ON THE ROAD

Journal of the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand
No. 50, September 2011

11 September 2001-11 September 2011

A decade of terror

Contents

OTR 50, September 2011

From the Editor

Nathan Hobby

When I collected Phantom comics as a kid, the 1000th issue was number 972, because there had been 28 unnumbered issues. This conundrum meant there were two special 1000th issues released a year apart. In a slightly similar vein, this is actually the 51st issue of *On The Road*. Ten years ago, Mark and Mary Hurst put out a special September 11 issue of *On The Road* which was unnumbered. You could say our fiftieth issue and the tenth anniversary of 9/11 are connected. Or you could say numbers—and milestones—are rather arbitrary.

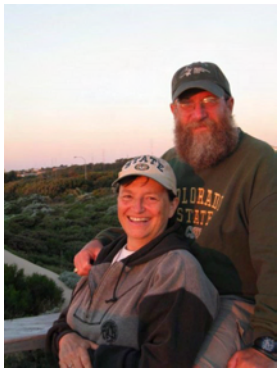
But if milestones and anniversaries are good for something, it is to encourage us to stop to reflect on the past and the present. You'll find a lot of that in this issue, from the articles on terrorism to the reports on the state of different cities across Australia and New Zealand.

On the back page you'll find details of the themes for our next two issues—Women & Anabaptism; and Pastor, Preacher, Chaplain.

The view from Ephesians 4

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

Mark and Mary Hurst, AAANZ staffworkers



> Martin Marty once wrote that people who have strong convictions are often not very civil, and people who are civil often do not have strong convictions. What we need, he said, is convicted civility… We need to talk together - yes, and argue passionately with each other. But it is important to find ways of doing so that will also allow us to work together for the common good.

– Richard Mouw, "A Need for "Convicted Civility" in our Dialogue" newsweek.washingtonpost.com

"Convicted civility." We like that. Holding to strong convictions but dealing with each other with "gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:16) There are plenty of opportunities for disagreement in our daily lives – at work, in the family, and in the church; times for having opinions that are then challenged by someone close to us.

It would be easier if we did not have to get along with others. If we were all hermits we could have whatever opinions we wanted. But a God who exists in community has created us to live in community. We are meant to speak the truth in love and find ways to get along.

Richard Mouw, the president of Fuller Seminary in the U.S., was interviewed recently as part of a series on "The Civil Conversations Project" produced by American Public Media's On Being radio show. He spoke about a book he first wrote in 1992, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*. The book asks "Can Christians be civil in a world falling apart?" Mouw has long been a kind of bridge person — theologically conservative on some issues and more progressive on others — but he most fervently insists that the way people are treated is a greater measure of Christian virtue than the positions one takes.

In the interview he spoke about the word "civil". It comes from the Latin word "civitas" meaning "one who lives in the city". Being civil is about getting along with others in the city who are different from us. He tied this understanding of civility to Jeremiah 29:7 – "Seek the peace and prosperity [shalom] of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Getting along with enemies - even the hated Babylonian captors - is part of being civil.

Not only are we called to "convicted civility," we are also to be "positively maladjusted" to the evil around us. Romans 12:2 says, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within." (J B Phillips New Testament)

Martin Luther King, Jr. said: "There are some things in our world to which men [sic] of goodwill must be maladjusted. I confess that I never intend to become adjusted to the evils of segregation and the crippling effects of discrimination, to the moral degeneracy of religious bigotry and the corroding effects of narrow sectarianism, to economic conditions that deprive men [sic] of work and food, and to the insanities of militarism and the self-defeating effects of physical violence." ("Positively Maladjusted: Martin Luther King and 'Transformed Nonconformity'" www.journeywithjesus.net)

The stories in Exodus 1:8–2:10 provide examples of nonconformity in relation to the powers of this world in contrast to conformity to God's redemptive purposes. These are stories of four women and a girl who act in humane and loving ways that thwart the plans of mighty Pharaoh. These women refused to be squeezed into the Egyptian mould.

The collective work of the Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah, Moses' mother and sister, and the daughter of Pharaoh is a gracious defiance because of the way it embraces life and blurs Pharaoh's attempts to draw lines of distinction between "us" and "them," between Egyptian and Hebrew, between dominating and dominated. These positively maladjusted women non-violently resisted the power of Pharaoh and changed the history of the Jewish people. Their "convicted civility" allowed them to take centre stage simply by being themselves, by acting with integrity and by meeting the challenges of the moment with wisdom and compassion. May we do the same.

This generation

President's report

Doug Sewell, AAANZ President

To what can we compare the people of this generation? What are they like?

When Jesus asked the same questions, as recorded in Luke's gospel, he answered with an Aramaic rhyme:

> "They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other: 'We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry.'" Luke 7: 32 (NIV)

What did Jesus mean? Were the children lamenting the inability of the marketplace to dance and cry? The marketplace was not only the hub of the city, the place where activity and people came together, but was also the nexus of commerce and power, and in Jerusalem a venue for the experts in the law and religion to debate and argue. The petulant children of that generation called out to each other but no one listened. As the momentum of the marketplace was about getting on with business, it could not afford to stop.

To dance and cry is to experience the full spectrum of humanity's colour and depth. Can the marketplace only see itself in terms of black and white?

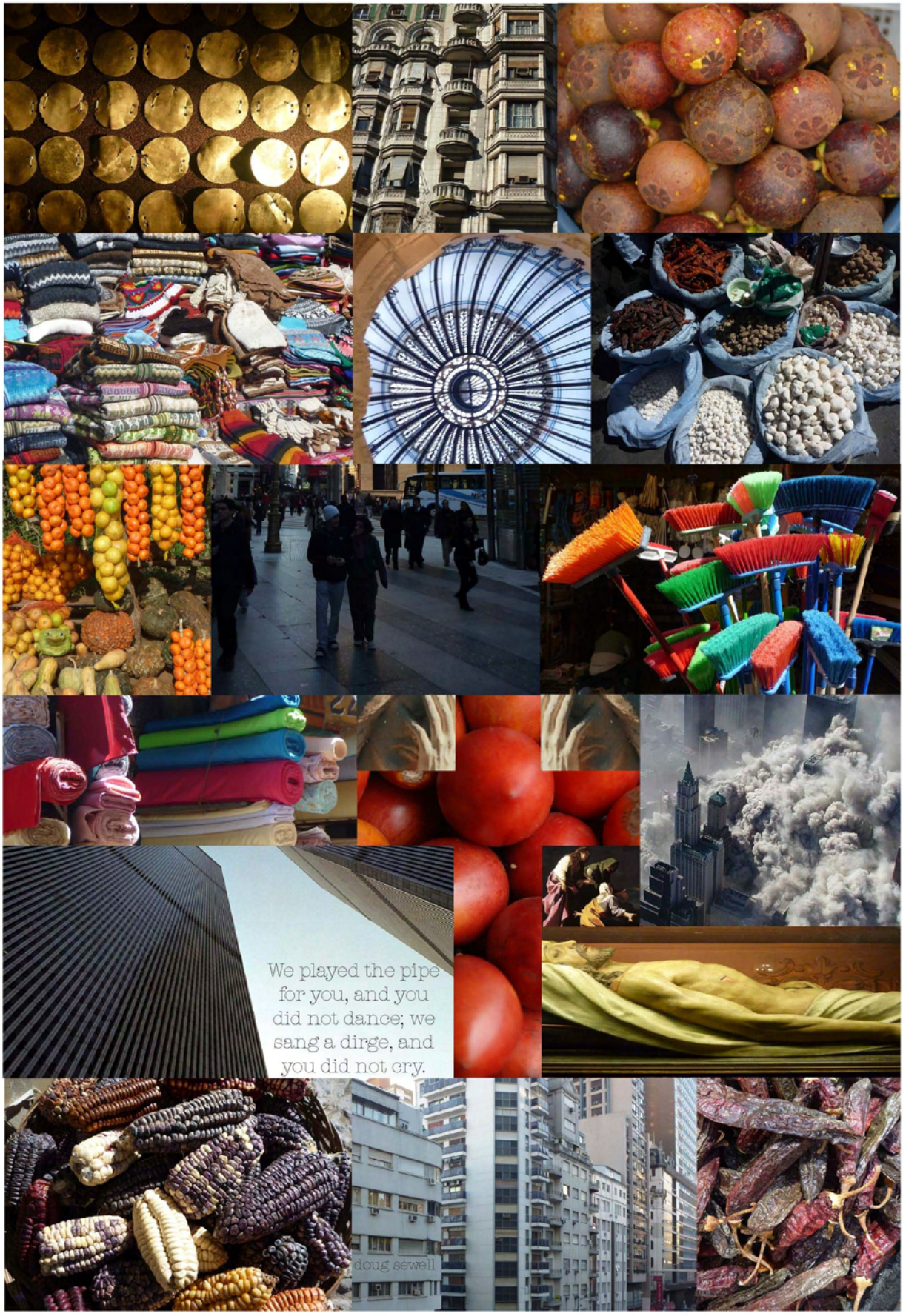
Modern cities even more than the ancient polis have become places of power, politics and persuasion. The city represents the pinnacle of civilization's progress but at what cost in terms of our environment and humanity?

Ten years ago, the 'black and white' icons of modernity, the twin towers, came crashing down with 2753 victims. People stopped what they had been doing and asked questions about causes and meanings. There was a short time when in the midst of the horror people began to play the pipe for one other, to sing a dirge, and to lament. But not for long before the great nations responded with more violence and more loss of innocent life, this time in the hundreds of thousands. It was as though the black became blacker and even the white turned grey.

How have these events and other factors shaped the people of today's generation and of our own nations and centres? Our cities are individually unique in terms of their character, demographic and ethnicity and each needs to be understood differently.

A few AAANZ members, one from each of our main centres, recently phone conferenced together and spoke personally about their cities. The regional representation group which we have called Groundbreakers wants to metaphorically "dig a few test holes" to better appreciate the places where they live. In this edition of *On The Road* they have described how they see their city or region.

