

ON THE ROAD

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A Radical Ministry



Dave Andrews on reframing intercession

Michael Hardin in Australia and New Zealand

Planting Seeds, Pulling Weeds: an extract from Mark
Barnard's *Messy Mission*

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From the Editor

Nathan Hobby

The three articles in this issue offer three different takes on ministry. David Griffin's is a provocative manifesto for a vision of what faithfulness to Christ in this time and place means. Dave Andrews writes about a ministry of intercession more like what Jesus did. Mark Barnard shows us what it means to be planting seeds rather than pulling weeds.

Last issue, I was surprised to be publishing an article with the word 'vagina' in it (I just hadn't thought of a context where it might arise). This issue, that word reappears, along with the f-word in Dave Andrews' article. The f-word is crucial to his whole point; it's certainly not gratuitous. Being a cowardly or sensible or degenerate editor, depending on your perspective, I have retained the word but added ellipses. Strange thing to do, really.

This issue is a month later than anticipated, which means the deadline for the next issue is soon—9 May. The theme is sexuality. It's a divisive issue, and I hope to receive submissions from a range of perspectives. May our conversation be a model of civility!

The view from Ephesians 4

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

Mark and Mary Hurst, AAANZ staffworkers



The AAANZ Executive Committee and a new group called Groundbreakers met this past weekend in Sydney for some dreaming and planning sessions. This happens every two years. Questions about AAANZ’s future come up each time. What is it we are about? How do we get our message out to a larger audience? Who is our audience? How will we fund our activities and support our staff? And so on and so on.

A big question that pops up from time to time is ‘Will AAANZ be more than a one-generation organisation?’ Like so many other groups today we are finding it a challenge to pass on our vision to the next generation and have them take it up as their own.

When we were recently in Brisbane we spoke with Dave Andrews about this. Dave has years of experience in community development and working with Christian groups like ours. He said not to worry about it. If AAANZ lasts only one generation, then it has served its purpose and that is good enough.

We found that answer freeing. Our concern should not be for institutional longevity

but for faithfulness to Jesus today. The questions then become ones like ‘What do we need to be doing now to be faithful to Jesus and his call to follow him?’ ‘How can AAANZ assist people in doing this?’

What are the things you think AAANZ should be doing now? How can AAANZ help you follow Jesus more faithfully today? Write us and let us know what you think.

Jesus taught us to pray “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.” That is a worthy aspiration for any group of people.

Is there an Anabaptist model for leadership?

President's Report

Doug Sewell, AAANZ President

Given that this issue of *On The Road* is looking at leadership roles within the church, I felt I ought to ask: Is there such a thing as an Anabaptist leadership model?



During the Reformation era church polity and leadership juxtaposed three broad types or models: The hierarchical Episcopal model, with a bishop appointed as the chief ecclesiastical authority with wide sweeping powers, the Presbyterian model adopted by Reformed or Calvinistic

churches where a congregation elects the presbyters or elders to determine governance and the Congregational model which favoured the "gathered church" principle, where authority, including the right to ordain, is not vested in elders, but is placed in the hands of the whole church.

Each position claimed self-justification from biblical precedent. The word episcopal is derived from the Greek word episkopos (overseer) who was appointed with both sacramental and political power. The presbyters (elders) were considered by John Calvin to be the proper form of church government as he reasoned the early church used the same form of organisation as the Jewish synagogue, which was governed by a group of elders. Robert Browne in 1582 published his congregationalist principles with the idea that the church should consist only of those who have responded to the call of Christ and who have covenanted together to live as his disciples. As a result the local church should be independent and not be subject to bishops or magistrates.

The Anabaptists of the Reformation period were a further shift toward giving responsibility to the people. The belief in the "priesthood of all believers" was used as the basis for a community hermeneutic, a context where the scriptures could be both interpreted as well as lived out. Anabaptist leaders promoted a servant-leadership, or shepherd-leadership model. However, there were variations in the types of leadership used by the early Anabaptists. The need for strong leadership during times of severe persecution did not always make it possible to organise congregational systems. The Anabaptists have also been described at times as anarchical and lacking any clear system of organisation.

Some of the attempts to characterise Anabaptist models are undoubtedly idealised, but they nonetheless can be of value

to us in sorting out our own dilemmas. The emphasis of Anabaptists was not on an institutionalised leadership but on a leadership which recognised giftedness and remained accountable to the group.

Most churches today have moved beyond the Reformation types and been influenced by contemporary political thought, such as democracy. In ancient Greece democracy was meant to be participatory, whereas modern democracy is more representative. We vote for people, not on issues. Applied to the polity types a congregational model is participatory, whereas a presbyterian model is representative. Both might claim to be democratic, but perhaps the word democratic in either form creates problems as we think in terms of voting and majorities and minorities.

Voting is a means by which we choose one alternative from several. Consensus, on the other hand, is a process of synthesizing many diverse elements together. The input and ideas of all participants are gathered and synthesized to arrive at a final decision acceptable to all. Through consensus, we are not only working to achieve better solutions, but also to promote the growth of community and trust.

The model for leadership becomes different when the principles of dignity, respect for the individual, the value of the group and non-violence are brought to play in the processes of decision-making and governance. The fundamental right of consensus is for all people to be able to express themselves in their own words and of their own will. The fundamental responsibility of consensus is to assure others of their right to speak and be heard. Coercion and trade-offs are replaced with creative alternatives, and compromise with synthesis.

The Beatitudes provide some good raw material for leader, educators, parents or partners - there are clues here for being focussed, clear, strong, gentle, courageous and free. Leadership requires us to develop all of these qualities - leadership requires us to move beyond ego, security and power needs and to create an environment where people can grow and develop.

The question then ought not to be, "What is an Anabaptist leadership model or even what is a biblical leadership structure?" but rather, "What leadership style will both be consistent with Jesus' leadership principles and be most effective in a specific situation?"

AAANZ Executive and Groundbreakers Gathering 2012



Doug Sewell



A bunch of the AAANZ executive and new Groundbreakers regional representative group met for a weekend in March in Sydney to do some dreaming, planning and hanging out together...

Groundbreakers are Anabaptists from each region who have begun to metaphorically “dig a few test holes” to better appreciate the places where they live and in the process possibly seed opportunities for engagement at a local level. Each region will develop its own agenda, but it is also good to compare notes and share ideas and feedback.

At our gathering, we talked about what we anticipate our culture could be like in five years time to help us shape our strategic objectives. We then looked for ways in which we could be responsive as well as proactive in targeting areas of need. I see this as us being missional in focus and therefore needing to be adaptable and willing to change in order to articulate and communicate the Anabaptist story and values in a more effective way.

We formulated some plans for the next two years and about where to direct our energy. Given our limited resources, we recognised the need to have specific and achievable goals.

As our network by virtue of its geographically scattered membership is made up mostly of individuals who connect loosely through electronic media we want to do this better and in a manner that is more integrated and interactive.

We wish every member to have a greater sense of "ownership of our network". This will mean more opportunities to join tele-chats with guest speakers, and closer involvement through the prayer diary and conferences. We'd like to see more discipleship and spirituality materials

available for in-house use and training and also a diploma course in Anabaptist Studies.

The Anabaptist Association is a vehicle to resource a wide network within a broader Christian framework. We therefore try to be in partnership with some of the other discipleship movements and to work alongside what already exists. AAANZ can offer a special appreciation of the Anabaptist core values of Jesus-centeredness, community focussed lifestyle and the centrality of non-violence, restorative justice and peacemaking in both theology and praxis.

We got to also meet the 1643 Community where Mark and Mary Hurst live and enjoy some table fellowship at Jim and Sally Longley's house perched on a cliff top overlooking the Tasman Sea. On the Sunday we shared in worship with the Avalon Baptist Peace Memorial Church folks and got a chance to explain some of our different stories of how we each got to be involved in our Anabaptist network.





Groundbreakers

Groundbreakers is a AAANZ initiative to encourage regional activities across Australia and New Zealand. AAANZ members have been appointed as regional representatives to encourage local events and awareness. Each issue of *On The Road* will feature updates from the different regions.

AAANZ in Queensland in 2012

Neil Holm

On 14 March, in conjunction with the Wellspring Community and Waiters' Union, AAANZ Queensland hosted an evening with Michael Hardin. Since it is the lead up to Easter, we chose the theme *A Nonviolent View of the Atonement*.

Michael's book, *The Jesus-Driven Life: Reconnecting Humanity with Jesus*, engages with atonement. Michael's approach is based on Rene Girard's understanding of atonement. He challenges ideas of the atonement based on scapegoating.

With the Queensland state election less than two weeks away, we were all very interested to hear Michael say that our view of atonement even affects the way we vote. He recounted some history from the British parliament when the house split down the middle on their views of atonement. They split over the issue of law and order: one half held the view that God was a god of retribution who always sought to punish sin; the other half held the view that God was a god of reconciliation who always sought to restore humanity to its proper state. Those in the retribution camp wanted laws that punished lawbreakers to the maximum extent. Those in the reconciliation camp wanted laws that provided for the rehabilitation of lawbreakers and their restoration to society as fully functioning citizens. I suspect that these views of atonement also influence our attitudes to refugees and asylum seekers.

