

ON THE ROAD

Journal of the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand
No. 42, October 2009



Mennonite World Conference 2009

- Chris Marshall's keynote address - 'One Community of Grace and Peace'
- An interview with Ann and Ian Duckham



Tell Me a Story: Whose Gandhi? Whose Jesus?

Odd Family Values

Jahworks Action Reports

Churches of Reconciliation

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From the Editor

Nathan Hobby



I'm excited about this, my first issue as editor of *On The Road*.

With such a small Anabaptist presence in Australia and New Zealand, it's an honour that one of our own, Dr Chris Marshall, was invited to give a keynote address to a plenary session of the 15th Mennonite World Conference. Ann Duckham

listed it as one of the highlights of the conference (p.7), and you can now read the whole thing (p.4).

We also welcome contributions from Jahworks and Urban Seed, two Christian communities in Melbourne who were introduced to AAANZ at the January conference. Andreana Reale from Urban Seed has written a fascinating reflection on the way we construct stories about our heroes (p.8). Jahworks has provided two action packed reports from non-violent protests in their local area (p.10).

Let me share my vision for *On The Road*. I'm hoping to achieve a mix of depth and readability, with plenty of short, punchy articles you can read over breakfast or on the bus, as well as longer essays that require more concentration.

In addition to the standard contributions, I'm keen to see the following things:

- Letters—write to me with your reactions to this issue; start a conversation.
- Art and photography
- Poems and other creative writing
- Interviews
- Memoirs
- Reviews of music, fiction and film from an Anabaptist perspective. Also, don't be afraid to review older books you're only just reading.
- Reports on things you're doing in your church, community or household.

Starting this issue, we will profile a member or members, asking them to share something of their life with us.

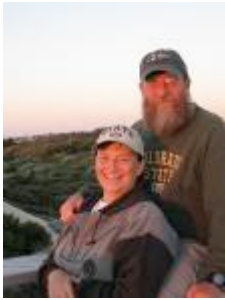
I'm also introducing a theme for each issue to focus our attention on a particular topic. It's not compulsory; I'll still be publishing plenty of unthemed contributions. However, it might inspire you to get thinking and reading and perhaps even writing and submitting.

The theme for issue 43 is 'The 2000s: The Decade in Review'. See the back page for more details. The deadline is 30 November 2009. Please email submissions to nathanhobby@gmail.com.

Front cover photo of a Mennonite World Conference plenary session by Max Wiedmer. Used with permission.

The view from Ephesians 4

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



Mark and Mary Hurst,
AAANZ staffworkers

Recently we returned from seven weeks of travel overseas in Paraguay and the United States. We are in a transition period, switching from one mission agency to another. It involves speaking in North American churches, organising a U.S.-based Mission

Support Team, and raising funds to meet a new budget. We did not reach our goal in fundraising so we are returning to North America in a few weeks to try again.

It would be easy to get discouraged through this wearing process – and we have our days – but overall we have a sense of peace that God is in control. If this does not work, then God has something else for us.

Tough times of change and uncertainty can throw Christians into a time of darkness. We wonder where God has gone and why has God abandoned us. A new book from Herald Press, *The Dark Night: A Gift of God*, addresses these times. Mennonite pastor Daniel Schrock writes that many Christians enter a dark night at some point during their lives, a period when they feel abandoned by God and experience a dryness in their spiritual lives. However, he says, even as they live through it, few Christians know what the dark night is or understand what God is trying to accomplish in this unique, life-giving experience.

On his website (<http://danschrock.org/darknightbook.aspx>), Schrock says this about the book:

I try to demystify this quite common phenomenon, which is often confused with depression. I root the dark night experience in Scripture, but also explore how it can express itself in one's vocation, marriage and family life, and even in the life of a congregation... The book connects the dark night with Christian discipleship and God's mission of creating shalom. The dark night can function a bit like a second conversion. It strengthens faith, deepens friendship with God, and propels believers into countercultural mission. The dark night is ultimately a gift from God.

We know of AAANZ members who are experiencing their own dark nights. Their usual ways of relating to God – through Bible study, prayer, and service – just don't work anymore. Something else is needed.

The Psalms talk about waiting on God. Isaiah asks, "Who walks in darkness and has no light, yet trusts in the name of the LORD and relies upon his God?" (50:10) Waiting and trusting through dark times is tough. Nevertheless, God often has something better for us in the light of a new dawn.

Lord of the dawn –
You who bring morning light to bless field and hill,
Roof and window;
Open our eyes to see,
Beckon our ears to hear,
Waken our souls to follow you into a new day.

The President's Report

Doug Sewell, AAANZ President



AAANZ is in the process of forging a new partnership with Mennonite Mission Network. Known also as the Network, Mennonite Mission Network is the mission agency of Mennonite Church USA and supports ministries in more than 50 countries.

The Network's mission statement is to lead, mobilize and equip the church to

participate in holistic witness to Jesus Christ in a broken world. The Network envisions every congregation and all parts of the church being fully engaged in mission – across the street, all through the marketplaces and around the world.

The intention is that the salaries of our staff workers Mark and Mary Hurst will be paid by the Network for the work they are doing through the Anabaptist Association of Australia & New Zealand. In order for this to happen the Hursts are spending some months this year in North America building a new Mission Support Team (MST) with Mennonite churches across the USA.

AAANZ will continue to financially support the Hursts at a local level by providing accommodation and ministry support as we have done in the past. AAANZ will also continue to direct the Hurst's ministry and the services they offer. The new partnership will not limit AAANZ's ability to set its own goals for what we do as Anabaptists in Australia and New Zealand. The relationship will enable AAANZ to draw on the global resources, mission focus and heritage that the Mennonites offer as an historic peace church.

Some of the heritage of the Mennonite Mission Network includes:

- Ministry among native peoples in North America since 1860.
- Evangelism efforts in the United States since 1882.
- Urban mission efforts since 1893 in Chicago.
- International ministries since 1899 in India.
- Church-planting and seeing mission as rooted in local congregations.
- Accompanying the broader Christian church in international contexts.
- Providing voluntary service alternatives since 1944.
- Using mass media to engage culture since the 1950s through Mennonite Media.
- Finding creative ways for mission in countries with limited access since the 1950s.
- Working in collaborative mission partnerships with other groups and denominations since the 1950s.

As people who are seeking to understand and actively live out as individuals and communities what it means to be Anabaptists today, we share with the Network a desire to engage people and cultures with the gospel and to foster a missional identity in the church. For AAANZ to share equally in the partnership I ask you, our readers and members, to support our work and mission. To find out more please go to www.anabaptist.asn.au.

Go Together in the Way of Jesus Christ

Ephesians 4:1-6: One Community of Grace and Peace

By Chris Marshall

Chris's paper was a keynote address at the Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15, Asuncion, Paraguay on July 18, 2009. There were morning and evening plenary sessions, and afternoon workshops and tours. He spoke on the Saturday morning plenary session, to the whole conference—6000 delegates from 78 countries! Each plenary session had a main speaker with an assigned biblical text, drawn from all over the Bible. Chris is based at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

- Ephesians 4:1-6 NRSV

This passage comes from the middle of Paul's soaring epistle to the Ephesians – a document that spells out the universal reach, and cosmic impact, of the Christ's saving work more powerfully than any other part of Scripture.

The epistle opens with Paul's customary greeting: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:1-2). It closes on a virtually identical note: "Peace to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ" (6:23-24).

"Grace", "peace" and "love" are singled out for mention at both the beginning and end of the epistle. They form the "bookends" that enclose the entire document. By this arrangement, Paul signals that his overriding concern in the letter is to expound the Christian gospel as the story of God's amazing grace, enduring love, and reconciling, restoring peace.

In the first half of the letter (chaps 1-3), Paul recounts the

"glorious grace" (1:6, cf. 2:4, 7-8) that God has shown in sending Jesus to secure the healing of the universe and to "make peace" (2:14-15) between hostile peoples. He reminds his readers of how their own lives have been transformed by God's grace:

Once they were alienated from God, devoid of all hope in the world, and languishing under the heel of sinister spiritual forces that held them in bondage to their own sinful passions (2:2-3, 11-12 cf. 5:10). But now, as a result of God's "immeasurably rich grace" (2:7-8, cf. 1:6-8) and "immense love" (2:4; cf. 1:5, 15; 3:17,19), they have been set free from spiritual oppression, forgiven of their sins, adopted as God's children, filled with God's Spirit, incorporated into God's people, and infused with hope for the future (1:3-10; 2:11-21). "For by grace you have been saved through faith" – Paul exults – "and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast" (2:8-9). It is 100% pure, unadulterated, liberating, life-giving, hope-releasing, peace-creating grace!

In the second half of the letter (chaps 4-6), which begins with our passage in chapter 4, Paul spells out what God's grace this should mean for how his readers lead their daily lives. The passage opens in with the crucial little word "therefore" in verse 1:

I, a prisoner for the Lord, **therefore** beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called (4:1).

The "therefore" refers back to all that Paul has said in the first half of the letter. In view of what God has done *for you*, Paul is saying, you must now commit

yourselves to a new way of living in the world. You must "lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called".

This is the central (indeed the only) command in our passage: Paul pleads with his readers to fashion lives that are consistent with the grace, and love, and peace they have received from God. Put simply, he calls upon them to practice what they preach. They have been "saved by grace and not by works", that is true. But the purpose of having such grace lavished upon them is that now, re-created in Christ Jesus, they might "do good works" and



Chris Marshall (r) at the conference with Alan Kreider

“walk in them” (2:8-10).