Contemporary Anabaptism is about engagement and we need to respond to our cities and its peoples with wisdom and compassion. To me this is the place to start, to go out into the marketplaces and to mix amongst people, to dance and to cry out for justice, for peace and reconciliation, and to walk humbly with our God.


We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry.
doug sewell

50

issues of *On The Road*

Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand

Newsletter

Issue 1 March 1998

Editorial

ON THE ROAD

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

No.25 DECEMBER 2004

Register before 10 JANUARY "CHRISTIANITY AND VIOLENCE" AAANZ CONFERENCE Registration forms available at www.anabaptist.asn.au

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Fifty issues is something to be proud of. To celebrate reaching this milestone, I've asked our previous editors to reflect on their time at the helm of *On The Road*.

One of the rewarding aspects of being the editor of *On The Road* is finding myself in contact with many interesting people, and the things they are doing across Australia and New Zealand. It's also forced me to think in a focused way on the themes in each issue, and encouraged me to write. myself

Thanks to all of our readers and contributors and to the previous editors who kept it going so long.

Doug Hynd

There at the beginning: some reflections from the first editor

After being asked by Nathan to supply some memories as the first editor of *On the Road* (originally the AAANZ Newsletter), I had an enjoyable time looking back over the early issues to refresh my memory. How did I become the editor? I vaguely remember volunteering. With my background as a librarian and then researcher, writer and editor in an earlier life for the Zadok Centre I thought that it was something I could usefully contribute to. Gary Baker, I remember, helped me with the circulation.

The first issue appeared in March 1998. Looking back with the technology available to us now it looks pretty primitive, and I remember struggling mightily with the column layout. Still the first issue attracted some enthusiastic responses. It probably was the article by

Chris Marshall on discipleship that caught the attention, an article that is worthwhile reading today. And the same applies to many of the substantial articles that we have published over the years.

For the first two years I was not too ambitious and managed the editorial work in publishing three issues a year. The third issue of 1999, No.6 was a landmark in that the publication transmogrified from appellation of Newsletter and took on the title *On the Road*. In my editorial I explained why the title had been chosen.

> After nearly two years this newsletter has a title of its own. … **On The Road** - a title which contains echoes of the early church where Christians were referred to as followers of the way and also to the theme of discipleship, a key theme in the Anabaptist tradition.
>
> There are some Australian echoes… The writing, life and witness of Athol Gill and the music of Ross Langmead's …. The resonances also echo in a recent work by the recently departed Morris West. In one of his last works **The View from the Ridge: The Testimony of a Pilgrim** (Harper Collins, 1998) the image that he recurs to in describing his life is that of the pilgrim. "The fact is we can survive only in communion with our present, our past and with our dusty footsore fellows on the road.

In the same editorial I announced that we would moving to a quarterly publication schedule in 2000. I met that commitment and finished up my time as editor with Issue No.10 in December 2000. In that issue there was news of the Hursts' return to Australia. I'd like to quote from the editorial to give you a flavor of the contents of the issue, but also to enable me to reproduce a dedication to one of the early members of the Anabaptist Network.

> From Ian Barns there is an article on the post-modern church – what should the politics of the church … From Stuart Murray there are notes from a sermon that he preached while in Australia on Jesus' engagement with those who are on the margins.
>
> There is unfortunately more to report on. A member of the committee John Cox, our membership secretary, who was holidaying on the south coast of NSW has been missing for several weeks after failing to return from a half day bushwalk. He is officially listed as missing. Given the circumstances it seems premature to undertake the grieving and celebrate the gifts he brought to the Association over the past few years. Yet something must be said.
>
> John was a person for whom the road had been hard over the past few years yet he travelled it with a consistency and commitment following the call of discipleship even though the cost was high. He was at the meeting in Tasmania at which the Anabaptist Network was established as the forerunner to the Association and served as membership Secretary over the past eighteen months. … John did not have a lot to say but when he did intervene in the discussion in our committee teleconferences there was a maturity and wisdom in what he had to say.
>
> In concluding this reflection there was Bessie Perierra's reminder that while John may be lost to us he is not lost to God. In life and death we are in God's hands and we trust that those hands are indeed loving and present.

Mark and Mary Hurst

Fifty issues of *ON THE ROAD*

Issue # 11 began with the following two quotations and explanatory paragraph:

> "To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly." - Henri Bergson
>
> "Just because everything is different doesn't mean that anything has changed." - Irene Peter
>
> Not everything is different but change has come to **On The Road**. Doug Hynd as editor faithfully guided this newsletter through its first three years and ten editions. The newsletter found a name and became a place to find news, book reviews and articles on Anabaptist topics. Well done Doug. Now he has passed the editorship on to us.

We continued to edit AAANZ's journal through to Issue #41 where we completed our run as editors and handed the role to Nathan. We wrote about it as a time of "generational change" for AAANZ.

Our eight years as editors was a learning time for us as we became more computer literate. Mark usually gathered material for each issue and Mary did her magic with the computer to put it all together. Mark then became proofreader and together we sighed with a sense of relief when an issue was mailed out. In our early days that included sending out hard copies but by the end of our time as editors all issues were sent out online.

Having regular contact with AAANZ members – both authors and readers of ***OTR*** – was probably the high point of our time as editors.

"How come we play war and not peace?"

The escalation of terrorism since World War One

by Neil Mactaggart

On 10 June, 1944, elements of the German second Waffen (armored) SS Das Reich division entered Oradour-sur-Glane located in the Limosin district not far from Limoges in delightful country with small hills and valleys, all very green and lightly wooded. They commenced killing all the inhabitants and then destroyed the village with fire and explosives. The men were assembled in groups and shot and the women and children were herded into the church, machine gunned and the church was burned with many inside still alive.

After the war, a fence was built around the village; it is now a memorial to those killed and to the exceptional brutality of the Nazis SS Das Reich, a unit recently returned from the Eastern Front.

On the 3rd November 2004 I visited this small French country village of Oradour-sur-Glane with my son James. Visitors to Oradour enter an underground arrival centre and are met by staff at a reception desk with an adjacent small area where postcards and books are on sale. Continuing underground, there is a small museum that displays a photographic time line of the history of the Nazi era and of Oradour. Continuing along the underground passage we reached ground level and the village itself.

There we found street after street of burnt and badly damaged houses, shops and garages; there are old cars, and various household items, children's toys and lady's handiwork scattered just as they were left in 1944. The telephone and tram overhead lines remain along with other overhead cabling. The church bell, a twisted globule of bronze, lies on the church floor and bullet holes in the church and in other walls around the village indicate the extent of the shooting. The fire set in the church by the SS troops and an explosion in the church was so fierce it caused the vault of the nave to collapse. Bronze melts at 950°C.

The entire village area has the characteristic silence associated with such tragic events along with having an atmosphere that is unbelievably sad and depressing. The village is still exactly as it was on that Saturday afternoon in June in 1944. A new picturesque Oradour village has been built nearby.

As we returned underground the staff at the visitor centre said that Australian visitors are very rare and gave us directions for the short walk to the new Oradour to catch the bus back to Limoges followed by a train back to Paris. One of the museum staff then asked if it is true that kangaroos wander around freely in Australia; though a regular question it seemed so out of place and reminded us that our country is not familiar with anything remotely like Oradour.

The attack on Oradour was not closely associated with any war effort. Das Reich began travelling to join the fighting at Normandy two days after the D Day landings. There was not and had never been any organized French Resistance activities anywhere near this district nor any military installations and none of the racial or political reasons usually associated with other massacres carried out by the Nazis. The 642 inhabitants of Oradour were murdered. Why? There was no obvious war related reason for this act of terrorism—except perhaps in the minds of the SS that

June day.

Some scholars believe that "the Oradour [attack] was a symptom of something *terrifying* that occurred in many different parts of the world between 1914 and 1945 and beyond." (Winter 2005). It is considered an act of terrorism carried out during the wider war.

Both world wars brought with them the industrialisation of killing and destruction and saw the decline of the late 19th and early 20th century moral standards and mores previously associated with European wars; civilians and their towns and cities became military targets.

Oradour is one iconic example of the extreme terrorist activities since 1914. Terrorist attacks of increasing violence, destruction and death by the anti-Israeli terrorism of the PLO, the mindless revolutionary violence of the Japanese Red Army and others were forerunners of the remarkable attack on the Twin Towers; all seemingly pointless, unbelievably cruel and ultimately for no recognisable gain. Acts such as Oradour and 9/11 invite retaliation in kind and prompt extensive preparations to deal with any future terrorist threats.

Before retiring, I spent some years developing security and emergency procedures at an airport in one of our capitals. As airports and aircraft are frequently attacked and used by terrorists as attention grabbing targets my colleagues from various airports and I spent many hours considering all we knew of past terrorist acts and tried to consider any new methods that terrorists may adopt to cause as much damage, death and destruction as they felt their cause warranted. Unfortunately, a cause or reason for a terrorist act is not always obvious and therefore difficult to deal with; we were preparing for a repeat of earlier terrorist acts. We never thought that large passenger aircraft would be hijacked and used as weapons as happened in New York on 9/11; likewise the French never thought that anything as militarily pointless as Oradour would occur at a small rural village without any militarily offensive reason.

There are many facets in preparing to deal with a terrorist threat at an airport that are outside the scope of this article, however ultimately any terrorist threat will be countered and terrorist violence will be met with a violent resolution no matter where it occurs in our world.

Both the Oradour and 9/11 attacks took senseless violence caused by terrorist attacks to a new and previously unimaginable level. As is always the case the response to both brought indescribable suffering to thousands which for Oradour in part led to the final destruction of the Nazis and in the decade since the Twin Towers attack has seen wars start in Iraq and Afghanistan and more terrorist attacks. Some have sought political gain from both incidents; there has been an increase in military spending and an astonishing increase in protective measures to stop any further terrorist incidents, especially related to airports and aircraft.

In one Calvin and Hobbes comic, Calvin is wearing a soldier's helmet and Hobbes is carrying a toy pistol as they prepare to play war games. Hobbes asks, 'How come we play war and not peace?' and Calvin says 'There are too few role models.' (*The West* 2011). Christians know better!

