ON THE ROAD

Journal of the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand
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On the Edge of Empire

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Cover: Dhanushkodi church ruin, on an island off the coast of India.

From The Editor

Nathan Hobby

'Edge of empire' can be taken in different ways, as the articles in this issue show. Edge of the Christendom empire. Edge of the Roman empire. Edge of the American empire. Edge in time. Edge in place.

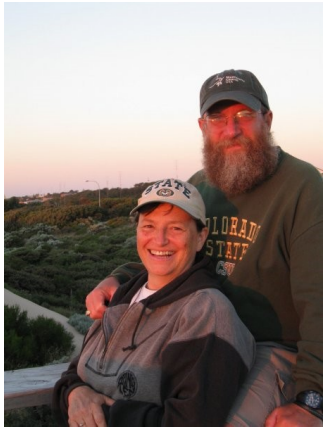
We dip our toes into controversy in this issue. Besides mixing religion and politics (as we always do in the AAANZ) in talking about empire, Philip Friesen, an American Mennonite reader of OTR, has contributed an article on homosexuality. No matter which side he took, there would be people who disagreed, and you may well disagree with this article. I invite anyone who would like to contribute another Anabaptist perspective on this issue to send me something for the next *On The Road*.

The other controversy is Rob Bell—probably not too controversial a figure for our readers, but certainly one in evangelical circles. AAANZ member Jarrod McKenna had an article on Rob Bell and universalism published on the ABC's religion gateway in March—www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2011/03/02/3153165.htm— which is well worth reading. Now Bell's book, *Love Wins*, is actually published, we can feature a review of the book, which you'll find on p.21.

The View From Ephesians 4

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

Mark and Mary Hurst, AAANZ staffworkers



"I read about Anabaptists but I didn't know there were still any living."

"Well, yes there are still a few of us around."

This was one conversation among many we had at the AAANZ information stand at the Surrender 2011 conference held recently in Melbourne. When people approached our stand, Mary would ask them "Do you know anything about Anabaptism?" More often than not the answer was "No."

Sometimes people took some of the AAANZ literature (the most popular piece was "What Is An Anabaptist Christian?") and other times not. But our favourite times were when people stood around and shared their stories. After one long talk with a couple, the husband said, "This is what we were looking for when we came to this conference."

Those who attend events like Surrender are often on a spiritual journey and it is a privilege to be a part of that journey with them. Our new AAANZ banner, used for the first time in Melbourne, features a winding road. As the name of this journal indicates, many of us are 'on the road' with Jesus, and we are not walking it alone.

If you are alone in your Anabaptist journey, we encourage you to find others to walk along. In our AAANZ Mailing we have been suggesting the following ways to join with others:

- Have a "Naked Anabaptist" party where the excellent book by Stuart Murray is introduced and hopefully weeks of study will follow. The book is available from the AAANZ office or online with study guide questions at www.heraldpress.com/Studygds/nakedanabaptist/.
- Gather others together for a time of "table fellowship". Getting together around food and conversation is a good way to build relationships. Include times of sharing, prayer, Bible study, and singing and you have what suspiciously could be called "church". (How radical is that?)
- For those more intellectual types, have a book study. David Augsburger's *Dissident Discipleship* (more details at Baker Books website) is an excellent book to begin with but be creative. Search back issues of *On The Road* for reviews of books that would be good to read and discuss with others.
- Start a prayer group and explore Anabaptist spirituality with *Take Our Moments And Our Days* (www.heraldpress.com/titles/takeourmoments/), a two-volume collection of prayer services designed for use by small groups and individuals.

Don't go it alone. If you need help in finding others contact us at the AAANZ office for more suggestions and the names of others in your area that may want to join you on the road.

A Minority Movement

Doug Sewell, AAANZ President

Being in the minority is tough. A challenge of travelling in a non-English speaking country for me, a predominantly English speaker, is being and feeling the odd one out. Whether the majority are Indonesian or Spanish or speak some other language, I need to adapt and learn in order to survive let alone be understood. Learning a new language is not something that comes naturally to me. The temptation is to search for a fellow English speaker as a way out, but by taking the easier option I become diminished and miss the opportunity to grow from my experience.

As a Christian living in a post-Christendom culture in which the once dominant church is a diminishing minority I face an equal challenge as one of the marginalised to adapt and learn to speak a new language of faith and discipleship.

At the recent Anabaptist conference at the Ngatiawa rural retreat in New Zealand we talked about what it means to be a minority living at the edge of the empire. We heard Dr Stuart Murray Williams speak in realistic terms about the church facing up to a time ahead of transition...needing to move from the centre to the margins, from settlers to sojourners, from a place of privilege to plurality and from control to witness. I found the idea of Anabaptists being a witness from the margins a liberating thought. The realisation of not having to prop up and protect past traditions sets me free. Living at the edge of something new with nothing left to lose but everything to gain brings a freedom to venture out on a road of exploration and discovery.

We have often said that Anabaptism is a journey. It is about a movement on the move. A healthy dynamic is freewheeling and beyond the ability of any one person or group to control. A movement has the capacity to change direction and be blown by a wind of grace. There is a risk though of going off the tracks. But I'd rather be part of a spirit guided movement which embodies the aspirations of a people on a journey together than an institution which relies on regulation and control to stay on a set of inflexible tracks.

The first Anabaptists were a Reformation movement characterised by separate groups that developed without an orchestrated structure. Some of the groups met to formulate confessions in order to give shape to their identity, but more often than not they operated as distinctive witnessing communities on the margins of the dominant mainstream churches. They risked becoming separatist and often unjustly suffered the consequences of being isolated, yet they adapted and grew.

The emerging network of Anabaptists in Australia and New Zealand is typified as a movement of individuals and small groups who are seeking to walk in the way of Jesus. They are a people who refuse to bow down to the material gods of an empire built on consumerism, power and gratification. The Anabaptists will grow as a movement if they can humbly adapt and willingly learn from the experience of being sojourners in a foreign landscape. That is the kind of servant journey I want to embark on.

Reflections on the Edge of Empire AAANZ conference

By Gary Baker

Recently, I was sitting at the Hunter River entrance, which forms the port of Newcastle. Enormous cargo ships carrying loads of coal or grain negotiate the river harbor quickly and safely. How do they do this when the ships are almost as long as the river is wide, and they need to negotiate a 90º bend? They do this with tugboats. The tugboats are small and powerful – able to help the cargo ship change direction in narrow places. The tugs are only required for a short time, until the cargo ship is in the open waters. Is AAANZ a tugboat?

The 2011 AAANZ conference took a broad look at Christianity and the church, over two millennia and into the future. Stuart Murray Williams, from the Anabaptist Network UK, gave some wonderful talks. People from the AAANZ, Urban Vision NZ communities and others joined with our hosts from the Ngatiawa monastery for two days to listen and dialogue.

The early church was changed in the fourth century when the Roman emperor Constantine I adopted the Christian faith and issued an edict of toleration that ended the threat of persecution to Christians in the Roman Empire. The churches were brought from the margins to the centre of society. In the following centuries the system of Christendom took shape. Christendom is an alliance of church and state, which required a cultural accommodation of the church to the world. John Howard Yoder describes this as the Constantinian shift and a grave mistake.

Over the last three centuries Christendom has unravelled and is dying. The church is in decline. We are now in a post-christendom phase. Post-christendom is the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence. The Anabaptist Network UK, have examined this change in depth.[1]

Stuart Murray Williams summarised the changes as transitions:

- From the centre to the margins
- From majority to minority

- From settlers to sojourners
- From privilege to plurality
- From control to witness
- From maintenance to mission
- From institution to movement

However, over the last millennium there have been episodes of radical reformation, which have overcome the Constantinian mistake by a renewal of the entire Christian movement. In the sixteenth century, the Anabaptists came into being. Members of the Anabaptist Network UK have seven core convictions which distill the essence of Anabaptism for today. These have also been used by AAANZ – www.aaanz.mennonite.net/About/Core_Convictions and now described in Stuart Murray's book *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith*[2]. A brief summary is.

- Discipleship as following Jesus
- Hospitality and community
- Peace and evangelism
- Rediscovering the radical Jesus

The conference looked at the church of today and the future; Planting new churches (Urban Expression), transforming old churches, and emerging church.

Stuart suggested that the church of God does not have a mission, but the mission of God has a church. In Post-Christendom the churches are exiles at the heart of empire. Mission after Christendom needs to put down roots, build for the future, take the long view, and seek shalom for the city.

Over the two days of the conference, the participants could join in the prayerful rhythms of the Ngatiawa monastery. This included communal worship, praise, Lord's Supper, and breaking bread together. We were a body of Christ for a short time. We enjoyed the practices that God called the early Christians to live out.

So what of the ships in the port of Newcastle and AAANZ? The ships are churches; perhaps AAANZ is a tugboat. Small, and able to help groups change direction. To do this AAANZ will need to expand similarly to Anabaptist Network UK, fostering relationships between individuals, but also communities, and organizations. Building on the resources to be provided, including speakers, publications, and theology.

[1] "What is post-Christendom?" Anabaptist Network www.anabaptistnetwork.com

[2]Stuart Murray *The Naked Anabaptist* (Scottdale, Herald Press: 2010)

Challenging Empire

By Bill Walker

Along with four other Aussies, including one Palestinian Aussie, I attended Sabeel's 2011 International Conference in Bethlehem in late February, followed by a three day, reflective tour. Sabeel is an ecumenical liberation theology centre working for peace and justice in Israel-Palestine.

It has Friends of Sabeel affiliates in many parts of the world. The local one is Friends of Sabeel Oceania (FoSO).

