



# ON THE ROAD

Newsletter  
of the  
*Anabaptist Association of  
Australia and New Zealand Inc.*  
No.18 DECEMBER 2002

AAANZ Bi-National Conference

## REGISTRATION DUE 6 JANUARY

Peace Church

### Sustaining Community in a Violent Time

24-27 January 2003 Otford Conference Centre, Sydney

FOR FUTHER DETAILS SEE ON THE ROAD #17

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**BY THE TENDER MERCY OF OUR  
GOD, THE DAWN FROM ON HIGH  
WILL BREAK UPON US, TO GIVE  
LIGHT TO THOSE WHO SIT IN  
DARKNESS AND IN THE SHADOW  
OF DEATH, TO GUIDE OUR FEET  
INTO THE WAY OF PEACE.**

- LUKE 1: 78-79

## FROM THE EDITORS

This end of the year issue contains the usual mix of articles, announcements, and information on book and website resources.

Throughout this issue, we are featuring thoughts on Christmas from Alan Walker. For over two decades, he wrote the Christmas and Easter editorials in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. These reflections were gathered in a book called *Herald of Hope* (Albatross, 1994). Sir Alan Walker was, for many years, superintendent of Wesley Mission, Sydney, and principal of the Pacific College of Evangelism (now the Alan Walker College). He is passionately committed to issues of social justice and peace as will be evident in his reflections.

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## On The Road

The AAANZ quarterly newsletter publishes news, articles, book reviews, and resource information. It is published online with a paper edition available for those without computer facilities. (Paper edition A\$20 per year) To be added to the mailing list write :

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

# THE VIEW FROM EPHESIANS FOUR

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

We heard a radio commentary that shocked us. It was called "Tables For All" and was given by Bill Harley, an American storyteller. Harley told an audience recently that one of the best things they could do for their families was turn off the TV at meal times. The dinner table is the place where families catch up with each other. Family stories are told, traditions are passed on, and language is learned.

After his talk, a friend who works with young mothers and infants told him "You made the same assumption I did." She spoke to mothers about the importance of talking to their children as they were feeding them at the table. What she discovered is that many of these mothers did not have a table and did not grow up eating with their family around a table. They do not know how to have a dinner conversation.

The order of furniture buying for these mothers was a couch, TV, VCR, Stereo system, and more chairs to sit around and watch the TV. No table!

Harley was astounded by this, as we were when we heard him. He cited a study done recently trying to find any "constants" among National Merit Scholarship winners, some of the brightest high school students in the United States. The only constant found was these students ate dinner regularly with their families.

This commentator believes being "at table" together is so important that the US government should make it a priority. Take money from the homeland security budget to buy tables. His final statement was "Tables for all!"

We had a discussion recently with Egyptian friends about the Emmaus Road story (Luke 24). Jesus was made known to the disciples "when he was at the table with them." In Middle Eastern culture, the host – usually the father – breaks the bread and serves it to the others around the table. This is a task of honour and obligation for the father to show hospitality to guests. In Luke's story, Jesus takes on the host's role, takes the bread, blesses and breaks it, and gives it to everyone else.

Some commentators are so appalled at what Jesus did – breaking the table custom – that they say Jesus and these disciples must have stopped at an inn instead of the disciples' home. They cannot imagine Jesus going against the table custom of his day.

The Gospels record a number of stories about Jesus eating with his disciples and others (often with "sinners"). Right before he was killed, we find him taking his "place at the table," sharing a Passover meal with his disciples, and talking about eating and drinking "at my table in my kingdom." (Luke 22:30)

Jesus taught, shared stories, and generally had a good time being at table with others. It is where his disciples learned the traditions and language of God's kingdom. There is a lesson there for us in our families and as the family of God. Neither the family nor church "table" should be neglected. We will all be better off being at the table. Tables for all!

(The article "NPR: Tables For All" can be found at [http://search.npr.org/cf/cmn/segment\\_display.cfm?segID=150309](http://search.npr.org/cf/cmn/segment_display.cfm?segID=150309).)

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT .....DOUG HYND

The issues confronting the Association as we complete the first two years of Mark and Mary's ministry are very similar to those when they arrived:

- Building support for the Association and support to sustain Mark and Mary's ministry locally and reduce our dependence on support from North America.
- Building communities in Australia and New Zealand across traditional boundaries that could sustain and embody a form of Christian witness shaped by the Anabaptist tradition.
- Establishing priorities for ministry amongst an enormous range of opportunities.
- Supporting the scattered network of friends in their discipleship.

Can I urge and encourage you to come to the conference in January for a time to be nurtured and encouraged in your journey? Come with a willingness to share to pray to celebrate and to discern something of the shape for a peace church down under.

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It is still Advent as I sit down to write this column. Advent is the time in the Christian community of waiting informed by memory and hope. For this reason we need to engage with the history of Israel as re-told and reflected on in the Old Testament. The memory is of God's engagement in human suffering and of hope for a future which is not determined by the claims of those who discern that we have reached the end of history.

This year as people across the globe wait facing the possibility of a war which may or may not be limited in its scope and impact on human history, Christians find themselves looking desperately for signs of God's love, justice and healing in the face of an awareness of deep injustice, raw pain and hopeless violence which is difficult to avoid but also difficult to live with in ongoing awareness.

Bruce Cockburn, the Canadian songwriter, with a sensibility deeply shaped by the Christian story, captures the sense of Advent for me this year when he sings of being "Shipwrecked at the stable door". (*Big Circumstance*, 1989) All security gone, the poet sees himself waiting at the stable for that strange unlikely birth amongst a strange marginal people that will challenge the certainties of empire. The lines of his final verse in this song take us to the Sermon on the Mount where he reminds us of the shape of this waiting.

**Blessed are the poor in spirit**

**Blessed are the meek**

**For theirs shall be the kingdom that the power mongers seek**

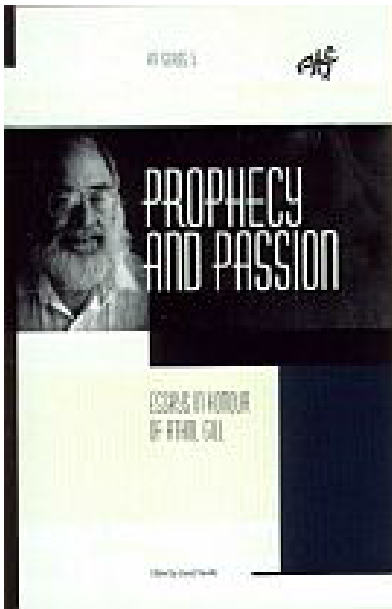
**And blessed are the dead for love and those who cry for peace**

**And those who love the gift of earth, may their gene pool increase**

May we be given patience to wait with hope, courage to surrender our fear, freedom to rejoice that God is with us.

\*\*\*\*\*

I have just started reading my way through *Prophecy and*



*Passion* a collection of essays dedicated to the memory of the life and witness of Athol Gill. Athol was a New Testament lecturer, founder of the House of the Gentle Bunyip and, prior to Tim Costello, probably the most widely known Australian Baptist of recent times.

I will certainly be doing a review of the book in the next issue. My initial reaction, reflecting on the situation of the world and the demands for Christian witness, was

how badly leadership of the type he lived out is needed in Australian Christianity today.

Athol was committed to critical involvement in society with the marginalized, an involvement which was grounded in commitment to discipleship rooted in scripture and the living out in a practice of church as community.