We had a good crowd of about fifty people. Michael spoke for about forty minutes and then we had a very lively question time. There was a range of ages and backgrounds present. I suspect that Michael decided that it would be best if he took a popular approach rather than an academic approach. To some extent, he presented an extreme description of people (particularly his compatriots) who adopted the retributive or (as he preferred to describe it) the violent perspective of atonement. Some of the questioners took issue with this. One person may

have wanted to defend the punishment perspective. Another person, one of Australia's eminent university professors, who favoured the reconciliatory perspective, took Michael to task over what he regarded as a very biased and wildly overstated presentation of the alternative position.

Taken together, it was a stimulating night and I am sure we went home with much to think about.

AAANZ in Launceston

Karlin Love

In Launceston, 2012 looks to be a year of looking inward and outward by local AAANZ members. Personally, I have to focus inward to finish a PhD, but also look outward to the international community in my field and what might be next. The immediate next will be a year away for us in the US and travel through some of the rest of the planet. Going out from Launceston this year are Ben and Emma Snare to the Arab world with Interserve, Sandra and Oscar Lowther-Owens to Central Asia, the McKinnons to Europe. Alex Bell keeps Gaza on all of our hearts. So, for now, I see my role in Launceston as simply to maintain connections and networks with TEAR, Oxfam, City Baptist, St. Johns Anglican, Wellspring, Micah Challenge, Voices for Justice, etc.; keeping Anabaptist sympathy on the radar, and plenty to pray about. No projects, which goes against my nature, but not my common sense! If anyone in Tasmania is interested in this role of Groundbreaker connection point, make yourself known. It would be a good time to hand it over, especially if in your life this is a time for projects.

News from Melbourne

Dale Hess

By the time that readers of *On the Road* see this, the event will be over. Nevertheless, Mary and Mark Hurst will be in Melbourne for the Surrender 12 Conference, held at Belgrave Heights, Victoria, 23 – 25 March 2012. The theme is ‘Hope Speaks – Hope Acts’ which is an invitation to serve God through both words and actions in our neighbourhoods. Speakers include Jarrod McKenna, Jon Owen, Andy Hawthorne, Sereki Korocowiri, Melinda Tankard Reist, Goma Jungarrayi Conlon, Cheryl Catford, Mick Duncan, Graham Paulson, Stephen Said, Mark Sayers, and Tony & Francine Riches. It will be a chance to catch up with folks from the AAANZ, as well as meet young people from various parts of Australia committed to social justice.

Early notice: Toward the end of the year (24 October – 6 December) Christian Peacemaker Teams Co-Director, Merwyn De Mello, will be touring Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines. The program is currently being planned.

Events in Sydney

Matt Stone

Two suggestions on the table for AAANZ folks in Sydney to focus on in 2012 are hosting an arts related social justice event to engage with the wider community and hosting Logan Mehl-Laituri when he visits Sydney later this year. Logan is the author of a soon to be released book, *Reborn on the Fourth of July: The Challenge of Faith, Patriotism & Conscience* (reviewed on p.24). These ideas need to be fleshed out, so in the

Events in Perth

Nathan Hobby



WA Anabaptists managed two meetings last year; we aim for three or four in 2012. Our first is scheduled for Thursday 19 April, with Michael Hardin speaking on “Reluctantly Becoming a Mennonite” at the Peace Tree Community in Lockridge.

Doug Sewell spoke at the Executive/ Groundbreakers Gathering about the type of people who are drawn to the Anabaptist Association. From memory, he identified three types—thinkers, drawn by the theology of Anabaptism; activists, drawn by our peace witness; and disaffected Christians, drawn by a Christianity centred on Jesus. I think this is a good analysis of the groups within AAANZ, including WA Anabaptists. The diversity is both a blessing and challenge—do we mean the same thing by ‘Anabaptism’? What can we do which will be of interest to us all? I’m hoping our events can appeal to all three groups, although so far we’ve gone mainly for the first group.

short term a few of us have committed to gathering on a monthly basis, not only to explore these possibilities but to also encourage networking across the wider Sydney area. For those interested, whether from the mountains or the sea, the next proposed date is Sunday April 15, 12:30 at 8 Camillo Street, Pendle Hill. RSVP to matthew.lewis.stone@gmail.com.



AAANZ Sydney gathering with Michael Hardin

On Not Trivialising a Radical Christian Ministry

David Griffin

“The Lord of Christian morality is not a principle or an ideal goal or a telos, but a person whose timely life confronts our stories with his own.”

James McClendon, *Ethics*, 323f.

Following this seminal statement by McClendon, allow me the liberty of asserting a brief number of theses that may prevent us from trivialising our ministry.

1. We avoid trivialising our ministry when we refuse to reduce Jesus to a cipher of a moral or social ideal such as justice, peace or any other pre-existent ethical category.

2. We avoid trivialising our ministry by reading the gospels through a hermeneutic that is Christological and trinitarian.

3. We trivialise our ministry as brokers of God's Word to his church when we read the Bible through a hermeneutic of suspicion which lacks faith in the lordship of Jesus. Rather, we read with a hermeneutic of faith, trusting that the Lord of the church is trustworthy, and that any ideological predisposition, progressive or traditional, is idolatrous to the extent that it robs us of faith in the God of Scripture to preserve his revelation for the sake of his church and world.

4. We trivialise our ministry when we take up sexy ministry concepts which resonate with the current ethos of the culture whilst despising those which are odds with such ethos. Hanging out with cool culture creators at the café is likely to be less spiritual than rolling bandages for lepers with little old ladies over a cup of tea in the old wooden church hall.

5. We trivialise our ministry when we capitulate to the eroticising of our culture and believe that sexual activity is essential to human fulfilment. We maintain radical faithfulness to the alternate vision of divine *agape*

and divinely ordered *eros* by asserting that traditional sexual values – sex belonging within marriage as husband and wife - is the only ordered form of sexuality approved by the Lord of our bodies who in his sexual flesh was fully human in his celibate virginity, despite all temptations.

6. We trivialise our ministry when we side with the progressive side of politics for no other reason than it is our tribe and the location of our emotional connections, believing that the conservatives have horns and cloven feet.

7. We maintain covenant faithfulness to the Lord of the Church when we are more spiritually connected with Christians in the Christian Democrats than with unbelievers in the Greens, as the church is the eternal body of Christ, indwelt by his Spirit, bought with his blood, and his people on earth.

8. We maintain ministry faithfulness when we both speak and act equally for righteousness and justice. We understand that Biblical justice may be retributive as well as distributive, and that righteousness means being rightly related to all people in covenant loyalty and mutual help, and is not just a pejorative wowserish term best avoided.

9. We maintain faithful ministry when we refuse to reduce sharp divine commands to vague therapeutic commendations shredded of their history and reduced to illustrations of moral principles, thereby gaining jurisprudential mastery over God and the law of Christ.

10. Pastoral faithfulness requires us to understand that ethics, as an independent discipline severed from theology, has no place in Christian ministry, and that ethics is driven by metaphysical visions of reality or ontological vision of humanity, and that as such both are found in the incarnate divine Word, Jesus Christ. We maintain that, as God is good, the only real good is found in God, manifested in Jesus Christ. Consequently, we affirm that no-one can be good or ethical without God, and that such goodness does not necessarily presuppose faith in Christ, but originates in God's good and kind grace to all in creation and preservation.

11. We avoid like the plague the use of the Anabaptist concept "outside the perfection of Christ" to justify certain practices that are socially approved or legalised, yet clearly sinful. We acknowledge that the 16th century Anabaptists used that concept not to justify sin in the world, but to acknowledge its reality, and that they sought to eliminate such sin, not give it legal status.

12. We maintain faithfulness to human rights not by adopting the Western liberal concept of autonomous individual rights to pursue one's own happiness, values or sexuality independently of righteousness and truth, but by believing that human freedom is only found in

truth, and that the elevation of the autonomous will devoid of proper moral content is destructive to humanity, such that "I choose, therefore I am," is a demonic motto.

13. We avoid trivialising our calling when we see that the Body of Christ is greater than our own group, and that traditional denominations, now eclipsed, are being replaced by ideological Christian associations that can be equally if not more intolerant as the older forms. We acknowledge that radical and Anabaptist commitments can degenerate into a form of defensiveness and suspicion towards other Christians, with the potential to keep emotional black books of enemies.

14 We avoid trivialising our ministry when we gladly acknowledge with all the angels of heaven and the whole church in heaven and on earth the Lordship of Christ over the principalities of mammon, *eros* or the power of the *polis*, joyfully confessing that we have hitched our lives to the shooting star of Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with the Father and the Spirit, forever praised, forever holy, and forever worthy of our trust.

Reclaiming and Reframing Intercession

Dave Andrews



When ‘prayer warriors’ tried to get me to join them in ‘intercession’, to ‘come against’ the forces of evil in ‘spiritual warfare’, I used to make myself scarce.

When I was in Afghanistan, I met a friend who had been asked to host a party of American ‘prayer warriors’ who said they’d been led by the Lord ‘to Latitude 33° 00’ North and Longitude 65° 00’ East’ to ‘intercede against the spirit of violence that had been unleashed’ in the country ‘when the Devil fell to earth in Kabul’. However, after praying ‘against the Devil and all his works’, my friend said that, on their way home, while travelling through the Khyber Pass, they couldn’t wait to leap out of the jeep at Darra to try firing the latest AK47s they manufactured in the lawless North West Frontier Province border town.

Those kind of so-called ‘intercessors’ frankly frighten me to death.