This is a feature of Paul’s theology that Anabaptists have always recognised and rightly emphasised. Faith and works cannot be separated. It is not enough to know the truth of God’s saving grace in our heads and hearts alone; we must live it out in daily experience. Or, as we might express it today, our ethics must match our theology. And since our theology is all about God’s grace and peace and love, so too must be our ethics.

But how does this work? What does it mean in practice to “lead a life worthy the calling to which we have been called”? In this passage, it means one thing above all others: it means being committed to reconciliation and peacemaking, especially within the family of the church. It means “making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (v.3).

Again, this is something that Anabaptists have always tried to take seriously. Mennonites have rightly insisted that a dedication to peacemaking and reconciliation is not an optional extra for followers of Jesus Christ; it is an indispensable ingredient of discipleship. Without peacemaking, Christian theology becomes mere theory, and Christian ethics loses its cutting edge. For that reason, Mennonites have been at the forefront of reconciliation work in hostile environments all around the world, in profound obedience to the truth of the gospel.

But let us note well that the call to Christian peacemaking in Ephesians 4 relates, first and foremost, to relationships within the community of faith. Certainly we must be agents for reconciliation in the wider world as well. But we will never be credible as peacemakers in a violent world unless, within our own Christian congregations, communities, and families, we “make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (v.3).

Of course, as we know, the Christian church sometimes appears to be as crippled with conflict as is the wider world. Church history is replete with episodes of bitter disagreement, and even of violent bloodshed, between Christian denominations and theological traditions. And within local congregations, there are often broken relationships and unhealed hurts that alienate believers from one another. Nothing is more damaging to the cause of Christ in the world than the visible *failure* of believers “to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”.

Yet Scripture calls on us “to make every effort” to do so. How do we do that? What does it entail? What is needed of us to be a people who maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?

According to our text at least three things are required.

First of all, we need to be absolutely *clear on the content of our Christian calling*. Paul implores his readers to lead a life worthy of “the *calling* to which you have been *called*” (v.1, 4), so we need to know exactly what that “calling” is.

The answer is found at the very outset of the epistle. There Paul explains that we are called to participate in God’s great work of healing the universe through Jesus Christ. God’s ultimate intention, Paul says, is “to *unite* all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (1:10) – that is, to heal every rupture in the universe, to bring violence and antagonism to an end forever, and to restore universal harmony to creation. *And we are called to be part of it!*

We are called to know the “mystery” of salvation (1:9,18; 3:8-9; 5:32; 6:19). We are called to tell and retell the story of Him who “came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who are near” (2:17), who “brought hostility to an end” through his body on the cross (2:15-16).

‘The unity of the church is not something we manufacture by being unusually nice to one another!’

The “calling to which we have been called”, then, is the call to be involved in God’s unifying, peacemaking programme in Jesus Christ. To “lead a life worthy of our calling” is to lead a life of peacemaking, a life in which we practice unifying, restoring grace in all our relationships with one another, and especially within the body of Christ.

This leads to the second thing we must do if we are to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” – we must *cultivate those qualities of Christian character that give expression to our calling*. Paul mentions four qualities in particular: humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearance.

“Humility” means having the appropriate view of our own weaknesses and faults and limitations, not just those of others.

“Gentleness” means doing nothing to deliberately hurt or humiliate any other person, no matter how upset we are with them.

“Patience” means a readiness to endure the discomfort of conflict without lashing out in revenge.

“Forbearance” means making room for those we disagree with, and whom we may not even like all that much, but to whom we are eternally bound by our common calling in Christ, whether we like it or not!

When these four qualities are present – humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance – it is possible to overcome every conflict, and to heal any hurt, that might arise amongst us.

This brings us to the third crucial requirement for sustaining Christian unity and peace. As well as being clear on our calling, and clear on our Christian character, we need

to be *clear on what the church is*, what it means to be the body of Christ.

It is hugely significant that Paul tells his readers, not to “create” the unity of the Spirit, but to “maintain” it. The unity of the church is not something *we* manufacture by being unusually nice to one another! It is something that *already* exists; it is an objective reality, brought into being by the Spirit of God.

Notwithstanding the church’s immense diversity, and its often fractious history, the truth is that there is only “one body” and “one Spirit” (4:4), just as there is “one Lord” (4:5) and “one God and Father of us all” (4:6). The word “one” recurs eight times in three verses! The oneness of the church is every bit as essential to Christian faith as the oneness of God and the lordship of Christ.

Why is this so? Why is Paul so emphatic about there being only *one* church? For two main reasons. The first is because the church belongs to Jesus Christ, and there is only one Jesus Christ. The church is not a human invention. It is not a social institution, or a voluntary club, or an association of like-minded individuals, or even a worldwide conference of Mennonites! It is the very “*body of Christ*” – the living embodiment of Jesus Christ himself in the world. Paul never tires of stressing the oneness of the church simply because there is only one Christ, and Christ has only one body, and that body unites all believers, through “one faith” and “one baptism”, in one undivided communion of love.

The other reason why the oneness of the church is so crucial for Paul is because of what the church represents in the saving purposes of God. God’s ultimate intention in history, we have seen, is to heal every wound in the universe, to bring tribalistic violence and antagonism to an end forever, and to restore universal harmony to all creation – to “unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (1:10).

But this great hope of cosmic reconciliation is not simply a utopian dream for the far-distant future. The good news of the gospel is that it has *already* begun! Cosmic restoration is *already* underway. It has already started to impinge on human experience, even here and now.

But where? Where is this cosmic healing to be seen? *It is to be seen in the church!* God’s ultimate saving plan is disclosed in the existence and character of the church. For the church is a brand new kind of human society – one held together, not by the bonds of race, or class, or language, or culture, but by “the bond of peace” (4:3), that is by the unique bond of fellowship forged by the peacemaking work of Jesus Christ on the cross (2:14-22).

The church is the only kind of human community that is not racially-defined, or class-defined, or gender-defined,

or law-defined, or culture-defined, or occupation-defined, or even religion-defined. It is *Christ*-defined. The church derives its unique identity solely from its union with Jesus Christ, an identity that transcends all other human distinctions of race, class or culture, and thus provides a new basis for human solidarity.

The multi-racial, multi-cultural church (in evidence at this wonderful Assembly) prefigures the final unifying of all things in creation. That is why there can only be *one* church, for the church is the first-fruits of reconciled humanity, and a fractured community of the reconciled is a contradiction in terms!

So then, for Paul, the unity of the church is an objective, divinely-given, Spirit-created fact. But this unity is still something that we must “maintain” or “keep”. We must live it out in practice. Our spiritual union in Christ must also be expressed ethically – by a steadfast commitment by *every* believer, in *every* congregation, of *every* denomination, in *every* place and at *every* time, to confront the strife and discord that inevitably arise in human relationships in a spirit of humility, gentleness, patience, and longsuffering.

Of course, that is not easy to achieve. In fact, it is *so* difficult to achieve that it requires us to “make every effort” to do so. It is so difficult because the peace that Christ seeks is always a *just* peace. It is not simply the absence or avoidance of conflict, but the positive attainment

of relationships of justice, equality, mutual respect, dignity and freedom (cf. 2:17-19). To forge such relationships requires us “to speak the truth in love” to one another (4:15) – to speak truthfully of the hurts and wrongs and sins that divide us, but always in a spirit of love, always with the intention of “building the body up in love” (4:16), not of winning our corner.

It’s time to finish. Ephesians 4 opens with Paul summoning his readers to “lead a life worthy of their calling” in Christ, by striving to maintain the unity of Christ’s body in the spirit of peace through cultivating relationships of humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance.

The chapter ends on a similar note. After reminding his readers of how they “learned Christ...and heard about him, and were taught in him – for the truth is in Jesus” (4:19-21), Paul again lists the ethical virtues they must nurture as a people called by God to declare his gracious work of cosmic peacemaking to the whole world.

Put away all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (4:31-5:2)

Amen.

‘God’s ultimate saving plan is disclosed in the existence and character of the church.’

Mennonite World Conference

An interview with Ann and Ian Duckham



Ann Duckham (centre) talking to a Canadian Mennonite outside the conference centre.

Nine Australians and New Zealanders travelled to Paraguay to attend the 15th Mennonite World Conference in July, including Ann and Ian Duckham from Perth. In this interview, they discuss the experience.

1. What was the highlight of the conference for you?

Ian: Congregational singing with 6000 people from all over the world led by a wonderful international music team.

Ann: Chris Marshall's Bible Study on Eph 4: 1-6

Other highlights -

- Spanish language the norm.
- Music with a Latin beat
- History Exhibition: persecution stories/art of German speaking Mennonites as they move from Russia through Canada to Paraguay.
- Hostel fellowship with German hosts and Brazilian, US and Canadian guests
- Tours to Asuncion Mennonite businesses and hearing of their witness.
- Meeting up with Eastern Mennonite Seminary Professors George Brunk and Dorothy Jean Weaver after 20 years
- Meeting fellow Australians.

2. Who was the most interesting Mennonite you met?

Ian: Maximo Abadie Director of Buen Gobierno ("good governance") a Christian ministry to government officials in Paraguay that is reaching hundreds of civil servants with courses on professional ethics, finance, personal development, family and marriage and bible study.