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Let me share a reflection from the work of Brian Walsh, Reformed chaplain at the University of Toronto. Despite this affiliation and the past history of conflict between the Reformed and Anabaptist traditions his writing has explored themes which build bridges. In a time of fear and holding on tight to what we think we have, hospitality is a practice that will be central in Christian witness. At the close of an exploration of homecoming in the lyrics of his fellow Canadian Bruce Cockburn, Walsh makes the following comments:

*When our lives have been irrevocably formed by dark memories, then we had better get used to being at home in the darkness. But this is not a defeated acquiescence for Cockburn - an abandonment of the pilgrimage home - because he is still "hungry for dawn." It is just that some of his memories are so horrific that they are untellable as story and become reduced to disjointed, fragmented scenes. Without a story, however, homecoming is impossible. And while Cockburn's dark memories seem to resist narrative, he tries to tell their story anyway. Indeed, the title track, "The Charity of Night," offers us three scenes, three painful memories, that constitute the "haunting hands of memory."*

*The last cut on the album, "Strange Waters," returns to these memories in the form of a meditation on Psalm 23. Cockburn confesses that through all the paths he has walked and love he has burned, his pilgrimage has been led by a divine hand:*

***You been leading me  
Beside strange waters  
Streams of beautiful  
Lights in the night***

*It has not all been dark. There have been streams of beautiful lights in the night. But this pilgrimage is long and it is painful. And the poet is still not home. So Cockburn transposes the thankful confidence of Psalm 23 into a lament:*

***But where is my pastureland  
In these dark valleys?  
If I loose my grip  
Will I take flight?***

*It is hard to experience the world as a pastureland, as a home, when you're hanging from a high wire by the tatters of your faith. And so Cockburn asks, if I loose my grip, if I follow my own advice that "everything is bullshit but the open hand" and actually open my hand, will I fall to my death, or will my tattered faith take flight?*

*For Cockburn, home is neither an accomplishment nor a possession, but a gift to be received with an open hand. As a gift, home cannot be secured with a tight, self-protective grasp. We must loose our grip and open our hands to an embracing hospitality.*

*("Homecoming Lyrics of Canadian Songwriter Bruce Cockburn", Brian Walsh, Christianity and the Arts, Winter 2000)*

May you experience the light of the incarnation in the midst of the darkness this Christmas.

### **SPEAKING TO ADVERSITY**

Christmas is being celebrated by millions of people amid anxiety and adversity. For the majority of the human race, poverty is always the setting of Christmas. For Western countries, it comes in the context of economic upheaval and unemployment.

Christmas declares God's concern for the poor. From the beginning to the end of his life, Jesus showed his identification with the poor.

Mary his mother foretold that he would exalt people of low estate and send the rich empty away. Jesus was born into a poor home in the lowliest circumstances - in a stable. In his first message, he announced good news to the poor. Jesus was homeless. He had few possessions. In the end, his friends buried him in a borrowed tomb. From personal experience, Jesus understood the meaning of poverty.

For all who suffered deprivation and want, the Christmas message offers sympathy and understanding. For example, Jesus felt the sorrow of unemployment. He told one of his best-known parables after seeing men standing idle, waiting for work in a marketplace. In the parable each man is given a basic wage regardless of the hours worked, foreshadowing the principle which lies behind modern social welfare payments.

Jesus saw clearly the underside view of life, knowing what it meant to be voiceless and helpless. As a result, he was and is a partisan of the poor.

The Christmas message represents more than sympathy: it is a call to a larger justice. Structures and institutions need to be challenged. In many places, the authentic Christian message is being sounded: set the poverty-captives free. (Christmas 1982)

**GOD IS CONCERNED FOR THE INSECURE**

In a time of crisis, Christmas is a reminder of God's providential care over the centuries. Long before the birth of Jesus, the promise was given: while the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease. This promise has been kept.

Why then do the lean years come? Why does the parched land cry out for rain and for long months it does not fall? Drought is not a denial of God's providence, but an expression of it. Through times of drought the Creator is providing a period of recuperation for the earth, preserving its productivity that it may continue to serve the needs of humanity. The rains do come. God's providence and goodness are never withdrawn from the world.

The Christian faith reminds us the world is not our permanent home. God in his wisdom has surrounded us with insecurity. Insecurity is part of the scheme of things. We are foolish to forget our frailty and mortality. There is no permanent abiding place on this earth; all must be placed in the context not only of time, but of eternity.

Bethlehem shows how much God loves and cares for the world. Christmas points to a God of love who initiated Christmas by giving to the world his Son, Jesus Christ. (Christmas 1991)

## **WORLDS IN CONFLICT? RUGBY AND CHURCH?**

**BY KEVIN WARD**

Thirty years ago, when I was a young Christian I had two major passions in life, the church, and rugby. They seemed to occupy very different worlds and as I became more and more involved in the world of rugby, playing at senior club level, coaching a 1<sup>st</sup> XV, and being on the local Union. It became often difficult to reconcile the two, and for a period, the world of rugby won out. I don't just mean the issue of playing and practising on Sunday, although that was an issue. They seemed to represent two very different cultural worlds. I want to suggest in this article that in actual fact they have much more in common, than I ever imagined back then, and that today they are struggling to come to grips with similar issues.

Reliable statistics on church involvement in New Zealand are difficult to come by, making research on what has been happening in the church in New Zealand as much art as science. From what I can cull out of the data that is available, it seems that about 20% of New Zealanders were in church on a Sunday in 1960, a figure not markedly dissimilar to what it had been for most of the previous one hundred years. Those who attended at least once a month may have made up 40% of the population. By 2000 those figures had halved to 10% and 20% respectively, although I suspect the real figure for individuals in church may be nearer the British figure of 8%, as the 10% figure is simply the cumulative total from church returns, which does not take into account those attending twice, often at different churches.

For many years, the favoured explanation of this decline was what became known as the secularisation thesis. This argued

that as modern knowledge advanced so people would give up believing in religion, because the world and how it operated could be explained without recourse to God or religion. This explanation has now been almost completely abandoned by sociologists, as religious believing has proved remarkably resilient. Indeed the signs are it may have increased over the past two decades. In Britain research through Cambridge University by David Hay, on the spirituality of non-church goers found in 1987 that 48% admitted to a form of religious spiritual experience.<sup>1</sup> In 2000, his *Soul of Britain Survey* found it had increased 76%. A powerful indicator of the return of the religious can be seen in the world of movies, perhaps the most powerful medium in our culture, where powerful spiritual themes can be found in movies such as *Contact*, *Matrix*, *Keeping the Faith*, *Sixth Sense*, *Stigmata* and of course *Harry Potter*. If spirituality is still important to people, and perhaps becoming more so, why is the church continuing to decline? Why does "religious believing" no longer produce strong links with "religious belonging?"<sup>2</sup>

One helpful way of looking at this is to look at what is happening in other forms of organisation in our society. One British researcher writes:

The important observation that religious believing seems to have become detached from religious belonging should be understood in relation to the parallel observation that virtually all voluntary associations have been finding it difficult in the last few decades to attract and retain members. In other words, 'belonging' has been simultaneously losing its popularity in religion *and* in other fields as well. The split between believing and belonging is therefore part of a broader pattern of change, which happens to affect religious organizations amongst others. It is not a problem unique to religion and does not necessarily arise from the inner dynamics of religious organizations alone.<sup>3</sup>

I recently heard an address by that great populist Tim Shadbolt, who has a remarkably keen insight into New Zealand culture. He was talking on the topic of social changes in New Zealand over the past 30 years, and observed with a number of illustrations, the marked decline in the numbers of people wanting to be involved in voluntary organisations, whether it was Rotary, the squash club, political parties or ratepayers association (at which he was speaking). An article in *Metro* magazine in March 2001 outlined the decline in all kinds of voluntary organisations in New Zealand. Rowan Brassey reported that two thirds of Auckland's bowling clubs will need to close in the next 5 years. One of the most interesting and significant studies in this area of change is by a Harvard Professor, Robert Putnam, called *Bowling Alone*,<sup>4</sup> which examines the decline in peoples commitment to organised social structures. The title comes from one area of life that Putnam uses to illustrate his argument. In the United States, more people are bowling than ever before, but the numbers in organised bowling leagues have plummeted to their lowest level ever. If we select the sporting sector there is all kinds of evidence that sport remains a significant, perhaps even an increasing, value in our society, but that across the board organised team sports clubs and organisations are in decline and struggling for survival.