In forty years of holidaying, this was probably my most unusual and unrelaxing 'holiday', but also among the more energising ones. The statement issued at the end of conference gives a fair summary of the conference:

> To Our Friends and All People of Conscience
>
> As the margins of Empire began to crumble in the Arab world, Sabeel's Eighth International Conference convened in Bethlehem inside the prison walls of imperial rule. We, the participants, 300 people from 15 countries, met from 23rd to 28th February, 2011, to discuss "Challenging Empire: God, Faithfulness and Resistance," surrounded by the unavoidable and cruel effects of empire's rule on the Palestinian people and their land.
>
> We heard how Jesus resisted the arrogance, violence and repression of Empire and became a model for us when he drove out the money changers and confirmed the people's independence from Caesar. Jesus helps us overcome fear and stand in solidarity against Empire. We must follow his example and pray for his courage to resist imperial power, aligning ourselves with the poorest and most oppressed.
>
> We met the victims of Empire in refugee camps, at check-points and in their homes, where they courageously persist in the face of unrelenting oppression. We saw them resist the theft of their homes, fields and water, challenging us to confront Empire in our own countries and in the Holy Land.
>
> We support the Kairos Palestine document and encourage all Christians to read it and act on it. Confronting the root causes of the conflict, this document urges all Christians and people of conscience to help end the military occupation that deprives Palestinians of their rights and condemns both peoples, Israelis and Palestinians, to a distortion of

> their humanity. We see boycott and divestment as non-violent tools for justice, peace and security for all. We say to the churches: come and see. You will know the facts and the people of this land, Palestinians and Israelis alike.
>
> Our word to the international community is to stop the double standards, and insist on the enforcement of international law and U.N. resolutions regarding the Palestine-Israel conflict.
>
> As we depart this conference we hold the United States responsible for the obstacles it has placed in the path of peace, including its veto of a U.N. resolution that condemned Israeli settlement building in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, contrary to U.S. policy stating that settlements are illegal.
>
> We will carry all that we have seen and learned here to our homes and families, our churches and governments, along with the challenges we have accepted for ourselves and our communities.
>
> - Bethlehem, Palestine, 28 February, 2011
> www.kairospalestine.ps

Interspersed with more traditional conference talks and Bible studies were: "Empire on the ground" sessions including worship in solidarity with local Palestinian Christians under the shadow of empire (eg beside the Wall which imprisons the inhabitants of Bethlehem and close to a military checkpoint). There was also inspiring justice-themed workshops in major historic Christian churches in Bethlehem and Jerusalem like the Church of All Nations in Gethsemane.

My group visited oppressed Bedoin and Palestinian communities (one of which had had the makeshift 'houses' in their community destroyed sixteen times by settlers living nearby); met with teams from Operation Dove and Christian Peacemaking; and shared an early morning experience of the humiliating and often arbitrary ordeal suffered by Palestinians in Bethlehem 'lucky' enough to have jobs (often menial and poorly paid), as they negotiate the military check-point into Israel very early on each week day.

Our opening speaker was Mazin Qumsiyah, a professor at Bethlehem University who chairs the board of the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement Between People and is coordinator of the Popular Committee Against the Wall and Settlements in Beit Sahour. So besides being an academic, he is also an activist who coordinates resistance to empire (for more on Mazin and the popular resistance see www.qumsiyeh.org or his books). He reflected on local resistance against the current backdrop of Arab resistance to oppressive rule across the Middle East.

There were ten excellent workshops. Unfortunately many were in parallel. Issues included boycotts, divestments and sanctions (BDS) against Israel; restorative justice; resistance through culture; and also presenting the work of local peace and justice groups based in Israel and the West Bank.

One evening we were entertained by traditional dancing and singing from local Palestinian youth, and an after-dinner speech from Fr Elias Chacour.

We ended the conference planning action back home, working in regional groups. Our FOSO group (five of us) focused on BDS work.

The post conference tour took us to sites in Galilee (such as Mt of Beatitudes and Tabga), a walking tour of Nazareth, including the Luke 4 synagogue - now built over by a mosque, Jericho and the Judean wilderness of Jesus temptation. Sabeel provided alternative reflections which highlighted Jesus's prophetic and peace ministry.

Given this sort of experience, what did I bring back with me?

First, a deeper sense of the varied layers of injustices oppressing Palestinians, both Moslem and Christian, in Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and Israel. Second, renewed energy and theological resources to address these injustices, based on some fresh insight into what reconciliation and peace requires. Third - moving this across to my daily work, which is not explicitly about 'peace' as such - I gained some new clues about where the work of peace fits, based on understanding four dimensions - peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, peacewaging.

Lastly, what could you do to work for peace in the Middle East? One important step you could take is to pray regularly for the Middle East. To help you do this, I suggest you join Sabeel's weekly Wave of Prayer. To check out the latest wave, and to sign up, visit http://sabeel.org/waveofprayer.php You could also register for the excellent newsletter Sabeel send. The next major Sabeel event is its Sixth International Young Adult Conference. This starts on July 20 and is a moving conference across Israel and the West Bank. If you are under thirty, consider attending. If not, maybe you could encourage a young person you know to go.

The Apostle Paul: Mission in the Midst of Empire

How did Paul respond to the empire of his day?

By Caleb Anderson

A select bibliography is provided below; full referencing and footnotes are available on my blog: http://calebmorgan.wordpress.com/2010/12/23/paul-and-politics-2-essays/

The apostle Paul is traditionally considered to be an advocate of political quietism; either by devoting all his attention to personal spiritual matters at the expense of any regard for external and political realities, or by giving active support for the powers-that-be as God's hand-picked servants. The author of the infamous Romans 13:1-7 passage didn't even wait for modern liberal democracy before giving his blessing to the state; he went as far as supporting the relatively beastly Roman empire of his day - or at least not opposing it. Such has been the usual way of looking at Paul in relation to politics and empire. Correspondingly, critics of imperialism both ancient and modern – if they have looked to the Christian tradition at all for support – have rarely looked to Paul. Yet in recent decades, a movement has emerged in Pauline scholarship which finds precisely this kind of counter-imperial sentiment all over the Pauline corpus and at the very core of Paul's theology. This work by Richard Horsley, Neil Elliott, N.T. Wright and John Dominic Crossan (among others) has represented a dramatic rethink of previous assumptions about Paul's political orientation, and his theology as a whole.

This new "counter-imperial Paul" school of thought is an attempt to take seriously the context of Paul's writings. We must understand the religious and political conditions of Paul's world if we want to move beyond hearing one side of a telephone conversation, or avoid anachronistically applying Paul's words at face value to completely different contexts. One of the most fundamental differences between the first and the twenty-first centuries, which must be understood if the full significance of Paul's stance toward empire is to be felt, is that our modern clear distinction between religion and politics simply did not exist in Paul's setting. Indeed, the two questions of what was the dominant religion where Paul lived and wrote, and what was the dominant political orientation, have a single answer: the emperor cult. Caesar demanded

both worship and subjection, and religious propaganda was the primary means by which political control was maintained. The emperor cult surely belongs in both our modern categories of "politics" and "religion", which Wright says "make[s] nonsense of the great divide between sacred and secular." Paul was not promoting a sequestered religion devoid of political content, but offering a political-religious alternative to the emperor cult.

The usual starting point in discussing the counter-imperial Paul is the acknowledgement that many of Paul's favourite phrases and concepts were derived from the imperial cult. Elliott points out that, given the lack of free thought in Paul's world, we cannot expect "a clear, consistent, uni-vocal … 'anti-Roman' posture" from "any first-century Jew." If Paul wanted to criticise the empire, he would have to do so in hidden ways. His favourite way to do this was by co-opting and parodying imperial language to say that that the claims made of Caesar are not true, because they are instead true of Jesus. Other of Paul's concepts and words seem to refer simultaneously to the Hebrew Scriptures as well as imperial ideology, often using the same Greek words, as Paul most often quoted from the Septuagint translation for his Gentile mission. Wright measures these resonances against Richard Hays' criteria for measuring echoes and allusions in scripture and concludes that this theory of Paul lampooning imperial propaganda is "enormously plausible historically" and would have been clear to his original readers.

The most common title for Caesar, not necessarily a divine title, was Lord (kyrios); Paul applies it 230 times to Jesus as if to highlight each time that "Jesus is lord and Caesar is not." Another now-common term for Christ is "saviour" (sôter); this Paul used just once, in Philippians 3. Philippi was a Roman colonial outpost, meaning that its residents had Roman citizenship, and in time of crisis, they could expect salvation (sôteria) from Rome. Paul, on the other hand, tells the Christian community that "our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil 3:20). These and other terms (Divine, Son of God, Redeemer, Liberator), which are now common titles for Jesus, originally referred to Caesar until Paul co-opted them for whom he saw as their rightful owner; "taking the identity of the Roman emperor and giving it to a Jewish peasant."

Paul did not exclusively use Roman terminology for Christ's lordship; he also, of course, hailed Jesus as the long-awaited Jewish Messiah; yet this too is a counter-imperial boast, as the Jewish understanding of their national identity meant that their king was the true king of the entire world; precisely what Caesar laid claim to. Even so thoroughly Jewish a title as "Son of David" could be a dig at the emperor's pretensions, as Roman emperors were eager to claim descent from Romulus and Remus, a 700-year legacy that was the oldest of any world ruler; in evoking his ancestor David, Paul was backing Jesus up with a 1000-year history. Paul's term for the message that Jesus is Lord and King was "gospel" (euangelion), which carried dual resonances both to the announcement by Isaiah's herald of God's return to Zion, and announcements by Roman heralds of some imperial "good news" such as a new emperor's accession or news of victory. In rather ingeniously lining up the news of Jesus with both heralds' announcements, Paul's gospel "cannot but have been heard as a summons to allegiance to 'another king,' which is of course precisely what Luke says Paul was accused of saying (Acts 17:7)."