Six of the nine participants from Aust and NZ attending the conference—Back Row – David Rouse, Ian Duckham, Anne McQueen, Mark Hurst Front Row – Jonathan? from Taiwan?, Anne Duckham, Mary Hurst.

Ann: John Roth MQR editor and History Professor at Goshen College – wise, kind hostel neighbour.

3. Did you sense a mood or trend in the Mennonite movement worldwide?

Ian: The end of North American/European dominance and a stronger sense of ownership of the Anabaptist heritage by the two-thirds world strengthened through cross-cultural cooperation in peacemaking and evangelism.

Ann: African and Latin prominence

4. What's your impression of the state of the Mennonite church in Paraguay and South America more broadly?

Ian: The 80-year-old Mennonite Church in Paraguay comprising a sometimes uneasy mix of German, Latino and Indian cultures has come of age and now ministers in city and country to the poor, the sick, business, government and education. In Argentina (where we spent most of our time) Latino Mennonite Churches are growing rapidly and are respected for their commitment to biblicism, peacemaking, social concern and evangelism.

Ann: Argentinian Mennonite Churches have strong evangelical focus and appear similar in style to other denominations.

5. Any lessons for Anabaptists in Australia & NZ?

Ian: Without congregations committed to Anabaptist values witness is fragmented and readily ignored. Only persistence in building such groups bears fruit in the long term.

Tell me a story...

Whose Gandhi? Whose Jesus?

By *Andreana Reale*

Andreana is a part of the Urban Seed Community in Melbourne and blogs at godofdishes.blogspot.com.

James told me that he wasn't a fan of Gandhi.

"Really?" I'd never heard anybody say that before. I almost wanted to tell him to keep his voice down – we were sitting in Credo Café, one of the main hubs of Urban Seed, a radical discipleship movement that seeks to be Christ to the poor and marginalised. In that organisation, to deny Gandhi is getting close to denying Christ!

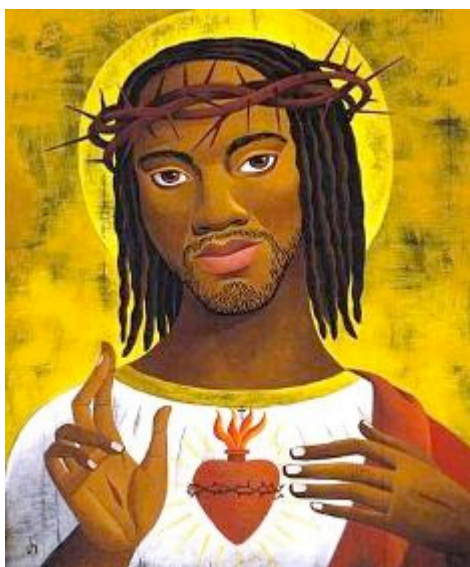
"Why?" I asked him.

"Well Gandhi called off the independence movement when it turned violent," stated James, leaning against a wooden bench. A candle flickered while volunteers mopped the floor around us. "I think to myself: how dare he! If the people wanted to take the movement somewhere, stopping it was a complete abuse of power. It wasn't his movement – it was the people's!"

I sat there half-smiling, a little stunned.

James went on. "In fact," he said, "The Gandhi story is simply a narrative that is popular amongst Americans. Same as Martin Luther King. He appeals to a white liberal audience, because he's relatively nice. It's all about racial harmony, as opposed to Black power. Actually," said James, "the 'I Have a Dream' speech was made some years before his death. Before he was assassinated, his speeches took on a stronger socialist flavour. But those speeches don't get remembered and quoted!"

I am not surprised that James has picked up on – or rather has been around people who have alerted him to – the socialist leanings of Martin Luther King. James believes passionately in the power of the grassroots. He is a self-



identifying activist, and continually wears a cotton red-and-white scarf that he picked up during his time in Palestine. A dense beard belies a youthful face and a crooked smile, which persists whether he's extolling the virtues of a polyamorous lifestyle or condemning Israel for genocide.

James reminds me that the stories of the lives of people we love and admire – like Gandhi and Martin Luther King – are simply that: stories. Like any narrative, some aspects are left out and others are emphasised, and this corresponds with the agenda of the storyteller.

The Gandhi story, for many of us, is a principle in narrative form that nonviolent good will always conquer violent evil. We underscore the nonviolent methods Gandhi demonstrated, such as long marches to gather salt and the burning of British cotton. James, on the other hand, emphasises the fact that at a certain point Gandhi calls the movement off – taking power from the people and causing the Indian people to suffer even longer under British rule. Similarly, we pick and choose from the historical reality of Martin Luther King – constructing a story of the man as a peaceful defender of civil rights, rather than a man of socialist persuasion. In fact, the whole Black civil rights movement is framed by the figure of the peaceful, Christian King, rather than the Muslim Malcolm X who believed in disciplined, violent defence. We construct a narrative and that becomes history.

I constantly need to remind myself that there are so many versions of history, and when you seek to emulate an inspiring figure, all you can do is imitate the ways of a character in a story. A story based on a historical reality, yes, but nonetheless a story.

The Jesus that I know is a story character. A while ago I posted an analysis on my blog of a narrative in Mark, in which Christ overturns the tables of the vendors in the temple. Actually my interpretation is very much a product of my time at Urban Seed, where we tend to view the figure of Christ almost as a social and political revolutionary. My Dad doesn't share these views, and responded to my post with a lengthy comment, arguing that Jesus' purpose wasn't primarily political or social.

"I don't believe Jesus came to Jerusalem just to cleanse the Temple," said Dad. "He came to die... so that Man might live." Dad went on: "His death would enable Man ... to enter that Kingdom, because without Jesus' death and therefore atonement for sin, NO ONE would be able to enter it."

For me, Jesus was about restoration on Earth. For Dad, Jesus was about eternal life in heaven. We both read the Bible with equal rigor and passion for truth, yet we follow

two different Jesuses. There are many other narratives you can create around Jesus – I even read recently that Jesus' mission was to free women and teach us about sexual liberation and the ways of the subconscious. The Gospels give us four separate accounts of Jesus, and we pick and choose from them to construct a narrative that works well for our own agendas.

Somebody turned the main lights off and we sat in semi-darkness. James related a story about the people of Venezuela, who defended the socialist President Chávez against a CIA-backed coup. Of course, James has his own narratives that he follows – his actions are inspired by the stories in which the common people win. Like me, he picks and chooses from what actually happened, constructing something that is useful for his life.

What actually happened? Who knows? All we can do is tell a story. That's called history.

Odd Family Values

A Reflection on Living with Others

By Mark Barnard

Background: The NZ Smacking Poll

On 31 July 2009, 87 per cent of New Zealanders who voted in a citizen-initiated referendum called for the so-called "anti-smacking law" to be overturned.

The non-binding referendum came about after the New Zealand parliament voted in 2007 to remove the defence of reasonable force for disciplinary purposes for parents charged with assaulting children. Proponents of this law point out that it was illegal to assault workers or any adult or animals, but legal to assault children. For them, it was just a case of making everyone equal before the law. The legislation meant that child abusers could not claim the defence that their physical abuse of children was reasonable. Many NGOs, including Save the Children are passionately defending the legislation.

Some of the fiercest opposition to the anti-smacking legislation has come from evangelicals and fundamentalists in New Zealand, including Focus on the Family New Zealand. For opponents of the law, good parents are being criminalised for properly disciplining their children. New Zealander Mark Barnard is responding to the idea of 'family values' often used by Christian conservatives in this context. The article was originally published in a Baptist magazine.

- Editor

I grew up in an odd family. Not weird odd, but different odd. Let me explain; most of my school mates in middle class North Shore (Auckland, New Zealand) were just Mum, Dad, two kids and Ben the Labrador. But we were different, we had extras. I remember when I was about

five, my Grandpa, affectionately known as Gramps, came walking down the street toward our house, with his suitcase in tow. He was a war veteran with an alcohol problem, and had just gotten out of Hanmer Springs rehab, marriage fallen apart, with nowhere to go but our place. He stayed with us for the next fifteen years, often sharing a room with me. We would talk all night, arguing about rugby, and race relations. None of my school friends shared a room with their grandfather.

But he wasn't the only extra at our house. There was Jim, who stayed for a while, he got kicked out of home and needed a bed, so stayed with us. Dad caught him sneaking home one morning after spending a night in a barn with a Dutch Reformed girl (oops). Then there was Rangi who stayed for a while, a big affable Maori bloke, who pinched a whole lot of Gramp's undies and singlets the day he left. Thomas was an interesting little kid who ended up with us too – had a past that would make you cry to hear about. He had a lisp and a shock of blonde hair that he often cut himself. One day he drove our van into the fence and did a runner. I can't forget Tui, the crazy old kuia (Maori for 'old woman') who stayed on our lawn in a campervan (I think she killed the goldfish). There were others, each with a story, each wonderfully wild in their own unique way.

My parents had this beautiful way of including all sorts into our family. I'm not sure I always appreciated it at the time but now I'm deeply thankful for the way they taught

me about family life. It's a small wonder that my wife Bridget and I ended up as foster care givers for Iosis, the Baptist Social Services. I'm just not sure if I know of any other way to do family, than with a few extras kicking round the place. By making room for others it feels like we have made a bit of room for Jesus. His idea of family values seemed a little odd too. When confronted by the 'pressing needs' of his own family Jesus responded "Who are my mother and my brothers?" Casting his eye to the rabble around him, he then comments, "Here are my mother and my brothers." (from Mark 3:31-36).

