century.

The subject of the book is, of course, a desperately important one, and I am in wholehearted agreement with Slattery's basic position. I too believe that Jesus prescribed nonviolence as a normative position for his followers. I agree that the just war theory – though well intentioned – is a travesty of Christian ethics and that, notwithstanding the vast learning of some of its modern proponents, it requires a studied naivety about the realities of war-making.

So I concur with much of Slattery's analysis. Yet this is not the greatest of books. It tries to cover too much ground in a short span, and so fails to do justice to several of the topics it covers. It is also very light on theological or hermeneutical reflection. Slattery draws the sharpest of all contrasts between Jesus and the Old Testament (even professing some sympathy for Marcion), without asking what this means for reading the Old Testament as Christian scripture, however bloody its content. It is also not clear who Slattery's target audience is. He catalogues the opinion of too many academic writers, and has too many ponderously long footnotes, for the book to qualify as a popular treatment. Yet he slides over too much complexity for it to count as a thoroughly scholarly one either.

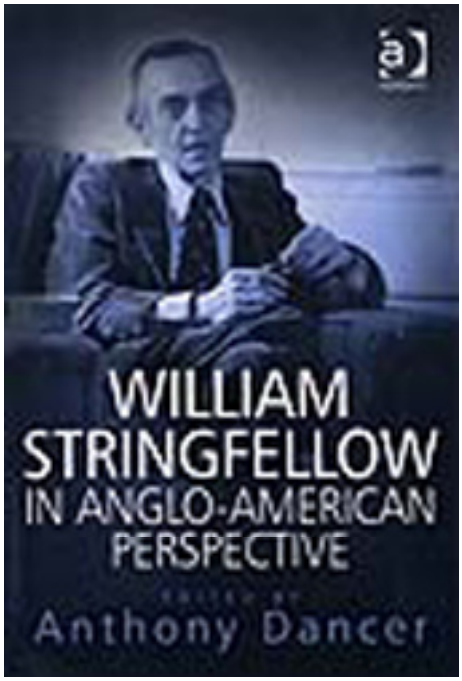
Beyond all this, the book needs a darn good edit. Ugly phrases like "it behoves us", "aforenoted", "here below", "contrarily", and "per below" recur on almost every other page, and there are several spelling mistakes, like "Annointed" and "they did not forbad". Reviewers ought not to nit-pick over minor stylistic blemishes and editorial slips. But in this case the prose is so clunky that it detracts from enjoyment of the book. After all, good books require good writing, as a university press ought to know.

On the brighter side, there are some interesting statistics in the appendices. It is gratifying to see that NZ spends a greater percentage of its GDP on health and education, and a lower percentage on its military, than almost any other developed nation. By contrast, it is distressing to see that in 2002 the country that spent the highest percentage of its income on the military (a whopping 23.5%) was poverty-stricken Eritrea. Who sells them the guns, I wonder?

- Reviewed by Chris Marshall, Wellington

William Stringfellow in Anglo-American Perspective

Anthony Dancer (Ed.), Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005



The name of William Stringfellow (1928-1985) is not well-known to the theological establishment. This is partly because he was not a "real" theologian, in the professional sense of the term. He was an attorney who practiced law in the slums of East Harlem, but a lawyer who, by his own admission, found reading the Bible and, more importantly, listening to the Bible, to be one of the major preoccupations of his life, much more so than studying law. He was a grassroots theologian, one who discerned the Word of God in the midst of everyday life and who penned what Kenneth Leech calls "street theology, theology in a hurry".

Stringfellow denied that the political and lifestyle commitments he derived from listening to Scripture were "radical"; to him, they were simply an expression of being truly Christian, or truly human (which for him amounts to the same thing). But by anyone else's standards, Stringfellow was a radical – a genuinely prophetic voice who critiqued both American culture and the American church in light of the gospel and who earned the admiration of Karl Barth and Jacques Ellul. Indeed Stringfellow is the only American theologian whom Barth advised America to listen to. This is very interesting, for Stringfellow wrote theology is a different style than Barth, notwithstanding affinities between their views. Were he alive today, Stringfellow would perhaps be called a narrative theologian, one who considered biography to be the best genre for reflecting theologically on the meaning of human life. He authored 16 books before his premature death and had a significant impact on the likes of Jim Wallis, Walter Wink and Stanley Hauerwas.