Because it has been so central an element in New

Zealand's culture and life, rugby is an interesting area of study. While the decline of church "belonging" can bring on great despair among church goers, the figures quoted above look pretty good alongside those for rugby. Although no annual figures were kept the number of those playing in the 1970s are estimated at 400,000. This number had plummeted to below 100,000 in the early 1990s. The decline was arrested and the figure now sits at about 125,000, with the last two years showing a slight decline again.<sup>5</sup> Needless to say, this massive decline has led to many clubs closing and others merging in order to survive. While over this period of time the involvement of people watching the game held up reasonably well, signs of a decline in even this level of involvement have been indicated over the past few years. Super 12 crowds were down on average in 2001,<sup>6</sup> and while we hear a lot about the great absence of spectators at Eden Park even in Canterbury, that last remaining citadel of rugby culture in New Zealand, the Union expressed considerable concern at the small crowds for the end of season Ranfurly Shield games, with even a partially demolished stadium being only half full. A number of reports have consistently indicated that numbers watching games on television has begun to decline<sup>7</sup> leading to television companies being unwilling to chase high figures to gain contracts. Of particular concern on the playing field is the huge fall off in those playing rugby between the ages of 15 and 19. While there is concern that soccer is already the most popular sport for children between 5 and 17 (114,000 compared with 98,000) there is particular concern that 60% of those playing rugby at 15 have stopped playing at 19.<sup>8</sup>

I recently spent some time talking with a researcher who had been employed by the Canterbury Rugby Union to try and find out why this is happening (yes they are worried even in heartland NZ). This, plus my own anecdotal research and general reading of cultural changes, indicate a combination of factors: its hierarchical structure and organisation; the authoritarian and controlling environment of clubs; rigid codes of protocol, dress and obligation; a very conformist and highly structured culture; high institutional costs; high demands on time over which the individual has no say; lack of choices over who you play with or even which position you play in; lack of choice about when you play or practice; a culture that demands loyalty instead of individual freedom; a repression of individual expression for the good of the team. These are values that increasingly are at odds with the more permissive, individualistic, personal choice orientation of the wider culture. While they are seen as good things for children to learn, and hence they are encouraged into team sports like rugby by parents and educators, as soon as they get to the age of personal choice (15 on), if they wish to remain involved in sport they do so through more individualistic sports. With an increasingly wide variety of other options available to spend leisure time on, rugby participation is becoming an increasingly less desired choice. Interestingly when I talked about these trends with a small group of American and Australian researchers, they said that description fitted what was happening in team sports (such as basketball and football) in their countries.

What interests me is that I suspect these are similar to the reasons why, in increasing numbers, the younger generations of New Zealanders are turning off church. They see it as hierarchical; authoritarian; controlling; conformist; demanding of time; lacking in variety and choices; demanding of exclusive loyalty.

There are some even closer parallels between the two.

### THE MEANING OF THE STAR

The star of Bethlehem is also a star of peace. The angels heralding the birth of Jesus sang of peace and goodwill. During his life, Jesus gave no endorsement to violence or war. On the contrary, in inescapable language he warned that all who take the sword shall die by it. He is rightly called the Prince of Peace.

Peace is impossible while half the human race lives in permanent, abject poverty. Peace comes to the world through the gates of Justice. Bondage and oppression must be overthrown wherever they exist, for freedom and peace are indivisible. Inner personal peace and world peace belong together, for broken, disturbed, discordant personalities create conflict.

Reconciliation with God is a prerequisite of peace on earth. Peace rests not on physical might, but spiritual power. The hope of the world lies not in superior weapons, but in the spirit and the teachings of Jesus brought to the world close on 2,000 years ago at the first Christmas. (Christmas 1985)

The first is that while a lot of parents encourage their children into church, Sunday School and youth group, as being places where they can learn good values and make good friends, the drop out rate when they get to make their own choices (15 and up) is I suspect similar. While the general population's involvement in formally organised religion is probably somewhere between 10 and 15%, a recent survey amongst Dunedin students indicated only 3.2% were involved in formally organised religious groups of any kind.

A second factor shows an even more remarkable similarity. Several reports recently have talked about a "white flight" from rugby. In Auckland of 445 senior rugby players, only 30 are of European descent. The Auckland rugby team has only two white players; Steve Devine is Australian and Christian Califano French. If you look at the make up of representative sides outside of Canterbury and Otago, the proportion of Maori and Polynesian players is out of all proportion to their numbers in the general population. Many High School 1<sup>st</sup> XV's are almost completely dominated by players from those ethnic groups, even in communities where they are not an especially high percentage of the population. If it was not for the continuing attraction of rugby in those groupings then the situation in the rugby kingdom would certainly be even more alarming than it already is.

If we dig below the surface in New Zealand church figures, a similar picture exists. If it was not for the large number of new Polynesian congregations (and also increasingly over recent years Asian as well) then the figures for those churches would carry even more cause for concern than they already do. This applies, for instance, to the Roman Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church and also the Assemblies of God (and I suspect some other Pentecostal groupings as well) particularly in Auckland. But it also applies to my own church, the Baptists, who feel rather self satisfied that in the latter half of the 1990s we have staved off the decline of previous years, and even shown a slight increase. However if you take out the figures for new ethnic congregations (let alone ethnics who have come into mainly Pakeha congregations) then our figures would

**CHRISTMAS OFFERS PEACE**

The message of peace sounds strongly at Christmas time. The song of the angels as heard by the shepherds at Bethlehem had only two themes: Glory to God and peace to the world.

Belief in war has, over the centuries, become part of the plausibility structure of humanity. The nations of the earth claim to be horrified by the suffering of war, yet go on preparing for it, trusting it and, in the end, accepting it. The Bethlehem message holds aloft the beauty of peace. It reminds us that war is a lie, peace is the truth.

Christian teaching presents a unique way of dealing with enemies. The response to an enemy is not to return hatred for hatred, but to offer goodwill. It calls for patience in human relationships. It is being prepared to give God time to bring his spirit to bear on events, to work out his solutions in the tangled web of human affairs. (Christmas 1990)

show an over all decline. The common factor in this attraction to rugby and to the church, is that these are cultures that still value those qualities mentioned above; hierarchical organisation; authoritarian leadership; conformity; group loyalty above individual freedoms; structured environments; personal identity coming out of group involvement. A similar pattern is found in Britain, where Peter Brierley, the key researcher on the church there, told me that if I wanted to know where the church was growing he could answer in one sentence, "among the black communities".

Before we take too much comfort from this, and hope as some do that from these communities the pakeha sector will again discover again the importance of church for their own lives, the research among blacks in Britain provides a caution. It indicates that among third generation blacks, who have grown up entirely in Britain, exposed to the dominant western cultural values around them, there is considerable decline in church going. Some initial studies that have been done among Polynesians in Auckland indicate similar trends. It seems that both the traditional game of rugby and it's organisation, as well as the traditional approach to church life and it's organisation, lack much appeal for the under 35s in mainstream pakeha Kiwi culture.

Referring again to Putnam's work mentioned earlier, his basic thesis is that traditional structures that depend on broad-based, long term and exclusive loyalties are giving way to single stranded, less formal, smaller groups that engage only part of your life and are easy to come and go from. I believe an interesting phenomenon to place alongside rugby that illustrates this is touch. This only began in an organised sense in 1990, but by 2000, it had 272,000 registered participants. This represents an increase that is quite phenomenal, especially alongside the decline in rugby. Among 18-24 year olds it is the most popular form of sporting involvement, and among 25-34 year olds second.<sup>9</sup> What are the contrasting qualities that make it so attractive?

These are fairly self evident. It is minimalist in terms of structure and cost. Individuals choose their own teams and with whom they will play. They choose their own name and uniforms

as well as the competition they will play in. It is a limited commitment time wise (for a period and then evaluated). Individuals can be involved in multiple teams and competition. It is gender inclusive. There is usually a high value placed on socialising and fun. No one minds too much if you miss a game or two. There is often a close connection between work place and involvement, with teams frequently being fellow employees, although open to others being included. Commitment is much looser. In other words, touch is not just another form of rugby, a repackaging of the same product. Although some of the same skills are involved, it is a very different game that has evolved.

One final observation on the way rugby has developed is to look at how those who are not playing participate. In a previous age people used to go to the game to watch, usually as individuals, or with a mate or family member. This was either at the local club or at the stadium where they merged indistinguishably into the mass crowd. Now very few people are at club games and numbers at representative games seem to be declining all around the country. (This is not a phenomenon unique to New Zealand rugby. Grace Davie notes that "the fall in attendance at professional football matches in Britain... more or less mirrors the decline in religious practice."<sup>10</sup>) Most people watch games in small groups, with their friends either in the comfort of the lounge or a bar somewhere. Occasionally they might go along to the big game, but when they do, especially among the under 35s, they tend to go as a group – often costumed and painted up to indicate their group identity. In other words, the small group is primary; the mass crowd is secondary.