Now, that I can relate to.

It's no cake walk though, I'll be honest. Opening the door a little wider to others is bloody hard work. A few extra holes in the walls, the odd broken window; a whole lot of stuff we could avoid if we went for a 'normal' family. We once had a kid who was a real challenge. I mean a real challenge. I had to carry him to his room a couple of times when he was going wild. I felt almost out of control myself. I felt the frustration, anger, and powerlessness deep in my guts. Boy I could have given him a clip around the ears. But... that's the thing, someone probably had. Again, and again, and much more than a clip. He had been through more than I could imagine, seen much more than he, or any child ever should. And it had damaged him. That's why I'm glad for the so called 'anti smacking' law. Because it protects kids like this from adults who should know better, but sadly don't and who were proba-

bly victims themselves once. It protects me from the lie within that might is right. It reminds us that violence is never the answer. Maybe it's time for the Christian community to let go of our 'rights', so that we can protect the most vulnerable in our society. The vulnerable, who quite often could do with somewhere to stay for a while (our foster boy came for the weekend and went home 2 & a half years later).

A while back, I received an email from a colleague asking me to invite to an open evening any people I know interested in becoming foster parents. Problem is, I just don't know any. A social worker from Iosis told me how many available foster care 'beds' they have in Auckland – twenty. The last census indicates there are around forty thousand Baptists in NZ. Do the maths. What is going on here? Maybe we have focused for too long on 'nuclear' family values and haven't thought much about the 'odd' family values of Jesus. I reckon it's time that we Christians start thinking about a 'no nukes' family policy; in the great spirit of rebellious Kiwis, let's kick the doors of our homes open a bit wider. Let's show the watching world that we're all about odd family values! That'll get the neighbours talking.

Jahworks Action Report #1 :

ADF Recruitment Drive

Jahworks is a Christian community based in Doveton, Melbourne. Many of the community attended at the 2009 AAANZ Conference and spoke about their life together. On 5-6 August this year, Jahworks were very busy with two innovative actions against the military-industrial complex, as detailed in the next two articles. You can keep up with the community through the blog of member Simon Reeves—<http://simonreeves.blogspot.com>.

Introduction to the action

On Wednesday 5th August 2009 the Australian Defence Force entered our municipality (City of Casey) to recruit young people to join the military. We were quite concerned that the ADF was in our neighbourhood to sign up another generation of Australians to engage in acts of violence on other soils around the world under the guise of 'making a difference', 'travel the world' and 'earn lots of money'. Especially considering the ADF's glamorous recruitment strategy, Australia's ongoing

participation in unjust wars around the world including the eight year old Afghanistan war and the continuing increase in military spending (\$60 million a day). As a community we agreed to become a public witness at this public event to give young people access to the complete truth.

The story of our action

We arrived at the Civic Centre early to centre our minds and bodies in prayer to the God of Peace and the nonviolent Jesus. After this we dispersed to our strategic locations. Krystal Spencer headed inside to be a presence to the ADF personal organizing the event and to read the atmosphere and relay information. While Sarah Williams, Jacob Bolton, Niki Ooustwood and Simon Reeves split into two teams and positioned ourselves on the two paths leading to the recruiting session.

We were dressed nicely and welcomed people as they

exited their cars for the recruitment session. We handed them an information flyer we had put together and offered them the all Australian favourite treat - 'Minties'.

The flyer we put together wasn't glossy or colourful like the ADF ones, but still aimed to make an impact. The front cover had a picture of a soldier helping a young boy and in bold asked the questions 'Want to make a difference and want your life to count?' Everyone who walked past us took our little flyer, little did they know, that inside the flyer the realities of joining the military were addressed such as 'you may be harmed or killed' and 'you may have to harm or kill another person'. It also included some facts and myths of war. The other page informed the reader 'there are other ways to make a difference' and included information on how to start being a peacemaker with a couple of nice quotes from Mother Theresa and Gandhi.

After we gave the attendees a flyer we assisted them with directions to the ADF meeting for which they were quite grateful as it was getting a little dark. It was interesting to see those attending. Some young people looked like their mothers were dragging them inside, others bounded ahead of their parents with friends talking excitedly. We also meet a couple of youth workers with their young clients, looking for some more opportunities in life especially for employment.

We gave away 60 of those flyers with people kept even coming up and asking for them while they poured into the building. The recruitment was well attended by around 130 people and I'm sure we could have given away that many if we'd printed just a few more! We were prepared to be sprung and asked to stop what we were doing. Yet, the closest we came to that was a member of the ADF bounding down the stairs just as we were running out of flyers and with a confused smile said, "Hey thanks for helping us."

We replied, "Well no problem, but our flyers are a little bit different to yours."

A worried look came across her face and she said, "I may have to call my supervisor." She took one of our last flyers and whisked back upstairs.

In the presentation itself, the ADF talked up the life of a military soldier as a life of traveling the world, earning loads money, having an amazing social life, waterskiing, gaining qualifications and university degrees, being part of a team, sipping lattes and so on. Throughout the presentation, the ADF attempted some light banter, but it was a tough crowd!

At the end came question time where, scattered throughout the crowd, we were able to ask pertinent questions addressing what was left out of the presentation. Just how much propaganda was presented can be illustrated by the fact that the only 'negative' aspect of joining the ADF in the formal presentation was that if you were a Victorian you would have to move states!

Thus we asked questions such as "What does a combat role actually involve?" and "Can you tell us about some of the other negatives such as potentially getting harmed or killed?" The presenter went slightly red-faced, struggling for a way to avoid speaking the truth. Perhaps the most confronting question we asked resulted in a presenter attempting to explain what compensation is involved if you unfortunately become mentally or psychologically traumatized from participating in armed conflict.



Reflections on our action

At the end of the night we spent some time with the youth workers. They informed us that they were deeply struck by our questions and flyer. They expressed disappointment that they had encouraged and brought their young people along to consider the opportunity of joining the ADF. The young people themselves told us when they read the flyer they realized they didn't want to kill people.

As we were leaving we were confronted by another youth worker known to us who holds a significant position in the local area who expressed extreme displeasure at our actions, telling us our actions were of 'poor form' and how dare we upstage the ADF who had rightfully booked the venue and therefore were entitled to present anything they wanted to. Whilst initially feeling attacked and vulnerable, we were able to put aside our anger and engage in a very positive dialogue around our youth work principles which espouse 'do no harm' whether they are our own young people or any in the global youth community.

Young people who are targeted, especially in low socio-economic suburbs deserve the complete story of what it means to join the Australian military.

At the end of the day, all Australians, young and old must come to an awareness that we as individual people and as a nation, whether in we're in the military or simply pay taxes, are complicit to acts of violence upon other nations and peoples all around the world, under the misled premise of 'defense'. We live for the day when we will all realize violence is not the way to peace, peace is the way.

Jahworks Action Report #2 :

Hiroshima Day Prayer Vigil @ Lockheed Martin Australia

On Thursday 6th August 2009 we held our second Hiroshima Day Prayer Vigil at Lockheed Martin Dandenong (LHM). LHM, the world's number one weapons manufacturer and defense contractor develop and sell rockets, missiles, cluster bombs, fighter jets, weapons systems and nuclear weapons. Last year for Hiroshima Day we held an 'evening' prayer vigil outside their corporate building in Dandenong. This year we held a 'morning' vigil to coincide with the time that the most horrendous act of violence was committed in human history and also to be present as LHM employees arrived for work.

Over the last two years we have communicated with LHM prior to any actions in an attempt to build a relationship of trust and honesty. We believe that change and transformation comes through genuine relationships and love. Thus, we gather at LHM not to cast judgment or express our anger, instead we gather to express our faith in the goodness of humankind and that one day LHM will either cease manufacturing weapons of death or its employees will refuse to work for such a corporation. We would in fact rather LHM transform what it manufactures as its skills and expertise are crucially needed to contribute towards helping solve many of our local and global problems.

However, we are not naïve as to think this is going to be an easy process! The important thing to remember is to have faith that this can happen and start to embody that faith, otherwise we are already doomed.

This year we arranged a face to face meeting with LHM who agreed to attend. Our high expectations for this meeting were dashed as we were not even offered the basic courtesy of being invited inside from the cold. Our

meeting took place outside the secure area with the employee who is in charge of facilities. He spoke for management and refused outright our offer for LHM employees to join with us for a minutes silence and remember those who died on Hiroshima Day. We were informed that if employees were to attend, they obviously weren't looking to advance their career at LHM. LHM then informed us that the police were still going to be attending the vigil...for protection I guess? That the world's biggest weapons maker requires police protection from us? Irony abounds!. We walked away disheartened from the 'meeting', but with a clearer picture of the depth of work required to help transform this corporate body.

The vigil was attended by approximately 29 people, young and old (from 7 week old babies to many years old), thanks to the Year in the Son Students

from Tabor College who attended and swelled our numbers. It was interesting to observe LHM intentional silence during the morning vigil. The carpark was unusually only ½ full when we got there at 8am and it remained that way even until we left at 9.30am (maybe some employees got the morning off...they definitely owe us now!). The police were interestingly nowhere to be seen, while high up in the LHM building through



the shaded windows a man silently took our photos. Near the end of our time a delivery van came by but was denied entry. Instead our friend in charge of facilities emerged to unlock the secure area, accept the parcel and lock up again. As he did so a couple of us who had met him last week waved and gave some friendly hellos. No response, not even a glance or a wave.