When I was in India, I woke up one morning to find the city of Delhi on fire, and Hindu mobs rampaging through the streets, tracking, surrounding and slaughtering thousands of defenseless Sikhs. I immediately phoned some Christians I knew round town to ask what they were going to do about the communal violence. They told me they were all going to gather at the church to ‘intercede’ and ‘come against the

spirit violence unleashed in the streets’ in prayer. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. So I checked. ‘Yes’, they said, that’s correct. ‘We are going to church to ‘claim the blood of Jesus’ as ‘a covering to protect us’. What they were really saying was that they were going to abandon their Sikh neighbours to seek refuge in the church, and, in the safety of the sanctuary, ‘claim the blood of Jesus’ to ‘protect them’, instead of being willing to shed their own blood like Jesus did to save their neighbours!

I don’t think we can depend on ‘intercessors’ like those to save many lives.

When I returned to Australia, I had the chance to get reacquainted with my wife Ange’s relatives. One of her cousins is a barber. Bill, the barber, told me about a hairdresser we both know, who asked his pastor to ‘intercede’ for the new business he had recently opened at great expense in a shopping mall. The first thing the hairdresser asked the pastor to do was to come and ‘bless’ his shop. Which he did. The second thing the hairdresser then asked his pastor to do was to go around the corner and ‘curse’ his competitor’s shop. Which he

also did. 'Coming against those (purported) powers of evil.'

Now I find that approach to 'intercession' quite diabolical. Don't you?

I think we need to review the whole idea of 'intercession'. The word 'intercessor' literally means 'a person who gets involved with someone, who has got themselves into a predicament, and pleads on their behalf. Like Christ 'who always lives to intercede for us.' (Hebrews 5:27) Note that the intercessor is not one who 'comes against anyone, but one 'who comes alongside someone and helps them express the deepest desires of their heart that they cannot express themselves.' Like the Spirit who helps us pray. 'We often do not know what to pray for, but the Spirit intercedes for us in a way that our words cannot express.' (Romans 8:26). And I believe we need to learn to do the same for others, to intercede in the same way for others - reclaiming and reframing 'intercession' as 'the capacity to feel deep intense empathy for others and the ability to express it in a way that those whom we are praying for can relate to as compassionate, empowering and helpful'.

Not surprisingly the perfect example of intercession is Jesus in the Gospel. In John 11 we read:

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick"... On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ...And many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home... When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they

may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go".

There are many intriguing aspects of this story, but I want to focus on it as a model for reclaiming and reframing the process of 'intercession'. Intercession always starts with coming face to face with a tragedy in the lives of others. In this case it was the death of Lazarus, the beloved brother of Martha and Mary. But intercession only irrupts when we move from dispassionate observation to compassionate participation in the agony at the heart of the tragedy. When Jesus got up close and personal - truly, deeply, and intensely personal - with the agony at the heart of this tragedy, he wept empathically with Martha and Mary. All intercession is essentially empathic prayer, with and for those whom we love, which articulates the longings of their heart in the language of their heart. With tears running down his face, Jesus prays Martha's and Mary's prayers to God, out loud, so they can hear him and say 'Amen' from the depths of their hearts. And, because of intercession, something changes. In this case there was spectacular change - Lazarus was raised from the dead. More often than not the change that takes place is not nearly so spectacular. But when we pray change does take place. Studies show that when we pray, healing is more likely to occur. We may not be able to predict when and where and how it will occur, but the scientific evidence cited by researcher Dr. Larry Dossey, proves healing is more likely to occur when we pray than when don't.

Now that's an approach to 'intercession' I find quite beautiful. Don't you?

I have become so fascinated with Christ's approach to 'intercession'. I teach Christian community workers to view the whole of their work as 'intercession' - embodied empathic prayer for the people we work with that they can experience as profoundly compassionate and empowering'. Seeing our work as 'intercession' rather than 'intervention' means that while we use plans to enact our prayer, we trust in God - rather than logframes - to answer our prayer.

I not only train Christian community workers to view the whole of their work as 'intercession', but also to look for specific opportunities to put it into words. I invite them to think of a particular person whose pain they have come face to face with. I invite them to remember a time they were talking with that person, when they became acutely aware of their pain. I invite them to re-imagine the scene, to see the person, to hear their story, to touch their tragedy, to taste their agony, to

feel their pain. Then I invite them to imagine that, at that very moment they were most empathically immersed in their pain, Christ walks by. Seeing the pain on the person's face, Christ stops, and asks them gently if there is anything he can do to help them. The person doesn't know what to say to Christ, so he or she turns you and says – 'You tell him!' At that point I invite the community workers I am training in 'intercession' to think of what they could say on the person's behalf, which would express their feelings in the words they would have used if they had said it themselves, so that when they were finished, the person could sincerely say, 'That's it mate! That's it!'

After they have practiced this, developing their capacity to feel deep intense empathy for others and their ability to express it in a way that others can relate to as profoundly helpful, I then encourage my community workers to look for opportunities to intercede with people in the context of their work.

A community health care worker, whom we'll call John, told me about his efforts to try to find a way of practicing intercession with two of his clients - both prostitutes – one we'll call Jenny, and the other we'll call Jane.

Jenny moved to Brisbane when her marriage broke up. She arrived at John's community health centre and John arranged some emergency assistance for Jenny and her family. But Jenny became frustrated with living on welfare, and told John that she wanted take up a job she had been offered, as a sex worker with a local escort agency, in order to get more money to support her family. Jenny asked John if he would respect her choice to be a sex worker and support in her choice of work, by helping her to keep free from STDs - sexually transmitted diseases.

This request presented John with a very difficult ethical dilemma. On the one hand, as a Christian, John was committed to sharing in Jenny's struggle to regain the dignity of 'choice' in her life; but on the other hand, as a Christian, John was committed to advocating healthy lifestyle choices, which - as far as he was concerned - did not include prostitution! John felt that the best thing he could do for Jenny was to try to encourage her to change her mind. So John spent an hour begging Jenny to consider a range of other alternatives. But he failed to persuade her. Jenny's argument was that she would be providing a necessary service to the community, and that John should support her in providing that service as safely as possible. John said he wanted to help her, but couldn't condone prostitution. So Jenny left. And John has never seen Jenny again. Not a successful intervention. Not a chance for intercession.

Jane presented herself at John's community health centre with pelvic pain and vaginal discharge. Jane told John that she was a 'working girl', and she needed him, as her doctor, to help her to cope with the occupational hazards of her work, like the STD she had presented with. With Jane, John was face to face with the same ethical dilemma that he had been confronted with by Jenny. He didn't know what to do with Jane. But he knew he didn't want to do what he had done with Jenny. Since the day Jenny had left his centre, John had been troubled by regret over his response to Jenny. With Jane walking into his office the way she did, John felt he was being given a chance to redeem himself by caring for a prostitute more appropriately. He decided that this time round, he would not take the moral high ground as a Christian; this time round, he would climb down from off his moral high horse, join his patient at her point of pain, and simply do all he could to help her, as Christ would.

So John told Jane that he would respect her choice of work and he would support her in her choice of work by keeping her free from STDs, as she had requested him to do; but he wanted to remain in dialogue with her about her work, and the impact that her work had upon her as a person. He assured her that he would be there for her, whatever she decided to do; and that he would be there for her, particularly, if what she decided to do got her into trouble.

Weeks went by. John saw Jane a number of times about a range of medical issues. And whenever they met they talked. Gradually John got to hear more and more of Jane's story. In many ways it was just like Jenny's. Like Jenny, Jane's marriage had broken up. Like Jenny, Jane had two kids to support. Like Jenny, Jane felt 'working' was better than welfare. And like Jenny, she said she was providing an essential service to the community. But Jane was not Jenny. Her story was her own. And as he listened, Jane told John about her struggle to keep 'working', and to keep looking after her children, at the same time; she knew her lifestyle was unsettling them, so she sent the kids to be with their father for a while; but he was preventing her from having access to them, because of her profession. Her life was starting to come unstuck; but she was tough, and she was determined to tough it out.

One day Jane turned up and collapsed into a chair across from John. 'My dad is dead', she said. Jane had had a love-hate relationship with her alcoholic dad. On one level she was glad he was dead. But on another level she was sad about his death. John tried to enter into her sense of loss, and share her feeling of grief as best he could. Jane responded to the support by bursting into tears, crying; 'I am so useless. I couldn't relate to my dad. I can't care for my own kids. I'm f—ked!' John

wasn't sure what to say. But eventually he said, 'Would you mind if I prayed for you?' She shook her head. 'No', she said. So, very carefully, John reached out and held Jane's hand, and cried out in a loud voice; 'Oh Christ, we're so f—ked up. Jane's f—ked up. And I'm f—ked up. But we'd like to believe that you can help f—ked-up people like us!' Jane could scarcely believe her ears. Here was John, the straight-laced Christian community health worker - whom she had never heard swear – praying the prayer of her heart in her own words. John says he was almost as surprised as Jane was. But after they got over the shock, they talked for a long while together about the possibilities of putting the pieces of her life back

together again. On the way out, Jane burst into tears again, and John gave her a big hug in front of all the startled clients standing round the community centre.

John saw Jane a few weeks later. After her dad's funeral she had gone to stay with her mum in a country town. While she was there she decided to quit her work, reclaim her kids, move back home with her family, and start her life all over again. Which is what she did. And that's what intercession can do.