The decade of war and terror we focus on in this issue of OTR is a continuation of what began in 1914 with the start of WW1 and the associated desensitising effect it has had on our civilized conduct, a kind of horror fatigue.

After playing their war game, we reach the final panel of the Calvin and Hobbes comic. During the game they had both fired their dart guns at once and hit each other; Calvin says to Hobbes, "Kind of a stupid game isn't it."

After 9/11 we need an angry God

By Chris Summerfield

The usual wisdom is that belief in an angry god is what caused a handful of people to get into planes and crash into skyscrapers and then caused a much larger group of people to get into many more planes and drop bombs on to people who lived in countries which were kind of close to the country where most of the first handful of people came from.

Furthermore, an often remarked criticism of the Bible is that the God of the Old Testament is full of anger but the God of the New Testament is full of love. This criticism is supposed to be a debate clinching argument because we, as a society, believe that you can't be both full of anger and full of love and that anger is an altogether bad emotion. If you were to hear someone say "my child has anger issues" you wouldn't reply, "That's great—you must be so proud". Instead, there might be some consoling about similar issues in their own children and how that anger might have been subdued through a combination of therapy and medication.

Our ideal citizen does not have "anger issues", our ideal citizen swims with the tide of the way the world is and learns to accept things as they are. Less than ideal citizens would include Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Oscar Romero and Jesus. All angry. Angry about the way their people had been treated by the ruling authorities. All full of anger and full of love. Key of course is that that they were angry and non-violent. And it is nonviolence that is key to understanding the gospel.

As I look around at the litany of injustices in the world I am angry and I am sure God must feel the same. I contend that God did not just pour out God's anger on Jesus making God satisfied and unmoved by the events of our world. Maybe instead God channelled God's anger into an act of nonviolence. The act of becoming a human and laying down his life for others in the crucifixion. An act that would be a window into a new paradigm, a paradigm where violence loses and love wins because the grave could not hold Jesus.

God is still angry and God is calling us to follow the Jesus path of nonviolence. Our anger is to fuel loving acts of nonviolent action.

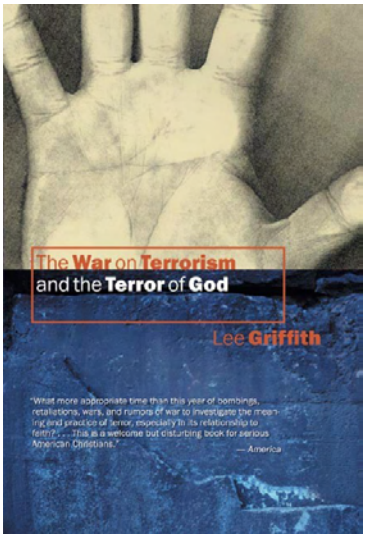
Like the terrorists on 9/11, I sense that something is unfair in the world and I want that to change. We both believe that God is angry about these injustices. The difference between us is that the anger of my God causes God to humble godself to the form of a man who would act out love and not violence even if that meant death on a cross.

Ten years on if you are angry about 9/11 or about the West's response or that the 9/11 anniversary will receive more attention than starving millions in the horn of Africa, then join God and follow Jesus on the path of nonviolent action in a new paradigm where violence loses and love wins.

Religion, violence and terrorism post 9/11

Lee Griffith's *War on Terrorism and the Terror of God*

By Doug Hynd



When I stop to reflect on how the violence of 9/11 has re-shaped the world in which we live, I find that I keep returning to Lee Griffith's *The War on Terrorism and the Terror of God* (Eerdmans, 2002). It helps me to keep my bearings as a struggling disciple of Jesus when the common cultural assumption of the necessity for violence in dealing with terrorism in media discussion threatens to overwhelm me.

Lee Griffith had completed the manuscript before the attacks on Washington and New York on 11 September 2001, but the book is eerily prescient in its addressing of issues that have dominated public debates since that time. I have been struck afresh by the power of his spiritual insights as I have returned to it again and again over the years. This is a fine piece of theological analysis and argument, weaving together social sciences, history and reflection on scripture that has touched my heart on more than one occasion.

> Griffith sets out his theological agenda and method for approaching the issue of terror when he affirms that ... consideration of the terror that people inflict on one another necessarily entails a consideration of faith. Karl Barth once called on believers to read Bible and newspaper side by side. An understanding of current events sheds new light on the hermeneutical context from which the reader approaches the biblical text, but more importantly the juxtaposition of newspaper and Bible makes more readily apparent the manner in which the biblical word demythologises our contemporary ideologies and social and political circumstances … Barth added a dialogue with church history into the mix of newspaper and Bible. (p.xiii)

Importantly, Griffith goes on to remind us of the communal context in which scripture is read and interpreted.

> The encounter with the biblical word is less individual than communal. It is within the community - both the living communion of saints as well as the host of witnesses that have gone before us - that we come to understand our own idiosyncratic readings of Scripture and faith ... (p.xiii)

This method makes for a richness of discussion by Griffith that continually pulls against any simple ideological positioning and rush to judgment of the obvious "baddies" or through uncritical accounts of those who we might have expected to see as obvious candidates for uncritical approval. Griffith's discussion of the abolitionist movement is a particularly good example of the discriminating complexity of his assessment of the differing strands of that movement.

How we see and understand and describe episodes of violence is an important consideration in shaping our response to violence. Massacre on a large scale, he argues

> … is not a sign of age-old hatreds that have prevented community formation; it is a sign of new hatreds that have been generated to disrupt and destroy communities that have already existed. Why? Because strong pluralistic communities constitute a threat to the unhindered exercise of political and military power. Terror can be both reflective of community disintegration and a means of fostering further disintegration by leaving people feeling unsafe, suspicious and disconnected. Grotesque acts of terrorism that entail the dismemberment of human bodies are sometimes used to communicate the message that the community itself is being dismembered. (pp 46-7)

Remembering is as much a matter of the location of our bodies as it is a matter of memory. We must, Griffith urges,

> … remember Jesus. Wherever and whenever Jesus is not remembered, those who claim the name of Christian have shown a special proclivity to give allegiance to race or ethnicity, wealth or weaponry, empire or liberation army ... When there is failure to remember the one who died on the cross, crucifixion follows. ... To remember Jesus, bread is broken, cup is shared, community is formed. All violence is an attack on community. All violence by Christians is also an attack upon the memory of Jesus. (p 48)

Like the terms community and religion, the definition of terrorism has proved controversial and created a literature of its own. Lee Griffith writes evocatively in his account of terror. On the relationship of terror to religion he comments:

> O Brother Job, the terrors are with us still. The raiders still come and the firepower falls from the sky: the winds still rage and the edge of the sword is bloody (Job1:13-19). While some suffer these horrors others try to sleep. Are these terrifying dreams by which sleep is invaded a warning from God (Job 33:14-18). While the source of the dreams is unclear, in Lebanon, the violence can be traced to its sources. When we follow the trail, and trace the violence back we do not find God. We find a mad confluence of godlets. We find principalities and powers; imperial nation states and barely organised guerrilla fronts, all self exalted, all petty, and all appealing to as much inhumanity as humans can muster. It is called liberation and martyrdom. It is called defense and justice. Call it what you will. It is terrorism. (p.6)

He also makes some salient points on the relationship between religion and terrorism and how we might define it. The definition of terrorism has proved difficult and has generated a cottage industry devoted to it. Griffith suggests we should let the victims of terrorist violence do the defining. Victims in their own immediate and particular way, are lived experts on the reality of terrorism.

> They recognise it when they see it. Both the US Marines subject to the truck bombing in Beirut and the Lebanese citizens subject to US shelling - they knew terrorism when they saw it. The women who are subject to rape and abuse, the African Americans who are subject to racist attack, the gay men and lesbians who are beaten in homophobic rage - they all know terrorism when they see it. Hutus and Tutsis, Palestinians and Israelis, Iraqis and Kuwaitis, Serbs and Croats - they all see and they know. No matter the identity of the perpetrators or the class of their weaponry or the nature of the motivation it is terrorism. (p.8)

Particularly challenging and likely to be counter-intuitive to both Christians and atheists alike is his reading of the Book of Revelation. He opens his discussion of this issue with the observation that there is general agreement that the author of the book of Revelation was a criminal in the view of the Empire and goes on from there. If John was not well loved by the Roman Empire he observes, the book of Revelation indicates that the feeling was mutual.

Revelation certainly is a dangerous book in the violence of its visions and language. In assessing that common perception of danger and the need to reject its violence, Griffith makes the important point that while there is indeed much violence in Revelation we need to be clear as to the identity of the perpetrator of the violence - Babylon, the Beast and the dragon - all images of imperial power.

God's weapons in response to the violence and oppression of the empire in John's visions stand in stark contrast. The response comes through the truth of God's word and the blood of the slain lamb. The other theme he highlights is that it is not a book about the end of the world it is about re-creation and a new heaven and new earth. The terror of God he notes is the resurrection. '... the resurrection is terror to all who assume that death and bloodshed will have the final word' (Publisher's Interview).

Lee Griffith does not remain in a detached, theoretical vein. His theology becomes personal and passionate at this particular point when he draws to our attention the two best sermons that he has ever heard preached on the book of Revelation.

The first was an address by the lawyer/theologian/activist William Stringfellow on the defeat of the saints.

> His meditation on the defeat of the saints was a renunciation of all triumphalism, be it academic, ecclesiastical, economic, political or military. It was a reminder that the saints are not raptured out of terror and into victory. It was a reminder that Easter is preceded by the cross, that God's cause is not served by the righteous who are triumphant but by the faithful who are defeated.(p.216)

The second sermon took the form of the recitation of a text by a wino in a ramshackle soup kitchen in Washington DC. Late at night in the kitchen open to provide warmth for the homeless following the death by hypothermia of one of the regular visitors to the kitchen, Griffith records that Scott Wright, one of the members of the Community for Creative Non-Violence who ran the kitchen, asked if people wanted to recite some poems or have some readings. An old

wino, Cool Breeze, asked for a reading from the Bible, "The Revelation to Saint John, chapter twenty-one, verses one through seven".