Yet Paul's vision of Christ as Lord and Saviour involves a radically different model of lordship and saviourhood than Caesar's. Roman lordship is archetypical of worldly political authority; based on violence and exercised primarily by privileged élites. The emperor was merely at the top of a society controlled by "rank, status and convention." Greco-Roman philosophers and intellectuals – from the pre-Socratics, through Plato and Aristotle to Roman thinkers such as Cicero, Virgil, Seneca and Plutarch – consistently reinforced the "self-evident rightness of the social pyramid." Local aristocrats such as Jewish historian Josephus had shared interests with the Roman aristocracy, so they too supported Rome. The status quo, with power and modes of production in the hands of élites and the majority struggling for subsistence, was maintained through shame and honour for the rich and through fear and terror for the poor majority.

Thus the salvation offered by Rome's Lord and Saviour, later dubbed the Pax Romana, was a "peace" bought and maintained "through terror, through slavery, fed by conquest and scrupulously maintained through constant intimidation, abuse, and violence", through the emperor cult and propaganda about "the 'naturalness' of Rome's global hegemony." A slogan of this Roman sôtçria was "peace and security," which Paul mocks in 1 Thessalonians 5:3: "When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them". Once again Paul references an imperial boast, but this time instead of transferring it to Christ he directly confronts it as a "hollow sham."

In contrast, Paul's "good news of Jesus refuses to employ threats and the exercise of power and violence – even the law – as instruments of rulership." Paul's salvation is "an end to the deadly cycle of power,

privilege, law, justice, and violence." To Paul, Jesus' example represents the total renunciation of power, from being "in the form of God" to "taking the form of a slave" and finally being "obedient to the point of death" (Philippians 2:5-8). This renunciation of power will eventually be universal; Christ will "destroy every ruler and every authority and power" and then himself hand over power to the Father; ultimately no human, even Jesus, will hold power; "God will be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:24,28).

The difference between Caesar's and Christ's way of being Lord and Saviour is best shown by the image of the cross. Crucifixion was the typical punishment for lower classes and political insurgents, such as the six thousand crucified for participating in Spartacus' slave revolt in 71 B.C.E. Thus the cross was an "effective and feared symbol of imperial might long before it came to symbolize anything else"; it represented the "exemplary violence that make[s] large-scale social control possible." Yet the cross is precisely what Paul chose as his dominant symbol of the way of Jesus; but its focus is flipped, with Jesus as the victim rather than the inflictor of the cross. The centrality of the cross in Paul's gospel should make clear its political nature, as the crucifixion is "one of the most unequivocally political events recorded in the New Testament." The juxtaposition implied by the reclaiming of this symbol shows clearly the difference between the two candidates for king of the world; Caesar maintains control through violence, while Jesus submits to being killed – even on a cross! (Phil 2:8) – rather than resort to violence. Precisely insofar as the cross represents imperial power, it also reveals "'the rulers of this age' … as "intractably hostile to God" (1 Corinthians 2:8). As Wright puts it, "it took genius to see that the symbol which had spoken of Caesar's naked might now spoke of God's naked love."

Yet if the story ends with the crucifixion, the empire and Caesar have won. The cross is where human possibilities fail for Jesus, but that is precisely where the miracle of the resurrection steps in. Resurrection is the hope that vindicates the way of suffering service, makes it possible and worthwhile (1 Cor 15.32) and spells the destruction of the worldly power represented by the empire and its cross. Wright says that "since earthly rulers have death as their ultimate weapon, the defeat of death in the resurrection is the overthrow of the ultimate enemy which stands behind all tyranny." When combined with the resurrection, the cross goes from being a symbol of Caesar's religious-military power to "the symbol of a power which upstages anything military power can do."

Of course, this victory is not yet fully realised. "Paul sees in the cross the beginning of the destruction of the powers – but only its beginning." Paul understands that the completion of Christ's victory – and empire's loss – must wait until the "end of the age"; the parousia of Christ. Parousia is another political term for the coming of a king or emperor, and Paul uses it alongside a related term, apantesis, meaning the official welcoming ceremony, or in Paul's case the "meeting in the air" of the living and the dead at Christ's second coming (1 Thess 4:17). Paul seems to hold an "inaugurated" eschatology, meaning that God's future reign on earth has partially broken into the present with Jesus as the "first fruits" (1 Cor 15:20) of the resurrection world; there is an "overlap of the ages." This overlap allows Paul to talk of Christ having defeated the powers in the crucifixion and resurrection, while the realisation of this defeat is obviously far from complete; it will have to wait for the end of the age, "when [Christ] hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power" (1 Cor 15:20).

This eschatology, which places Christ at the climax of history, is a major challenge to the propaganda of Roman eschatology, which told the glorious story of Rome's history from Venus through Aeneas and Romulus to the kings of Rome, ultimately reaching its climax in Octavian (or whoever the current emperor was), when Rome became the "mistress of the world". Paul's grand narrative of the world doesn't centre on Rome, and moreover it involves Rome's destruction, along with all other empires, to make way for God's reign. Paul's eschatology is also a challenge to the likes of Josephus who attempted to use the Jewish story to show that God had blessed Rome and their current "Jewish" emperor (and Josephus' employer) Vespasian; Paul stresses that "history was running not through but against Rome and its empire."

At this point, Paul fits within a rich Jewish tradition of resistance to empire. The Jewish people traced the birth of their nation to their liberation from the Egyptian empire, and much of their scriptures were compiled during exile in Babylon. Israel's vision was to be a nation set apart from the pagan empires they were formed in reaction to; their law contained constant reminders of how they "came out of Egypt" and instructions to conduct themselves differently. Prophetic writings such as Isaiah, Daniel and the Wisdom of Solomon, were stronger still in their "political as well as cultural resistance to Western empires." The term for this prophetic tradition is "apocalyptic", a movement which focussed on "future deliverance from imperial domination." J. Christiaan Beker asserts that apocalyptic expectation was "the central climate and focus of [Paul's] thought." Paul sometimes harks back to apocalyptic tradition; his statement that all power and authority will be destroyed is a reference to

Daniel 2, and "what [Paul] does with the Caesar-cult stems directly from what Isaiah does with the Babylonian cult." Yet he also "radicalizes traditional apocalyptic topics" with his idea that the future is already here; he does not just forecast the empire's eventual destruction but proclaims that its destruction has already begun, and establishes counter-imperial communities in the here and now.

What makes the kingdom inaugurated rather than simply delayed is this present element, which finds expression in the communities Paul established and advised. These churches (though such a word is potentially misleading due to modern connotations) were the practical expression of Paul's counter-imperial gospel. Here he goes beyond creating a theoretical parody challenging the ideology of empire: he calls the Christian communities to be an active parody with their lifestyles. The communities were essentially political; the Greek word Paul used for churches, ekklesia, was yet another political term, denoting a citizens' assembly. And they were essentially eschatological; in them 'the day of the Lord' which will destroy the empire "becomes a reality in the life of the community... 'The children of the day' are the architects of the new eschatological community in which the future is becoming a present reality."

These ekklesiai operated with radically different values to the prevailing ethics of the rigidly hierarchical Roman society. In Paul's vision for the ekklesiai, "the principal societal divisions of 'this world … that is passing away' were overcome in these communities of the nascent alternative society:" "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). Paul's community ethics spell "the end of authoritarian (allegedly protective) power" which is so integral to Roman order; replacing it with "an environment of loyalty and solidarity, of fidelity and confidence, of spirit and community." One example was Paul's championing of mutual aid, including the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. This horizontal economic reciprocity opposed the pervasive Roman system of patronage and benefaction whereby order and the status quo were maintained by the powerful buying loyalty from those underneath them. These relationships were "created and practised for the benefit of the elite, and not for the poor" and Paul refused to partake in them.

Paul's ethics are modelled primarily on the example of Jesus, summed up by the cross. This means overcoming evil with good, loving enemies, associating with the lowly, renouncing power, becoming a slave to all, humbly considering others better than oneself, and serving others even unto death (Romans 12:9-13:10, Philippians 2:1-11). If this were merely advice to a following class, Paul's advice could be construed as supporting the status quo as the Greco-Roman philosophers did. Yet Paul knew no class, and service even unto death was his demand to all. There were none who could use status to avoid the injunction to serve; certainly not Paul, and not even Christ himself. Indeed, it was quite the reverse; Paul modelled this model of service to his ekklesiai, and as for Christ – whom Paul considered the rightful owner of all the authority claimed by Caesar – Christ was where the suffering servant model came from in the first place.

It is in this gospel of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus – in all its implications – that Paul sees God bringing justice to the world. Romans 1:16-17 says that the gospel unveils God's righteousness/justice (dikaiosyne). This word carries dual resonances for Paul's first-century readers. Firstly, it is the Septuagint word used for covenant faithfulness, and thus recalls the Abrahamic covenant to bless the entire world through Abraham's descendants. And secondly, it denotes the Roman ideal of justice. Dikaiosyne – or its Latin equivalent iustitia – had close links to the imperial regime; "Rome prided itself on being … the capital of Justice, the source from which Justice would flow throughout the world." Imperial propaganda declared that with the reign of Augustus – and later Nero – Rome had entered into a "golden age" which meant "the return of Faith and Justice to rule over the earth, the flourishing of Law and Right, a flood of piety." Elliott suggests that Paul is reacting against these boasts with his "indictment of wholesale human wickedness" in Romans 1. With his use of the word dikaiosyne, Paul is saying that true justice cannot be brought to the world by Caesar, but only by Jesus, who is God's fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant promising just that.

So how important was this counter-imperial position for Paul? Given the first-century impossibility of 'serving two masters,' Paul's understanding of the upside-down nature of Jesus' Lordship to Caesar's, the eschatological promise that the empire would soon be destroyed and the establishment of communities living as if it has already happened, it would seem to be vitally important. His message did not just have "a few social or political implications"; instead, it was "subversive to the whole edifice of the Roman Empire." And his mission was "not simply catalyzing religious congregations of Gentiles, but … organizing an international anti-imperial alternative society based in local communities." Crossan says that "without seeing the archaeology of Roman imperial theology, you cannot understand any exegesis of Pauline Christian theology."