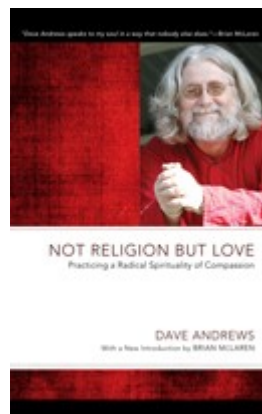
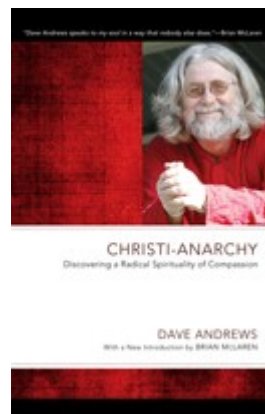
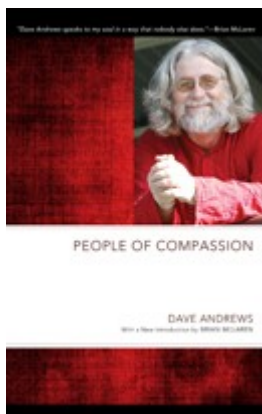
So let's reclaim 'intercession' and reframe it as embodied empathic prayer.

Tips For Praying For People We Don't Know Personally

As I was putting the finishing touches on this article on intercession, I got an urgent email from Lee Davis asking all TEAR supporters to intercede for a partner in South East Asia who has just been kidnapped. Which raises the crucial question of - How do we pray for people we don't know personally?

I suggest we:

1. Get as much information as we can within the limits of the time we have.
2. Try to imagine their predicament, see the person, hear their story, touch their tragedy, taste their agony and feel their pain as empathically as we can.
3. Think of what we could say on that person's behalf, which would express their feelings in words they may have used if they had said it for themselves.
4. Trust that the One who hears our prayer will somehow answer our prayer.



Dave Andrews Legacy Series

US publisher Wipf and Stock has just released the Dave Andrews Legacy Series, republishing six of Dave's books, many of them out of print, and all of them difficult to get internationally.

These books are available from Melbourne-based Mosaic Resources. Mosaic is an Australian distributor of Wipf and Stock, and have recently launched Mosaic Press, to publish more Australian theological titles in partnership with Wipf. Their web address is www.mosaicresources.com.au.

Planting Seeds, Pulling Weeds

An extract from Mark Barnard's new book *Messy Mission* (Praxis, 2011)

You may have attempted gardening with children; it's a good idea in theory. Get the kids involved out in nature, get their hands in the soil...it's the stuff of good parenting, straight from the manuals! But the reality can be a little different. We all know that as sincere and helpful the efforts of small people in the garden may be, the outcome can be, well...messy. The flowers get pulled out, while the weeds get left intact. Vegetables get crushed, not to mention the slightly frustrated adults.

Matthew 13 contains an interesting story about gardening, called the 'parable of the weeds' (13:24-30). Jesus' gardening methods are somewhat unconventional: "Don't worry about the weeds; we'll sort them out at harvest." Pretty much the opposite of conventional gardening, which dictates that you should weed as you go so the good stuff can grow. I actually quite like the Jesus approach, as my own attempts in the garden have been fairly light on the weeding.

This parable of weeds and seeds comes in the midst of a chapter pregnant with parables. Jesus uses bite-sized, cryptic stories to narrate the kingdom he is heralding. Stories whose meanings are not immediately obvious to the hearer. Tales that take digesting and reflecting upon if the hearer truly wants to understand.

This story helpfully comes with an explanation (vs36-43). Jesus takes his disciples aside and talks them through it. The Son of Man is the sower, the field is the world. The wheat, the children of the kingdom; the weeds, the children of the evil one. The harvest is an end of time judgement conducted by the angels, resulting in final vindication of all that is good and condemnation of all that is bad.

It seems to me that Jesus' point is a simple one, but with profound implications. "Concentrate on the growth of the seeds, rather than worrying too much about pulling weeds."

Why? Well, because kingdom growth is slow, fragile and uncertain; like tiny mustard seeds in the ground, and yeast through dough. We may not always notice the subtle shifts and incremental changes. If Jesus' early disciples spent all their time worrying about weeds, they

would miss the actual growth of the seeds. If they went around looking for suspicious shoots, they might, like eager children, pull up the wrong things.

With such an unconventional gardening approach, Jesus is inviting his fragile first-century followers to entrust judgement in the one who judges justly, who makes the right call, every time. Rather than endeavouring to eliminate evil, Jesus challenges them to expend their energy on good gospel growth.

It's a lesson that I'm sure the early disciples needed to be careful with. The temptation to join bloody revolutions to topple tyrants was a real one. As an oppressed people, hungering for liberation, some good old-fashioned guerrilla gardening – complete with weed whacking - was an appealing option. The Zealots in the tradition of revolutionaries, such as the Maccabees, had little time for Roman weeds.

But history tells us that take heed they did. The early church preferred the way of gentle revolution to that of violent revolution. As a result, gospel seeds were sown across the Mediterranean, right under the nose of the Roman Emperor! Seeds of compassion, mercy and kindness, which turned the world upside-down.

Unfortunately though, with the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 312AD, the Church began to trade seeding for weeding. Almost overnight, Christians went from being food for the lions, to being those in charge of the zoo: Rome became Christian. The transition from being a powerless people to a powerful people had wide-ranging consequences. As the saying goes, power corrupts, but absolute power corrupts absolutely.

The dark ages are not called the dark ages without reason. Constantinian Christianity set in motion a pattern of the Church as a powerful institution standing as judge and jury of the world, rather than its original identity as marginal movement acting, in the words of the prophet Micah, with justice and mercy. In short; they went from seeding to weeding.

The lesson of the parable, and of Church history, seems to be that we Christians are at our best when acting with justice and mercy, and at our worst when standing as judge and jury.

Justice and Mercy – Not Judge and Jury

Listen to a decree by Emperor Theodosius in 380 AD:

We shall believe in the single deity...of the Holy trinity... we command those persons who follow this rule shall embrace the name of Christians. The rest however... who shall sustain the infamy of heretical dogmas... whom we adjudge demented and insane, shall be smitten first by divine vengeance and secondly by retribution of our own initiative, which we shall assume in accordance with divine judgement. (Andrews: 1999, p.26-27)

Similarly in 410 AD Emperor Honorius decreed:

Let all who act contrary to the sacred laws know that their creeping in their heretical superstition to worship at the most remote oracle is punishable by exile and blood. (ibid. p. 27)

Sounds a lot like pulling weeds.

Lamentably such episodes as the Crusades, the Spanish inquisition, the Reformation, and the Salem witch hunts all followed in such weed-pulling ways. The Church acted as judge and jury, leaving a dark blot on the name "Christian."

But fortunately, again and again in the Christian story we have good gardeners who remind us to nurture gospel seeds, acting with justice and mercy.

We think of St Francis in the twelfth century, the son of a wealthy merchant who sold all that he had to serve among the poor and despised. At the height of the Church's power and in the midst of the violent Crusades, he forged another way.

In his book *You Will Be My Witnesses*, John Dear retells an inspiring episode from the life of St Francis;

Francis did far more than love animals, preach to the birds, and build the first nativity crèche.

He renounced violence and war, and announced that he and his followers would be people of nonviolence and peace. In his most dramatic episode, he joined the crusades, not as a warrior but this time as a practitioner of gospel non-violence. In 1219, he began a year long, unarmed walk right through a war zone from Italy to northern Africa, where he managed to meet the Sultan, Melek-el-Kamel, the leading Muslim of the time.

Before the meeting, Francis begged the Christian warrior commander, Cardinal Pelagius, to stop the killings and the wars. The Sultan was so impressed by Francis' kindness and gentleness, that he announced, "If all Christians are like this, I would not hesitate to become one." He offered Francis gifts and a large sum of money, but Francis turned it all down.

Francis' journey through the war zone to meet the Muslim leader is the equivalent of traveling to Iraq today. Instead of killing the Sultan, he loved the Sultan and proved himself a true practitioner of Gospel non-violence. (Dear: 2006)

Now that sounds more like tending seeds: seeds of justice, peace, mercy and compassion. Of course we need not stop with St. Francis – there are so many more seed tenders who remind us of the call to justice and mercy.

We do so much better when we focus on the good growth of the kingdom, rather than embarking on crusades to end evil. In our own following of Jesus, the challenge is the same: to focus on good gospel growth, majoring in strengths rather than weaknesses. Where can we see justice and mercy already present in our communities? How can we support its growth? What opportunities exist in our day to day that invite our positive participation?

It is often easier to spot the weeds though, isn't it?

The media is great at giving us sound-bites which incite fear and tell tales of terror. This creates a climate in which it is easier to draw lines between 'us' and 'them', between 'goodies' and 'baddies.' Think about the language so often used against those we are suspicious of. I wonder if we made a conscious attempt to adopt Jesus' gardening methods, choosing seeding over weeding, it would begin to make a difference in how we see the world, and how the world sees us?

Imagine if we decided to change our approach a bit to those we consider 'weeds.' Something along the lines of 'loving our enemies.' I wonder if that could be transformative in some weed-ridden lives?

I once came across a newspaper article that told of a New Zealand Baptist church that took a bit of a risk on someone who many would consider a weed.

It read:

He was the most hated man in New Zealand, on trial for the murder of his three-month old twins.

They were Christian pastors, settled in Panmure and dedicated to helping society's misfits, the abused, the abusers, the dejected and the abandoned, victims and perpetrators.