I believe the implications for the church in this comparison are both interesting and significant. It is not that people are no longer interested in sport. But the way they want to participate in that with others in an organised form has significantly changed. Likewise, it is not that people are no longer interested in spirituality or religion, but the way they want to participate with others in an organised form has markedly changed. If the church continues to function with forms that are marked by the cultural values of a world increasingly disconnected from that in which most people live, then like rugby one can only see a continuing pattern of declining participation. A few years ago, an article appeared in a New Zealand Christian magazine pointing out "what the church can learn from the sporting revolution," in particular in rugby, then riding on a high in the media. Time has shown however that the revolution in rugby was not a real revolution but merely a repackaging that pumped new life into the upper levels of the game for a few years, without ever dealing with the deeper issues impinging on the game at a grassroots level.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, most apparent change in the church over the past few years has merely been a repackaging of the product rather than dealing with the deeper issues impacting it at a grassroots level. Eddie Gibbs, professor of church growth at Fuller, claims, "The popular models of church today... are only tactical attempts to breathe new life into old structures."<sup>12</sup>

One of the great points of hope for the church is that sociologists suggest we are moving away from an era of rampant individualism into a new communitarian era. However, it will be a very different form of communitarianism than existed in a previous era, where it was marked by conformity, control, and hierarchies. Rather it will be one into which people bring a strong sense of individuality and therefore is marked by a high degree of diversity and variety. We urgently need to find forms

of church life that resemble much more a community of touch teams than the local rugby club. This will mean a community which is much less tightly controlled, more eclectic and varied in the ways it expresses itself, much less of a centralised organisational structure, offering more choices, run at much lower cost, less demanding of people's loyalty and time and more connected to their places of work. It will mean the small group is the primary form of Christian belonging and the large gathering, whether on Sunday morning/evening or at another time, is secondary, and for many occasional. In doing so if we are not only willing to give the freedom for this kind of evolution to occur, but also provide resources to foster it, we may find not only a form of church life that actually engages with and incarnates the gospel into the culture in which we are placed, but also surprisingly one that more resembles in essence the church we find in the pages of the New Testament.

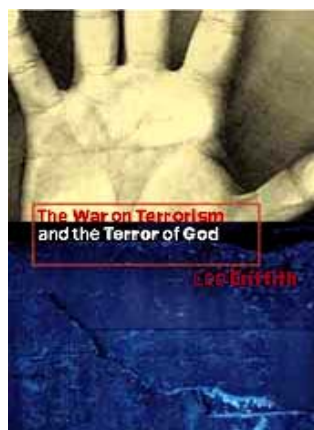
- <sup>1</sup> David Hay, *Religious Experience Today*, London: Mowbray, 1990.  
<sup>2</sup> For further explanation of this terminology see my article "Believing without Belonging" in *Reality* 43, Feb/Mar 2001, pp 19-24.  
<sup>3</sup> J. Beckworth quoted in G. Davies, *Religion in Postwar Britain*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, p19.  
<sup>4</sup> R. Putnam, *Bowling Alone* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999.  
<sup>5</sup> "State of the Union: Part 2." *NZ Herald* 19/05/01.  
<sup>6</sup> "State of the Union: Part 3" *NZ Herald* 19/05/01.  
<sup>7</sup> "Game Over" *Listener* Feb 3 2001, p24.  
<sup>8</sup> "A Man for a Crisis" *NZ Rugby World* Feb 2001, p98.  
<sup>9</sup> www.hillarysport.org.nz  
<sup>10</sup> G. Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, 112. She also notes interestingly that "in both activities what might be called the top divisions continue to flourish; the lower divisions (or average parish church) very much less so."  
<sup>11</sup> M. Hawke, "What the church can learn from the current sports' revolution in New Zealand" *Affirm* Vol. 5, No. 2, 1997.  
<sup>12</sup> E. Gibbs & I. Coffey, *Church Next: quantum changes in Christian ministry*, Leicester: IVP, 2000, 2000, pp168-9.  
 Kevin Ward lectures at Bible College of NZ.

## THE WAR ON TERRORISM AND THE TERROR OF GOD

LEE GRIFFITH  
 Eerdmans, 2002.

If you want one book to read this year on current events and how to think about them theologically, this is the book. Lee Griffith is a teacher, author and social activist currently working with a community mental health program in Elmira, New York, USA. He has put together a timely book on terrorism and its antidote, nonviolence. The book was already in production when the events of 11 September took place. Howard Zehr calls the book "immensely poignant and profoundly prophetic...the fact that it was written before the attacks of September 11 only adds to its power." (Back Cover)

It is a very readable book and well-documented with one hundred pages of notes, bibliography, and indexes. A short Preface and Postscript speak directly about 11 September 2001 while the rest of the book deals with the broader issue of



terrorism and a Christian response to it.

Griffith begins by asking "who are terrorists?" and "Is terrorism that which is perpetrated by non-state or subnational groups in contrast to the legally sanctioned violence of the nation state?" (3) After looking at these questions historically, he settles on the following definition of "terrorism" from the Friends Committee on National Legislation:

*Terrorism is a tactic, whether used by an established government, a revolutionary group, or an individual. The characterization of an action as "terrorism" depends on what is done, not on who does it. Terrorism includes threats or acts of violence ranging from deprivation of basic human rights, to property destruction, physical violence, torture and murder. Terrorist acts are consciously chosen and committed for purposes that go beyond the violence itself. Terrorist acts are usually undertaken for an identifiable political goal, as distinguished from crimes committed for personal gain or private vengeance or because of mental derangement. The political goals might be to punish or retaliate against an enemy or dissident elements or to destabilize an opposing government or organization.* (18)

Griffith argues for a complete rejection of violence in all of its forms. "Once one justifies the use of violence, one should not be surprised to find that the line between just warrior and terrorist can be very fine indeed – fine to the point of subjectivity, fine to the point of apparition." (19)

Violence begets violence. "Victory is won and violence is transformed, not by those who inflict it, but by those who suffer it." (23) This is the Lamb's victory in the Book of Revelation and God's answer to violence.

The book traces the use of violence and terror in a chapter entitled "Terror and the Death of Community". One timely point in this chapter is "The cause of war is preparation for war." We now live in a world constantly preparing itself for the next war. How do we get off this merry-go-round? "In order to oppose terrorism and genocide, whenever there is an effort at organized forgetting, we must remember...the victims...[and]community." The author says "Terror is a sign of dismembered community...All violence is an attack upon community. All violence by Christians is also an attack upon the memory of Jesus." (48)

"Do this in remembrance of me"... "has to do with feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the prisoners." We do not do this service for Jesus' sake but for our own. Griffiths draws from Native American spirituality when he reminds us that we are "to remember the future as well as the past; honor the ancestors *and* consider the impact that all of our words and deeds will have on the next seven generations." (49)

The book argues against a dualism that divides the world between good and evil people. "All people have potential for loving acts of kindness or horrendous acts of terror...Our task, then, becomes one of seeking to appeal to that image of God, to that potential for love which persists in ourselves and others." (60) "One form of resisting terror is to offer prayers for the storm of God's love." (69)

"Like all wars, the war on terrorism is firmly rooted in these: lies and violence". (88) Griffiths argues that it is a "system – a powerful principality – that thrives on lies and deceit" that holds us captive. Often I hear Christians in the US argue that Bush or other government officials are such "good Christians." I found the letter below about President Bush

online. It was written by a former adviser who now disagrees with Bush's policies.

"In my view, President Bush is a highly admirable person of enormous personal decency. He is a godly man and a moral leader. He is much, much smarter than some people—including some of his own supporters and advisers—seem to suppose. He inspires personal trust, loyalty, and confidence in those around him. In many ways, he is all heart. Clinton talked "I feel your pain." But as Bush showed in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, he truly does feel deeply for others and loves this country with a passion."