The recent counter-imperial scholarship "suggests a re-examination of what it is that Paul is against primarily." Paul has traditionally been held to be essentially responding to Judaism, promoting an alternative based on grace rather than works. From the counter-imperial perspective, Paul's challenge to Judaism was a transformation from within, while his fundamental, front-on target was imperial ideology. As such, we cannot understand Paul without understanding his counter-imperial stance.

The movement towards construing Paul's theology as counter-imperial is a dramatic departure from traditional ways of understanding Paul, particularly his political orientation. "The common view [has been] that Paul was uninterested in political realities"; which in practice has made him a social conservative. From early on, Paul's followers were anxious to temper his political edge; some of these attempts may be visible within the New Testament itself, as is suggested for Luke and Hebrews. Several of the counter-imperial scholars consider that the deutero-Pauline letters represent a softening of Paul's radical political and social attitudes; certainly in the "conservative Paul" of the Pastorals but also in the "liberal Paul" of Ephesians and Colossians. Wright, denying that the latter two are post-Pauline, calls that distinction "absurd," and a counter-imperial thrust can certainly be perceived in Colossians and Ephesians too; though perhaps only to the extent of a political liberal like Wright, rather than a radical like Elliott or Horsley. Elliott notes that the pseudo-Paulines stress that the powers are created and will be redeemed, while the undisputed letters do not hold back from preaching their destruction.

In any case, by two centuries later, the radical politics of Paul had been well and truly betrayed when "what [had] started as an anti-imperial movement became the established religion of empire." For the next thousand years, the opinion-shapers in the established churches shared power interests with the empire, and later nation-states. They were no more likely to honour the counter-imperial tradition within Christianity than Josephus was to honour the anti-imperial tradition within Judaism. For teaching about Christian political responsibility, those passages in Paul which are on the surface most friendly to the state, such as Romans 13:1-7, have been relentlessly used and abused to promote loyalty to the established order. This has led to near-consensus, at least in the established churches, that Paul was a political conservative. Meanwhile, Paul's many – usually more subtle – attacks on empire have been ignored.

The Enlightenment brought separation between church and state, meaning that the church was once again theoretically free to criticise empire, but by that stage the Reformation was already well underway, with its assumption that Paul was only interested in "spiritual" matters; specifically, challenging Judaism. Church and state were separated not because the way of Jesus is inherently anti-power and political power corrupts the church, but because religion and politics were by now considered separate spheres of life. And so the separation of church and state did not reverse the effect of their combination. Over "the Enlightenment's shrunken definition of 'religion'" the church was granted free reign, but in the political sphere the state was still Lord. A quick glance at Romans 13 was enough to reinforce the previous consensus that Paul was an enthusiast for the establishment.

This forced separation of politics and religion – which affects other fields of scholarship and "not only scholarship but whole societies" – remained frozen throughout much of modernity, but in the last few decades it has been showing some signs of thawing. If the presupposition that Paul was not interested in politics was a factor of modernity, this "paradigm shift" towards seeing Paul as anti-imperial is a factor of post-modernity or late modernity. Largely due to the influence of post-colonialism, scholarship in general has been realising the importance of imperial contexts; Elliott quotes Palestinian post-colonialist Edward Said that "we are at a point in our work where we can no longer ignore empires and the imperial context in our studies." Non-western voices in biblical studies have aided in the increasing awareness of the importance of empire; affecting first Old Testament studies, then historical Jesus scholarship, and finally Pauline studies.

Another way in which late modernity has impacted upon Pauline scholarship is in the post-Holocaust lessons Western society has learned. The tyranny of the Nazi regime called governments into question and made it far less politically dangerous to talk of opposition to imperialism. Meanwhile, the eagerness to avoid anti-Semitism has prompted scholars to rethink Lutheran assumptions about Paul and Judaism, which has led to a "new perspective on Paul." This new perspective had "gaps" as it still understood Paul primarily over and against Judaism rather than imperial theology, but this "breath of fresh air" in Pauline scholarship has certainly aided the burgeoning "anti-imperial perspective." N.T. Wright, one of the leading figures in the New Perspective, has recently begun to see the relationship between Paul and empire as the "leading edge" of Pauline studies.

As we have seen, there is much evidence for the idea that Paul's theology is counter-imperial. The acknowledgement of this facet of his thinking, and the centrality of this facet to his overall theology, is a potentially

massive departure from previous ways of understanding not just Paul's political orientation, but his theology in general. "Paul and empire" is still a new field with plenty of room for new research, and it remains to be seen how substantially this new current in Pauline studies will affect the church and the world. There are no doubt massive implications for modern Christians and churches in how they relate to modern incarnations of empire and imperialism; just what those implications are is another huge question. Suffice it to say that Paul would not only be horrified that the history of interpretation has largely ignored the counter-imperial nature of his gospel, but scathing of modern-day Josephuses within Christianity who attempt to accommodate his gospel to the current imperial order.

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A Small Thought About Empire

By Karlin Love

Several years ago, we were visiting a friend with a new, small Peugeot. I insensitively commented that it looked just like a new, small Holden. This didn't go over very well. Of course the Peugeot was better! It cost a lot more. Brand loyalty because it was a bigger investment. We want a return on our investments. The higher the price, the more we want to know it was worth it, especially in modern Western, middle - and upper-class cultures.

At the time of Abraham, child sacrifice was possibly common among neighbouring religions. He didn't question the practice when God gave him instructions. It wasn't out of the realm of his imagination of what a god might require. It did fly in the face of the promises, but gods are gods.

Perhaps God had him offer Isaac, right up to the moment of drawing the knife, to show Abraham that Yahweh is not like the other 'gods'. The Creator of the Universe doesn't need to be fed with the blood of children, with the sacrifice of those we love. The God of Love is different. Quality is not determined by price.

When governments refer to those who 'made the ultimate sacrifice' let's not be swayed by the high cost, and in our brand loyalty neglect to question and call to account those who sent them to the altar.

The Waiters Union And Christian Anarchy

By Jim Dowling and Anne Rampa

First published in **Learnings: Lessons We Are Learning About Living Together,** a book about the Waiter's Union, a network of households in Brisbane's Westend. The book is reviewed on p.25.

We come from a Catholic Worker tradition, where anarchism is an integral part. We have also been part of the wider Waiters Union network since its beginnings.

For most Christians the word anarchism has only negative connotations, but just as there seem to be many interpretations of how to live a Christian life, so anarchism is open to all sorts of variations.

For us Christianity and anarchy came together firstly when Cain asked God the all-important question, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'(Gen.4: 9). For Christians the answer is a clear 'Yes'.

God tells the Israelites what a disaster it will be if they become like other nations and appoint a "king" as their "keeper." The king will take their sons and daughters and make them work for him and his officials, that they will become enslaved to him, and that they will cry to Yahweh because of the king they have chosen, 'but on that day Yahweh will not hear you'(1 Sam. 8: 7- 9).

This may seem a different situation to the one we have here in Australia, because we have the power to elect new leaders on a regular basis, although in theory we still do have a "queen". But our enslavement to this system deserves a closer examination and our passing of our Christian responsibility for others onto the government is obvious. The Israelites wanted a king to 'rule us and lead us and fight our battles'(1 Sam. 8: 21). They no longer wanted or trusted God to do so - and we are no different today.

We would argue that instead of a "king" we are ruled by the more abstract tyrant of modern capitalism, embodied in the "businessman". Peter Maurin, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement wrote 'Modern society has separated the Church from the State, but it has not separated the State from business. Modern society does not believe in a Church's State; it believes in a businessmen's State. And it's the first time in the history of the world that the State is controlled by businessmen.'

Now that economics directs our lives, instead of God, we accept the giving of a monetary value to everything we do. What is given the least monetary value but the care and companioning of the old, young, sick, imprisoned, and poor – the very ones to whom Christ directs us in order to be involved with Him. Jesus told us clearly that we can't serve God and money, and a system that is set up to make money for us will inevitably lead us away from our God.

A Christian anarchist chooses God, as revealed to us in the life and words of Jesus, to be our "ruler". Much inspiration for this comes from the Beatitudes. The repeated reading of the Beatitudes converted the hard-nosed atheist anarchist, Ammon Hennacy, to

Christianity and it will convert us too – away from violence and towards poverty, gentleness, compassion, purity, seeking after justice and peace. It will help us joyfully accept derision and conflict that comes our way because we are always working and living "against the tide" when we seek the Kingdom of God.

The Waiters Union embraced this radical new direction towards God by firstly looking for the needs around us which we could help meet, then caring for and companioning those people without any concern for monetary input.

We were quickly plunged into the issue of the displacement of the poor in our neighbourhood, because of Expo 88. We organised ways to confront that personally and politically in a campaign that involved prayer, fasting, picketing, rallies, and rewarding landlords that resisted the temptation to make money from the situation. The media were invited to come and celebrate our efforts with us. It was very successful and there have been the flow on effects of preserving and building homes for the poor in the inner city, where services are more available to those without transport of their own.

As a community, we were already offering a home to those in need of accommodation. We shared their lives and struggles without payment from government or church. When the Waiters Union was formed, we felt a kinship immediately with these other people gathered to serve Christ in the poor at a "personal cost" and found mutuality, support and fellowship with them.

We have had the luxury of enjoying the relationships, distributing information, and generally fitting in where we could while having very little to do with the day-to-day practicalities of organising and housekeeping. We avoided decision-making on direction and organisation, but of course we are not alone in this. There was no compulsion to take a part in anything which no doubt caused frustration for those organising. We have contributed very little to the financial running of the Waiters Union (mea culpa!).

However, close association with the Bristol Street house began. This house was a community house of (mostly) young people associated with Waiters Union, experimenting with living together, and serving one another and the poor of West End. We swapped prayers, insights, guests, stories, tears, and laughter.