(Recently) Christopher Sonny Kahui was acquitted of murdering his baby boys, Chris and Cru, who died in June 2006, five days after being admitted to Starship hospital with serious brain injuries.

For seven and a half months Chris was living under pastor Tom and Margaret Ngapera's roof at the Faith Family Baptist Centre. Sheltered from prying eyes, he formed a strong bond with the people who supported him when no one else would.

"I got involved because Chris's dad came to me and asked for help," says Mr Ngapera. His family, who he loved, were being hurt and destroyed publicly. My heart went out to this dad who was broken and asking how his family got into this position."

The Kahuis had asked for help from other agencies. But every person and organisation turned them away when they found out who they were. Whether Chris was innocent or guilty didn't matter to Tom and Margaret. It was never even discussed.

"I just came to support a broken family going through hell. That's what my job is. To show the compassion and love of Christ to someone who desperately needs it," he says.

It was a decision not taken lightly, but one that was supported by Mr Ngapera's friends and family, and other congregations.

"I talked to my son and said to him I was going to work with the Kahui family. He said: 'Well dad, you call yourself a Christian, so put your money where your mouth is'."

Chris Kahui was bailed to their home, and for seven months they saw a side to Chris that nobody else knew. Humble, softly-spoken, quiet, shy, a lovely young man, they say. A man who is growing more confident but a man who is the same as when they first met.

Now the trial has ended, Kahui is adjusting to life as a free man. He is now part of the church family.

Although they say Chris was not religious when they first met, he has seen people change, witnessed what God has done, and has formed his own ideas about faith.

"The Kahui case is just part of the parcel and you don't need to be religious to be part of it," says Mr Ngapera. "The church is known as the Faith Family. We're about raising and strengthening families.

It's been this way for almost 30 years. People like Kahui have walked through their doors and asked for help...high profile people who many dismissed as no-hopers, were given a chance through the church.

"But there's also the good stuff," says Mr Ngapera.

Good stuff, he says, like the four national jujitsu champions who train at the church, the kapa haka group travelling to Israel in September for the Christian World Indigenous Conference and the breakfast clubs at schools that feed hungry children. There's the homework classes, computer courses, discos, bible studies and pastoral care that make up the day to day running of the church.

The church and its volunteers receive no government help and fund every programme themselves. Mr Ngapera says he is dedicated to helping those who need it the most, regardless of what they've done or who they are. That means if the Kahui twins' killer wanted help, he would give it to them, he says... (Glucina: 2008)

An ordinary Kiwi Baptist church committed to growing gospel seeds, rather than pulling troublesome weeds. It's heartening and inspiring stuff; a community of Jesus followers who are most definitely into seeding. This is the church being the Church! Most likely we will not be asked, like the Ngaperas, to house suspected murderers. We probably won't get the chance to broker peace deals with Muslim kings like Saint Francis.

But we will, in many other ways, each and every day, have opportunities to tend seeds of kindness and compassion. There will be opportunities to challenge weed-pulling ways, through responding to racist remarks, brutal backstabbing or ignorant stereotyping. We can demonstrate another way, an alternative approach to gardening. Positive seeding over negative weeding. We will have chances to foster good gospel growth in the lives of those around us, whoever they may be: from annoying neighbours to wearying work colleagues, to lonely elderly folk. And also to kids with wild behaviour. As I have discovered.

Afa was a lively Samoan boy who liked to push the boundaries at a school holiday programme I was running. I had to keep a close eye on him the whole time. The last day of the programme was the final straw – while playing at the park, Afa (along with a group of boisterous boys) decided to pee on a concrete wall. I caught them red-handed. "I'm going to have to talk to your parents about this one!"

It was one of those phone calls you don't look forward to. "Ah hi, Mrs Manu, well um I, had a wee, ah, I mean small, problem with your son at holiday

programme today...” “Oh, that doesn’t sound like my boy, I’ll talk to him about it,” Afa’s mum replied.

What was my next step? Should I go for weeding? Some form of punishment? Not allow Afa back to the next programme? Or should I go for something a little more creative, more like seeding? I had just the thing! A colleague and I were to begin a Young Leaders Club and I needed more boys. Afa would be perfect! I rang his mum back, “Hi again Mrs Manu, how did you get on with Afa?”

“Well,” she replied, “I spoke to him and he didn’t do it.” Right, sure he didn’t, he must have been firing a water pistol at the wall then! Should I challenge her on this?

“Oh ok, that’s good, well would he like to be a part of our Young Leaders Group that we are starting?” (Take that for a come back!) “My Afa? Ok, sure” she answered, sounding surprised.

Afa became a key member of our Young Leaders group. He was a lot of fun and continued to keep me on my toes. But he grew heaps during the six months he came along and I learned a bit more about seeding in the process. It would have been easier to weed him out. But I’m glad I went for seeding because so often kids like Afa expect weeding, and they get used to it. So then their behaviour reflects these expectations we place

upon them. But Jesus calls us to something higher, bringing out the best by focusing on the good.

Seeding over weeding.

Wouldn’t it be great to be remembered as the kind of disciples whose focus was on justice and mercy, leaving God to be the one to stand as judge and jury?

Who likes weeding anyway?

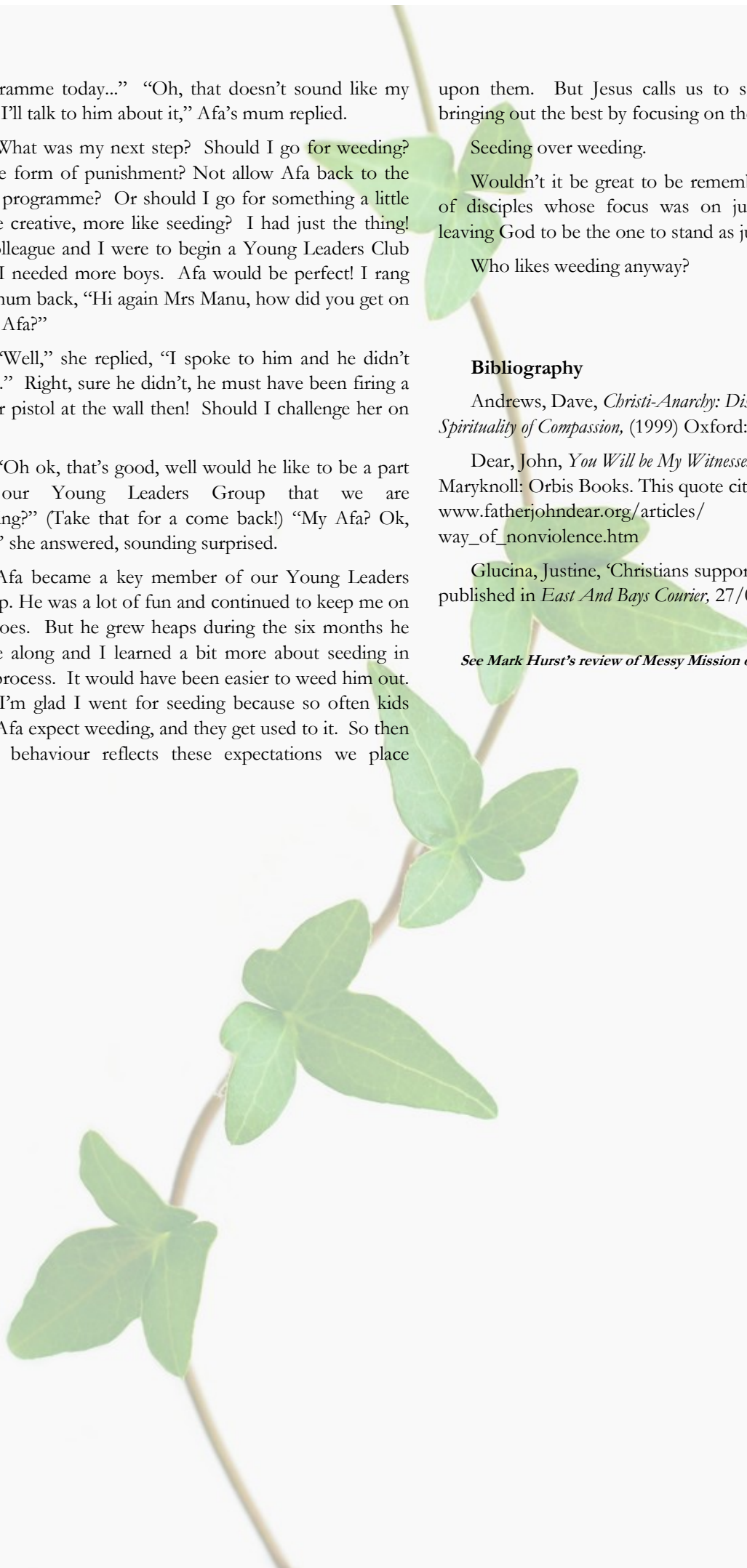
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See Mark Hurst’s review of Messy Mission on the next page.



Reviews



Messy & Muddy Disciples: Three Locals Against the Tide

Messy Mission: Reflections on a Missional Spirituality, Mark Barnard, Praxis, 2011.

Against the Tide, Towards the Kingdom, Jenny and Justin Duckworth, Cascade Books, 2011.

Muddy Spirituality: Bringing It All Down To Earth, Jon Owen, UNOH Publishing, 2011.

Reviewed by Mark Hurst

I recently ordered a book on theology that is over 1,000 pages long. I know it will be work to read the book. These three books by Australian and New Zealand authors are just the opposite – short and a delight to read.