Along the entrance to LHM we erected 14 white crosses representing the 140,000 people who died during the bombing of Hiroshima. As we gathered we reflected on this sad day and our own violence. In the space where Lockheed Martin Australia works, we had a minute silence, read some quotes, heard some speeches, read from Scripture, listened to some music and chanted our prayers of peace up and down the street. As we did so, the local journalists and photographers made sure our prayer vigil and Lockheed Martin became front page news in Dande-

nong the following week (See attached. The Journal in particular published an amazing and challenging article!).

For those of us who attended it was an early morning, full of tired eyes. Yet just as we gathered in this space outside the world's number one weapons manufacturer you could feel amongst one another a commonly held sense that some things in this world are just not right, that corporations existing in our own suburbs have been freely allowed to develop and profit from violence, that history has been forgotten, while the world pushes forward in even greater violence. A nuclear weapon today will not kill 140,000 it will kill 2 million. More than ever we need to gather around the places that promote and profit from violence and say 'we have forgotten what it means to be peace' while at the same time personally committing our own whole being towards seeking to never do harm again.



Churches of Reconciliation:

The Diverse Church as Good News for the World

By Nathan Hobby

This paper was originally given at the WA TEAR Conference on 19 September 2009. The theme of the conference was 'Reconciliation'. A number of Anabaptists attended the conference, with John McKinnon, Jarrod McKenna, Harry Wykman and Ian Barns all running workshops. Nathan blogs at nathanhobby.wordpress.com and perthanabaptists.wordpress.com.

Often when we think about justice issues, including reconciliation, we locate them out in the world. We think about how as Christians we can support programs and organisations which are promoting reconciliation. That's not wrong, but it's not the whole story. The church itself is meant to be a place where extraordinary reconciliation is taking place all the time. The life of the church is meant to show the world what reconciliation is all about. The life of the church is meant to offer hope to the world that it's possible to overcome cultural differences and racial tensions. The life of the church is meant to turn on its head the status differences and oppression that occurs between rich and poor and male and female. When the church has truly swallowed the gospel, it becomes good news for the world. In this paper, I'm going to be arguing that diverse congregations where different groups are reconciled to each other are an overlooked but important part of the good news of the kingdom.

Biblical Basis

We see three important reconciliations happening in the early church – reconciliation between ethnicities or races, reconciliation between social classes and reconciliation between the sexes. Paul mentions all three in Galatians 3:26-29 –

You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Baptism is the start of reconciliation. On entering the church through baptism, converts are swearing their first loyalty to the new humanity. A convert's new primary identity is as a member of the new humanity. They remain a Jew or Greek, a slave or free, a male or a female, but these aspects of their identity are no longer primary.

Let's examine these three reconciliations in turn.

Jews and Gentiles

The best statement we have about the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles in the new humanity church is in Ephesians 2:14-18:

For Christ is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups – Jews and Gentiles - into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

We have to go back two thousand years and get our heads around just how amazing it was that Jews and Gentiles could be reconciled with each by coming together in the same faith community, the church. Paul wasn't exaggerating when he calls it 'hostility'. It was often mutual hatred. William Barclay says it like this: 'The Jews had an immense contempt for the Gentile. The Gentiles, said the Jews, were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell. God, they said, loves only Israel of all the nations that he has made.' (Milne: p.21)

Here in Ephesians, Paul is claiming that on the cross, Christ put to death the hostility between Jews and Gentiles. God's action in Christ creates a new humanity which anyone can enter by faith, rather than birth.

The reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles was a major missionary and pastoral focus of Acts and Paul's letters. The reconciliation happened not by leaving each other alone and separating into two different types of churches. It happened by painfully staying together and sorting through issues.

Eating together was so important to the early church that it was the focus of many of the disputes. Table fellowship is critical to the church being a reconciling community. It is one of the activities the first church is listed as doing in the much quoted description of Acts 2:42-47 – 'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.' They

were carrying on what Jesus had instructed them to do at the Last Supper – eating and drinking together in remembrance of him. Eating together in remembrance of him meant sharing food and sharing it with people you wouldn't normally share it with. The breaking of the bread became known as the agape – the love feast. It was critical to reconciling both race and class.

As the gospel spread beyond the Jews to include the Gentiles as well, the Jewish Christians wrestled with the legacy of strict dietary laws that made it hard for them to eat with the Gentile Christians. In the decades after Jesus, the churches were constantly struggling to work out how these laws still applied and what it meant in the life of the church. There were disputes and fights and splits, and the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, spent a lot of time trying to resolve these. He didn't advise them to go off and have their own separate agape; he tried to get Gentiles and Jews to give and take in love so that they could eat together (eg 1 Cor 8).

Rich and Poor, Slave and Free

Table fellowship created issues for the reconciling of different classes too. Slaves and masters, rich and poor didn't normally eat together. In the Roman empire, slaves made up as much as one third of the total population (Finger, 2007: p.31). It was unheard of for slaves to dine with masters. Slaves were seen as property, not as equal human beings worthy of dignity. Yet the revolutionary new humanity church expected that masters would treat slaves as equals.

Slaves, at least, had enough food to eat. Former slaves and the working class were often poor and hungry. The table fellowship had a real economic meaning for them: it was where they got fed. The rich would have brought the food to provide for them. It was a form of justice – the poor could rely on getting at least this meal. The pattern in the first church in Acts is that the disciples started by sharing food and then stepped up a level and started sharing everything, selling off property to provide for everyone. In Acts 4:34 we read 'There was not a needy person among them'. The common meal was the start of an economic reconciling where the differences between rich and poor were overcome socially and even abolished (Yoder, 1992: p.20-21). Reconciliation between classes involves redistribution.

From where we stand in the twenty-first century, it's easy to think that Paul didn't go far enough in reconciling master and slave. He didn't insist that Christians free their

slaves. Yet the life of the early church was more effective at reconciling Christian slaves and masters than the abolition of slavery in the USA in the nineteenth century. Abolition has been followed by more than a century of racism and inequality in the USA. To this day a gulf exists between blacks and whites. Don't get me wrong – legal

solutions are a necessary part of reconciliation. But the early church had no hope of influencing the empire to abolish slavery. What it could do - and what was good news for the world - was to bring Christian slaves and masters around the table as equals. No such respect and dignity would have been given slaves if they were simply declared free and sent out into a society where they had no status and no

money.

Male and Female

The reconciliation of the power imbalance between male and female in the church is something that was started in the New Testament, but not brought to completion. Unfortunately, present day conservative readings of the New Testament read it in the opposite direction to which it is headed and use the New Testament to reinforce the patriarchy rather than critique it.

At a time when women's participation in society was much more restricted than it is today, we see signs of an early church giving unheard of responsibility and participation to women. We are told in Luke 8 that the community of Jesus' disciples was funded by a group of rich women. In Romans 16:7, we have a female apostle, Junia. In Acts 18:26, we have Priscilla, the house church leader who taught the faith to Apollos and with her husband Aquila was a 'co-worker in Christ Jesus'. We have Phoebe, the wealthy benefactor who delivered Paul's letter to the Romans and read it out, no doubt interpreting it and explaining it on Paul's behalf (Finger, 2007: 61-62).

The assumption of one of the most sexist passages in the New Testament, the head-covering passage of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, is that women *have* a role in the church prophesying. Paul's concern is that they do it in a way that doesn't make others think they are behaving scandalously, with loose hair like prostitutes. In all the heat generated by his sexist justifications for this, we lose sight of the fact that he doesn't challenge their right to prophesy.

It is this giftedness of all believers in the body that has an important reconciling effect. The gifts of the spirit for the building up of the body are poured out on every believer,

'Unfortunately, present day conservative readings of the New Testament read it in the opposite direction to which it is headed...'

not just the powerful ones. The fact, for example, that slaves and women will be given prophetic words to speak to the rest of the body keeps everyone humble.

Evangelicalism Today: What Mega-churches and the Emerging Church Have in Common

Unfortunately, in the name of evangelism, we have lost this good news. Evangelicals have misunderstood salvation and distorted the Great Commission to come up with too many homogenous churches which simply don't show enough of the good news of reconciliation.

'Make disciples of all nations as you go, baptizing them, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.' (Matt. 28:19-20) Many evangelicals understand the Great Commission as the most important part of their Bible, the central command with which to interpret the rest and with which to decide what our purpose as church is.

Evangelicals have tended to privatise discipleship and make it simply a case of 'asking Jesus into your heart'. So when some evangelicals are interpreting the Great Commission, they assume that 'making disciples' means getting people across the line and into heaven. The more people we can convert, the better we are fulfilling the Great Commission – what could be more important than that?

This sort of thinking is behind the church growth movement, which has strongly influenced the shape of evangelical churches over the last thirty years. Church growth uses research to attract members, by working out sociological and marketing strategies to attract unchurched people to church. Donald McGavran, used the term 'homogenous unit principle' to describe the idea that people like to worship in churches that are monocultural. The gospel is best received when it doesn't involve crossing cultural boundaries. To be effective, we shouldn't try to bring together black and white people or rich and poor people into the same church – it will put people off.