An-archy means "without rulers". If one believes in a sacred equality of all people, and not in a system of some having power over others, then it seems the only way to survive is to love one another, to serve one another, to "wait on" one another, as the name "Waiters Union" implies. Anarchism becomes not an act of angry rebellion but an awesome acceptance of personal responsibility - for one another and the world around us.

For us it also intrinsically includes the rejection of any sort of violence as a means to try and solve our problems. This means we resist our society's obsession with "violent solutions" in the waging of war, provision of abortion services, and other more subtle forms of violence such as racism. We confront these in a variety of ways, including nonviolent direct action, which could end in arrest and imprisonment, and sometimes has. Without a supportive network like the Waiters Union around us it would have been so much harder to maintain this level of resistance, especially as we began to have children.

Does the Waiters Union function as some ideal of anarchist organising or Christian living? Very few, possibly none, of those involved over the years would answer, "Yes".

We watched from the sidelines the inevitable fights over power and direction of the Waiters Union. (We often experienced similar conflicts in our own small community.) We have remained good friends both with people who have left the Waiters Union very bitter over these issues, as well as those still there. The truth is the Waiters Union has not always functioned as a perfect model of anarchy or of Christianity.

However, our most common observation has been that many of the complaints about "power", have involved a desire for "perceived power" without a corresponding desire to take on all the responsibility it entails. We have never felt that space has not been given for us to speak or act. At the same time, being the flawed humans we are, there is little doubt that some of the criticism of those "in power" is valid.

Generally however, we would say the Waiters Union has functioned as a group with the most amazing amount of egalitarianism in terms of respect for one another. Perhaps from an underlying philosophy of respect for the marginalised, there seems to be little room for elitism in day-to-day relationships.

The Waiters Union has often embraced some of the most marginalised people from hostels or refugee camps and put them at the centre of community living. Not just eliminating a society where the leaders "lord it over others" as Jesus warned the disciples against (Matt. 20: 24-28), but building a society where those with little power or respect from society can have a voice.

In doing this we have often seen in the Waiters Union the beautiful and moving reality of Christian anarchism at work.

God, Gays and Mennos

By Philip Friesen

A Hermeneutical Question

Is the boundary defining marriage revealed in Genesis an insulated wall of concrete and steel that cannot stretch or bend, or might it be more like a living membrane that can expand or contract depending upon circumstances? If the latter, how much stretching can the system tolerate without destroying the purpose of marriage? This is the issue at hand.

Mennonites traditionally do not participate in war as a matter of conscience. The most common theological defense for this position is the centrality of Jesus Christ. While much of scripture would seem to support a different position, it appears utterly clear that Jesus would not ever require carnal warfare to accomplish his purposes. Mennonites have not condemned those who carried weapons for self-defense, but have taught that to do so would be to live "outside the perfection of Christ."

Does Jesus speak to the issue of homosexuality? Those who want to find a lesson of Jesus directly teaching about this will be disappointed, but that does not mean we can learn nothing from Jesus about this issue. The question I ask is hermeneutical. Jesus often interpreted scripture; therefore, he practiced hermeneutics. What might we observe and learn from him in how he did this?

The Importance of People in the Process

When I was preparing to leave home to be a missionary, my friend, Tom, came 400 miles to say goodbye. He and I had a history of travel together, camping trips, long conversations on politics, religion, art, and science, and he had played violin at my wedding, but we had never seriously discussed homosexuality. Tom waited until the day of parting to tell me he was gay. I believe he thought this visit would be our last goodbye and that I would not want to see him again, but I was happy to tell him our friendship would not suffer because of what he told me.

Christians who advocate for gay marriage and ordination of practicing gays in the church inevitably have a friend, or more than likely a family member who is gay. Seeing the spiritual gifts of a person, observing the work of God's spirit in another's life, and entering into their struggles inevitably challenges some of our most deeply held convictions. That is why I write this paper.

I grew up in a Mennonite home and registered for the draft as a conscience objector. In college I met Christians who challenged my position. I found none of their arguments convincing, but one thing did challenge me seriously, and that was their lives. I saw the presence of Christ and the power of God's Spirit in so many lives that I had to rethink my position, and by graduation I had abandoned the peace position. It took more than three decades before I was able to reintegrate a Mennonite perspective into my theology on peace.

This paper seeks to integrate both the recent experience of the church and the theology of the

church with regard to homosexual marriage and ordination. I hope it serves to clarify our thinking, glorify our Lord, and maintain the unity of the Spirit whom he has given us.

An Example from Jesus

In Matthew 19 (and also Mark 10) some of the other teachers asked Jesus' views on divorce. Did Jesus agree with those rabbis who allowed divorce only if one's wife had been sexually active with another man, or did Jesus agree with those who wanted to give the husband the arbitrary power to divorce his wife for any reason? The discussion that followed reveals a great deal about Jesus' approach to interpreting the Old Testament. In his response, Jesus drew a line between the creation story and the rest of the Old Testament.

In Mark's account Jesus referred the questioner first of all to Moses. How did they read the scripture? According to Moses a man could divorce his wife if certain procedures were followed—procedures that gave the community and the woman's family time to make other provisions for her needs.

After hearing their answer, Jesus reversed Moses altogether with an appeal to the creation story. Jesus' explanation of Moses is revelatory. "Moses gave this command due to your hard (unbelieving), hearts," Jesus said. "In the beginning it was not so." Jesus explanation makes Genesis 2 definitive as to God's design and intent. Jesus points beyond the law to an original blueprint at the beginning.

Jesus could not appeal to a command against divorce in the beginning, as divorce is not mentioned in Genesis. Jesus' teaching is inferred from the fact that "the two become one" by an act of God. The case for marriage being specifically a male/female relationship is actually stronger than the case against divorce, because the original declaration makes a point of it, and Jesus draws our intention to that fact. "God made them male and female." Male and female is foundational to the concept of marriage in the beginning. The same hermeneutics Jesus applied to divorce would also appear to rule out homosexual marriage.

The purpose of marriage is for male and female to become indivisibly one, reflecting in a microcosm of humanity the image of God—the covenant keeping God who is eternally trustworthy and faithful. The ideal of faithfulness in marriage is rooted in the Trinity.

The love of male and female in marriage is the sign revealing most perfectly in our humanity the true nature of divinity. The basic problem with homosexual marriage is that in a homosexual relationship, half of the human race is not represented. It reveals a distorted picture of God. Simply put, homosexual marriage cannot be the image of Trinity.

This original design in Genesis becomes the vision of Jesus for all humanity in John 17 – 'that they may be one as we are one' - and this vision underlies the entire Biblical story. In Revelation it climaxes with the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is the foundational truth that ties the Biblical vision from Genesis to Revelation together—one Trinitarian God and one two-gendered humanity become one in Christ. The prescription in Genesis 2:24 that a man leaves his father and mother and becomes one with his wife is the prescription for the incarnation as well, according to which the Son left the Father to become one with his bride upon earth, the church. In the language of the gospels we can say that marriage of man and woman is a "sign" of the incarnation.

Paul Eddy (2011) has suggested that sex is the ritual sign of a covenant just as Holy Communion is the sign of a covenant. Communion is repeated again and again to remind us of the vows we made to our Lord in baptism. Sex is repeated again and again to remind the couple of the vows they made for marriage. The design of God for sex is a life-long exclusive relationship that propels a man and woman towards an intimacy that mimics the love God is. Symbolically the entire race is represented in every marriage through the union of man and woman, and this union in the flesh is to be the sign of a deeper union in the spirit through Christ.

Yves Raquin (1979, p. 126) wrote, "The Father is Father in the depths of the Son and the Son is Son in the depths of the Father, and the relation which is the love of the two is called the Spirit." In marriage, the man is the man in the depths of the woman, and the woman is the woman in the depths of the man, and the relation which is the love of the two is called marriage. This is not to say that marriage is all there is to being the image of God, but marriage as God intended is the essential foundation for humanity to be the icon of what God is.

By design marriage unites the entire human race as one symbolically in the union of both genders; and thus reveals in a microcosm what God is. This is the highest expression of what it means to be the image of God. All human potential is present in this relationship.

Further Evidence from Paul

There is evidence that Paul followed the hermeneutics of Jesus. For Paul, the law was made necessary because of sin; in Galatians 3:23-25, the law is our tutor until Christ. Like Jesus, Paul puts the law in its place with an appeal to Abraham's faith, which came before the law. While this is not an appeal to creation as in Jesus, it is an appeal to the earliest foundations of Israel's faith in Genesis. Paul's hermeneutic follows the pattern Jesus used.

When Paul wrote to Rome from Corinth, he described the Roman world as he saw it in Romans 1:18-32, a world of degraded sexual disorder. In the Roman world marriage was a legal contract entered voluntarily by a man and woman that could be abrogated by either one at any time. Marriage was encouraged by the state for the sake of procreation, but the enjoyment of sex could be found outside marriage with either gender just as acceptably as within marriage; furthermore, the Romans were just as obsessed with sex as we are (Clark, 2003: p.88, 159). With regard to this situation, William Barclay once suggested that the example of relatively stable and happy Jewish families was a major attraction bringing God-fearing Gentiles to the synagogue. The family orientation of the Jewish community would have been the attraction.

Paul's social commentary in Romans 1:18-32 began with people who knew God, but rejected him and exchanged the worship of God for the worship of nature. The first consequence of this mistake appeared in the relationship of male and female, resulting in sexual confusion and chaos. The disintegration and loss of wholesome relationships within the male/female marriage arrangement spiraled downward until many persons born into this sexually chaotic and identity confused world lost even the ability to identify with their own gender. According to this understanding, homosexual disorientation (rather than orientation) is the last step in the downhill process of a society given over by God to "degrading passions." One is reminded of Exodus 20:5 where the consequences of the father's sins reach to the third and fourth generation. There is a clearly discernable downward social spiral.