Little has yet been published on Stringfellow, and the only Ph.D done on his work is that by New Zealand's own Anthony Dancer, currently the Social Justice Commissioner with the Anglican church. In this highly engaging and well-written book, Dancer commends the legacy of Stringfellow to the current generation. The book falls into two parts. In Part One, Dancer gathers together a representative sample of Stringfellow's writings touching on such things as the centrality of the Bible to Christian consciousness, the unavoidably political nature of Christian commitment, the idolatry of American nationalism, the all-pervasive clash between the powers of life and the death (Stringfellow was, we are told, obsessed with death), the meaning of Christian freedom, and the character of Christian mission (which he rightly refuses to collapse into charitable deeds or mere social work). Included in the collection is an excellent short essay on the meaning of the biblical phrase "principalities and powers", which Stringfgellow decodes as the power of images, ideologies and institutions.

Of course some of the political comment Stringfellow makes in these excerpts is necessarily dated, referring to events in the 1960s and 1970s. But subsequent developments have only confirmed Stringfellow's prophetic prescience. For example, with reference to the Reagan administration in the early 1980s, he writes:

> *I do not give much credence to conspiratorial interpretations of history, but I apprehend that the truth is that there are persons and organizations and financing resources seeking to transmute the mythology and rhetoric concerning America*

the holy nation into a political and ideological movement to 'convert' America into a so-called Christian nation...I conclude that such forces actually gather; they meet, they strategize, they launch pilot exercises, they recruit support, they get ready for their own style of coup d'etat. Meanwhile they manipulate Reagan and others who have power or influence temporarily, and they largely dominate and direct a vast, unfortunate, misled constituency, generally assembled as the 'Moral Majority'...(pp. 71-72).

The so-called "neo-con revolution" in America and elsewhere, the violent fruits of which we see all around us today, would have come as no surprise to Stringfellow.

In the second part of the book, a number of scholars offer reflections on the life, theology and significance of Stringfellow. Several of these essays are biographical in nature, which only adds to their interest. But the essays are not mere hagiography. Clearly Stringfellow had a tendency to dogmatism, extreme language and impatience with others. But these typically prophetic faults can be forgiven for, as one contributor puts it, "Stringfellow cared about the right issues" – poverty, violence, racism, and the fidelity of the church to the gospel of Christ.

Tony Dancer is to be thanked for making this feast of theological reflections on the meaning of Christian discipleship, both by Stringfellow and by his perceptive commentators, available to the rest of us. Twenty years after his passing, William Stringfellow remains a voice worth listening to. His call for the church to be less religious and more biblical is as urgent as ever.

- REVIEWED BY CHRIS MARSHALL, WELLINGTON

Handbook of Restorative Justice

Gerry Johnstone & Daniel W. Van Ness, Willan Publishing, 2006

The concept of restorative justice was coined two or three decades ago as a way of describing experimental attempts, largely by community-based practitioners, to develop more satisfactory ways of addressing the aftermath of criminal offending. Different models of restorative justice emerged in different places, but it wasn't too long before cross-fertilisation began taking place and a genuine international social movement for judicial and social reform emerged. Naturally this new movement and its agenda soon came to the notice of the academic world, and thus has arisen in the past 10 to 15 years a substantial and rapidly expanding body of scholarship on the theory and practice of restorative justice.

It is now almost an impossible task, even for academics, to keep up with the wealth of literature on the many facets of restorative justice being generated by specialist scholars working in a range of disciplines. Inevitably a cleavage has opened up between grass roots practitioners who do the actual work of restorative justice and the scholarly "experts" who reflect critically and theoretically on what is being done and who debate its merits and shortcomings. Some practitioners may have little time for or interest in the scholarly discourse that now exists around restorative justice. Yet being able to access the critical insights and empirical findings of these scholars is extremely important if the restorative justice movement is to continue to develop as a viable and sophisticated justice alternative.