Griffith says

*Violence has spun out of control, not because of the evil designs of American politicians or terrorist chieftains, but because of the autonomy of the war system itself. Violence is not put to use by people; it uses people and it uses them up. The centrifugal momentum of militarism is wielded by neither emperors or thugs; it wields them...violence itself has a life of its own.* (99)

In looking at the "terror of God", the author recounts the church's sad history of giving in to violence – including Constantinianism, the crusades and a history of anti-Semitism. "Currently, the kingdom of God is not among us as a mighty nation but as a mustard seed." (156)

"The resurrection is the vindication of God and the proclamation of the victory of God's justice." (179) The love of God is the answer to fear and hopelessness. "This is the terror of God. This is the fire of hell, the eternal torment. Those who would reject all love are forced to endure it." (184)

Griffith argues "the revelation of God in Jesus is a refutation of any link between God's wrath and violence." (195) Nonviolence "is not always safe and it does not always 'work'" – look at the cross. But, he says, "love and peace are not pragmatic tools; they are manifestations of the reign of God." (202)

In examining the Book of Revelation, Griffith points out that "ninety-eight verses (of over four hundred)...speak of catastrophe, and 150 refer to joy, consolation, brightness, and hope...Revelation is more a book about terror defeated rather than terror inflicted, which is why worship and liturgy are such a central feature of the book." (205)

The "Beast" in Revelation is not defeated by violence. "Resurrection deprives Empire of its only power, the power of death...It is this resurrection terror of God that marks the imminent demise of earthly terror." (214) Revelation is not about the end of the world, it is about the biblical struggle we are engaged in. "In the Bible, there is really only one story: that of a people struggling to leave empire behind and set out to follow God." (215)

In Chapter V, "Beyond Terror and Counterterror", Griffith suggests some alternatives to the present war on terrorism. He presents hopeful suggestions for "individuals and communities to act in ways that interrupt the perpetual sowing and reaping of terror." (243)

*The daily choices we make ranging from the television we watch (or not) to the books we read (or not) can serve to engender or resist the dualistic consciousness on which terror and counterterror thrive. Clichéd as it may sound, the most important place to begin moving beyond terror and counterterror is in our own homes...if we want to end all terrorism, we have to stop practicing terrorism in our lives, in*

*our families, in everything we do. And then we can live in a world without fear of others.* (243)

We can also resist government and media attempts to scare us. "We can refuse to be terrified upon command." (244) We can "refuse to participate in the demonization of adversaries." (246) We can practice "nonviolent dissent and noncooperation" – the "antithesis of both terror and counterterror". (246) We can become "educated non-consumers" and resist the "recipe for making a locality ripe for terror: undermine traditional culture(s), pour in plenty of weapons, and introduce competition for economic survival". (247)

"We are not called to world-transforming actions but to live humanly and faithfully, even in the midst of apocalyptic terror." (250) "Nonviolence is a way of being in the world that interrupts the cycle of terror and counterterror by exercising control over the one and only person who any of us can ever hope to control or should ever desire to control, i.e., oneself." (251, 252)

Griffith ends the book with stories of three people who challenged terror with their lives of nonviolence – Leo Tolstoy, Dorothy Day, and Desmond Tutu. In telling Dorothy Day's story, the author quotes some gems from Peter Maurin, a philosopher who influenced her and the Catholic Worker movement. "Be what you want the other fellow to be." "We should be announcers, not denouncers." And, "Don't criticize what is not being done. Find the work you can perform, fit yourself to perform it, and then do it." (260)

The author also quotes Clarence Jordan, one of my heroes. "The evidence that Jesus lives is not a vacant grave, but a spirit-filled fellowship. Not a rolled-away stone, but a carried-away church." (268) Our terror-filled world needs our hopeful witness. This book ends with five reasons for hope: hope in the witness of those who have been willing to risk their lives in the service of others (John 15:12-13), hope in the fall of Babylon (Revelation 18:1-3), hope in the witness of the remnant who speak for peace (Zechariah 8:4-12), hope that the prayers and lamentations of September 11 might yet turn to repentance and *metanoia* (Ezekiel 32:22-32), and above all, hope in Christ crucified and resurrected. AMEN. -reviewed by Mark S Hurst

**When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among brothers and sisters,  
To make music in the heart.  
-Howard Thurman**



**As the United States and its allies prepare for war in Iraq, a number of church bodies in Australia have voiced their opposition and have even talked about war tax resistance. Anabaptist/Mennonites have struggled with the issue of “praying for peace while paying for war” for years. No clear consensus has emerged on the issue but some like the author of the article below have chosen to refuse war taxes out of a sense of Christian obedience. While the issues are different by degree between the amount of tax money used in the United States for war and that used in Australia, the issue of Christian obedience remains the same.**

**The following article is reprinted with permission from the July 2, 2002 issue of *The Mennonite*.**

## **A NEW PATRIOTISM A BETTER PATRIOTISM**

**J. DARYL BYLER**

I love many things about this country, but I am increasingly concerned about our nation’s growing militarism—its harm to our culture and its impact on our sisters and brothers around the world.

During a recent Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) trip to Iraq, one Protestant Evangelical Christian—fearing another U.S. military attack—told our group, “We hope that someday your government will not do everything with force.”

This coming year, the United States will spend nearly \$400 billion for military purposes, a jump of \$100 billion from only five years ago. The United States spends 33 times the combined military budgets of the three nations President Bush labelled an “axis of evil” –Iran, Iraq and North Korea.

During another period of rapid U.S. military growth in the 1970s, more than 100 Mennonites gathered in 1975 in Kitchener, Ontario to discern “our leading as a people regarding the payment of taxes used for military purposes.” They considered biblical, theological, and historical Anabaptist perspectives on the issue. While there was not full agreement among those present, a summary conference statement suggested two options for consideration by U.S. churches, church institutions, or individuals: (1) living below the taxable income level and (2) refusing to pay “federal tax or a percentage thereof since such a large part is used for military purposes.”

For many years Cindy and I have rechannelled the military portion of our federal income tax to MCC or another church agency.

I don’t like receiving threatening letters from the Internal Revenue Service [the tax office]. During law school, I worried that my actions as a tax resister would keep me from getting a license to practice law. It did not.

Tax resistance sometimes feels lonely. I wish I could simply read Romans 13 and voluntarily pay all my taxes. But I cannot in good conscience do so.

Romans 13:6-7 seems clear: “For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, busy with this very thing. Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due.”

But what is due to a government that spends more than half its discretionary income on war and preparations for war?

How does one reconcile Romans 13 with Jesus’ command to love our enemies? Or with the calls of our sisters and brothers in Colombia, Iraq and Israel-Palestine to oppose U.S. militarism? Or with the frequent biblical examples of civil disobedience when governing authorities overstep their bounds?

At the 1975 conference, Willard Swartley said, “Although there are two texts (Mark 12:17 and Romans 13:6-7) that enjoin payment of taxes, both texts caution against universalizing that position in that both clearly call for moral discrimination.”

The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective (Article 23) says that while governments have been called to “act justly and provide order,” they “tend to demand total allegiance” then “become idolatrous and rebellious against the will of God.”

The Confession commentary continues, “When the demands of government conflict with the demands of Christ, Christians are to ‘obey God rather than any human authority’ (Acts 5:29).”

What would happen if Christians en masse decided to no longer pay the portion of their taxes that go to war? What if Christians mounted a mass resistance movement as an expression of our loyalty to Jesus Christ and his way of peace?

Several years ago PBS aired a series called *A Force More Powerful*. This documentary tracked six nonviolent social-change movements in the 20th century, including the U.S. civil rights struggle, the campaign to end apartheid in South Africa and the movement in India to end British rule.

The common thread in these successful nonviolent movements was masses of people choosing not to cooperate with forces of evil and oppression. Oppressive powers depend for survival on the cooperation of the masses. When that cooperation is withdrawn, these structures eventually will crumble.

On my trip to Iraq, we visited the ruins of ancient Babylon. Biblical Babylon represents the excesses of political and military power—the Tower of Babel and the empire of Nebuchadnezzar.

But Babylon was also the site of some of the greatest resistance stories in the Bible. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar’s golden statue (Daniel 3). Daniel himself refused to obey Darius’ decree that no one pray to anyone but the king (Daniel 6.)

Perhaps the best way to love our country is to join those—like the Jewish youth of Daniel’s day—who loved God enough to remind the king when he was being rebellious.