Besides being published in 2011, these books have much in common. All of the authors work with young adults and the books are written with that audience in mind. All of the authors were at Passionfest 2011, an annual Kiwi gathering of radical discipleship folks.

The books are story-based with Biblical reflections woven in. They use the lives of the authors, warts and all, to illustrate what it means to follow Jesus today. I was reminded of Paul's instruction to the Corinthians "Take me as your pattern, just as I take Christ for mine." (1 Corinthians 11:1, *New Jerusalem Bible*)

Mark Barnard works in the Praxis programme in New Zealand, training future youth leaders. Along with his wife Bridget and three children he is part of

Urban Vision, a new monastic community in Wellington.

Mark's book is full of his subtle Kiwi humour. He says in the Introduction that his book is actually a sequel to Mike Yaconelli's book *Messy Spirituality*. Yaconelli never wrote his own sequel so Mark says he will do it for him.

Why? Because down through the years, I've read and heard too many triumphant, hard-core, rock star-type mission stories that have left me thinking, 'maybe I should give up on trying to serve Jesus and just stick to my day job.' If you're anything like me, then you might be hoping for something a bit more down-to-earth too. Something with the awkward bits left in, rather than edited out. A bit more, well, 'messy'. (8)

The Duckworths helped Urban Vision get started in Wellington. Scott Bessenecker writing on the back cover of their book picks up on this theme of messiness.

Honest and deeply reflective, Jenny and Justin Duckworth have granted us a window on the beauty, the mess, the joy, and the pain of missional community. What they discovered is that we can live fuller, more gracious lives in community, mission and contemplation than we can by living in our nuclear family fortresses.

Jon Owen uses 'muddy' to describe the messiness of living in community among the poorest of the poor in Western Sydney as part of his Urban Neighbours of Hope community. He ends his book with a bold statement.

Turning our faces away from the needs of the world has made us face inwards, and too much of modern day discipleship encourages us in this pursuit, which is pure idiocy. (163)

He explains that the word "idiot" in the Greek meant "a private citizen, or individual."

In ancient Athens, an idiot was a person who declined to take part in public life... idiot was a term of derision. By not modelling and emphasising the social and communal aspects of our faith, we are developing idiots, not holy fools. (164)

Christ calls us to reject the world's wisdom and be fools for the kingdom of God – going into those marginal places where we will find Jesus living among the poor and despised. All three of these books describe in a very readable way local, incarnational attempts to do this.

Turn the page for a second look at Against the Tide.

Against the Tide, Towards the Kingdom,
Jenny & Justin Duckworth, Cascade Books,
2011.

Reviewed by Doug Hynd

This is the story of the Urban Vision community located in the Wellington region in New Zealand/Aotearoa. The authors of this slim, easy to read volume, Jenny and Justin Duckworth, have done something rather different from offering a straightforward narrative of the foundation and growth of the community. For many of the details of the community you will want to consult the Urban Vision website at www.urbanvision.org.nz.

What Jenny and Justin have done is something perhaps more helpful. They have structured the story of their adventure with Urban Vision over the past fifteen years around a variety of themes and issues that

have been critical for them in their journey into mission. As someone who was involved in the Christian community movement in Australia in the 1980s, I wish I had had the benefit of their wisdom way back then. There is a degree of pain for me in reading their account and reflecting on the scars of my own experience during the years I was involved in a missional community with a shared life.

This is a book that shares wisdom, painfully acquired at times, of their journey into a missional community with the poor and marginalised. What makes it particularly valuable is that it is written from outside North America. The story has a tone and nuance that reflects a world that is recognisable—despite the differences—to an Australian. Each chapter concludes with a passage of scripture and questions for discussion.

Did Religion Ever Really Go Away?

Migrations of the Holy: God, State and the Political Meaning of the Church, William T. Cavanaugh, Eerdmans, 2011

Reviewed by Doug Hynd
Also appearing in *Zadok Perspectives*

The last decade has seen a re-emergence of public debate in Australia about the role of 'religion' in policy debates and the political process. The narrative underpinning the discussion has been that of 'religion' making a comeback, despite the longstanding predictions of its demise.

Against this background William Cavanaugh, senior research professor at the Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology, and professor of Catholic studies at DePaul University has published several books on the relationship between violence, politics and the political character of the church, most recently in *The Myth of Religious Violence*.

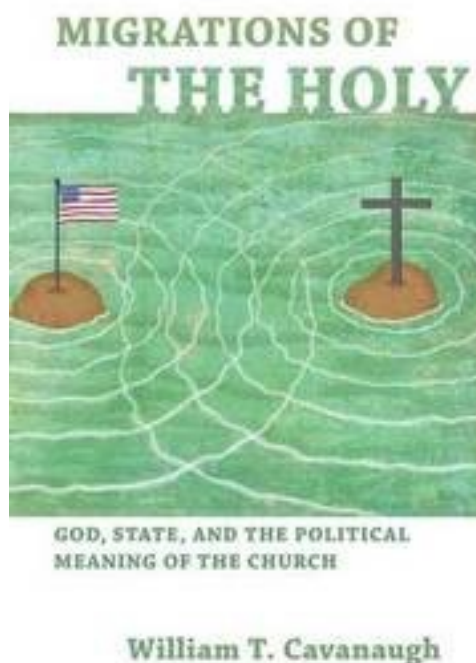
In his most recent collection of essays, *Migrations of the Holy*:

God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church Cavanaugh has provided us with a theologically informed account of the issues that are at stake in the debate about the place of religion in political sphere. Cavanaugh directly challenges many assumptions and commonly accepted narratives. His challenge is not only directed at those seeking to fence off the public arena from the intrusion of religion, but also at Christians who are nostalgic for a Christendom-style role for the church and see the apparent return of religion as an opportunity to return to that form of engagement.

The need to keep 'religion' and politics separate has certainly received renewed emphasis since the events of September 11, 2001. Dawkins has argued for the necessity not only of keeping them separate, but for getting rid of 'religion' entirely. Taking a different approach, some historians and political theorists have argued that the West had achieved a separation of religion and politics, an achievement that was now under severe threat, not only by people flying planes into buildings but by people who want to bring theological reasoning and language back into the political arena.

Cavanaugh thinks that the argument is misguided. His starting point is that rather than

... a separation of politics and theology in the modern era, what we in fact witnessed was the transfer of faith to the modern



nation-state. As public Christianity declined in the West, the modern nation-state took on, in different ways, the role of both church and God. This is seen most clearly in the migrations of lethal energy. Today in the West, killing for Jesus or for Christianity is universally considered repugnant, yet the worthiness of killing for one's country or for an ideal such as "freedom" is generally taken for granted.

Over recent centuries, religion, according to Cavanaugh has not "gone away" in the West, it has, rather, migrated towards association with a new object of worship, or to put it another way, there has been a transfer of the "sacred" from the church to the nation-state. As Cavanaugh has argued elsewhere

... the term "religion" has accompanied the domestication of Christianity. It has facilitated the marginalisation of the radical claims of the gospel and the transfer of the Christian's ultimate loyalty to the supposedly rational spheres of nation and the market. The church is now a leisure activity: the state and the market are the only things worth dying for. The modern concept of religion facilitates idolatry, the replacement of the living God with Caesar and Mammon. ("God is not Religious" in *God is Not...* edited by D Brent Laytham, Brazos Press, 2004, p.112)

Citizens now look to the state for hope, comfort and salvation as they navigate the risks and pains of their material life. When nationality becomes the primary source of identity and belonging, the state becomes the god and idol and lives are sacrificed in its defense. In Australia the development over recent decades of Anzac Day as a focus for a civil religion that honours the "sacrifice" of those who died in war, has become a key element in popular accounts of what it is to "be an Australian".

The essays by Cavanaugh in this collection provide a variety of perspectives on what 'the migrations of the holy' from church to state involves and the significance of these migrations for the practice of discipleship and the character of the church in an era of globalization.

Importantly, they address some underlying problems with the way the state has shaped the political imagination of Christians concerning the political character of the church along with a critique of the character of the nation-state. The vigor of Cavanaugh's argument is captured in the titles of some of his chapters; from his opening essay, "Killing for the Telephone Company": Why the Nation-State is Not the Keeper of the Common Good', through "Messianic Nation: A Christian Theological Critique of American Exceptionalism", to "How to do Penance for the Inquisition" you are not going to die wondering where Cavanaugh stands on the theological issues that he deals with.

What is particularly significant in this collection of essays is that Cavanaugh makes it clear how and why

abstract theological accounts of the state, which treat it as a trans-historical, and "essential" feature of human social existence are misleading and dangerous. Such accounts hide from our view both the 'migration of the holy' in the emergence of the contemporary nation-state and the religious demands it places on us as citizens. Cavanaugh takes some important first steps towards re-grounding our approach towards the state as a historically-conditioned and religiously significant institution that is making claims on citizens that may need to be resisted by Christians.

For evidence of the phenomenon of the 'migration of the holy', identified so compellingly by Cavanaugh, in the Australian context we only need to look to the liturgy surrounding Anzac Day, though it now goes well beyond 'the one day of the year'. Indeed, as the historian Marilyn Lake has pointed out,

... The militarisation of Australian history and public memory has a seemingly unstoppable dynamic.

I would even say that the conflation of national history with military history, that is, the assumption that national history is military history, is pretty much complete. Rather than celebrating the diversity of Australian historical and cultural experience, it seems the only thing recent governments want to commemorate is Australia's involvement in warfare.