That is why this new reader in restorative justice is to be so warmly welcomed. Running to over 600 pages, it comprises a superb collection of essays, each specially commissioned by the editors from leading international authorities in the field, that cover almost all aspects of the movement in light of the latest scholarship. Without exception, the essays are well-written, carefully considered and thoroughly documented. Some essays are more demanding than others, and not all the contributors are equally enthusiastic about restorative justice. But all give an honest and reliable account of the many issues and debates that surround the definition and practice of restorative justice, and all are worth listening to carefully.

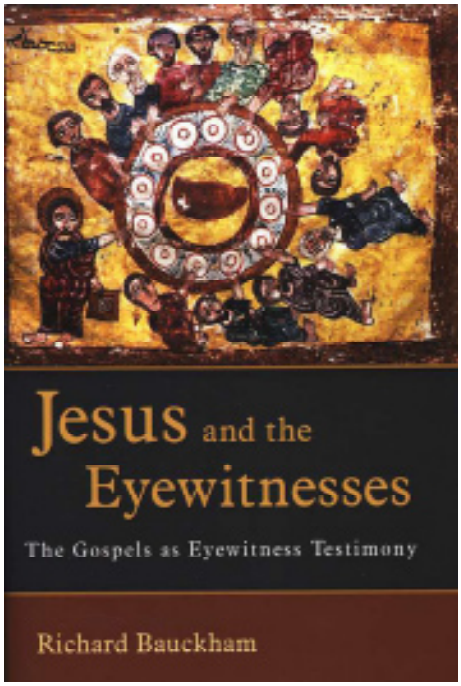
The 29 chapters are grouped somewhat loosely into seven sections, each of which opens with a helpful summary by the editors of the main ideas that emerge in the discussion that follows. Essays in Part 1 deal with the increasingly contested definition of restorative justice and the meaning of its key ideas and principles (including what I think is an outstanding essay on restorative justice values). In Part 2, the contributors examine the alleged roots of restorative justice in indigenous and biblical traditions, as well as in more recent social movements such as feminism, civil rights and the victims movement. In Part 3, the essays focus more on restorative processes and practices, while those in the following section discuss the application of restorative approaches in different social contexts, such as policing, prisons, schools, truth commissions and terrorism. The two detailed essays in Part 5 give an up-to-date account of what empirical evaluations of restorative justice schemes have discovered. These are followed by several contributions in Part 6 that trace the international spread and diversification of restorative justice. Finally, in Part 7, the future of restorative justice is discussed, both its future in the criminal justice system and its intellectual future, specifically the extent to which it can, or should, attempt to formulate a universalizable theory of justice.

Bringing together such a wide range of high quality offerings on restorative justice has been no small undertaking for the editors, and they are to be warmly thanked for doing so. They have created an outstanding resource book that will serve for many years to come as the premiere teaching aid and reference work in the field. I highly commend it to all restorative justice practitioners, policy makers, criminal justice professionals and academic commentators.

- REVIEWED BY CHRIS MARSHALL, WELLINGTON

Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony

Richard Bauckham, Wm B. Eerdmans, 2006



Richard Bauckham is a prolific New Testament scholar with the annoying habit of disputing some of the most cherished assumptions of modern gospel scholarship. In an earlier book, for example, he challenged the taken-for-granted assumption that the gospels were written to address the distinctive needs of particular Christian communities, which in turn means that each gospel can be used as a window into the internal life of its author's own community. Rejecting this view, Bauckham insisted that the gospels were always intended by their authors for wide circulation within the network of early Christian churches who, for all their differences, shared many common concerns. Now, in this compelling tour de force, Bauckham takes aim at yet another sacred cow of 20th century scholarship – the presumption that the gospel traditions passed through a long phase of oral transmission prior to the writing of the first gospel, during which time they were transmitted by anonymous Christian communities who shaped and reshaped them according to their communal needs. Critical scholars have differed in their judgments about how much the traditions were modified in this process. Some have postulated a high degree of creativity in the oral phase; others have imagined a much more conservative tendency. But almost all scholars have accepted the notion of a lengthy gap between the time of Jesus and the activity of the gospel writers, a period when oral transmission was an essentially collective and anonymous procedure.