You can see this approach used in 'seeker sensitive' services and many mega-churches, where the good news is a self-help message, a way to personal fulfilment. Bill Hybels is the pastor of one of America's biggest churches, Willow Creek, a pioneer of seeker-sensitive services. It's

interesting to see his shift in attitude. He said in a 2005 interview:

Willow Creek started in the era when, as the book noted, the church growth people were saying, "Don't dissipate any of your energies fighting race issues. Focus everything on evangelism." It was the homogeneous unit principle of church growth. And I remember as a young pastor thinking. *That's true.* I didn't know whether I wanted to chance alienating people who were seekers, whose eternity was on the line, and who might only come to church one time. I wanted to take away as many obstacles as possible, other than the Cross, to help people focus on the gospel. So now, 30 years later... I recognize that a true biblically functioning community must include being multiethnic. My heart beats so fast for that vision today. I marvel at how naive and pragmatic I was 30 years ago. (Gilbreath: p.38)

It makes it hard to know what to say when the target of your criticism has so publicly repented of his old attitude, and Paul Louis Metzger don't know quite what to do with Hybels' turn around (Metzger, 2007: p. 57). It's certainly good news and we can only hope that it translates into diverse mega-churches. However, I'd also say that the mega-church itself doesn't easily fit with the diverse new humanity church I'm talking about. Even if there is a mix of classes and races, it is much harder to gather around the table and have the level of fellowship which allows the church to embody the good news.



Homogeneous mission in the Emerging Missional Church

You see an interesting echo of church growth in the emerging missional church (EMC) in Australia. I like a lot of what the EMC does in questioning the received ways of doing church and responding creatively rather than defensively to postmodernism. It also has a welcome emphasis on justice. However, despite reacting against the megachurch phenomenon, the emerging missional church seems to be built on church growth theory as well.

Some of you will be familiar with the key EMC text in Australia— Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost's *Shaping of Things To Come*. Their model for mission is for what they call 'incarnational' living amongst particular subcultures of society. Perhaps you find a club with an enthusiasm for model aeroplanes or motorbikes and you join it, befriending the people and walking alongside them. The hope is that the whole community finds itself moving toward God together. The idea is that these communities already exist, and instead of expecting seekers to be extracted from their natural cultural setting to an attractional church and thus asking them to accommodate to church culture, we should turn their community into a

church.

When I asked one emerging church leader about the homogeneity of the EMC approach, he said that the homogenous unit principle was a missional strategy, while diversity was a goal of worship and discipleship. I'm unconvinced by this – I think that if we create churches out of special interest groups, they will probably stay homogeneous.

British theologian John Milbank wrote a harsh polemic against the emerging church in an article called 'Stale Expressions: The Management-Shaped Church':

The church *cannot* be found amongst the merely like-minded, who associate in order to share a particular taste, hobby or perversion. It can *only* be found where many different peoples possessing many different gifts collaborate in order to produce a divine-human community in one specific location. St Paul wrote to Galatia and Corinth, not to regiments or to weaving-clubs for widows. He insisted on a unity that emerges from the harmonious blending of differences. Hence the idea that the church should 'plant' itself in various sordid and airless interstices of our contemporary world, instead of calling people to 'come to church', is wrongheaded, because the refusal to come out of oneself and *go to church* is simply the refusal of church *per se*. One can't set up a church in a café amongst a gang of youths who like skateboarding because all this does is promote skateboarding and dysfunctional escapist maleness, along with that type of private but extra-ecclesial security that is offered by the notion of 'being saved'. (2008: p.124)

Milbank's tone is combative and I don't think his criticism is true of everything done in the name of the emerging church movement. But I do think that his challenge is one that needs to be heard and grappled with.

Practicalities

What, then, does the new humanity church of reconciled peoples look like today?

Bruce Milne pictures the new humanity church like this:

What should churches look like as they gather for worship?... Even if the congregation is situated in a mainly homogeneous neighbourhood in respect of ethnic origins, we would hope to see good numbers of both men and women, clearly comfortable together, with all the age groups and generations represented, plus signs of different kinds of family structure, different wealth levels, and probably indications of diversity in regard to how long the individuals or family units have been part of the congregation. Hopefully there might be also be signs of a spread of work setting between blue-collar and professional, and evidence of people who are still seeking for a personal Christian faith, as well as the mature, seasoned believers. Here and there the presence of people with physical or mental challenges would indicate a further

expression of the congregation's diversity. (2006: p.74)

Worship

'Worship wars' are a familiar problem facing evangelical churches. The dividing line tends to be along generational lines. Worship which disenfranchises parts of the church dishonours God. It needs to be 'consciously shaped so that all members of the congregation can experience it as a generally meaningful vehicle for their response to God.' (Milne, 2007: p.107) There should be a lot of give and take between generations or groups in the church, so that worship pleases our neighbours as well as ourselves.

Mosaic Church in Little Rock, Arkansas is a truly multi-ethnic church with blacks, whites and Hispanics worshipping together. They have seven different worship teams, all with different styles, who rotate leading the worship. Words to the songs are projected in both English and Spanish (Kennedy, 2005: p.43).

For me, small, participatory churches are the best way to ensure there is reconciliation in worship.

Leadership

Seeking diversity in the leadership of your church is an important step. Are there men and women in leadership positions? Are there young and old? Are there working class people as well as the university educated? Is there anyone who's not from the dominant ethnicity?

Eating together

Eating together was crucial to reconciliation and diversity in the early church. I think it is crucial today too. Recovering the shared agape meal of the early church as a regular part of worship would visibly bring all the different people of your church around the same table.

It is also something that you can also practice as a household, inviting people from within the church and your local community to eat with you. Eating together is surely a good way to defuse tensions within a church. If there is someone whose faith and beliefs is most at odds with yours, then perhaps that's the person to invite back for Sunday lunch.

Reconciliation and Redistribution

In his book *Consuming Jesus*, Paul Louis Metzger insists that 'reconciliation involves redistribution'. He calls for a

redistribution of need, so that the affluent start realising they need to learn from the poor about surviving oppression and being poor in spirit. We achieve this redistribution by listening to the poor and spending time with them. The redistribution of resources means that churches with resources should give time and money to those without. He also calls for the redistribution of blame, by which he means taking responsibility for the sins and injustices of the past committed by our ancestors and embedded in structures today. (Metzger, 2007: p. 143f.)

Conclusion

I want to finish my paper by mentioning some of the unanswered questions and weak points in my argument.

Firstly, there's the danger of hypocrisy. I like the idea of diversity across race and class. But what about across theological lines? That's more uncomfortable. I gravitate toward people whose version of Christianity matches mine most closely. What about reconciliation with these other people?

Secondly, I'm not sure what to do with homogenous minority ethnic churches, like Chinese churches and Aboriginal churches in Australia. Is ethnic diversity something they should be striving for too? Rory Shiner made an interesting comment on a blog about the homogenous unit principle:

Like most Christians I suppose, I have an intuitive hostility to the idea of a homogeneous church. However, I do repeatedly come across situations where the argument against a homogeneous church/ministry comes from the people who are loving things just the way they are: e.g., the white power-holders in Australian country churches who oppose the setting up of Aboriginal fellowships because they love the expression of unity from black and white worshipping together. Problem is, of course, the same people would never dream of allowing their church meetings to become the sort of 3 hour affairs that Aboriginal Christians expect, complete with country music, altar-calls and multiple sermons. (Chester, 2006)

In terms of immigrant congregations in Australia, there is a strong argument for church services in people's first language. But there is still room for involvement in these congregations by other Australians as visitors and members. And what about the next generation, who are comfortable with the English language? Often, a new service is started for them, making it both culturally and age homogenous. I think this is a mistake, and this is when the church needs to strive for greater diversity.

Thirdly and finally, I want to acknowledge how difficult diverse churches of reconciliation are. In 2006, a Harvard

political scientist named Robert Putnam reluctantly released his findings that ethnic diversity breeds mistrust in communities. 'His extensive research found that the more diverse a community, the less likely were its inhabitants to trust anyone, from their next-door neighbour to their local government.' (Wilson, 2006) It's findings like these that seem to strengthen the case for homogenous churches. But we can argue it the opposite way. We can see in this finding the urgent need of the good news of a reconciled people who embrace diversity, who choose to love and trust each other.

Of course, the mistake would be to think we can do it on our own. Metzger (2007: p. 91) writes:

Attempts to confront race and class divisions can be intense and overwhelming and will not bear lasting fruit - indeed, could end in anger or apathy - unless we experience the undying love of God that is poured out into our hearts through the Spirit of grace, whom God in Christ freely gives us to transform our hearts and lives. What is required is a great awakening, a turning of the tables of the heart in which the Spirit inspires within us an all-consuming passion to follow the downwardly mobile Christ in the world.

'But what about across theological lines? That's more uncomfortable.'

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Member Profile: Tim & Trudy

WA Anabaptists Tim James and Trudy Jacobs are getting married in November. Ahead of their wedding, I decided we should profile them in the first of a new regular feature of On The Road.



1. Does your wedding have any Anabaptist flavours?

We are planning to include foot washing as part of the ceremony and generally, we have a lot of our extended family and community being involved in the ceremony and reception.

2. How about your marriage?

We want our home to be a place of hospitality that we can share with friends, family and strangers. Longer term, we are prayerfully considering working overseas in developing nations. We will keep you posted!