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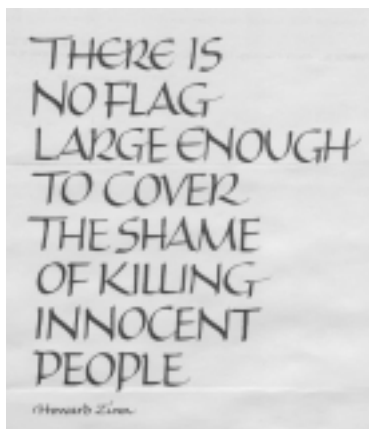
### **DOXOLOGY FOR PEACE (GRACE MOORE)**

**PRAISE GOD ALL PEOPLES OF THE EARTH  
PRAISE GOD FOR THE GREAT GIFT OF BIRTH  
PRAISE GOD WHO RULES THE NATIONS STILL  
GOD BEND THEM TO YOUR PEACEFUL WILL.**

**PRAISE GOD THE CREATOR OF ALL  
PEOPLES AND NATIONS GREAT AND SMALL  
PRAISE LOVE THAT MAKETH WARS TO CEASE  
GOD LEAD US IN THE PATHS OF PEACE.**

## MENNONITES AND WAR TAXES RESOURCES

- Occasional Papers on Mennonites and War Taxes  
<http://www.mcc.org/respub/occasional/18.html>
- **Handbook on Military Taxes and Conscience**, ed. Linda B. Coffin, Friends World Committee for Consultation, 1506 Race St., Philadelphia, PA 19102
- **MCC's Christian Perspectives on War Tax Opposition**, Information packet
- **Fear God and Honor the Emperor, A Manual on Military Tax Withholding for Religious employers**, by the Friends Committee on War Tax Concerns. Available from MCC Information Services, 21 S. 12th St., P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500, USA
- **War Tax Resistance: A Blessing That Awaits the Church**, a brochure by Titus Peachey which envisions the potential impact of war tax resistance on the church.
- **As Conscience and the Church Shall Lead**, Booklet (Mennonite Publishing House, 616 Walnut Ave., Scottsdale, PA 15683, USA)
- **Seeking Peace**, Titus and Linda Gehman Peachey, A book of stories about peacemaking which includes 12 military tax related stories.
- **Communities of Conscience: Collected Statements on Conscience and Taxes for Military Preparations**, Peace Tax Foundation, 2121 Decatur Place N.W., Washington, DC 20008, USA



Calligraphy by Elinor Holland

- **What Belongs to Caesar?**, Donald D. Kaufman, Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA, 1969.
- **The Tax Dilemma: Praying for Peace Paying for War**, Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA 1978.
- **The Rule of the Lamb: a study guide on civil responsibility**, Larry Kehler, Faith and Life Press, 1978.

## WOOLLOOMOOLOO MUSINGS

BY ROSS COLEMAN

### Dangerous Living

Woolloomooloo is a dangerous place to work. Spend some time with the locals and there's a pretty good chance you will be unsettled. It's happened to me. It's a place where my values have been reworked, where glimpses of God in those most broken in our society occur daily, where I've seen community in action by the homeless in such dramatic ways. Come with me on a life changing journey.

Located in Sydney's CBD, and just down the hill from the infamous Kings Cross area, Woolloomooloo is primarily a public housing estate surrounded by million dollar mansions (eg. Finger Wharf), businesses, and coffee shops. It is a mix of those

incredibly rich sharing the same footpath with those who have nothing, those who are housed with those who are homeless, those who are in their 'right' mind and those who live with significant mental health issues.

In that cross current of people groups and outlooks, I started work at Woolloomooloo in March 2002 with Baptist Inner City Ministries as its community development worker. It has been a fascinating journey where Woolloomooloo has moved from just another inner city suburb to a place where I know people known by name.

Take for instance Joe. I first met Joe when I was helping a volunteer serve coffee and tea at our Backshed Café. The café is a welcoming space for local residents, the homeless, and workers. Joe walked to the counter and through the few remaining badly decayed teeth that remained in his gummy mouth; he ordered a cup of coffee. We serve free cakes with our coffee (all for 50c!!). His eyes lit up when he saw what was on offer with his drink. Without hesitation, and to my surprise, his large dirt encrusted hand reached into our cake container and he helped himself! It happened just when I was trying to help volunteers embrace more hygienic practices.

Joe is a towering figure of a man and sleeps under the railway viaduct with his mates. His clothes are often covered in grass because that's where he last slept. His large stomach protrudes through his undersized and stained t-shirt. At times his toiletry habits leave a lot to be desired – the local plants do well!! Joe lives with mental health issues – I've never asked (nor should I) but it is clear he can be in another world at times.

We've become good friends over the last few months. When I walk past the railway viaduct, I always say hello, when he comes into the café we swap greetings and often share a humorous comment.

Joe has found a place in my heart and faith. I like the bloke. He has so little and yet when a person came to him in the café a couple of weeks ago he shared his tobacco without hesitation. Joe was not likely to get repaid – it wasn't even an issue for him. He reached to his box of tobacco and handed it to the man in the café. You got to look after your mates he said to me later. These people stick together. That's life on the streets – share what you have today with your mates because those same people will look after you tomorrow when your supplies are low.

I've seen that depth of sharing many times – a punnet of strawberries being shared around the café, papers and tobacco offered to help a mate whose cheque isn't due til next week, and incredible tolerance of those whose appearance portrays a troubled mind.

Joe and his mates unsettle me. They are modelling some of the very values I'm struggling to embrace. Jesus calls me to be loosely attached to my possessions, Jesus calls me to community living and sharing, he calls me to be embracing of others, and to celebrate the simple things of life. I have a lot to learn from people like Joe.

I came to Woolloomooloo as a community development worker. I never expected to find so much in me that needed to change. This is dangerous stuff.

### Thank God For Lights

It sounds so trivial but one of the most frustrating moments for me in going to work is waiting at a set of pedestrian lights. If my timing is wrong it seems like minutes pass before

the traffic lights go red, the green 'walk' sign flashes, the cars slow down and pedestrians can cross in safety. I've been walking this track to work for some months now and still get irritated when I come to this particular set of lights. In my mind, I see the unfairness of giving so much time to vehicular traffic when I have so much work to get to. The reverse trip can be just as irritating because I am keen to get home.

Last week when I was dutifully waiting for the indicator light to flash 'walk' a thought flashed through my mind. For most people in the world this is sheer luxury. The majority of global citizens walk along dirt encrusted roads crossing as they are able. There are no traffic lights, no lanes for cars and often just dirt for the road. There are lots of animals, carts and bicycles often going in opposing directions! These people may have no regular paid work to go to but eek out a living in the rubbish in the gutter.

A couple of years ago my family went to Thailand. Our first few days were spent in Bangkok coping with both the hot stifling weather and the torrential flow of traffic. As tourists, we came to a pedestrian crossing expecting the traffic to stop. It just kept coming. Even when we started walking during a short break in the traffic, cars would not slow down – we had to get out of the way. It was a harrowing experience until we learned about people power. We observed the locals gathering at the footpath and then starting to walk on mass – cars had to stop to allow a sizeable group to cross.

We were able to walk briskly and tag along with others. On our tourist jaunts, we saw a number of disabled people begging. They were badly disfigured, blind or had significant impediments to free and quick movement. How do they cross the road? What driver would slow down to let them crawl at a snails pace across a road? Whom do they 'walk' across the road with?

I waited again today. I thanked God for those pedestrian lights. I am not badly off at all. In fact, I am very well off. As I walked I was thankful for arms and legs that move in sequence, for good bitumen roads and car drivers that obey the traffic regulations. And maybe while I wait I can get a better perspective on matters of life and faith.

### **What do you want for Christmas, Dad?**

"What do you want for Christmas, Dad?" Ben asked as we finished our sumptuous evening meal around the table. The question caught me off guard. We had been talking about a whole variety of subjects but this one came out of left field. I shouldn't have been surprised – it was only three weeks til Christmas. After a moments pause I said I wanted some new sunglasses – the current ones had been in use for over twenty years. They were in good working order but were well and truly dated as a fashion statement. It seemed a reasonable request and one that could be easily met because Ben worked at a warehouse that distributed surf clothing including sunglasses.