What is wrong with this picture, Bauckham spells out, is that it overlooks the crucial and ongoing role played by individual eyewitnesses in the formation and preservation of the traditions. In one sense this is not a new insight. Writing in 1935, British form critic Vincent Taylor famously quipped that the eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry were not translated to heaven immediately after the resurrection, as his more radical German counterparts seemed to imagine! What is new, however, is Bauckham's insistence that these eye witnesses continued to exercise a controlling influence over the traditions throughout the oral period; that the gospel writers, in keeping with best practice standards of Greco-Roman historians and biographers, favoured eyewitness testimony above all else in compiling their narratives; and that it is actually possible to identify, often by name, just who these eyewitnesses were. Also new is the way in which Bauckham grounds his analysis in the latest scholarship on Hellenistic historiography, on the characteristics of oral tradition and contemporary methods for doing oral history, on the psychology and reliability of recollective memory, and on the epistemology of testimony. He also offers a fresh analysis of the well-known statements by Papias and other ecclesiastical figures relating to the origins of the four gospels. Given such impressive learning and his amazing attention to detail, the case Bauckham builds cannot be easily dismissed. He has thrown a proverbial spanner into the workings of conventional gospel criticism, making the habitual scepticism of many scholars in the field look like what it really is – a reflex reaction stemming from questionable, and in some cases discredited, presuppositions.

Running to over 500 pages, the book is full of fascinating insights. Bauckham asks, for example, why it is that about half the individual characters in the gospel narratives are personally named. There is no demonstrable tendency to add fictional names to the New Testament traditions, and a comparison with a data base of all recorded Jewish names from the period reveals that the distribution of names in the gospels conforms to the prevailing Palestinian (but not Diaspora) Jewish pattern. The answer Bauckham gives is that these named individuals were well-known members of the earliest Palestinian Christian communities and that it was their personal testimony that accounts for the stories associated with them in the gospel narratives. This also accounts for why certain key players in the passion narrative (such as the man who supplied the donkey for Jesus' entry to Jerusalem, or the woman who anointed Jesus' feet, or the disciple who lopped off the ear of high priest's servant) remain unnamed in the earliest versions of that story. They too were members of the Jerusalem church, but in their case their anonymity is deliberately preserved so as to protect them from retribution from the high priestly authorities. It was only when this threat was no longer existent that the names of some of these characters could be included in retellings of the story, as they are in the Gospel of John.

Eyewitness testimony was the source, Bauckham argues, not only for individual episodes and sayings in the gospels but also for the full course of Jesus' ministry. Here special importance is attached to those who were "eyewitnesses and servants of the word from the beginning" (Luke 1:2), people who could vouchsafe the overall shape and direction of Jesus' activity from start to finish. The Twelve were most important in this respect, although other accredited disciples also played a role. In a remarkable piece of detective work, Bauckham pinpoints textual clues in the opening and closing sections of three of the gospels which indicate, by means of the literary device of inclusio, who the most important of such eyewitnesses were for each writer. For Mark it was Peter (Bauckham rehabilitates the case for seeing Peter as Mark's principal informant); for Luke it was, along with Peter, a group of named women disciples; for John it was the Beloved Disciple (whom Bauckham considers to be John the Elder rather than John the apostle).

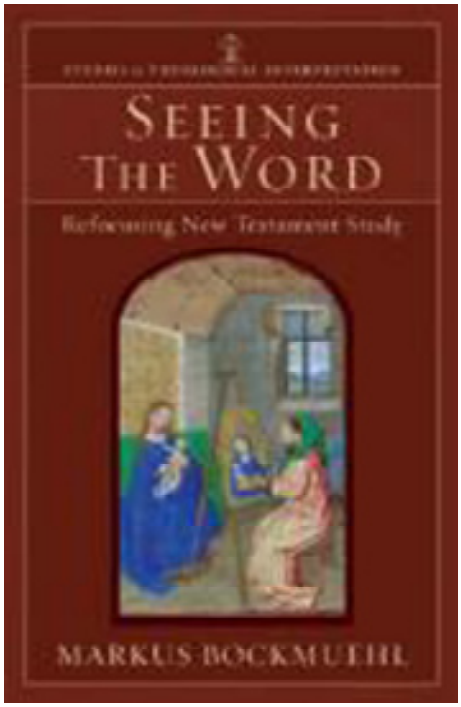
Employing his own version of inclusio, Bauckham opens and closes his book with a discussion of the implications of factoring in eyewitness testimony for the so-called Quest for the Historical Jesus. The gospels do not present us with direct access to the unadorned historical figure of Jesus, as is now universally recognised. But nor do they merely depict the falsely historicized Christ of faith. Instead they portray the "Jesus of testimony", Jesus as others bore witness to him. It is the category of testimony based on first-hand memory, Bauckham proposes, that enables us to read the gospels appropriately both as history and as theology. From an historical point of view, the testimony of the gospel writers invites a response of trust rather than scepticism, for it is of the nature of testimony to elicit trust (even if not uncritically). All historiography – in fact all knowledge – is ultimately dependent on the need to trust the testimony of others. It is simply not possible to live in the real world or to communicate with other human beings on the basis of the principle of radical doubt; human beings necessarily live by faith. To view the gospels as testimony, therefore, is to underscore their trust-worthiness as historical reports. It is also to recognise their theological value, for testimony is the only appropriate genre for communicating divine disclosure. The gospels are concerned not simply to narrate bare facts about Jesus but to attest to his perceived significance as a unique revelation of God.