It is important to recognize, however, that in Romans 1 Paul is not talking about personal salvation, nor is he condemning the homosexual condition. The thrust of the passage is best described as social commentary on the whole of a society in moral decline. Paul describes sexual chaos as the "sign" of God's judgment in a way similar to how Jews wanted signs of God's endorsement for Jesus in the gospels, even though he doesn't use the term. The list of "unacceptable thoughts and indecent behaviors" in Romans 1:28-32 (New Jerusalem Bible) are the judgment to which God had abandoned Roman society.

Paul's description also applied to the Jews. Romans 1:18-32 parallels the story of Genesis 1-6, where polygamy appears after the fall (Friesen: 2010, chapter 2), the orgy of sex and violence in the book of Judges, and the monarchy after David, whose first six children had six different mothers. The same moral decline Paul observed among the Romans had repeatedly occurred in the Old Testament, and Paul would have noticed the similarities. In the following chapters Paul demonstrates that Jew and Gentile equally share the same problem, but can be saved by the same faith in Jesus Christ.

Applying Paul Today in Society

I suggest the process of social disintegration Paul described can also be discerned in the recent history of the USA, a story similar to the experience in Australia and New Zealand. In the sexual revolution of the sixties, we began to think of marriage as a social contract at best, and a mere piece of government paper at worst. With the encouragement of our professors, and the entertainment industry, my generation of youth decided that sex before and outside of marriage was nothing terrible, and God's design was essentially repressive and flawed. We believed we had finally figured out what was good and what was evil, and we took the forbidden fruit.

The result has been disaster. When inviolable trust between marriage partners is no longer the norm, trust will decline everywhere, and violence will follow, both domestically and in society. Today confidence in society's main institutions of government, church, and business is lacking, while confidence in marriage as a viable institution has precipitously declined. The number of adults who are married and stay married is now less than a majority (http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1802/decline-marriage-rise-new-families). Fear has given the USA the highest military budget in the history of the world, and the ubiquitous presence of security cameras reveals how little we trust each other. The root of this violence and distrust in society germinated in the bedrooms of the nation, and now the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from

which we ate in our generation has born fruit and is scattering seeds everywhere. The USA has the highest total documented prison population in the world (www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incarceration_in_the_United_States).

This is exactly what one could expect based on Romans 1, and it should be no surprise that public discourse today becomes more vitriolic as passions grow year by year. The pattern follows Paul's description. First trust in the goodness of God's commands was discarded, then trust between men and women in the sexual relationship was violated, and finally trust in humanity itself is in danger.

In our society, we followed that same pattern Paul describes. Instead of God, we chose to worship science and all the inventions science had given us to solve life's problems; for example, contraception and abortion were seen as the solution to any problem of unwanted pregnancy. We worshipped the inventions (gods) we had made and God gave us up to our passions so that sex now dominates everything. In opposition to the current state of the social sciences, Paul describes homosexual disorientation as a consequence of this social, sexual chaos. In Darwinian terms of competition and survival of the fittest, homosexuality is the end of the line. I suggest when these gender-confused individuals become consumed with the same lust that is rampant in all of society; they are the first to become victims of loneliness, despair, promiscuity, and disease. This is why gay marriage appears to be needed, but in the beginning, God did not provide for that option.

Western society today is individualistic and personal happiness is the ultimate value. Guided by this value, personal choice and social equality are the means that supposedly guarantee the best chance at personal happiness for every individual. If one adds the notion that everyone has a right to have sex, then choice in the matter must be a purely individual decision with nearly all options open. When personal happiness and self-expression is the ultimate value, the boundary of marriage will be destroyed.

The demands of the gospel, however, do not cater to personal happiness. When a happiness-oriented, Euro-centric, individualistic value set is adopted, then gay marriage becomes a perceived necessity so that homosexual people may share the same expected joys of intimacy and personal fulfillment heterosexual people are believed to enjoy. However, the decline in marriage today suggests that marriage is not living up to people's expectations or bringing happiness.

This is because sex has become an end in itself, with marriage as only one possible means to that end.

However, in God's design sex is not an end in itself, but rather a means towards achieving a quality of intimacy that mimics the intimacy of Christ and the church by the Holy Spirit.

In our rejection of God, my generation lost all respect for things sacred. In the home where I grew up we learned early that to speak of sex was to speak of something awesome and godly. Sex was something our parents did in private, and it was something mystical and marvelous that only parents knew about. Later it was shocking for me to hear my generation of students calling my understanding of sex "repression". It seemed to me they had no concept of things truly sacred.

Intimacy and trust are things most sacred. Sex, however, is not the only route to true intimacy. If it were, then homosexual marriage would be absolutely necessary, and God would have provided for it in the beginning. Intimacy is possible for any who walk with God; therefore, marriage is not an absolute human need.

In our culture, marriage is now seen to be a contrivance for achieving personal happiness and equality before the law, and not the bedrock of social order. Following this assumption, the justice of human equality Americans believe in demands homosexual marriage. It is needed as surely as are no fault divorce courts and abortions on demand. I am going to argue that there is a place for gay marriage, but it is not the place gay marriage advocates would want to see.

It would appear the real issue at stake regarding homosexual marriage for Christians is which Bible governs our minds? Do we read the human rights documents of our time through the lens of scripture, or do we read the Bible through the lens of these documents we humans have written? Fortunately in the church we have an entire world of non-western cultures to help us think about this issue. We need to ask them for their broader perspective, and my application following includes some of that needed conversation.

Applying Jesus and Paul to the Church

There is a yet place for homosexual marriage.

In order to properly apply Jesus' teaching about marriage today, we need to notice one more thing about the text in Matthew 19 and Mark 10. Jesus did not condemn Moses for permitting divorce. He did not even scold his hearers for their unbelief. If we

take Jesus' approach as a model, we should not condemn those who permit gay marriage. The one caveat is to recognize the reason Jesus gives - our hard, unbelieving hearts. Gay marriage is outside "the perfection of Christ," to use Anabaptist terminology, but it may be as necessary in our fallen world as are divorce courts and military force to restrain the chaos brought about by sin. We sometimes must work within these structures, but at the same time call the community to the kind of faith that will make them obsolete.

As already stated, accommodating structures are social arrangements God permits but did not intend. Homosexual marriage could be a restraint that protects practicing homosexuals and provides them stability in relationship, so long as they abide by the covenant they make. How viable this might be over the long term has yet to be determined. The sexual response of males and females is different, and God designed for this difference to be a part of the challenge in sexual relationship for personal growth. Still God can work through less than perfect social arrangements. He does this all the time.

Throughout history, variations from the Genesis model for marriage have been widespread - the wall defining marriage has been stretched and torn in every possible way, and has been institutionalized in the practice of polygamy. In our response to the gay marriage agenda, it will be worthwhile to look at how the church in our day handles polygamy in places where it is normative.

Recently I asked Africans from Ethiopia, Cameroon, and Kenya to describe for me how the church handles polygamous marriages, and their answers were generally the same. Today, the church quite consistently opposes polygamy, but does not bar polygamists from membership. Nonetheless, many churches restrict leadership to monogamist persons, which often means the first wife in a polygamist marriage will be allowed leadership roles, but not her husband or any of the other wives. No one who takes a second wife can be a member in good standing. This seems to be the most common approach. Certainly we can learn from the Africans how we might handle cases outside "the perfection of Christ" built upon the Genesis model Jesus used.

I suggest we learn from the African churches. As with polygamy, so with gay marriage— it is not our job to destroy relationships that exist prior to faith in Christ, but it is our job to warn against entering relationships that fall outside "the perfection of Christ," and we dare not honor such relationships with rites of blessing or invite such persons into significant positions of leadership.

Mennonites do not condemn those who carry weapons in uniform, or those who administer the flawed laws of flawed earthly governments. But our teaching remains the same on the issue of violence, and we do not offer formal prayers in church for the protection of those who go to war. Rather, we are required by the demands of the gospel that we pray for our enemies. The teaching on sexual matters must also remain the same as the only Biblically defensible position.

Our Mennonite teaching on war limits our ability to serve military people. Our offer to help returning veterans would not be appreciated by all, but the door is never entirely closed, and we can serve some of them. We also must recognize the presence and gifting of the Holy Spirit in many chaplains and other brothers and sisters in uniform. They are still one in Christ with us, and Christ blesses and uses them. God calls people from everywhere. We are not called to judge, but we are called to bear witness to the truth we have been given.

In the same way we must recognize the gifts and calling of homosexual people. God will call some of his servants to minister within social contexts that in principle, we cannot approve, and some of them will see things differently from what I propose; however, I believe time will vindicate the Genesis model for marriage I have recommended.

Today it is popular in radical Christian circles to be against war, but it is not popular to teach chastity or purity in sexual matters. Let us not be successful in teaching what is popular and fail to teach what is unpopular when God's word is clear about both.

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- **See also a review of *Reasoning Together: A Conversation on Homosexuality* on p. 26. Other perspectives on this issue are, of course, welcome.**

BOOKS

Not quite a review: Responding to *Poetry and Prophecy* by Kristin Jack

By Doug Hynd

Poetry and Prophecy / Kristin Jack
(Servants to Asia's Urban Poor, 2010)

Memoir and autobiography have been common forms for reflection on the path of discipleship. The "story" shaped form has been readily accepted as an appropriate way of sharing our journey and there is now a long tradition of its use for this purpose. This has arisen not least because of its rich reference to, and shaping by, the narrative form of much of scripture.

The use of poetry for the task of reflection on the shape of discipleship and the virtues that go with it has been much less common. Nevertheless, a little thinking about the other forms of writing in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament reminds us that the poetic form of expression and communication has strong scriptural warrant. I refer of course to the psalms and to much of the writings of the prophets whose utterance, in my judgement is most powerful and passionate when they move into the poetic and oracular mode.