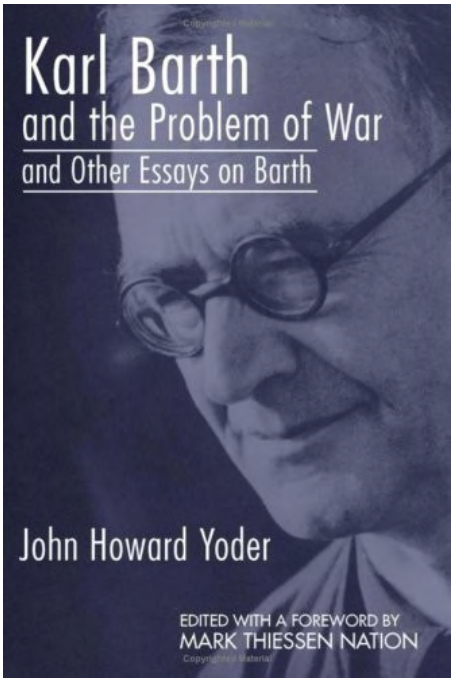
> Scott read, and right from the very first word, Cool Breeze recited alone: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth ..." Cool Breeze - his words were slurred but there was no mistaking it. It was Revelation 21, the word of God spoken in a way I had never quite heard before or since. " ... and God himself will we with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more ... See, I am making all things new."
>
> Well, for reasons I do not understand, that was one of several conversion experiences in my life. What was it? Was it the words of promise spoken in a ramshackle setting? Was it the conjoining of voices? The voice of Scott a man of gentle faith and nonviolence, with the rough and slurred voice of Cool Breeze, also a man of faith who had been brought low by the great society as surely as by his bottle? Or was it simply fatigue that left me open to hearing the verses of Scripture in my guts as well as my ears? I do not know.
>
> But this I do know. As day broke and Scott and I left the kitchen I knew it to be absolutely true - there will be a new heaven and a new earth. And we are going to be there. O we may be transformed. We may not have our finery and fancy attitudes, but we're going to be there. ... And that no-good old wino Cool Breeze he's gong to be there too. Maranatha. Come Lord Jesus. (pp.217-8)

The call Griffith issues is for our conversion, not a stance of judgement of the "other" or retributive violence against the perpetrators of violence, but a conversion that will enable us to step beyond the spiral of violence to follow Jesus, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth.

War and Christian pacifism

With some reflections on Yoder's response to Barth

By Wes Campbell



I was raised as a Methodist in small town Western Australia, in the 1950s, where the Bible was taken literally and the government was conservative. In that environment – post World War 2, during the so-called Cold War - the government was to be accepted and obeyed in matters of armed defence. After all, in the 1940s the Japanese had threatened Australia, and now in the 1950s the threat from the north came from communists.

In 1968, as an Australian male aged 20 years, I was due to be conscripted to military service to support Australia's military involvement in Vietnam. I had spent a year in Sydney at the Central Methodist Mission under the ministry of Alan Walker and had been exposed to his preaching of pacifism and opposition to the Vietnam War. As it turned out, with a letter half written to my parents explaining that I was not going to submit to the draft, I took the path of accepting exemption due to my 'full time religious studies'. Exemptions were available for those undergoing 'religious studies' and the mentally ill.

As a theologian in the late 1960s I was formed by the work of Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and – to a lesser degree - Reinhold Niebuhr. The

prevailing note was that of 'Christian Realism'. I learnt from these great figures that pacifism was suspect – an adoption of a 'principle', and therefore the loss of Christian freedom. In 1968, as I attempted to clarify my own stance with countless cups of late night coffee and conversation, my contemporaries told me that military service was possible for a Christian, on the basis that there is 'no greater love' than if one lays down one's life for one's friends!

I have been involved in popular movements which protest and also hold out hope for a different world: the resistance to South African Apartheid, support of Aboriginal land rights, opposition to nuclear weapons, action to protect the environment, an appeal to government not to attack Iraq and Afghanistan, and so on.

I have lived in a tension between Christian discipleship, non-violent pacifism and the challenge of whether it is ever justified to go to war. Karl Barth was a leader in the resistance to Nazism through the Barmen Declaration and the Confessing Church – he developed a notion of responsible citizenship. Bonhoeffer's active resistance to the Nazi Government endorsed the role of active discipleship which knows one must act in obedience in a given situation. Niebuhr criticised 'irresponsible pacifism', articulating the necessity of opposing force with force, especially against the Soviet Union in the Cold War.

John Howard Yoder, the Mennonite theologian, is an important voice in my continuing attempt to be informed by these theological greats. I recently read his book, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War and Other Essays on Barth* (ed. Mark Thiessen Nation, Cascade Books, Wipf & Stock, Oregon, 2003). Yoder's work on Barth is important because it takes seriously Barth as a church theologian. (Yoder also reports that a draft of his Barth essay was shown to Barth who agreed with it.) Yoder takes Barth's *Church Dogmatics* into serious account. He argues that Barth understood ethics to be integral to the task of systematic theology, with regard (among other ethical themes) to abortion, euthanasia and war.

Barth appeals to two categories: a rejection of casuistry; and the notion of *Grenzfall* (a limit situation). In exploring Barth's use of these categories in his *Church Dogmatics* volumes II, III and IV, Yoder shows how the questions of life and death in these ethical questions take the Christian to a critical moment which requires the risk of obedience, as a response to the command of God. Barth says he resists casuistry because it appeals to principled thinking that tries to sort out the ethical response ahead of time, rather than acting in faith (here and now). In fact, Barth does use 'cases' to argue and explore the ethical challenges, engaging in a form of casuistry.

With regard to war, Yoder observes that Barth reverses the usual order of treatment. Traditionally abortion and euthanasia take the lead and war is dealt with later. Here, Barth treats the question of war first. He admits that in war there is no order, but rather chaos and destruction. Barth rejects the term 'necessary evil' (Niebuhr) but does allow for the possibility of the 'lesser evil'.

However, Barth takes the view that the Christian is called to be a pacifist. The weight of the Christian claim is to make pacifism the norm. But he allows an exception: that in a *Grenzfall* a command of God might require a person to engage in killing. Barth argues that God must be allowed the freedom to command war. This leads Barth to a view he describes as 'practical pacifism'. (To test this approach he uses a case study - the role of Switzerland's 'armed neutrality'.) Note that Barth is critical of Bonhoeffer and his co-conspirators as 'dreamers'; they were neither serious enough to follow through the planned attack at the cost of their own lives, nor did they plan for the resulting consequences.

Barth's political engagement with the question of war took place in the 1930s and 1950s. The latter engagement was in the context of the Cold War and the development of atomic weapons; Barth argued for an 'atomic pacifism'. Yoder observes that Barth uses a version of 'just war' doctrine.

Not surprisingly, Yoder challenges Barth's acceptance of the possible involvement by Christians in war. Yoder exercises in a 'Barthian critique' of Barth. He shows that Barth leaves major themes relatively untouched: the character of 'the State', the history of non-violent resistance, the possibility that the church might, as a body, respond in times of conflict by deciding to declare against governments who are preparing for war. He posits the option that all Christians might become conscientious objectors. Taking up Barth's development of Christology (in the humanity of Jesus) Yoder demonstrates that Barth's notion of the 'command of God' leading to war does not take seriously the way of Jesus Christ, and ignores the essential wrongness of war as expressed in his description of its destructiveness.

There is much more detail in Yoder's account of Barth's ethical thinking on war but these are the key themes that impress themselves upon me. This work is helpful in our current Australian context with regard to the church's response to war. For example, during the 1980s, the Uniting Church in Australia developed a clear and unequivocal stance against nuclear weapons, declaring the Christian vocation of peacemaking and declaring the production and use of nuclear weapons to be 'sinful'. The church's response to so-called conventional war (which is total war now) is as yet unresolved. Many Australian Christians would still hold to a version of 'just war', and allow for Christian involvement in war, including appointing chaplains to the military services, perhaps because they have accepted the role of Christians as responsible citizens.

Yoder's work presses for a faithful discipleship truly based on following Jesus Christ.

A parable about a lifesaving station

By Dave Andrews

There was a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occurred, and on the coastline was a crude, makeshift, lifesaving station.

This station was simply a boathouse with a single boat. But the few devoted lifesavers kept a constant watch over the treacherous sea and launched their boat at a moment's notice to rescue anybody in trouble.

With no thought of themselves, they used to risk life and limb, to row out into the maelstrom of the fierce storms that broke along the coast, to save the lives of seafarers who would have otherwise been lost.

In fact, this lifesaving station saved so many people it became famous.

Those who were saved, and other well-wishers, wanted to be a part of the station and gave their money and time to support its work.

They built a bigger, better boathouse. And they bought an up-to-date, state-of-the-art lifeboat. But, to run the more sophisticated but more expensive operation they developed, they needed a lot more income.

So they hired a director from the corporate sector, with experience in getting the funding and managing the funding effectively.

The managing director told the lifesavers that they couldn't expect to get the funding that the boathouse needed without changing some of their policies and making their policies more in line with current guidelines that were set down as requirements by funding agencies.

The lifesavers were told the most important priority for the lifesaving station was to manage risk. Funding agencies would not want to support projects involving unnecessarily risky behaviour, which would require big insurance premiums and could expose them to litigation.

The lifesavers said that the whole purpose of the lifesaving operation was to save lives at risk, which was an inherently risky business.

But they were chastised for their reckless attitude, which, they were told, could put the whole operation in jeopardy, and were pressured to accept the new best-practice health and safety policies that were proposed by the experts the director had employed.

Since that time the boathouse has become a model institution. Its administration is very reputable. People write research papers about it.

Some of the older lifesavers who couldn't adapt to the new system have moved on (and there are rumours some of the old lifesavers were actually told by the management to learn to get along or move along).

The new professional boathouse staff who have been hired to take the place of the old amateur lifeboat crew appreciate the dangers to the organisation of taking risk, comply with the risk management strategy, and are quite comfortable with life in the boathouse under the new system.