It remains to be seen whether Bauckham's stunning analysis will persuade his peers in the scholarly guild. Arguably nothing will dissuade some from their die-hard scepticism, for it is rooted in something deeper than the evidence. But, if nothing else, Bauckham's book will serve to show just how few of the assured results of modern gospel criticism are really all that assured after all.

- Reviewed by Chris Marshall, Wellington

Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study

Markus Bockmuehl, Baker, 2006



One of the most exciting developments currently underway in biblical scholarship is the recovery of so-called "theological interpretation". By this is meant interpretation that is concerned primarily with the theological meaning, not just the literary and historical contours, of the biblical writings – that is, with what the text tells us about God and with how the text enables us to hear the voice of God speaking truthfully to us. It seeks to press beyond speculation on the plethora of historical, literary and hermeneutical problems that have long preoccupied academic scholarship in order to encounter and comprehend the word of God. Such an interpretive endeavour constitutes a genuine recovery of the church's historic practice, for the church has always confessed that the intended purpose of canonical scripture is to mediate the knowledge of God to attentive and obedient listeners, not to keep critically detached scholars entertained. This faith-based approach to biblical interpretation has long been treated with contempt in the modern academy, with its the vaunted but illusory objectivism. But it is an approach far more congruent with post-modernity's recognition of the perspectival and self-involving nature of all human knowledge.

In this intriguing book, Markus Bockmuehl takes a long hard look at the current state of New Testament studies, which has all but lost any sense of theological accountability. Bockmuehl is an expert guide on the subject, with an impressive, even intimidating, grasp of the vast primary and secondary literature relating to his discipline. His basic thesis is that New Testament studies is in deep crisis, for it no longer has any integrating methodological focus nor even any commonly agreed subject matter. It has fractured into a multitude of semi-autonomous pursuits and has fallen victim to every conceivable whim of intellectual and ideological fashion. It is also riven with disagreement on almost every critical issue. Even the current consensus about the importance of recognising Jesus' Jewishness is, Bockmuehl contends in the final chapter, only skin deep.

What is to be done about this malaise? How can New Testament study regain some sense of common purpose or methodological integration? The answer does not lie in developing a more refined and nuanced historical method, nor in fashioning ever greater hermeneutical sophistication. What is needed is an approach to New Testament interpretation that is congruent with the theological subject matter of the documents themselves and with the theologically unifying effect of their canonical inclusion and arrangement.

Bockmuehl offers two constructive proposals in this respect. First, he proposes that New Testament scholars should engage more deliberately with the "effective history" (Wikingsgeshichte) of the texts they study in order to better grasp their significance. That is to say, they should recognise that the texts have continued to exercise a formative influence over the belief and practice of the Christian community down through history, and that this influence tells us something about the meaning of the texts themselves. Just as the significance of an early period in Winston Churchill's life can only be fully appreciated in light of our knowledge of the vast historical influence he exercised later in his life, so the meaning of the New Testament writings can be properly

grasped only in light of their subsequent dogmatic and practical impact on the believing community.