3. What do you think of Mennonite beards and/or have you ever had one?

Tim: I have dabbled in the Mennonite beard on occasion, a facial feature I would recommend everyone to give a go. Especially women.

Trudy: I don't mind the good ol' beard... Tim dabbles with his facial hair, but I tend to go for the clean cut look :-P

4. What interests you most about Anabaptism?

Tim: I guess my interest was first peaked when, in about 1997, I looked up 'Anarchism' in my family's dusty encyclopedia. Under 'Christian Anarchists', the reference listed Anabaptist and Tolstoy. Coming from a conservative church, to me, the idea the church could be a radical "Kingdom of God" was an exciting spark that has stayed in the back of my head, heart and soul.

Trudy: Coming from a big church background, I

guess I like the idea of meeting together as a smaller group with our diverse backgrounds... it's very enriching. But even with our diverse backgrounds we are united in our desire and passion for social justice and the reality of Christ's transforming love and grace in our communities.

5. Favourite part of the Bible?

Tim: We are getting married in November, so Song of Songs is never far from my mind.

Trudy: My favourite scripture is Isaiah 42:5-7
 "This what the Lord says - he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: 'I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and light to the Gentiles, to open the eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.'

Very challenging and encouraging - as this is a prophecy about Jesus, I feel it also a calling to us, as we follow Christ, God is always there to guide us.

I also love the book of Esther and the Psalms, in addition to the gospels :-)

6. Least favourite part of the Bible?

Tim: I don't dislike them, I just have not waded through the Minor Prophet books. I should get onto that.

Trudy: The book of Numbers I guess?

7. Your church involvement, present and/or past?

Tim: Baptist born and bred. I grew up at Gosnells Baptist, through Sunday School, youth group and playing music. Around 2004/5, I bumped into Perth Anabaptist Fellowship and started going along there.

When that folded in 2007, I have been going to Bentley Baptist Church.

Trudy: I came to know the Lord at age 19 and served in various ministries at Swan City Church for over 11 years, including youth & kids ministry, worship team and organising overseas missions teams. I (along with Tim) am now serving together at Bentley Baptist Church as part of the worship team and just led my first service recently.

8. A book or a writer who has inspired you in your discipleship?

Tim: Rob Bell's *Velvet Elvis* was a great book for making theological concepts accessible and exciting, and motivated me to further explore and develop my biblical understanding. Other writers have been Robert Banks, Nigel Wright, a little Yoder and NT Wright. Nathan Hobby is also very good.

Trudy: There have been lots of books that have influenced me, but probably one that springs to mind now would be *Chasing the Dragon* by Jackie Pullinger - what an amazing testimony of faith, trust in God and perseverance! A true encouragement and challenge to me, as we look to do overseas mission in the future.

9. Your favourite Anabaptist?

Tim: My Anabaptist history is pretty thin, but it hard to go past Dirk Willems, with the classic image of him turning back on the ice to rescue his pursuer.

Trudy: Is it ok if I say Tim James is my favourite Anabaptist? :-)

10. A favourite film and why?

Tim: At this moment, *Spirited Away*. I grew up watching "drawn" animations (as opposed



Trudy would have been sad to hear of the recent passing of *Dirty Dancing* star, Patrick Swayze.

to "computer") and so it is great to see these 'moving pictures' on a big cinema screen, with outlines and everything! Nostalgia aside, the story is a wonderful mix of humour, fantasy and childhood innocence breaking down dividing walls. And talking frogs.

Trudy: My all-time favourite is *Casablanca* - very classic Hollywood romance. I will also admit to my love for *Dirty Dancing*, but I enjoy being challenged by movies such as *Hotel Rwanda*, *Slumdog Millionaire* and *The Killing Fields*.

11. Politics?

Tim: Generally left leaning, collective decision making, concern for the environment and for those not as privileged.

Trudy: Generally leaning to the left, caring for the underprivileged and concern for the environment. I was handing out fliers for the Greens from age 15 with others in my family!

12. Pastimes?

Tim: Reading, playing and listening to music, cooking, drawing, movies.

Trudy: I love meeting up with friends for coffee and a chat, watching movies, playing and listening to music.... I would love to pick up my guitar lessons again in the new year!

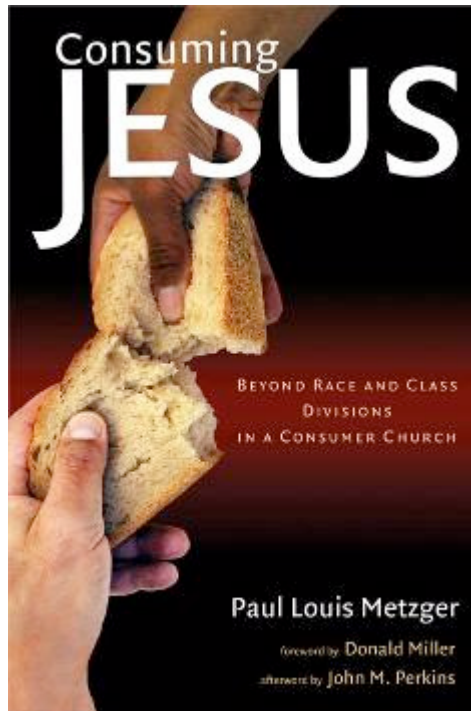
Reviews

Consuming Jesus : Beyond Race and Class Divides in a Consumer Church

Paul Louis Metzger (Eerdmans, 2007)
Reviewed by Nathan Hobby

In this book, Metzger argues that evangelical churches are consumer orientated and this perpetuates the race and class divisions of the world. The gospel, he insists, is the good news that these divisions have been broken down through Christ and are shown in a new humanity of different races and classes worshipping together around the same table.

The church is a power instituted by God. It was designed with the particular mission of bearing witness to God's advancing kingdom of beloved community through participation in the crucified and risen Christ, and of being consumed by him on behalf of the world for which Christ died. As such, that beloved community should be breaking down divisions between male and female, Jew and Gentile, slave and free, and it should be confronting the demonic forces that distort and reduce people to races and classes, to rugged individuals in isolation, people whose value lies in how much they produce and consume. (p.36)



Metzger begins with a helpful historical overview of how fundamentalism and evangelicalism became hostile or apathetic toward social engagement, and accepting of the secular consumer culture that built up over the twentieth century. By insisting on a critique from within evangelicalism, he draws on the father of American reformed evangelicalism, Jonathan Edwards and thereby says things which post-/ ex-/ progressive- and non- evangelical readers of *On the Road* may find difficult. Drawing on Edwards, he asserts that good deeds done outside Christ are not pleasing to God and are not of lasting value (p. 96). The inner transformation at the heart of evangelical spirituality is essential, Metzger insists, to the reconciling church.

His engagement with church growth theory and the homogenous unit principle is important and interesting, if too brief. Church growth theory undergirds most of contemporary evangelicalism - the main resistance to it has come from conservative and Reformed evangelicals, as well as Anabaptists. He discusses how for years Bill Hybels, pastor of America's biggest church, Willow Creek,

'made sure nothing interfered with reaching people for Christ - including issues of race. He was afraid that addressing such problems would serve as a stumbling block to (white) people, keeping them from Christ.' (p. 25) The attitude is typical of much of evangelicalism, where the only thing which counts is getting individuals 'across the line' and into heaven, even at the price of a heavily discounted gospel.

But Hybels has repented of this attitude and acknowledges that a 'true biblical functioning community must include being multi-ethnic.' (p.56) Metzger faces the question of whether this means that his fight is already won and evangelicalism is backing away from the homogenous unit principle. However, he insists that the battle is not won, that a 'pragmatic consumerist mind-set' remains even amongst followers of Hybels who are now embracing multi-ethnic churches - they are still chasing what 'works' and neglecting structural injustice. I think Metzger needs to spend more time investigating the turn around of Hybels and others before dismissing it.

Metzger calls for a number of 'reorderings' to break down the divisions of class and race and to ensure that we are 'consumed by Jesus' rather than consuming stuff. He believes we need to replace the café - a symbol of consumption and ease - at the back of the mega church with an altar at the front - a symbol of sacrifice. He believes in the power of the Lord's Supper, calling for its symbolism and ritual to reflect equality and

Jesus' centrality. He briefly suggests a potluck supper could be a part of it, but does not develop John Howard Yoder's idea in *Body Politics* of the shared meal as central to the Lord's Supper. He calls for redistributions in the church - for the affluent to start realising they need to learn from the poor about surviving oppression and being poor in spirit; for the churches with resources to give time and money to those without; and to redistribute blame, taking responsibility for the sins and injustices of the past committed by our ancestors and embedded in structures today.

Overall, *Consuming Jesus* is an important book, presenting a central idea about race and class divisions that all churches should grapple with. It also offers a promising vision for change. But readers might also find it a somewhat frustrating book, because it doesn't finally seem to pull the threads together. The idea of 'consuming Jesus' remained vague for me, and the reorderings were not as practical as I hoped. It might be that Metzger was keen to avoid the simplistic template structure of so many church growth books.

- For more on the topic, see 'Churches of Reconciliation', p.14.