But people don't take the boat out to rescue people at risk in storms anymore. It's too risky; what's more, it's against boathouse policy.

And people drown.

Groundbreakers

Groundbreakers is a new AAANZ initiative to encourage regional activities across Australia and New Zealand. AAANZ members in different cities have been appointed as regional representatives to encourage local events and awareness. Each issue of *On The Road* will feature updates from the different regions. As a starting point, Doug Sewell has asked each of the groundbreakers to give a report on the social, cultural and religious climate of their place.

Christchurch

Paul McMahon

Christchurch/Otautahi, in the Province of Canterbury in Aotearoa/New Zealand's South Island, was originally settled by the (Maori) Waitaha tribe, who were later assimilated into the Ngai Tahu tribe. Then, in the mid-nineteenth century, Europeans of mainly British descent (Pakeha), began to settle in the area. Christchurch was founded by Royal Charter on 31 July, 1856.

Christchurch now is a very different city to what it was even a year ago: it was really "the place to be," a growing city with relatively low unemployment and lower levels of inequality than the other main centres of New Zealand. Christchurch was known as "The Garden City", and there was no more beautiful place in spring. Christchurch, unlike Auckland, had kept many of its heritage buildings and had a large cultural precinct in the inner city. The city is only an hour and three quarters from top ski fields, geothermal hot pools and top surf beaches.

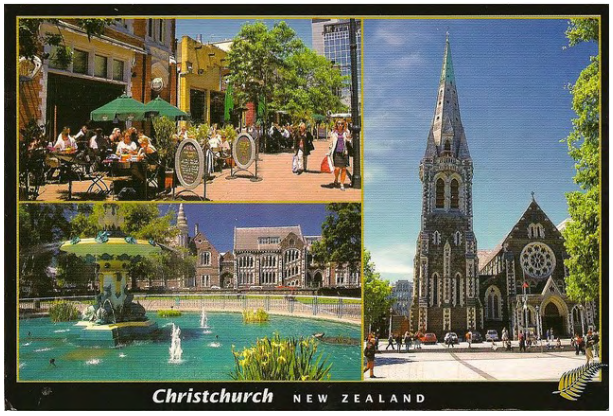
But, now Christchurch is "munted". On September 4th, 2010, the city and surrounding areas was hit by a massive 7.1 earthquake, causing widespread damage but no loss of life. The East of the city, typically poorer areas, was hit by liquefaction, which is subterranean silt and liquid coming to the surface due to the shaking of the layers of sedimentary soils by the earthquakes. Since that time there have been well over 7,000 "aftershocks", including a devastating and, for 182 people, fatal 6.3 on February 22, 2011, that changed the city forever.

Christchurch is not what it used to be. The roads are munted, the footpaths are munted, the Central Business District is totally ruined and needs to be completely rebuilt. Over 5000 people have lost their homes and thousands more are likely to as well. About four earthquakes have caused major liquefaction, and each time it is the poorest people in our city who have been hit the hardest. Life is not as it used to be.

But, there are positives. Many churches have been damaged (not good in itself!), which means that churches are sharing resources and working together more. People are getting to know their neighbours and looking out for each other more. People are driving more slowly, because you have to always be on the look out for new (and potentially large) potholes. The value of community and the local has been highlighted.

People are asking the question, "Where is God in the earthquake?" There have been plenty of poor answers to that question, some good and most mixed. Some people want to rebuild the city the way it was; others want to leave ruins as a memorial to what we have lost, but I want to see the city rebuilt in a way that puts people first. No more one-way streets that rush traffic through the inner city; no more skyscrapers which make the city cold and windy and dominate its human occupants and the few trees there are; no more isolated social housing breeding dysfunction and alienation.

This seismic season is an opportunity to rebuild a city in a way that is sustainable socially, economically and environmentally, so that the dysfunctions are dealt with. I want to see a city that is built in a way that is far more conducive to human flourishing - a city that foments creativity, cooperation and community.



Dunedin

Tom & Cat Noakes-Duncan

Dunedin is located on the East coast of New Zealand's South Island. Maori occupation of the area dates from the 13th century with waves of immigration occurring until the first European settlers arrived in the early 19th century. The local *iwi* is Ngai Tahu, who have a strong presence despite the area being predominated by Pakeha. In 1848 the area of Dunedin was chosen to be a settlement for the Free Church of Scotland, which explains the size and history of the Presbyterian church in the city. There is also a lot of "old money" in the city, largely stretching back to the Gold Rush that happened after the 1860s.

Today, Dunedin remains a smaller city, in part a university town, with up to a quarter of its residents being students.

Here in Dunedin, a few AAANZ members and others interested in Anabaptism connect in a range of different ways. Anabaptist influences are evident at the university - largely due to the influence of Yoder and Hauerwas. Kristin Jack (Servants to Asia's Urban Poor, AAANZ) is working with a community organisation called 'Rock Solid' alongside Cat Noakes-Duncan (Order of Urban Vision, AAANZ). Rock Solid is working with young people at risk and also young mums and bubs and the Anabaptist flavour Kristin and Cat bring to the organisation is positive and will continue growing into the future.

We attend a local Presbyterian church and one of the pastors, Bruce Hamill, identifies himself as an Anabaptist; many of his sermons and conversations in the community involve issues of non-violence and community mission. Bruce recently presented a paper at the university on "Christianity after Christendom". Another of the pastors at the church, Selwyn Yeoman, is interested in Anabaptism and environmental sustainability, he is a part of the 'A Rocha' community here in Dunedin which has a number of members.

Basically, there is a lot of scope here in Dunedin to increase awareness of Anabaptism and AAANZ, particularly among university students and certain church communities. We are new to the city but can see lots of opportunities for further awareness and potential membership.

Queensland and Brisbane

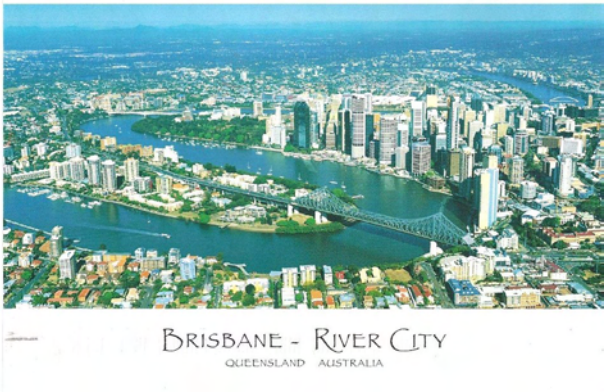
Neil Holm

Margaret and I have recently returned to Brisbane after being away for ten years. After twenty years in the NT, we moved to Brisbane in 1987, and now we have returned.

Queensland is a large state. Brisbane is considerably east of Sydney, while Townsville and Cairns are close to the longitude of Melbourne, and Mt Isa is close to the longitude of Adelaide. Brisbane to Cairns is the same distance as Brisbane to Melbourne.

Brisbane - The population of Greater Brisbane is over 2 million. The Brisbane City Council administers a significant portion of the Brisbane metropolitan area and has a larger population than any other Local Government Area in Australia—over 1 million. The Council administers a budget of over A$3 billion.

Brisbane is about 20 km inland. It is situated on the muddy coloured river that is a dominant feature of life in Brisbane. It is prone to flooding and it meanders around the city.



Age Groups - Queensland has a higher level of youth (greater percentage of children aged 0 - 4 years and young adults aged 15 to 24 years) than most other areas in Australia.

People Born Overseas - About 22% of Queenslanders were born overseas but most (85%) come from Anglo sources. Therefore, there are relatively few people from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, or the Pacific. However, Inala, where Margaret and I live is very multicultural – many Vietnamese, Africans, and people from the Middle East, including many refugees. Inala is in the western suburbs. Areas with high levels of unemployment occur in the southern and southwestern suburbs of Brisbane City.

Living Arrangements - About 22% of households are comprised of one person living alone. About 12% of families are one-parent families with dependent children. About 7% of families are DINKS (double income, no kids).

Housing - About 54% of homes are owned outright by the occupant. There are very low percentages of home ownership in the inner-city suburbs, which tend to contain high percentages of privately-owned, rented dwellings. We now fit both categories – at last after renting for years, we own our home but we also own an investment (superannuation) property in the inner city.

Religion - The denominational and religious breakup is: Catholic 22%; Anglican 13%; Uniting Church 4%; Buddhism 3%; Orthodox 3%; Presbyterian and Reformed 2%; Lutheran 1%; Baptist 1%; Islam 1%; No Religion or Not Stated 42%.

Queensland is quite conservative. Toowoomba is regarded as being very conservative. The chaplaincy in schools movement is very strong in Queensland and was well established before the Federal Government provided funding. Scripture in Schools is conducted with children staying in class being the default position. This means that a high proportion of children in primary school at least stay for Scripture. Margaret has become involved in teaching Scripture to three classes at the local school.

We attend the local Anglican Church (our closest church) where we have found a welcoming, committed, and supportive community. I am enjoying a community development training program that is sponsored by our church. More than twenty people from southern and western Brisbane attend a course run by AAANZ's Dave Andrews for three hours each week for six weeks. We are learning how to become engaged in community development and to explore avenues for community development in the places where we live. I play tennis with Dave and Robert Gilland (another AAANZ associate) each Saturday morning.

Cultural Life - Brisbane has a strong cultural life. We are proud of the Southbank complex – parklands and swimming pools in the downtown area that link with the modern and well-patronised Performing Arts Complex, Art Gallery, Museum, State Library, and the Gallery of Modern Art. Margaret and I recently enjoyed a visit to the Surrealists Exhibition at GOMA.

Sydney

Matt Stone

The first thing that hits many first time visitors to Sydney is the busyness, particularly the traffic, but also the general lifestyle. People are impatient, deadline driven and always rushing somewhere. It's not an environment that encourages contemplation.

It is, however, an environment that encourages industriousness and a cosmopolitan outlook, and it's hardly surprising that Sydney hosts some of the largest and globally influential churches in Australia, namely Hillsong (Pentecostal) and the Sydney Anglicans (Reformed Evangelical). Together with the Catholic Church, these conservative traditions dominate the local Christian scene.