In exploring the New Testament's effective history, Bockmuehl thinks that we should privilege the first 150 years of the text's afterlife. This is because the "living voice" of individual and collective memory of the apostles' teaching was still operative down until the end of the 2nd century. During this period there were still people alive who could recall the oral testimony of parents or grandparents whose own parents or grandparents had personally heard the apostles or their close associates teach and preach.

Bockmuehl's second proposal is that scholars should take seriously the implied readers/readings of the New Testament writings. He demonstrates how the biblical authors envisaged a particular kind of reader when constructing their work, so that what they actually say can be best appreciated when considered from the perspective of such readers. The implied readers of the New Testament are those who have a personal commitment to Christ, who have undergone (and continue to undergo) a religious, moral and intellectual conversion, who are open to the inspiration of the Spirit and, who, crucially, are located in ecclesial settings. They are not religiously neutral or critically detached outsiders, but people who are profoundly involved in the divine realities of which the text speaks.

Moreover, for all their differences, the New Testament authors all assume that there is an essential agreement or commonality underlying their apostolic witness. Peter and Paul, for example, do not regard each other as arch rivals, with one championing a Jewish gospel, the other a quite different gospel for Gentiles, though this is how they are often construed in modern scholarship. Instead they see each other as equal partners in the work of the same gospel, even if their relationship was sometimes strained. Subsequent Christian tradition certainly considered the two apostles to be compatible witnesses to a common truth, as is shown by their inclusion together in the same canon and by the way their relationship is depicted in Christian artistic tradition.

Seeing the Word is both a daunting and a profoundly reassuring book. Bockmuehl is a scholar of vast learning, penetrating insight and acute wit, and he is not shy about lamenting the shortcomings of his academic colleagues. But his prodigious gifts are turned to the greatest of all goods, that of reaffirming the importance and viability of reading scripture in the interest of discerning the very word of God.

- Reviewed by Chris Marshall, Wellington

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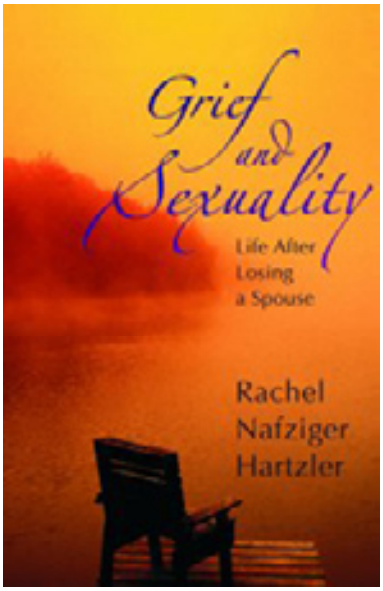


Grief and Sexuality: Life After Losing a Spouse

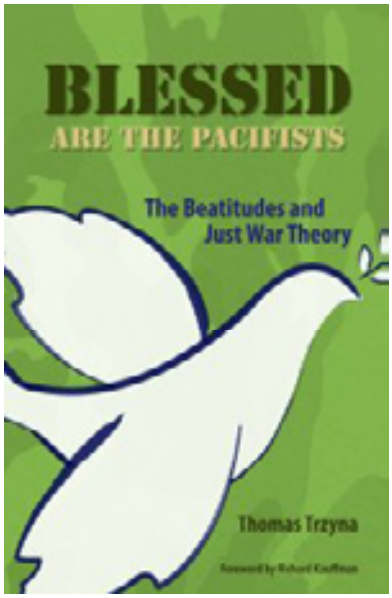
Rachel Nafziger Hartzler

No one can fully prepare for the death of a spouse, but ***Grief and Sexuality*** provides a bold glimpse into the multiple layers of such a loss. Rachel Nafziger Hartzler's own story is woven into brand new research that looks beyond superficial questions about grief, spirituality, and romantic relationships. Hartzler also considers the pastoral implications of her findings for those who seek to minister to their widowed friends.