### **RECONCILING THE WORLD**

Christmas releases into the world a spirit of reconciliation. Relationships are softened, antagonisms released as a mood of goodwill moves through society. For the Christian, the coming of Jesus to Bethlehem represents God grappling with the most fundamental antagonism of all, the separation of human beings from their Creator. As St. Paul puts it in one of the most profound statements of the Bible: 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.'

If there is any message the world needs to hear today it is a call to reconciliation. Human relationships are criss-crossed with suspicion, misunderstanding, and bitterness. On the personal level, in many family circles, in national life and in international affairs, the world cries out for reconciliation.

Christmas sets flowing a flood of generosity as millions of dollars are given to relieve the suffering of the deprived and the needy. Yet it is not enough. Charity can never be a substitute for justice.

The Christmas message raises basic issues of justice and freedom. The exultant cry of Mary on learning she was to be the mother of Jesus was, that with his coming, the powerful would be brought low and the hungry would be filled. Later in his first message at Nazareth, Jesus announced he had come to bring good news to the poor and liberty to the oppressed.

We will not find national unity without moving towards a more just society. Growing wealth is, sadly, widening rather than narrowing the gulf between rich and poor.

The Christian message profoundly challenges the present nature of society. It places the poor, the marginal people, at the centre of concern. It is a reminder that the first call on the strength of the strong, on the wealth of the nation, should be the care of the weak. It declares that privilege must be unacceptable until it is shared.

A true understanding of reconciliation would set us seeking far more urgently a more just and equitable society.

...There cannot be peace at the circumference of life while disharmony remains at the centre. If we are living at enmity with God, we are at enmity with others, with society, with life itself.

Christmas is God's declaration that a broken, lost relationship can be restored. It represents God taking the initiative, reaching out towards humanity from his side of the gulf that has developed to heal the rupture, to ease the hurt that has come.

Through responding in faith to God's outgoing love, by taking hold of his outstretched hand, a new life can begin for us. Christmas reconciliation goes to the heart of the human predicament. Through becoming reconciled to God, we gain the inner peace and strength which enables us to become agents of reconciliation in a divided world. (Christmas 1981)

I thought about my response some time later and revisited the question. What did I want for Christmas? What is it about western capitalism that squeezes me to contemplate that new is better? To believe fashion is important? To accept that while the old works it is good to have something new?

What is it in me that responds to and is caught up in the emotion of something new? Being seduced by new is so strong. I still remember the buzz of a new car, the smell of new upholstery and the shiny new finish.

What gets under my skin is that the sales marketing people focus on this very aspect of our nature. Why hold onto your VCR when DVD gives such a better picture? Why swelter in the heat when A/C will help keep you cool? Why play tapes in your car when you can play CD's or even DVD?

The seduction never allows us to be satisfied. At first glance, the sales pitches make sense. But whether it be new sunglasses, a new car or whatever, we will never complete the list. There will always be something that we must have tomorrow. And most of us will reach for the plastic card to satisfy our cravings.

How do I live as a follower of Jesus in a consumerist self focussed society? How do I live simply when I would love a CD player in the car, A/C to cool the house and a DVD player? If I had the money, would I have bought them anyway? How do I celebrate life and not just be a total bore?

Are these inner struggles reflecting a need in me that says I get increased self esteem and pleasure from these things in a way that my faith doesn't quite achieve? What is it about my faith that is lacking? I know their enjoyment won't last, I know they come at a cost; I know many of the items are made by poor people overseas paid at pitiful rates of pay but I still want them.

Going against the flow, being a radical disciple after Jesus, is a difficult journey (at least for the rich in the west anyway!). Those seductive voices echo very loudly. I believe I need to walk the walk with others who are committed to a life of simplicity, celebration, and sharing. Thank God, for those people who mirror to me those qualities that resist the great seductions of the western capitalist world.

I thought about my response some time later and completed the question. What did I want for Christmas from my son? More times to talk and share at depth. More times to laugh and play.

By the way, I still would like the sunglasses. I'm not through with the struggle, I can justify it very clearly but to be honest I'd like them anyway. Therein lays the struggle. Where are those friends?

#### THE PEACE THAT JUSTICE PROVIDES

All of us need to be recalled to the spirit of Christmas, to hear the challenge to live and work for the common good. Only as money loosens its grip on our consciousness, only as the ideal of service and sacrifice strengthens its grip upon us will social peace and progress become possible. The peace of Christmas is the fruit of justice.

This truth is given vivid expression in Psalm 85: 'Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' There can be no peace built on festering hunger and poverty, on the tyranny of political oppression, on exploitation of the many by the few.

The issue is plain: no righteousness, no peace. (Christmas 1976)

## MUSLIM AND JEW COME TOGETHER TO RECONCILE

**CELESTE KENNEL-SHANK**

*The Goshen College Record*

GOSHEN, Indiana, USA - As an Iranian Muslim and an Israeli Jew, respectively, Hossein Alizadeh and Noa Simone know what it means to grow up with enemies. And through life journeys that have led them to religious reconciliation work, they have learned how to love those enemies.

Alizadeh and Simone, who spoke to an audience of 50 at Goshen College, are educating students about Middle East conflict as part of a campus tour, Voices of Peace, sponsored by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), an interfaith peace and justice organization. The pair spoke of their own experiences and about the fear that once separated them and now brings them together.

"Fear has become such a main component of our lives," said Simone. "Hearing 'Allah Akbar,' those beautiful words, 'praise the Lord,' causes fear, because it is what suicide bombers say before they blow themselves up.

"That fear is such a big part of my life that it stopped me from seeing my Palestinian brothers and sisters as human beings," Simone continued. "Self righteousness can blind us, fear can blind us."

Alizadeh, 27, a University of Notre Dame graduate with a master's degree in international relations and peace studies, opened his presentation with details of his personal history. Hostilities between his native Iran, neighbouring Iraq and the United States over the past several decades have impacted him and his country deeply. Iran is "a country still at war with Iraq, and the United States," said Alizadeh.

In the 1980s, during the Iran-Iraq War, the U.S. sold arms to Iraq to help them fight Iran, explained Alizadeh. Then, in 1988, the U.S. shot down an Iranian airliner, killing more than 300 passengers.

"That was a very big moment in my life," said Alizadeh. "I decided that was not fair that a superpower should kill innocent citizens, call it an accident and not apologize. — So I decided to study politics."

For several years Alizadeh worked for Iran's Foreign Ministry as a specialist on Afghanistan and the Taliban.

Two and-a-half years ago, Alizadeh came to the United States to study at Notre Dame, though he carried with him negative expectations of U.S. citizens from Iran's conflicts with the U.S. His experience when he reached northern Indiana transformed those views.

"I was shocked by the humanity of the people," said Alizadeh. "I never thought Americans were like me." In building friendships with fellow students, Alizadeh discovered that, "when we talked about corruption, when we talked about poverty, it's pretty much the same in every society," he said.

Alizadeh further changed his perceptions of nations he had grown up viewing as enemies when he joined FOR as coordinator of their Campaign of Conscience for the Iraqi people, which seeks to help the Iraqis who, under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, live with U.S. imposed economic sanctions that have resulted in economic

degradation, starvation, increased disease and high infant mortality rates.

“We are punishing all the people in Iraq because we have a problem with the government in Iraq,” said Alizadeh.

Living in a town in Israel where there have been over a dozen suicide bombings in recent years, the 20-year-old Simone also knows what it means to be punished for the actions of one’s government, as she spoke of the fear that permeates day-to-day life.

When her parents walk down the street on their daily activities, they travel on separate sides so that both will not be killed, leaving Simone an orphan, if an attack occurs.

Last year, Simone faced a difficult decision that forced her to question her views on how fear was making Palestinians her enemies. Simone was called to duty in the Israeli military and entered an army training course for five weeks. In this time, Simone realized that, “If we keep attacking them and they keep attacking us and nothing comes out of it but blood, this is not the right way.”

Simone left the Israeli army and applied for Conscientious Objector (C.O.) status. “It’s very difficult to get an exemption,” Simone said, adding, “last year there were only six people granted C.O. status in all of Israel. I was fortunate.”