Christian influence aside, Sydney is also characterized by amazing multicultural and multireligious diversity, with Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam all growing faster than Pentecostalism and significantly influencing the cultural life of the wider city together with consumer-driven spirituality and atheism. Distinct cultural / religious hubs can be found in

different quarters of Sydney, often centred around temples, mosques and synagogues, presenting challenges for churches still locked into a one-size-fits -all approach to community engagement and discipleship.

Distance is also a challenge. Living near the geographic centre of Sydney I can drive more than a hour in any direction and still be in the midst of suburbia. It's not unheard of for people to live more than 90 minutes from where they work and for people to commute over 45 minutes to a church. Such distances can make community cohesion difficult, especially for small and geographically diffuse groups like the local Anabaptist community.

Anabaptism flies largely under the radar in Sydney. There are isolated pockets of interest, but few outside of these circles realise that they exist. Though there is strong social justice concern in some quarters, this typically takes the form of emotionally driven activism without much awareness of the Radical Reformation tradition. There are opportunities for awareness raising but also many challenges.

Canberra

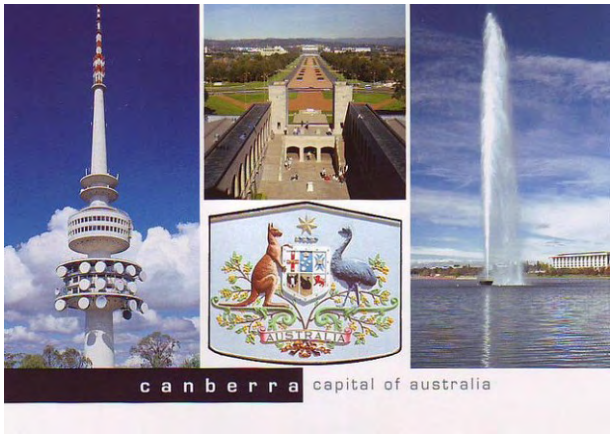
Rowan Ford

Canberra is an expanding and increasingly diverse, multicultural city of 360,000. Over a quarter of its residents were born overseas. As the national capital with its own local government, over 50% of people work for either the Commonwealth or ACT governments.

Canberra is divided into a number of regions (from north to south): Gungahlin, Belconnen, North Canberra, South Canberra, Woden, Weston Creek and Tuggeranong, with any one region comprising 10-20 suburbs. Many people live over the border in NSW towns such as Queanbeyan, Murrumbateman and Yass, and work in Canberra. The Labor Government has been in power for ten years, probably through its greater commitment to social justice than the opposition. There are also four Greens members in the seventeen seat Legislative Assembly.

The church scene ranges from liberal, traditional to conservative, from mainstream to Pentecostal. There is quite cordial cooperation between clergy.

We're not aware of any particular Anabaptist flavour, apart from pockets in St Marks Theological College (a great place where I am completing a Bachelor of Theology part-time) and individual clergy. There are certainly TEAR supporters in many Protestant churches.



Margaret and I have been married for 30 years and have 4 children aged 19 to 28. Our youngest, Nathan, is still at home.

We moved from Belconnen to Gungahlin in January to buy a house. It has three bedrooms, so one is nearly always available for Anabaptist Association people passing through. Gungahlin is a newer area than Belconnen with a comparatively larger Chinese population. A mosque will be built in the area in the next couple of years.

Margaret and I were very involved in Scripture Union for 30 years, running camps and beach missions, and with Margaret the chair for 5 years. We've attended Uniting Churches, independent charismatic churches, Belconnen Baptist Church and house church. We've started attending Gungahlin Uniting Church, and our attendance rate of once every 2-3 weeks probably reflects a growing trend in Christian circles in the Western world. We have a strong interest in social justice and human rights issues, and joined the ACT Greens a few years ago, which didn't seem to win us any friends in Christian circles. In fact, we need to rebuild a friendship network and have seen the Anabaptist Network as partly an opportunity to do this. Marg and I are aware of many people in their 20s, from strong youth group scenes, who have left the church or whose faith is floundering. There seems to be a growing phenomenon of young people drifting away from faith.

Margaret is a psychological and counsellor working for the ACT Government with victims of crime. I was

an English teacher in government high schools until two years ago, when I left to work as a policy officer in the Community Services Directorate of the ACT Government. Our strong interest in justice issues, and our work outside the church, means that we are sometimes conscious of the 'churchiness' of some Christians who seem to interact mostly with other Christians inside churches.

Melbourne

Dale Hess

Melbourne is a large sprawling, multi-cultural city composed of many different ethnic communities. It has a population of approximately four million people. It is a centre for arts and culture, education, sports, entertainment and has been ranked as one of the top three of the 'World's Most Livable Cities'. It is a city with two cathedrals, one Anglican and the other Roman Catholic. These represent the dominant religious denominations here, but nearly every religious group has some representation in Melbourne. Anabaptist interest is found in individuals and groups that sponsor the Surrender Conferences (http://surrender.org.au). This year Jarrod McKenna was one of the keynote speakers. Mary and Mark Hurst came to the conference from Sydney and maintained a stall which gave them an opportunity to talk to many of the young people who attended the conference. The Urban Neighbours of Hope (www.unoh.org) brought the prominent American Mennonites, Ron and Arbutus Sider, to Melbourne to give a series of lectures last year. The annual Ethos Conference is another opportunity to engage with others about Anabaptist ideas (www.ea.org.au/Ethos.aspx). Ian Packer, Gordon Preece and Ian Barns are prominent in the organization. Chris Marshall, Professor of Christian Studies at Victoria University, Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand, spoke last year on the Atonement, Nonviolence and Abuse. Recently Meg and Manuel Loewenthal from the Danthonia Community (the Bruderhof) at Inverell, NSW, visited Melbourne, looking to make contact with like-minded people. They spent some time with the Urban Seed group outside of Geelong. In August 2011 Nancey Murphy, Professor of Christian Philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary at Pasadena, California, visited Melbourne, brought out by Christians in Science and Technology (www.iscast.org).

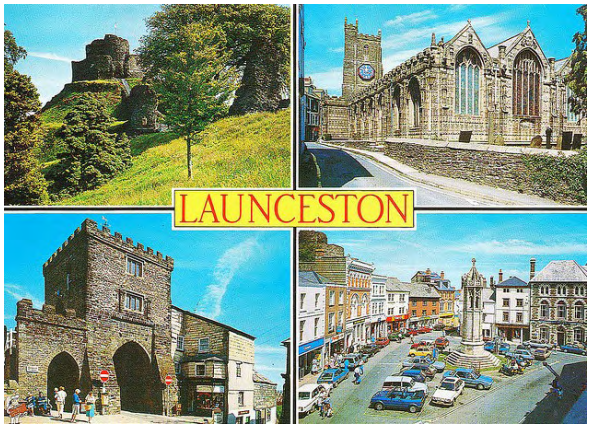
Launceston

Karlin Love

Launceston is a small city of about 100,000. For Australia, it's an old city – European settlement goes back to 1804. Consequently, some cultural resources, like the museum are especially good, with collections that go way back. There is a large campus of the University of Tasmania and the Australian Maritime College here, which attracts many international students.

Tasmania has three distinct regions: South, North and Northwest. Launceston is the cultural centre for the northern region with many performing arts organizations and lots of artists and writers. Economically, it is a light manufacturing centre, and thus, has felt the impact of the recession (or whatever one is supposed to call it!). Young people tend to leave for mainland opportunities even in better times.

It's small enough for churches and organizations like TEAR and OXFAM to co-operate. Anabaptist sympathizers emerge from these collaborations.



Launceston is in the marginal seat of Bass, so we attract federal funding promises. Some of us try to use that attention for social justice issues like the Millennium Development Goals.

Perth

Nathan Hobby

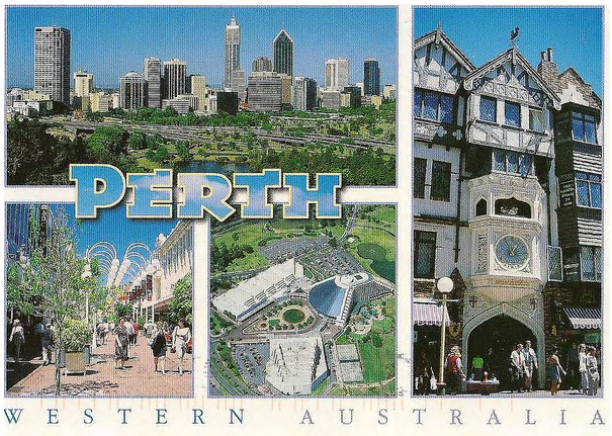
Three quarters of Western Australians live in Perth, 1.7 million people. All the clichés have some truth to them—it's an isolated city, a mining city, a conservative city, a bogan city. It's a beautiful city, too, in its own way.

The mining boom has created a class of people with high incomes and low education; it's also inflated house prices, putting home ownership out of the reach of many not in mining-related jobs.

There are the usual expressions of church, with conservatives and pragmatics dominant.

Anabaptism has been an undercurrent running through the city for several decades. Founding principal Noel Vose and other former lecturers at the Baptist Theological College where I work (now Vose Seminary) have always emphasised the importance of the Anabaptist heritage for Baptists. The library holds a special Anabaptist collection of 400 volumes. A few of the students of the college in the nineties formed an Anabaptist house church in the 2000s; this coming after Ian and Ann Duckham had spent many years trying to form a Mennonite congregation in the city.

The Peacetree and Open Table communities of Lockridge (a suburb to the east) have been influenced by Anabaptism. They live out an alternate way of life in a poor area, helping out people in need and trying to show peace, justice and sustainability in their common life.



Naked Anabaptist Group in Perth

By Nathan Hobby

Perth has now had two 'Naked Anabaptist' meetings, where we have gathered to hear a talk on the first two 'core convictions' adopted by the Anabaptist Network of Britain (and explained in Stuart Murray's *The Naked Anabaptist*), share news, and fellowship. We met in the library of Vose Seminary.