Kristin Jack, from the Servants of Asia's Urban Poor, has taken the path less travelled in taking up the poetic mode for his reflections on faith and discipleship in seeking to achieve a degree of closure on sixteen years living with the poorest of the poor in Phnom Phenh. In the Foreword to *Poetry and Prophecy* he comments:

> As we come to the end of our season here, I have tried to record in this collection something of the impact of this magical place and beautiful people have had on me. I have tried to capture something of the heartbreak, the anger, the joy and the hope that have engulfed and sometimes overwhelmed me.
>
> … what do I hope for you, now that I have been audacious enough to give you these words? I hope that they will help you and I both, in some small way to keep pushing forward on our quest to become more and more human, more and more who we are created to be from the very beginning. (p.5)

This collection, attractively laid out and presented, set against appropriate black and white photography and images, is best read slowly, and meditatively in a quiet space and then perhaps read aloud to others. They are also best read in some cases with reference to the utterances of the prophets in their oracular passionate pleading for justice and denouncements of oppression and in others with reference to the unsparing, angry arguments of the psalmists with God.

By way of digression, if you wish to develop your appreciation of the writings of the Biblical prophets as passionate utterance, the expositions of the books of Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel and Isaiah written by Daniel Berrigan himself a poet are to be commended. The form and content of the poetry shared with us by Jack, while deeply personal, has much more in common with prophetic utterance and the unrestrained passion of the psalmists, rather than the tradition of poetry sourced in individual inspiration that resists the possibility of dealing with questions of moral purpose or judgement or accepts a religious frame of reference.

Wendell Berry, whose poetry I was reading along with *Poetry and Prophecy*, provides us with a pointed critique of the practice of inward looking poetry that does not engage with the questions of injustice and oppression.

> When the strong have perfected their triumph over the weak …
>
> poets will still intone fluently their songs
>
> of themselves, to reward the fearful for their fear. Oh,
>
> the lofty artists of sound , of sound and shape and color,

> of words will still accept proudly their jobs
>
> in universities, their prizes, grants and awards.
>
> On the day that ugliness is perfected in rubble
>
> And blood, beauty and the love of beauty will
>
> Still be praised by those well paid to praise it.
>
> (Sabbaths 2003, VII, *Given: Poems* p.128)

To point to another witness in this tradition of prophetic poetry, William Blake's entire contribution and life was a protest against such moral and religious pretensions to detachment. Jack catches such a note in his poem "Theology" when he says:

> … But I am all ears to Poetry and Prophecy,
>
> the wild song that rides
>
> upon the Wind and on the Light
>
> an ode to Love and Wonder
>
> sung to the one and only Word
>
> that ever truly took on shape (p.39)

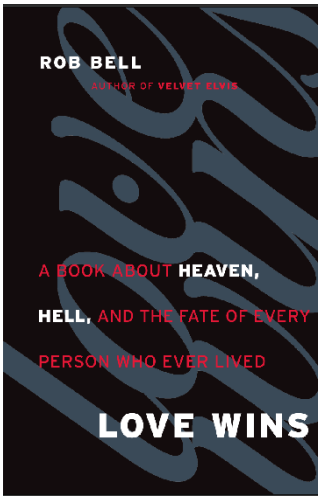
In this collection Jack writes in a way that is characterised by a bracing honesty and awareness of his, and our, failure and limitations with not a note of judgement of those who have not taken the path of discipleship he has. Some of the poems are specific to life in Cambodia and capture the sites and smells of urban life there. Other poems, while more reflective of the inner journey, are rarely detached from the issues of the wider world and the questions of justice and oppression.

To "review" a book can imply an approach from a position of detached judgement. In responding to this collection of poetry as poetry, I do not feel capable of, nor have I attempted to "review", or to pass judgement on it from some detached academic point of view. Much of Jack's poetry engages with questions that have arisen in my own faltering journey of discipleship, and in much of both the questioning and affirmation in these pieces I find myself close to the spirit expressed the author.

Given that I am not detached enough to review this work what I have wanted to do in this not quite review is to encourage you to read this collection and engage with it reflectively and prayerfully. I suggest you will be rewarded by being open to engagement with an author who has made himself vulnerable in much of what he has shared with us. Such engagement will be an aid to encouraging a more embodied discipleship informed by the pain and glory of a broken yet wonderful world.

By way of background

If you want to understand more fully the context and the spirituality and theology that underpins this collection of poetry I would recommend that you read *The Sound of Worlds Colliding* (2010). This is a collection of stories from the ministry in the slums over the last 25 years of Servants to Asia's Urban Poor. Edited by Kristin Jack, the book provides a comprehensive portrait of the work, lives and the theology of the movement in their engagement with the poor. Further information can be found on the Servant's website at www.servantsasia.org.



Love Wins: Heaven, Hell and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived / Rob Bell
(Harperone, 2011)
Reviewed by Nathan Hobby

Love Wins generated heated denunciations before it was even published. It is Jesus-filled, hopeful, and inspiring – and just as the conservatives warned, it points toward a (Christ-centred) universalism – without quite unequivocally endorsing it.

In typical Rob Bell style, *Love Wins* is a generous pastoral… ramble (in the best sense) through salvation and eschatology… or 'heaven, hell and the fate of every person who ever lived'. He has written this book because

> A staggering number of people have been taught that a select few Christians will spend forever in a peaceful, joyous place called heaven, while the rest of humanity spends forever in torment and punishment in hell with no chance for anything better. It's been clearly communicated to many that this belief

> is a central truth of the Christian faith and to reject it, is in essence, to reject Jesus. This is misguided and toxic and ultimately subverts the contagious spread of Jesus's message of love, peace, forgiveness, and joy that our world desperately needs to hear. (4)

Bell pulls apart this idea – what qualifies you to be one of the few? Does your salvation depend on having a youth pastor 'who relates better to the kids' when you're a teenager? On the missionary who is coming to bring you the good news not having a flat tyre? If we grant that God might show mercy on children (because even the most conservative find it impossible to send children to hell) who die before the age of responsibility, wouldn't the most loving thing to do be to kill every child? (8)

Bell goes on to set out his understanding of Christian hope for eternal life ('the life of the age to come') and the bringing of heaven to Earth. It will require judgement, the banishing of evil and injustice. He imagines heaven as a place of 'learning how to be human all over again' (29), a place of soil and rewarding toil as the prophets looked forward to. He writes:

> It's not about a life that begins at death; It's about experiencing the kind of life now that can endure and survive even death. (33)

The flipside of this is hell, which Bell says we know is true because we see it in the world today. Examining the sayings of Jesus about hell, he says that rather than talking about hell to convert pagans, Jesus 'talked about hell to very religious people to warn them about the consequences of straying from their God-given calling and identity to show the world God's love.' (44) Judgement, Bell says, precedes restoration; the prophet Ezekiel even has a vision of a time when God 'will restore the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters' (Ezekiel 16) – even for Sodom and Gomorrah, the story isn't over(45).

Chapter 4 is called "Does God get what God wants?", and Bell builds on God's universal salvific will - 'God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim. 2). He draws on the picture of God as the shepherd seeking out the lost sheep –

> The God that Jesus teaches us about doesn't give up until everything that was lost is found. This God simply doesn't give up. Ever. (52)

Bell uses a similar style of teaching to Jesus – a lot of questions, which point in the direction of universalism, without insisting on it. He tells of no-one less than Martin Luther being open to the idea of a post-mortem opportunity for salvation; Bell goes on to ask:

> And then there are others who ask, if you get another chance after you die, why limit that chance to a one-off immediately after death? And so they expand the possibilities, trusting that there will be endless opportunities in an endless amount of time for people to say yes to God. As long as it takes, in other words. At the heart of this perspective is the belief that, given enough time, everybody will turn to God and find themselves in the joy and peace of God's presence.(55)

As if he hadn't tackled enough big issues, Bell moves on to suggest that God is at work in Christ everywhere, beyond the boundaries of the church. It is an inclusivist perspective, finding God at work wherever there is truth and goodness (as opposed to exclusivism) and that God's work is through Christ (as opposed to pluralism which would see religions as independently valid) – he calls it 'exclusivity on the other side of inclusivism' (78).

Bell's most confronting words come in the context of a chapter about the prodigal son's older brother -

> And that is the secret deep in the heart of many people, especially Christians. They don't love God. They can't, because the God they've been presented with and taught about can't be loved. That God is terrifying and traumatizing and unbearable. (85)

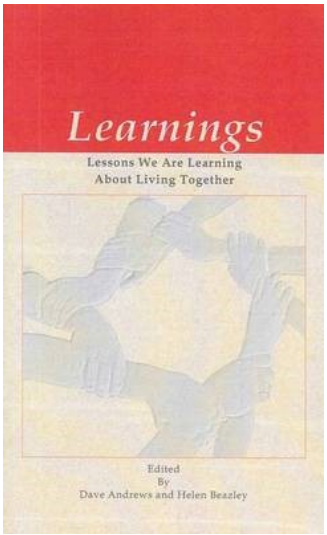
This is the God, Bell says, who loves every person so much but will eternally punish someone in hell without any hope if they die in a car accident without accepting Jesus. 'Does God become somebody totally different the moment you die?' (85) Many Christians' conviction that God does leads them to be secretly terrified of God. He sums up the entire book well in this passage:

> When the gospel is understood primarily in terms of entrance rather than joyous participation, it can actually serve to cut people off from the explosive, liberating experience of the God who is an endless giving circle of joy and creativity.
> Life has never been about just "getting in." It's about thriving in God's good world. It's stillness, peace, and that feeling of your soul being at rest, while at the same time it's about asking things, learning things, creating things, and sharing it all with others who are finding the same kind of joy in the same good world. (87)

He goes on to say that we do not need rescuing from God and his wrath; God is the one who rescues us from death, sin and destruction (89).