Take as a case in point the Bombing of Darwin Day, newly added to our national calendar. Australia now has five national days of remembrance: two used for decades to commemorate those who lost their lives in war, Anzac Day (April 25) and Remembrance Day (November 11), plus a further three days, all added in the last five years, Battle for Australia Day (first Wednesday in September), Merchant Navy Day (September 3), and now Bombing of Darwin Day (February 19).

- <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/3845062.html>

This collection of essays should be of particular interest to Anabaptist Christians, as it brings into focus the question of Christian identity in the face of the state claiming our primary loyalty. It is political theology at its best, engaged with the Christian tradition and undertaken to assist the church as a community of disciples to live more faithfully on its way through the world.

While the essays are scholarly and substantial in the level of argument, they are not dull, abstruse in style, or overloaded with footnotes. They certainly place some demands on the non-specialist in theology, but the effort is amply rewarded.

Jesus and Girard: The Gist of The Jesus-Driven Life

The Jesus-Driven Life: Reconnecting Humanity with Jesus, Michael Hardin, JDL Press, 2010.

Reviewed by Rowland Croucher

First appeared on the website John Mark Ministries, www.jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/29114.htm

When well-read Christians list the most influential exponents of their faith the names include Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Barth, Bonhoeffer, Tillich, C.S. Lewis...

Michael Hardin says we must now add the name Rene Girard. Girard's main contribution to Christian hermeneutics? 'Mimetic theory', which, for Hardin, answers Bonhoeffer's key question 'Who is Jesus Christ for us today?'

Brian McLaren writes about a deep shift in American (make that Western) Christianity, especially among its youth. Researcher George Barna (*You Lost Me*) says 18-29 year olds are becoming either 'nomads, prodigals or exiles' as they desert the churches. We have growing movements like the New Monasticism, or radical spiritualities like Shane Claiborne's *The Simple Way*. Even Evangelical scholars/pastors like N.T. Wright, Alister McGrath, Rob Bell, Ben Witherington III and others are doing radical re-thinks of traditional orthodox systems-of-belief and behavior. [1] So this approach is creating quite a stir, especially among conservatives. [2]

It's a bit complicated, but let me try to connect a few dots. In 1996 some researchers in Parma, Italy, discovered 'mirror neurons' in the human brain, which not only guide our actions, but also our perception. Cells "fire" and we move our arm to wave good-bye... but these same cells are also imitation or copy devices: when we see someone waving these same cells "fire" as if it were our own arm waving. Deduction: we are hard-wired to imitate, *and do so from birth* (Hardin's italics, 141). Girard came to the same conclusion but mainly – though not exclusively – from studying the insights of great novelists and playwrights. And theologically, when 'mimetic theory' is viewed through the early church's teaching about the cross of Jesus Christ it becomes transformative. The connection? If God is like Jesus, loving and nonviolent, and is prepared to be done to death by all of us, we have a Model for living which transcends the ugly, warlike way we learned from infancy (Michael suggests that's what 'original sin' might be about). The biblical drama teaches us that 'God in Jesus entered the cultural religion of sacred violence, suffered its most

horrible side effects and revealed that the mechanism is ungodly and doomed' (155).

All of which involves huge leaps of theo-logic, of course, and raises many questions. To take just one at this point: Are Hardin – and Walter Wink, and James Alison and Shane Claiborne and Marcus Borg et. al. – saying that God is not actually violent? Yes. The Bible can only be properly understood from the standpoint of Jesus, 'our primary interpretive matrix' (38). What the church has done, especially since the Constantinian hijack (my term), is to revert to Platonic ways of doing theology, and replace Jesus and the non-violent message of the Sermon on the Mount with a 'Janus-faced god' who is a projection of our own violent way of 'doing life'. Thus we got out of the habit of interpreting the Bible – Old and New Testaments – through the lens of the life and teaching of Jesus. [3]

In short, says Hardin, Christianity is about Jesus, or it is about nothing. 'God is not a mixture of yin and yang, good and evil, terror and love... The gods of our

theologies might be mixed up, but the one who made the heavens and the earth is and always will be the One we are called to love because God is love' (35). And how do we know God is love? Simple: we trust Jesus, who deliberately divorced himself from his contemporaries' violent ideologies. And we are called to follow Jesus and also do the holy work of peacemaking in a world as addicted to violence as it ever was.

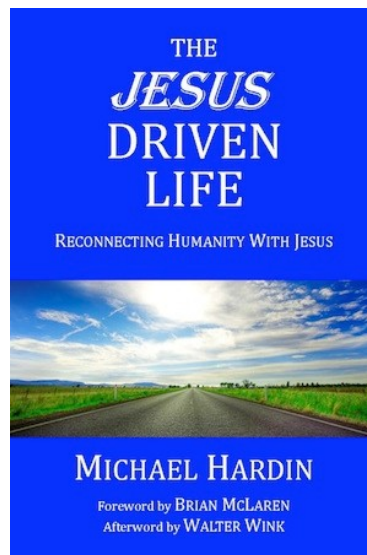
It's an exciting book, and raises some hard questions. It's not an 'easy read' in places, and presupposes a working knowledge of some theological jargon/ideas.

The foreword by Brian McLaren and the Walter Wink's afterword are excellent bookends for Hardin's main thesis. They both highly commend Hardin's work ('magisterial' says Walter

Wink – that's not faint praise!). Let's use McLaren's five point summary-headings (the first five below, to which I've added five more) to summarize the book's main theses:

(1) Jesus. The beginning, middle and end of all Christian life and theology is Jesus. 'The greatest commandment, for Jesus, was a way to interpret the Old Testament that was lived out by Jesus. Jesus spoke of God, the *abba*, as one rich in mercy and not prone to retribution' (154). Jesus' negativity about the Temple rituals mainly had to do with the hierarchical model of sorting out those worshippers – they fitted into strata of holiness, from the outer court of the Gentiles to the Holy of Holies. So also in society [there were] varying degrees of holiness, as Joachim Jeremias has outlined in *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 'It was a hierarchical model, lived out by every group or party except one, that of Jesus' (71).

(2) Scripture. The Hebrew and Christian scriptures affirm God's peaceable purposes for creation/humanity, but since Augustine, Anselm, Calvin and others we theologians and pastors have been 'well trained not to notice'. 'The church until the early second century (for the



most part) interpreted the Scriptures in the light of Jesus rather than Jesus in the light of the Scriptures' (129). Have we not noticed that 'the Hebrew prophets critiqued their own biblical tradition, [and] Jesus followed suit' (166)? 'We are not rejecting parts of the Bible [as Marcion did]; we are simply insisting they be interpreted within the framework given by Jesus and the apostolic church' (184). [4] And, as Michael points out (John 5:39 etc. 251 etc.) it's often those who study the Bible most – then and now – who are least likely to get the point. For example those who condemn same sex relationships, based on five biblical passages, and also most likely to minimize the thousands of references to poverty (271). [5]

(3) Atonement theory. Girard says every culture comprises three pillars: 'prohibition, ritual and myth. These pillars are generated by the mechanism of the scapegoating process' (152). 'Jeremiah [7:21-23] is a trenchant critic of the sacrificial system and the Temple' (301). 'In the cross, as Mark Heim puts it, Jesus didn't get into God's justice machine. God in Christ entered ours' (154) (cf. James Alison's notion of 'the intelligence of the victim'). 'In the cross, scapegoating violence is shown to be the emperor with no clothes' (155). 'His death ends once for all any relationship we have to texts that authorize violent retribution' (229). In summary: 'The death of Jesus is

- The end of sacred violence
- The end of violent Biblical interpretation
- The end of relationships based upon law
- The reconciliation of enemies
- The turning of the ages, the Eschaton' (232). [6]

(4) Violence in human history. President George W. Bush failed to reach out to the two greatest living experts on warfare in the Persian Gulf – his father and his secretary of state – when he ordered the invasion of Iraq. But as Bush told Bob Woodward, there was no reason to ask Colin Powell's advice because he knew the general opposed the invasion. Bush 43 also told Woodward that there was no need to seek out Bush 41's wisdom since he had his "Heavenly Father" to consult! Jon Pahl, *Empire of Sacrifice*, 2009, 'shows that violence is at the structural heart of what it means to be the American people' (307). One of the most problematic texts in the Hebrew Bible is this one: 'I form the light and create darkness. I bring prosperity and create disaster: I the Lord do these things' (Isaiah 45:7). But note that when Jesus read Isaiah in the synagogue (Luke 4:16-30) he omitted 'the day of vengeance of our God'... And then we have post-apostolic church history: 'Augustine paved the way for St. Thomas Aquinas, who attempted to provide the medieval Inquisition with a theological foundation' (quoting Altaner, *Patrology*, 532) (305). [7] In summary: Jesus rejected any relationship of violence (sacrifice) to authentic religion.

(5) God. Michael Hardin denounces – probably 30-40 times – the notion of a traditional 'Janus-faced' God – merciful and wrathful, loving and punishing. The God Jesus preached about and related to is essentially non-retributive, a God of mercy and love and forgiveness, who actually does what he commands us to do i.e. loving enemies. 'The use of violence or retribution did not form

any part of the way in which Jesus perceived God's working in the world' (106). 'Nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus say God is angry or wrathful with sinners' (104).