The first happened on the morning of Saturday 7 May, with Mark Hurst offering a fresh reading of the parable of the pounds (Luke 19) as a parable showing the price of the third servant speaking truth to power. Twenty people attended, ranging in age from 28 to 89.

We stuck with Saturday morning for the second meeting on 20 August, with twelve people coming to hear Vose Seminary student, Kyle Vermaes, give a paper on a Jesus-centred approach to the Bible. The paper is published in this issue on p.23. We also heard Noel Vose share his interest in Anabaptism over the past six decades, from hearing of it at seminary to ultimately attending Baptist-Mennonite talks as Baptist world president. He went on to read two of his columns on Anabaptist history which were first published thirty years ago in *The Australian Baptist*.

The aim in starting these meetings has been to give us a chance to disseminate and discuss Anabaptist ideas in WA, influencing the churches or organisations we belong to; and to have fellowship, networking and news between people interested in Anabaptism in WA.

The plan is to continue with three monthly meetings running for two hours on Saturday mornings, with a different core conviction covered each time. It's a simple approach which could work in other cities.

Anabaptist Scot McKnight visits Perth

By Nathan Hobby

Scot pictured, coincidentally, in front of Vose Library's Anabaptist Collection

Every two years, the Baptist-run Vose Seminary in Perth hosts an academic conference. The theme of the 15-16 August 2011 conference was 'Beyond Four Walls', with a focus on church and mission. The keynote speaker was prolific US New Testament scholar Scot McKnight, a self-identified Anabaptist.

In his opening talk, Scot claimed most Christians have reduced the gospel to either justice or justification. Christians on the left have mistakenly thought the good news can be reduced to social justice. Christians on the right have mistakenly thought the good news can be reduced to personal salvation in the form of justification. Scot called us to remember the gospel is found primarily not in Paul but in the first four books of the New Testament, all of them the one gospel, not four, but told by four different writers. The gospel cannot be reduced to Jesus' death; it is the whole story of Jesus and it is Jesus' announcement of the kingdom.

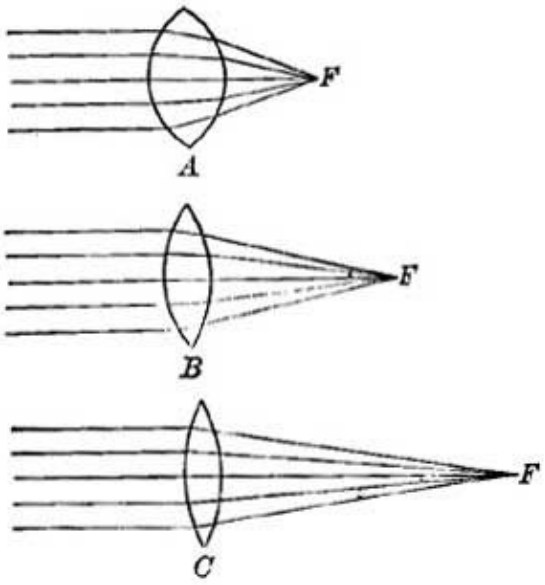
Scot began so many of his sentences with 'As an Anabaptist' that one of the first questions thrown at him from the audience was, 'Why are you an Anabaptist?'. He responded, 'Because I read my Bible.' After the laughter subsided he explained that he thought the Anabaptist emphasis on discipleship and the centrality of Jesus was the right way to approach Christianity. He mentioned the strong influence Anabaptist theologian Ron Sider had on him in his formative years. In a conversation I had with him, McKnight said that he saw himself as somewhere between Sider and John Howard Yoder. He finished off his answer to the question from the audience by saying, 'And that's why I go to a very Anabaptist church called Willow Creek.' Willow Creek, a megachurch which invented 'seeker-sensitive services', is about as far from Anabaptist ecclesiology as I can imagine, although it has focused more on discipleship in recent years. The joke may have been lost on much of the audience, but he was acknowledging a dilemma which faces many Anabaptists in Australia and New Zealand – finding a church which fits our beliefs.

If Scot's first talk offended many on the right, his final talk offended some on the left. He spoke of the increasing focus on 'justice' amongst his students and their belief that working with NGOs and politics to achieve social justice was 'kingdom work'. Scot insisted that this was not kingdom work but social work. He called for unglamorous, quiet church-based justice: looking after the aged, the widowed, the poor within the church community, and constantly reaching beyond the boundaries to bring more people into the church. These were controversial words, but ones worth contemplating for those of us who tend to see social justice as kingdom work. Scot says his forthcoming book, *The King Jesus Gospel*, will explain his position better. It does need better explaining, and I think his words may have given comfort to people in the 'do-nothing' camp. But in part, it seems to me he means what Yoder means in *Body Politics*, and that is that the church needs to embody justice to the world.

The Naked Anabaptist: core convictions

Jesus, Bible, Community

By Kyle Vermaes



'Jesus is the focal point of God's revelation. We are committed to a Jesus-centred approach to the Bible and to the community of faith as the primary context in which we read the Bible and discern and apply its implications for discipleship.'

Stuart Murray focuses on three points from this conviction: that Scripture has implications for discipleship, that the community of faith is the primary context for Bible reading, discernment and application, and that a Jesus-centred approach is necessary for both the Bible and the community of faith. I found that the focus on discipleship and the community of faith were the most central points, but obviously the idea of approaching the Bible and the community in a Jesus-centred way shines through any discussions of these topics.

So Jesus is the *focal point* of *God's revelation*. But what does this really mean?

A focal point in optics is that point which rays of light converge at having passed through a lens. It is the inevitable destination – having passed through the lens, all light ends up passing through the one point. In the same way, Jesus represents the focal point of God's revelation – we see the Hebrew Scriptures inevitably pointing toward – narrowing, converging – to his life, death and resurrection. And we see the writings of the early church as a direct consequence of His person, emanating from His life.

But the use of optical terminology here is subtly more profound than it first appears, for having a Jesus centred approach to Scripture means that Jesus is not just the focal point of Scripture, but the lens through which to correctly view Scripture as well. To redirect light to any particular point, a certain type and shape

of lens is required. In the same way, reading the Scriptures does not – unfortunately – always result in Jesus being revealed; Jesus doesn't always end up being the focus. It is only when Jesus is also the lens through which we read Scripture – when we interpret the Scriptures in light of Jesus' ministry, and by the guidance of Jesus' Holy Spirit – that the truth of the Scriptures is revealed.

Most Christians would affirm the necessity of the presence of the Holy Spirit for faithful Bible interpretation to occur, but considering Jesus as the only accurate lens through which to view Scripture means that just as important is approaching, reading and understanding Scripture the way that Jesus did.

Thankfully for us, in Matthew 7:12, at the conclusion of Jesus' longest recorded teaching, Jesus indicates directly how he understands the Christian life espoused by the Scriptures:

> "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets".

Stassen and Gushee – the writers of *Kingdom Ethics* - point out that:

> "Jesus here claimed that the moral content of the entire biblical witness can be summarized as an ethic of other-regard demonstrated through deeds."

According to Jesus then, it is *discipleship* that the Scriptures are primarily concerned with.

If this seems too brief, too easy, or possibly taken out of context, the four passages which follow this stress the importance of following Jesus' teachings in a way that is always challenging and sometimes terrifying:

> Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter through the narrow gate…" Following Jesus is a narrow road, many miss it.
>
> Matthew 7:15-20: "You will know them by their fruits…" Following Jesus involves a way of life such that it is obvious whether faithfulness to Christ is present or not.
>
> Matthew 7:21-23: "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven…"
>
> Matthew 7:24-27: "Everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock…"

Stassen and Gushee summarise by noting that

> "According to Jesus, there is no authentic Christianity, discipleship or Christian ethics apart from doing the deeds he taught his followers to do."

This is Stuart Murray's first observation regarding the second conviction – Scripture necessarily has implications for discipleship. Certainly all of the Anabaptist convictions involve "a call to serious discipleship in different areas of life", but these statements regarding Scripture support the other convictions – there can be no separation of interpretation from application; it is fundamental to the purpose of reading the Scriptures to be formed into a disciple.

Obviously, this isn't always the case. In the introduction to the book *Mere Discipleship*, Lee Camp notes the puzzling and horrifying breakdown of Rwandan Christianity during the 1994 genocide. In a country where around 90% of the population claimed some Christian church affiliation, the genocide illustrated that the Christianity which had swept through the country had failed to create communities of disciples. Camp describes:

> In Rwanda, with 'Christian Hutus' slaughtering 'Christian Tutsis' (and vice versa), 'Christian' apparently served as a faith brand name – a 'spirituality', or a 'religion' – but not a commitment to a common Lord.

Murray points out that Protestant congregations in the West have compartmentalised interpretation and application in a similar way. Academic scholarship, while well informed and with the resources to interpret the Scriptures well, often has no setting in which to test the implications of their research, and has little or no support for accountability. Meanwhile, Bible studies in the local congregation can result in what Murray refers to as a "pool of ignorance", and may not go any further than trying to search out the meaning of the text. Both situations fail to meet the expectation that adequate Bible study must "lead to more faithful and creative discipleship".

To avoid this situation, there is an admirable tendency to try to integrate the academy and the congregation, often by having teachers and pastors seminary trained, who can then teach and preach using more informed biblical interpretation. While this can help to overcome the presence of the "pool of ignorance", community meetings can often become mono-voiced – listening to a pastor or a teacher exclusively, and marginalising the voice of the congregants.

This was one of the central issues over which the first Anabaptists parted ways with the Reformers. The Reformers' focus on Sola Scriptura - Scripture Alone! - challenged traditional interpretations, but operated on the assumption that all careful, reasoned exegesis would line up with their own interpretations. However, just like today, this was not the case. Alarmed by this, the Reformers attempted to "put the cork back on the bottle" by declaring that

congregations should give priority to the interpretations of their pastors and preachers. Unsurprisingly though, it was too late. Some, including the Anabaptists, were not satisfied with trading an exclusive priesthood for an exclusive pastorate – insisting that ordinary Christians who were attentive to the Holy Spirit could interpret the Bible responsibly even if they lacked theological training.