Bell says in the preface that there's nothing in his book which hasn't been taught before; the historic, orthodox Christian faith is 'a deep, wide, diverse stream that's been flowing for thousands of years' (6). He's right in that his book popularises ideas recently presented by Gregory MacDonald in *The Evangelical Universalist* as well as some

(but not the universalism) from Tom Wright's *Surprised by Hope*. But the suggestion of universal hope is not one which has been flowing much in the evangelical stream, and Rob Bell is a major evangelical figure. Nineteenth century devotional writer Hannah Whitall-Smith has routinely had chapter 22 of her autobiography excised for its embrace of universalism. 'Gregory MacDonald' wrote under a pseudonym to protect his position at an evangelical publishing house. When conservative pastor John Piper tweeted 'Goodbye, Rob Bell' and sparked the pre-publication frenzy, he was surely farewelling Bell from evangelicalism. I think there are many middle of the road or right-of-centre evangelical churches which will farewell Rob Bell, adding him to the suspicious list and no longer playing Nooma DVDs in their youth services. Of course, he is already on the suspicious list for New Calvinists, the evangelicals in the mould of John Piper. But there will also be many of Bell's readers who have felt so blessed by his deep love of Jesus and communication of God's love that they will stick with him, and feel both challenged and liberated by this latest book.



Learnings: Lessons We Are Learning About Living Together / Edited by Dave Andrews and Helen Beazley.

(Community Initiatives Resource Association, 2010)
Available from www.lastfirst.net
Reviewed by Nathan Hobby

This book is truly collaborative, bringing together thirty-six short pieces of writing by people who been a part of the Waiter's Union community in one way or another. As the editors put it, 'The bits and pieces people have written for this book represent a beautiful multi-coloured, multi-layered mosaic of lessons they have learnt about living life together through their association with the Waiters Union and their participation in our training.' (14)

Waiters Union is based in Brisbane's West End and over the last twenty years has had between two and twenty households as a part of its network. Rather than running Waiters' activities, the various groups within the network get involved in things already happening in their community. Waiters Union holds worship meetings as well as live-in training programs twice a year.

I found the acknowledgement which begins the collection refreshing:

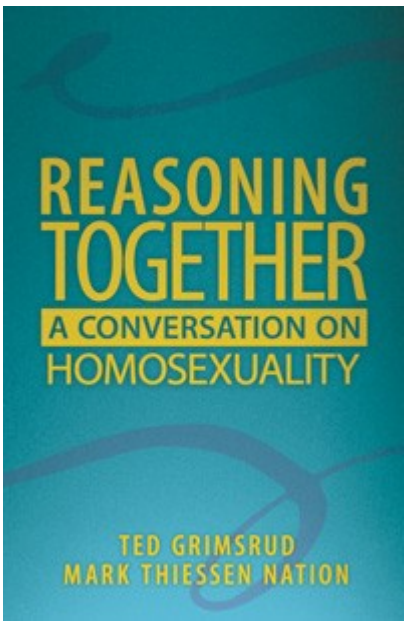
> …we'd also like to begin this book with an acknowledgement of all those people who would have had difficulty in writing anything celebrating their association with Waiters Union: people who came to the Waiters with high hopes, but left with deep disappointments; people who didn't experience the Waiters as hospitable or helpful or supportive; people who experienced the Waiters as exclusive, not inclusive, but cliquey… We know that community amplifies our experiences. It makes good experiences better and bad experiences worse… (13)

The book is divided into three sections. In the first, "The Network", several pieces offer interpretations of what the network is about. The second, "The Training", focuses on that aspect of the network. The third, "The Learnings", offers a diverse collection of responses. Many of them are in the form of 'Waiters and…', covering important topics like the relationship to the emerging church, the traditional church, mission and community development. There are reflections on learning to walk with indigenous Australians and to work with refugees.

There will be a number of names familiar to AAANZers. Amongst members contributing are editor Dave Andrews and his wife Angie; and past president Ross Coleman, writing with Di Coleman about why they use Waiters Union for their training.

As promised by the editors, the book is fragmentary and diverse, but also thoughtfully arranged. In its diversity, it's true to the nature of the Waiters Union and a good picture of the network. We get a sense from the book of the wide-ranging impact a community of believers trying to live out the kingdom can have.

- **One of the stories from Learnings, "Waiters Union and Christian Anarchy", is republished on p.15.**



Reasoning Together: A Conversation on Homosexuality
By Ted Grimsrud and Mark Thiessen Nation (Herald Press, 2009)

Reasoning Together brings two Mennonite theologians, Ted Grimsrud and Mark Thiessen Nation, into dialogue on an issue they disagree over – homosexuality. For Nation, the Bible's witness on the issue is clear: homosexual acts are sinful; sex should only occur in the context of marriage between a man and a woman. For Grimsrud, to follow Jesus means to be on the side of the liberation of the oppressed – including homosexuals. This means the burden of proof is placed on the other side to prove that homosexual sex within the context of a same-sex marriage is wrong. For a number of reasons, he believe this burden is not discharged – particularly, the few passages which talk of homosexuality do not envisage homosexuality as an orientation nor do they refer to same-sex marriage.

The conversation moves around a lot, returning to several key points which are never fully resolved as the two writers respond to each others' cases. I found myself unable to pick a 'winner', forced as I was to read counter-claims to every claim and not allowed to escape with a caricatured picture of either side.

How are we to conceptualise homosexuality? The contrast between the metaphors Nation and Grimsrud use is central to the debate. Aware of the offence it will cause – and pained by it – Nation conceptualises homosexuality as a disability, like blindness. For him, it is something that means a person is not functioning as fully as they should be. In response, Grimsrud believes a better metaphor is left-handedness, which was once thought to be a disability, but is now seen as a neutral trait, present in a significant minority of the population. For Grimsrud, homosexual acts are not inherently sinful – they are only sinful if practised outside a same sex marriage. A number of times he states that he does not believe Nation has made a case for the inherent sinfulness of homosexual sex.

The two interpret Jesus' silence on homosexuality in opposite ways. Does it mean that Jesus endorsed the Jewish status quo, regarding homosexual acts as sinful? In this view, it was a presumption that didn't even need mentioning. Or does his silence mean that we shouldn't prohibit what he did not prohibit?

The opening chapter of the book is an excellent and evenhanded survey by Grismrud of the 'restrictive' and 'inclusive' cases within Christian ethics. Both writers also supply an annotated bibliography listing what they see as the key resources.

While always respectful, each of them seem frustrated with the other at different points. Perhaps this means they are being honest. On a number of points, they are just not even able to arrive at a common definition from which they can depart. Nation thinks Grimsrud overstates the importance of hospitality in the biblical narrative – it is not the *only* emphasis. Grimsrud thinks Nation fails to prove the inherent sinfulness of all homosexual acts. Nation thinks the meaning of the scriptures is essentially settled and inclusivists like Grimsrud are trying to avoid the obvious. The book sums up the present debate well from an Anabaptist perspective, and shows what a divisive and difficult issue it is, while also offering an example of respectful if robust conversation.

Where will the homosexuality debate take us? Will the churches remained locked in an impasse for good? Probably not. My perception is that within evangelical and Anabaptist contexts, more and more people are being won over to an inclusivist position. If this continues, the debate may subside, with the exclusivist position remaining as an ongoing minority. Will it require some kind of division between churches? For free churches, quite possibly, at least in the sense of congregations adopting an exclusivist or inclusivist position and living by it. The important question will be how they relate to congregations on the other side of the fence. For denominations like the Uniting Church and the Anglican Church without congregational government, the issue is harder fought and coming to a settlement more difficult. For a network like the AAANZ, it will remain possible to live with diversity.

Contributor Profiles

Gary Baker lives in Armidale, NSW.

Jim Dowling and Ann Rampa live on a farm north of Brisbane, making vegetarian soap, and continuing on in their lifestyle of voluntary simplicity, nonviolent direct action against violence, and lots of other bits and pieces to hopefully help build 'a new society in the shell of the old'.

Philip Friesen is a US scholar who blogs at www.galileanfellows.org/category/friesen/.

Nathan Hobby is librarian at Vose Seminary in Perth and blogs at www.perthanabaptists.wordpress.com.

Doug Hynd lives in Canberra and blogs at www.doug-subversivevoices.blogspot.com.

Karlin Love hails from Tasmania.

Caleb Anderson is studying sociology at Victoria University, Wellington and blogs at www.calebmorgan.wordpress.com

Bill Walker lives in Melbourne and works for World Vision.

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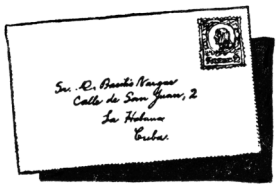

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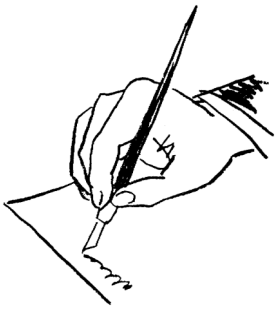

You are welcome to submit pieces for *On The Road*. To contribute, please send your piece to the editor, Nathan Hobby, nathanhobby@gmail.com. Submissions should be in Microsoft Word (any version) or Rich Text Format. Photos or illustrations are helpful.

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.**

In issue 49, we're exploring the Arts. So, whether you're a musician, novelist, painter, sculptor or playwright, please consider sharing something about what you do, or an example of your art. Visual pieces are very welcome, and anything else outside the forms we normally publish in OTR, although obviously we're not set up for sound or video.

Non-themed submissions are always welcome too.

How to… JOIN

If you identify with the Anabaptist impulse and want to join the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand, visit www.anabaptist.asn.au.

Membership is open to individuals and groups who desire to make Jesus, community and reconciliation the centre of their faith, life and work.

Membership enables you to be connected to others in the network and join tele-chats with guest speakers from your own phone. You will also receive the quarterly prayer and contact calendar.

There is no membership fee, but we encourage you to contribute to the association and the work of our staffworkers, Mark and Mary Hurst.