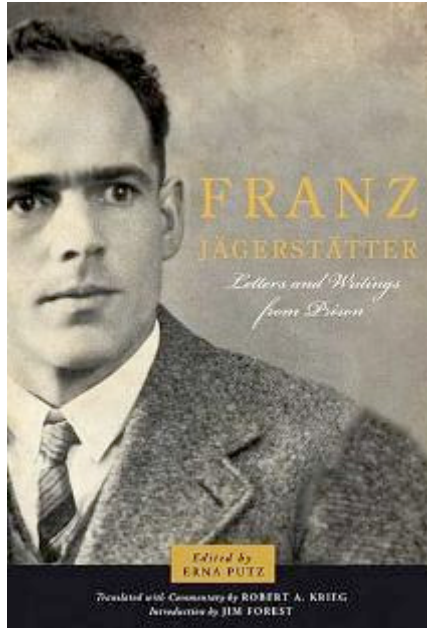
Franz Jägerstätter: Letters and Writings from Prison

edited by Erna Putz, Translated into English with Commentary by Robert A Krieg (Orbis Books, 2009)

Reviewed by Doug Hynd

Franz Jägerstätter was an Austrian peasant who refused to serve in the German army during World War II. I continue to be haunted by his moral clarity and courage, as revealed in the account of his life by sociologist Gordon Zahn in the book, *In Solitary Witness*.

Franz Jägerstätter: Letters and Writings from Prison brings us much closer to both Franz and his wife Franziska. Here we have the letters between the couple that have survived, as well as a complete collection of his writings, essays, meditations and brief theological reflections.



The letters and writings that Putz has assembled provide us with view of Franz and his wife that does not differ substantially from that provided by Zahn in the 1950s. However, it brings the picture that Zahn provided into sharper focus in at least some respects. The correspondence between the couple portrays the depth of their relationship, the concerns about maintaining and operating the farm during his absence and a traditional Catholic piety that was deeply engrained into the pattern of their daily lives.

In the introduction to the book, Jim Forest notes the overlapping presence in Tegel of both Bonhoeffer and Jägerstätter - an occurrence first noted in print in my "Voices from Tegel Prison 1943-44: The 'Solitary Witness' to the 'body of Christ' of a Berlin Theologian and an Austrian peasant" (*Zadok Perspectives*, No 93, Summer 2006).

The account of Jägerstätter's spiritual practices in these documents highlights the point I made in that article that while he was solitary in the judgments he reached about the Nazi regime and his refusal to serve in the military, his life was deeply shaped by practices of prayer, participation in the liturgical life of the church and spiritual reading.

The 'solitary' character of the witness of these exemplary performers of the faith should not distract our attention from the reality, ... , that their witness was rooted in the disciplines and practices of the church. Both Bonhoeffer and Jägerstätter upheld the communal character of the church in a context and location, imprisonment for opposition to an unjust state, where their church communi-

ties would not support them, a failure grounded in an ecclesiastical confusion of faith with national identity and expressed in the silence of leadership in the face of a state bent on genocide. (p17)

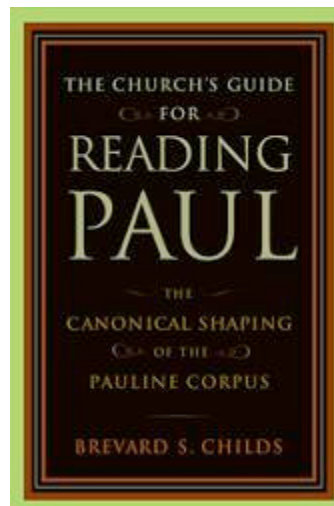
The challenge of Jägerstätter's witness is that in him we have an ordinary person, with no academic standing, no clerical status and without access to the information that we tend to regard as necessary to the process of moral discernment. Yet he displayed a degree of moral discernment and unwavering courage to follow the call to martyrdom, unknown and unheralded that should leave us both disturbed and encouraged.

• You can follow Doug's reading and thoughts at his blog—doug-subversivevoices.blogspot.com

The Church's Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus

Brevard S. Childs (Eerdmans, 2008)

Reviewed by Chris Marshall



This sophisticated book, by the late great biblical scholar Brevard Childs (1923-2007), explores a problem created by the modern critical study of Paul that is rarely faced squarely by New Testament scholars. The problem centres on the relationship between the historical Paul and the canonical Paul. In the New Testament canon, 13 letters are ascribed to Paul, not counting Hebrews. Tra-

ditionally all 13 letters have been used to understand Paul's unified theology. In current Pauline scholarship however, it is customary to distinguish between the "undisputed" letters (those everyone agrees were authored by the apostle) and the "disputed" letters (those suspected to have been written by someone else, in Paul's name, in the following generation). The disputed letters include Colossians, Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians (whose authenticity is still hotly contested) and 1 & 2 Timothy, and

Titus (which are almost universally regarded, even by some conservative scholars, to have been penned by someone else). It is now considered scholarly “best practice” to base any analysis of Paul’s thought on the undisputed letters alone, and to treat the other documents as evidence for subsequent developments in the Pauline tradition. Not infrequently these subsequent developments are judged to be a defection from, or a domestication of, Paul’s own radical outlook.

Now this practice of favouring only “authentic” letters in the reconstruction of Paul’s theology raises a major question about the normative status, and hermeneutical implications, of the Pauline canon. Most New Testament scholars duck the problem by assigning canon to the study of church history and assuming it to be irrelevant to the concrete task of historical exegesis. Childs will have none of this. Canon, he insists, cannot be limited to the listing of approved documents by ecclesiastical councils in the fourth to fifth centuries, but embraces the entire process by which certain documents, and not others, were received, edited, transmitted, and set apart as truthful apostolic testimony. This process stemmed back to the earliest stages of the tradition, and therefore cannot be considered irrelevant to exegesis. The New Testament documents, as we have them, are individually and collectively the product of canonical shaping. This means that while the quest for the historical Paul may be valid in itself, it must always be recognised that our only access to him is via the canonical tradition. Therefore rather than trying to separate the authentic Paul from the canonical Paul, interpretation needs to explore the dialectical relationship that exists between them. It also needs to recognise that the canon imposes certain parameters on the normative theological meaning of his texts, though it certainly does not require a facile harmonisation of their content.

Childs finds huge hermeneutical significance in the fact that the Pauline canon opens with Romans and closes with the Pastoral epistles. Romans, as Paul’s most profound and mature work, serves to introduce the great themes of his theology in its most coherent and universal form. The contingent applications found in the ensuing letters must, from a canonical point of view, be viewed through the coherent lens of Romans. Childs therefore considers attempts to explain the content and occasion of Romans primarily in terms of Paul’s need to address pastoral problems in the Roman church to be a huge mistake.

Equally significant is the role the canon assigns to the Pas-

torals. In critical scholarship, the Pastorals are frequently judged to be a deceptive manipulation of Paul by an anonymous author to support his own ideology. But, drawing heavily on recent German Roman Catholic New Testament scholarship, Childs makes a persuasive case for seeing the Pastorals as a unique development within the evolving Pauline canon intended to render Paul’s theology as normative for the church in the post-Pauline period. Drawing on both Paul’s extant letters and on continuing oral tradition, the author of the Pastorals depicts Paul as the church’s teacher *par excellence* whose apostolic witness to the gospel provides a normative yardstick for all time. A similar concern can be discerned in the canonisation of Acts (here Childs challenges the idea that Luke-Acts should be read as a unity), while the close association of Hebrews with the Pauline canon is because it furnished a way of appreciating the larger relationship between the old and new covenants within which Paul’s thought may be located.



Brevard Childs, 1923-2007

Childs devotes the major part of his book to eight “exegetical probes” that demonstrate how a consideration of canonical arrangement can fruitfully guide exegesis and inform biblical her-

meneutics in general. At several points he expresses criticism of scholars, like Richard Hays, who use the category of “story” to understand Paul’s thought and in particular his engagement with Israel’s scriptures. Childs thinks that the term story is inadequate to do justice to the complexity of the biblical tradition. Moreover to assert that Paul reads the OT as a story obscures the centrality Paul gives to the written character of, and the divine voice heard within, the Scriptures. Story is also a peculiarly modernist hermeneutical category coined in order to by-pass the problems for biblical truth created by rationalist historical criticism.

Although the book is entitled *The Church’s Guide for Reading Paul*, it is by no means an introductory level text on Pauline interpretation for people in the pews. It is an exacting specialist analysis of some of the most complicated issues in New Testament scholarship. Whether or not one finds Childs’ canonical style of exegesis to be persuasive, his underlying commitment to honour the canon, not as some arbitrary imposition of orthodoxy on the delightful pluriformity of nascent Christianity but as the inherent and theologically essential outworking of the apostolic traditions themselves, is hugely important and to be greatly applauded.

On The Road Subscription and Submissions

The AAANZ quarterly journal publishes news, articles and reviews. It is published electronically.

Subscription is free, though we encourage you to contribute to AAANZ; to subscribe, email Mark and Mary: AAANZ@iprimus.com.au

We welcome submissions. To contribute, please send your piece to the editor, Nathan Hobby, nathan-hobby@gmail.com. Submissions should be in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format.

The theme for issue 43 is 'The 2000s: The Decade in Review'. Suggestions for articles:

- War and peace in the 2000s.
- A review of the book, film or album from the decade which had the biggest impact on you.
- The story of your community or ministry over the decade.
- Trends in Anabaptism over the decade.
- Australia in the 2000s and its significance for Anabaptists

Themed and unthemed submissions are welcome. Deadline is 30 November.

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

Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand

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.

The theme for issue 43 is 'The 2000s: The Decade in Review'. Themed and unthemed submissions welcome.