"Rachel Nafziger Hartzler writes with the authority and insight of someone inside the experience. Her work draws on the wisdom of having suffered. She links the best writings and studies of grief with questions that are not hypothetical, but authentic, arising from the lives of a wide group of persons in pain. A book to read and to share as bibliotherapy." -David Augsburger, Fuller Theological Seminary

"This work emerges not only as a guidebook for the loss of a spouse, but also as a life skills manual for anyone who has suffered the loss of someone dear to them." -Wilma L. Derksen, author of ***Unsettled Weather***

Rachel Nafziger Hartzler, at age 51, endured the intense sorrow and confusion of widowhood after her husband died suddenly of a heart attack. While studying for an MA in Christian Formation at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, she undertook to research the experiences of other widowed people. Hartzler currently works as a spiritual director, speaks on issues related to grief, spirituality, and sexuality, and is pastor of Pleasant Oaks Mennonite Church in Middlebury, Indiana.



Blessed Are the Pacifists: The Beatitudes and Just War Theory

Thomas Trzyna

Thomas

Trzyna takes a fresh look at pacifism as a way of life and a practical method of conflict resolution that is grounded in the Scripture, particularly the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel. Based on a study of just war theory and contemporary world events, this book

does not rehearse familiar debates about how to justify war. Rather, it approaches the topic from the provocative angle that the work of peacemakers requires setting goals to be measured in generations, not years.

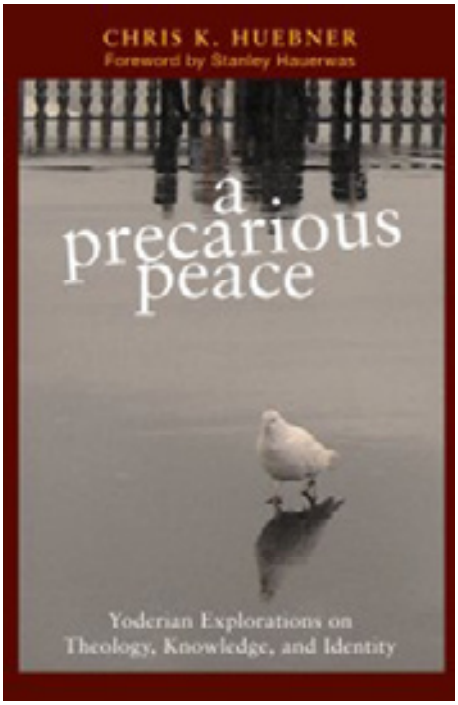
"I commend [this book] to you. It just could start a much needed and fruitful conversation between the two Christian camps on war and peace. Like Trzyna says, 'peacemaking must begin by tending our own gardens.' Christians could do no better than by tending to this ugly divide between us, with pacifists on one side and Just War advocates on the other side." -Richard A. Kauffman, Senior Editor, The Christian Century

Thomas Trzyna is a professor of English at Seattle Pacific University. Currently, he is developing a new university in Vietnam to create sustainable peace and economic progress through education.

A Precarious Peace: Yoderian Explorations on Theology, Knowledge, and Identity

Chris K. Huebner

"Chris K. Huebner displays John Howard Yoder's intent to cultivate the patience needed to keep dialogue alive, as he develops a trenchant theological critique of prevailing notions of freedom, culture, and interpretation. In a powerful homage to his mentor, Huebner shows the alternative path of self-criticism needed to liberate a world suffused by religious strategies intent on dominating. There can be no other way once we appreciate that knowledge is not ours to possess but only to seek-with others and through disagreement, as exemplified in the 'knowledge of Christ.'" -David Burrell, Hesburgh Chair of Theology and Philosophy, University of Notre Dame



"A Precarious Peace is intelligent, at times elegant, and unremitting in its depiction of the church as a counter-polis, gifted with witnesses and martyrs and a distinctive voice, but resistant to the frozen embrace of a theology captured by method and harnessed to rootless abstraction. Huebner's range and voice makes what he has to say relevant to Christians of all stripes, and among the many virtues of the book is that it shows, without trying to, the increasing insignificance of denominational divisions for the intellectual work of the church." -Paul J. Griffiths, Schmitt Chair of Catholic Studies, University of Illinois at Chicago

Chris K. Huebner is an assistant professor of theology and ethics at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In addition to teaching in the area of theology and ethics, he also contributes to the departments of philosophy, peace, and conflict transformation. Huebner's writings are primarily in the area of philosophical theology and can be located at the intersection of politics and epistemology, with a special interest in questions of peace and violence.

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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