How then should a Christian balance the varying voices of preachers, scholars and tradition, while also incorporating their own contextual setting and the voices of fellow brothers and sister in the faith? This question leads directly to Murray's second observation: that the community of faith is "the primary context where what each brings can be weighed":

> It was when those in the community of faith gathered and reflected on Scripture together that they anticipated the Spirit would guide them and bring them to one mind about what the text meant and how they were to apply it.

There are two compelling motivations for adopting a congregational approach to interpretation of Scripture, both of which result from a Jesus-centred approach to the community of faith.

Firstly, it is congruent with Jesus' central ministry – to the powerless. Time and time again in the Scriptures Jesus is seen to reach out to those that are deemed unclean and worthless – healing the sick, dining with tax collectors and prostitutes. Those who were marginalised and thrown aside by the power systems of that day were those that Jesus ministered to most often. Ultimately, through the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, Jesus passes that ministry to any who would claim to follow and know him – it is the feeding of the hungry, the welcoming of the stranger, the clothing of the naked, the caring for the sick and visiting the imprisoned that are the signs of following Jesus. It is a ministry to the powerless, the marginalised; those who have no voice.

Congregational interpretation which involves the last, the lost and the least then not only grants them a voice in a world in which they are almost always voiceless, but also affords them the dignity of moving from spectator to participant and, perhaps more significantly, from being viewed as purely a recipient of grace to a contributor within the community. In short, not only does it fulfil Jesus' command to welcome the outsider, but it affirms the humanity, self-worth and identity of all members.

Secondly, a communal approach to interpreting Scripture combats a growing tendency toward individualism and a shallow Scriptural world-view. Culture increasingly demands that we accept and affirm each individual's right to their own opinions and interpretations and that no-one has the right to challenge another's perspective. Despite commands to the contrary within Scripture (such as speaking the truth in love in Ephesians 4, dealing with sinning against one another in Matthew 18, or removing the speck from your brother's eye in Matthew 7) the notion of unadulterated acceptance and affirmation of other's actions has infiltrated the church. This development naturally affects the impact of congregational teaching – rather than being challenged by it, listeners are more likely to reject, ignore or even complain about a message that doesn't resonate with their understanding.

This scenario would have seemed outrageous to Reformer, Catholic and Anabaptist alike. While the Anabaptists stressed the importance of all voices being heard, and opposed the mono-voice system of either preacher or priest, they equally would be appalled by the isolated nature of much contemporary Biblical interpretation. And since this is inescapably influenced by who we are and the kind of upbringing we've had, our own position in culture and even society's regard for Christianity, this isolated approach to Scripture reading can have a disastrous effect on the likelihood of being transformed and challenged as disciples.

Making this problem of isolated and individual interpretation worse though is that, as humans, we are naturally drawn to those who we agree with, who we relate to most easily, who we share the most in common with. There is, of course, nothing inherently wrong with this connection to people like us. However, there is a downside – if we tend to spend a vast majority of our time with people who are very much like us, it is incredibly likely that we hear the same voices, saying the same things more often than not. When it comes to Bible reading, discussion and ultimately discernment then – the result is a shallow reading, essentially a mono-voiced reading.

One of the strengths of communal interpretation of Scripture then is that we hear other voices – voices which challenge our own, voices which speak from a different viewpoint, voices which offer varying meanings of a text. Reading Scripture with others who are in different contexts to us can therefore aid in our interpretation – which results in a more nuanced understanding than our individual efforts can. As an example, in our Western, first-world lives, there is a

tendency to over-spiritualize versions of the Scriptures because the more literal, down-to-earth messages they are speaking are completely foreign to us:

- We can read Exodus as a metaphor for being set free from the oppression of addictions because we do not understand what it means to be in literal slavery,
- We can prefer the Matthean version of the Beatitudes as they bless those who are poor in spirit rather than those who are poor, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness rather than those who are actually hungry, for many of us cannot relate to being truly financially poor or physically hungry,
- We can read many of the parables from an over-spiritualized perspective, casting characters as God where the context does not immediately call for such a role, because they speak to a first century marginalised Israelite world view that we are unfamiliar with. Mark Hurst's parable reading at the last meeting was an example of such a re-reading.

That is not to say that there is no spiritual dimension to these passages, or that there is no value in such readings. It simply illustrates how we will all naturally be inclined to read the Bible in particular ways, and that there may be hidden depths to Scripture that will be difficult for us to discover on our own.

The beauty of the second Anabaptist core conviction is that it would have us gather and discern together what God is speaking to us as a group, and encourage each other to faithful discipleship. The role of interpretation, discernment, encouragement and application are to be communal undertakings – involving hearing all voices.

---

phoebe duck

walking through the shadowlands
I found a wet, flailing duckling
who,
when plopped into
box with lamp
dried and fluffed up
primping with delight

well,
I *imagine* delight
as I
was to imagine all of her emotions...

really,
the divide was huge
she was a duckling, I – a woman
encountering some of life's
gritty moments
she was
well, she was just Phoebe

for many long years
she basked in the rye
avoiding
every guise that death sent
until
the orange creature
all sharp angles and smelling
rank
slipped past the Catcher
and Phoebe – well

Phoebe's life was done

I am left
feeling foolishly bereft of duck creature
left
with a memory
of rounded beak
shovelling into my palm
scattering seeds in all directions
with an occasional lunge
at my elbow
which would send me
sprawling and laughing
my feelings slightly hurt
by duck aggression?
duck love?

- Jill Gannon

Connecting inner peace with active peacemaking

By Jon Rudy

My commitment to active nonviolence and work in the field of peacebuilding have given me a window on some of the hot spots around the world. I have met and worked beside some of the great unsung heroes/ heroines who have given their lives to mitigating violence in their communities. I have been privileged to make some small contributions to their efforts.

Now, far away from the combat zones, far away from the places where peace is not a luxury but survival, I find that my involvement in peacebuilding has taken on a more pedestrian flavour.

I was reflecting on this shift from the 'front lines' to the safe shores of my suburban existence and realised that the peace work I am now doing is actually quite profound. And frankly, I am discovering that I am making an impact for peace in the only realm that I really have any influence, myself.

Inner peace or the quest thereof, is maybe what I had been seeking while standing in solidarity, practicing activism or grappling with conflict dilemmas. So while I don't have bullets flying around me, the unrest has been equally as great.

Discovering my peaceful person has come from realizing one great truth. I cannot have inner peace if I do not love myself. This painful realization came clear one morning when I woke up to my own self loathing. How could I contribute anything positive to the world if my own self hatred equalled my hatred of war and violence?Was I not projecting and thus embodying all the wretched destruction that I wanted to fix with my peace work?

I began my journey of inner peace with suspending judgment. I asked myself what in my past has given me the false authority to stand as arbiter of what is good and bad, what is right and wrong, what is sacred and profane. I had to admit that it was my own diminished self respect. Every pronouncement was a condemnation against me. Every time I stood on my pedestal, I was exposing my own shortcomings. Every edict against another sentenced me to being further from my goal of peace. So suspending this kind of lordship over all things freed me for the next step, opening my heart.

I imagined that my heart was open. Open to new ways of thinking, open to persons I was afraid of and open to choosing life instead of death. Heart opening led to the gift of gratitude. I discovered that fear and hatred cannot inhabit the same space as thankfulness. Gratitude opened up the imagination for surprise and abundance. Now where there was once a closed self raging against war, there was openness to embrace peace.

I began carrying a threefold mantra; I love myself, I have peace, I am happy. Repeating these three phrases has helped me relax into being a the kind of person who can genuinely contribute to peace wherever I go, whatever I do and whoever I meet under any kind of circumstances. It is not I who make the peace, but I am the vessel who receives and passes or pours out the peace.

Life isn't perfect. I sometimes fall back into my un-peaceful self esteem. But gently I am reminded that while I am building peace I am also learning peace and living peace.

Contributor Profiles

Dave Andrews can be found in person at West End, Brisbane or online at www.daveandrews.com.au.

Wes Campbell is a Uniting Church Minister and convenor of the national Uniting Church working group on doctrine. He has ministered in congregations in Perth and Melbourne, and in social justice education and advocacy. He is married to Bev with two adult children.

Jill Gannon is a AAANZ member from NSW.

Doug Hynd is working on a PhD and blogs at http://doug-subversivevoices.blogspot.com.

Neil Mactaggart, now retired, was Operations Service Manager at Perth Airport which included responsibilities for security and emergency response; he works as a library assistant at the Vose Seminary.

Jonathan Rudy has more than 25 years experience in 45 countries providing program support in strategic peacebuilding, training and advocacy in nonviolence. He now resides in Manheim, Pennsylvania, USA and has a website at: www.PeaceBuildingGlobal.com.

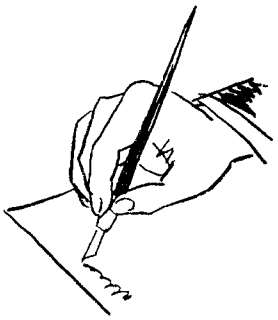
Chris Summerfield is from Western Australia and has blogged at http://achurchlessfaith.blogspot.com/ since 2004.

Kyle Vermaes writes 'I'm a theology student who is trying to follow Jesus, not just be a fan. Finding Anabaptism has been more like a coming home than a discovery.'

How to...CONTRIBUTE

#51 Women and Anabaptism

#52 Pastor, Preacher, Chaplain



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

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

The theme of issue 51 is Women & Anabaptism. Topics might include feminist aspects of Anabaptism; women and peacemaking or violence; women in the Bible; women in Mennonite or Amish communities. **The deadline is 10 November 2011.**

The theme of issue 52 is Pastor, Preacher, Chaplain— a call for reflections on paid/ professional ministry, on preaching peace, on teaching Anabaptist concerns, on pastoral care and nonviolence, on the idea of chaplaincy, on what Anabaptist pastoral theology looks like, and other related topics. **The deadline is 9 February 2012.**

Non-themed submissions are always welcome too.

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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 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.