(6) Revising our theologies. Michael Hardin has journeyed from the Catholic faith of his childhood, through the Dispensationalist fundamentalism of The Thompson Chain Reference Bible of his 'conversion' experience, to his current ecclesiological home within the Mennonite movement. So, with Brian McLaren and others he asserts that there's now 'a new way of thinking emerging that cannot simply be labeled "conservative" or "liberal" or "pietistic" or anything else' (112). He rejects the 'canned' doctrinal approach of Christian fundamentalism, with its 'flat view' of biblical inspiration and its 'Old McDonald' approach to proof-texting ('Here a verse, there a verse, everywhere a verse verse...'). He still likes some of the more enlightened Evangelical scholars (Tom Wright, Alister McGrath). The 'Moral Majority' of Jesus' Judaism caused him the most problems (74). The fundamentalists' 'hell' is reserved for apostates and outsiders; Jesus' preaching about hell was particularly directed at the leaders of Israel (295). He preferred 'Be merciful as your Father in Heaven is merciful' to 'Be holy as I am holy'. 'Holiness caused ostracizing and exclusion; mercy brought reconciliation' (75). The goal of discipleship is not 'I me my' narcissistic accepting Jesus as Savior 'so that when we die we go to heaven' or getting 'peace of mind, blessing, wealth, health or anything else'. 'The goal, the reason we follow Jesus is to serve one another as he has served us' (83). But liberal Christianity is also given short shrift (eg. it threw out the Fourth Gospel because it would not come to terms with the divinity of Jesus). Hardin says that he's appreciated the scholarly offerings of the Jesus Seminar, but he could not follow that movement to its key conclusions.

(7) Action: Our model for existence is summarized in the Sermon on the Mount and the *Didache* – both used as catechetical studies in the early church for Christian neophytes. Walter Wink: 'Jesus' injunction in Matthew 5:38-48 does not counsel letting others abuse you. The Greek verb *antistenoí* does not mean be a doormat, it means that when you are abused (persecuted) you "speak truth to power" by engaging in actions which, while nonviolent, are also resistant' (119). 'There is no record of which I am aware where a Christian convert to Christianity in the first three centuries asks if killing can be justified' (119). The Anabaptist maxim 'to know Christ is to follow him, to follow Christ is to know him' is our valid starting-point' (259).

(8) Anthropology: what are humans really like? 'Our brains are hard wired so that we are always imitating one another' (148). Original sin? We learnt it from each other (144). Thus, says Rene Girard, we are 'interindividual' (147). Further: 'The devil is an anthropological category not a theological one. The devil is about us humans, our violence, our projection, our victimizing, our idolatry'. 'The satanic requires sacrifice, human sacrifice' (174). [8] 'The Powers' are institutions/bureaucracies humans form to regulate behavior. And note that history is about whoever wins battles: 'in the beginning was the weapon' as Andrew McKenna wryly puts it (163).

But the cross turns all this upside down: Christianity is about what Bonhoeffer calls 'the view from below'. 'Mimetic realism' confronts us with our violent selves, and helps us find our true humanity. 'Tears are a second baptism' (John Climacus (c. 579-649) (180).

(9) The Christian life. 'Discipleship was not matriculation in a Rabbinical College but apprenticeship to the work of the Kingdom' (79). 'Ethics is no longer a question of trying to figure out right and wrong; it is about living in relationship with others in the same manner that Jesus lived in relation to others' (82). [9]

(10) Mimesis. Hardin writes:

Mimetic realism is one of the few modern anthropologies that takes the witness of the entire Bible seriously' (148). Further: 'I can no longer do theology *etsi Girard non daretur* (as though Girard did not exist). Rene does not have all the answers, he is not always right. But he is the best guide for where humanity needs to go in its thinking and Christians in their theology as we begin this ominous twenty-first century (169).

Challenging stuff! As the 'Jesus freaks' used to say 'If God is like Jesus, nothing is too good to be true!'

More: visit Michael Hardin's websites

www.PreachingPeace.org , www.TheJesusDrivenLife.com

Footnotes

[1] See <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/29015.htm> – Evangelicals re-thinking issues like abortion and gay marriage.

[2] For the pedant a couple of Hardin's habits are annoying – like his use of Roman numerals for end-notes, and his almost universal preference for it's when the word is its. Some reviewers don't like the annoying title – a take-off of Rick Warren's *Purpose-driven Life*.

And there are some tantalizing idiosyncratic words and memorable phrases sprinkled throughout. Like –

* 'Job had trouble with this kind of [punitive] god and three times threatens to file a lawsuit against God' (85)

* 'The popular relationship between Jesus and God looks more like a good cop/bad cop routine' (86)

* The [Christian feminist] term kin[g]dom of God – a lovely expression in my view

* Unusual words like alterity, rivalrous, victimage, disclosive, originary, anthropologizing... (I just noticed Word put a wiggly red line under all of those, so I'm not the only ignorant wordsmith here).

[3] For example, Augustine, 'the most influential Christian ever... provided a theological justification for victimizing' (123).

[4] Little note to Michael: I like your statement that when 'God' is mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures Jesus was able to tell when his 'Abba' was speaking (209), but another chapter is needed to help us discern this better. You can borrow some of Marcus Borg's helpful insights here.

[5] The notion of social justice tends to be absent from Christian creeds.

[6] Hardin quotes Tom Wright [*Jesus and the Victory of God*, 1996:14]: 'If the main purpose of Jesus' ministry was to die on the cross, as the outworking of an abstracted atonement theology, it starts to look as though he simply took on the establishment in order to get himself crucified, so that the abstract sacrificial theology could be put into effect. This makes both ministry and death look like sheer contrivance' (303). Father Raymund Schwager's *Must There Be Scapegoats?* dramatically changed Hardin's thinking (19). The 'cleansing of the temple' stories are telling us that the end of all sacrifice had come; something new, mercy and compassion – far more pleasing to God than the blood of bulls and goats – replaced sacrifice (77). Medieval atonement theory 'breaks with the New Testament, for the apostolic church did not relate Jesus' death to a wrathful deity. They say the opposite: the initiative for our reconciliation comes from God (eg. Romans 5:6-11, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21) (101). Jesus never says or implies 'that God's wrath must be appeased before God can accept sinners back into the fold. None of the logic of *the sacrificial principle* (his italics) can be found in anything Jesus says regarding his death' (104). He likes this phrase – 'The myth of redemptive violence' (278).

[7] Paul, in his Damascus Road experience is asked about his violence (not whether he wishes to be born again, or become a Christian or whatever): 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' (Acts 9:4). This was the big question for Paul: what was it about Jesus that deserved persecution? (211). Later Paul writes about his Jewish contemporaries reading Torah 'veiled'. 'They read it from the perspective of divinely sanctioned death, through the lens of zeal, that which authorized killing in the divine name' (215).

In John 8:17 Jesus refers to 'your law': the religious authorities used 'the Law as a tool of justification of social violence... In every case where the word *nomos* (Law) appears in the Fourth Gospel, it is strategically tied to the problem of violence... The issue is not Christianity vs. Judaism [but] between those who interpret the Scriptures as justification for violence or whether, like Jesus, many rabbis, the Gospel writers and Paul, interpret the Scriptures as the in-breaking revelation of God's not-retributive character' (252).

[8] The satanic is the human religious impulse toward scapegoating, using violence to cast out violence... The Spirit defends the victim of unjust persecution, exposing the victimizer's lies and vindicates the victim (264). Genesis begins with Abel (the mark of Cain is a reminder that killing will escalate out of control) but ends with Joseph (who could have been retributive, but was reconciliatory' (175). There are three types of victims: the victim of myth, the one who believes they are guilty as charged; the innocent victim like Abel who seeks retribution but whose voice is heard; and the victim like Joseph who seeks to be reconciled with his "enemy brothers". Jesus, says Hebrews (12:24) is like Joseph: his blood speaks a better word than that of Abel' (183).

[9] See T W Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus* (1935; 239-240); also Ben Witherington III *The Christology of Jesus* 16).

Contributor Profiles

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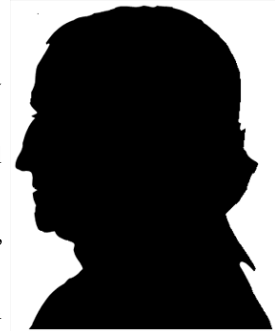
Mark Barnard works for Praxis, a network of Christian practitioners in youth and community work, in Wellington.

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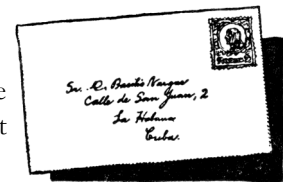
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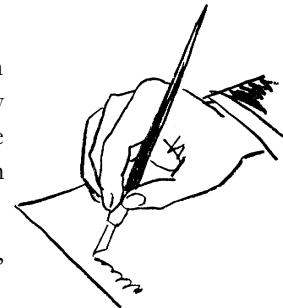
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Submissions are welcome. To contribute, please send your piece to the editor, Nathan Hobby, nathanhobby@gmail.com. Submissions should be in Microsoft Word (any version) or Rich Text Format. Photos or illustrations are helpful. Please provide some brief notes for a profile on you—your city, your website, perhaps your interest in Anabaptism.

For referencing please use in-text style, with author, date and page number in brackets, followed by a bibliography at the end. **Please don't use endnotes or footnotes.**

The theme of issue 53 is sexuality. The deadline is 9 May 2012.

Non-themed submissions are always welcome too.



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