Since coming to the U.S. and working toward religious reconciliation with FOR, Simone has been able to talk with Palestinians and hear their perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Israeli settlers’ occupation of territory on which Palestinians formerly lived. Simone said, “I am now able to see myself as the enemy.”

## NO MORE ARMS

**RACHELLE SCHLABACH**

Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office

<http://www.mcc.org/>

“Please, don’t send us any more arms. Please.”

With these words, the pastor from Arauca province in Colombia pleaded for the flow of military aid from the United States to Colombia to stop. He was speaking to a group of 35 of us, in Colombia last summer for a learning tour hosted by Colombian Mennonites.

As a whole, Colombia experiences extremely high levels of violence due to the civil war raging there. In Arauca, the numbers are double the nation’s average. In the first trimester of 2002 alone, 136 politically motivated deaths were documented in the province.

The pastor described to our group the violence that comes “at all times of the day.” The violence mainly affects civilians, including church members. Armed groups target churches in part because young people from the church refuse to join up with any of the armed movements.

In Arauca, there was little government presence (or fighting) until oil was discovered in the mid 1980s. That all changed as multinational oil companies, the Colombian government and military, and armed groups moved in, all with their eyes on the oil.

Although U.S. military assistance until now has been restricted to counter-narcotics programs, this year the U.S. Congress approved a down-payment of \$6 million to train a Colombian military battalion to protect an oil pipeline in Arauca.

“Colombians...are different from the people of other Latin American countries. They love the cafe society and they love to dance on the streets. ...Creativity and fun flourishes with the tropical abundance.

This is very hard to understand for some people – so much death, they say, so much war – but so much fun? But it is. When death strikes you of course it is a huge tragedy but somehow people manage to run right ahead of it and don’t let it touch them.

And in all of this energy there is a huge peace movement. A few years ago human rights organisations had a march calling for people to go out on the streets dressed in white. Eleven million people marched. Why...does the outside world never hear of this? The world...should look very seriously at Colombia. In some ways we are the scenery of the future. A terrible future, so perhaps the world should look at us, at capitalism gone wild, of double-talk and hypocrisy about subjects like drug traffic. It’s a modern war, with men having their money in a Swiss bank. Colombia is a **Mad Max** type of nation – a mixture of past and future.”

- Laura Restrepo in “My sweet Colombia”, by Helen Elliott, *The Weekend Australian*, Sept. 7-8, 2002, Review, 6.

One of the guerrilla groups active in the area has targeted the pipeline, which is jointly owned by Occidental Petroleum, based in Los Angeles, and the Colombian state oil company.

In June, staff from Justapaz, the Colombian Mennonite peace and justice agency, visited Arauca. Local residents told Justapaz that they noticed a visible increase in the level of violence once the \$6 million was approved.

Residents also noted the increased presence of paramilitaries, illegal armed groups that are responsible for the majority of violence against civilians. Paramilitary groups work closely with the Colombian military, and have taken advantage of the increased military presence to move into the region.

Unfortunately for the pastor and other residents of Arauca, even more military “aid” is almost certainly on the way. The annual funding bill for international programs has gone through both House and Senate committees. The House bill contains \$98 million for the pipeline protection program, and the Senate bill contains only slightly less — \$88 million. The pipeline project is part of a larger military aid package for Colombia, totalling around \$375 million this year.

The U.S. government argues that military aid is necessary to provide security for Colombian civilians. Colombians like the pastor from Arauca, who has seen friends die as a result of the war, know well that they need security. Yet, as he said so plainly to our group, war never brings peace or security. It only brings more war.

To read the entire Justapaz report on Arauca, see: <http://www.mcc.org/areaserv/latinamerica/colombia/arauca/index.html>.

## TRANSFORMING VIOLENCE INTO GRACE IN COLUMBIA

BARRANQUILLA, Colombia (Mennonite Mission Network) — A gunpoint robbery within the first month of Amanda and Gamaliel Falla's arrival in Barranquilla, Colombia, is serving as a springboard to launch a new ministry.

In mid-July, the Fallas began a second term of service with Mennonite Mission Network. As the couple left their bank on 14 August, assailants held guns to their heads and threatened them with death if the couple didn't surrender a briefcase containing their salary and program money to plant a church in Colombia's fourth-largest city.

The Fallas returned to Colombia, the land of their birth, in 1996 after having served as pastors and church-planters in the United States for 15 years. During their first term of service as Mennonite missionaries in Colombia, they helped to begin a church in Cali. Today, that thriving congregation supports a pastor, discipleship programs, and reaches out in holistic ministry to people displaced by violence.

"Even though I wanted to pack my bags and leave when the robbery happened, I have regained my vision," Amanda Fallas said. "This is a test, an attack from the enemy to block our ministry, but nothing will move us."

Despite being traumatized, the Fallas, with perseverance and optimism that have become their trademarks, continue to pursue their call to plant a church in Barranquilla, long said to be the entry-point of European civilization into Latin America.

Two weeks after the hold-up, the Fallas organized their first worship service in a hotel room. They were accompanied by two pastoral couples who had visited them after they were robbed. Among the 17 others present was a woman who had offered herbal tea to Amanda after assault. She brought a friend. Members of the Mennonite Mission Network's extensive prayer network provided additional spiritual support.

Amanda was shaken by the attack, but her faith was not. Once, following a bus accident, she led a fellow survivor to Christ as the two women waited for medical care in an emergency room. This time, it was the Fallas who experienced the care of those whom they came to serve.

"We don't choose this type of vulnerability, yet we learn that when we allow those we came to serve to also meet our needs, God can use this in amazing ways," said Linda Shelly, Latin America director for Mennonite Mission Network.

The Fallas say they consider the robbery to have been an initiation.

"Many people have suffered even more," Gamaliel said. "Now we are one with them... Together we are more than conquerors through Christ. Many die for God's cause.

"Of course, violence always affects us, but we stand firm in the word of God and in prayer," he said. "We think of the early Anabaptists. We are vulnerable, but recuperating."

In two months of ministry, the Fallas have preached on radio programs to raise awareness of the Mennonite church, and they have preached in the neighbourhoods of Baranquilla. They are working with others to help hungry children.

The Colombia Mennonite Church, under whom the Fallas work, is deeply involved in seeking alternatives to the violence in their country. With financial support from U.S. and Canadian Mennonites, the Colombia Mennonite Church recently spearheaded a campaign that published a large ad in four major

daily newspapers. The ad proclaimed that peace comes through active nonviolence and love for neighbours.

### JOIN THE CIRCLE!

A SojoCircle, in connection with Sojourners magazine, is currently forming in Canberra and you are invited to join the circle. SojoCircles are prayer, study, and discussion groups that invite their members to share issues of faith, hope, and peace in a time of uncertainty and war.

To find out more contact: Doug Hynd  
ph 6288 9191 e.mail:doug.hynd@netspeed.com.au

The AAANZ is part of an international network of Anabaptist "centres". The two articles below introduce you to our worldwide partners. In August 2003, we hope to meet with representatives of these centres while in Zimbabwe for Mennonite World Conference's Assembly.

## ANABAPTIST CENTRES BUILD BRIDGES

One never knows how the work one does will affect someone in another part of the world.

So says Mennonite Mission Network worker Janie Blough, who with husband Neal has served as co-director of the Centre Mennonite de Paris since its inception in 1988.

For more than 20 years, she's taught English as a second language in the city's adult continuing-education program. When the regional library was preparing to buy English children's books, the staff librarian asked Janie Blough's advice on what to include.

"I was able to give them a listing of peace literature for children and youth gathered by the peace library at Bluffton College in Ohio," Blough said. "It has given me great pleasure to see these books slowly accumulating on the library shelves."

For Blough, who has lived more than half her life as a mission worker in France, this story demonstrates the importance of an ongoing presence within the culture one hopes to engage.

"This kind of confidence often takes many years, but the fruit that we are privileged to see ... makes it worth the wait and the effort," she said. "The Mennonite churches continue to be faithful in their support of our mission in France. We are thankful to them and to God that they have allowed us to be bridges between peoples, cultures, and ideas."

Building these bridges is the founding principle at each of six international Anabaptist centres supported by Mennonite Mission Network. Created as resource centres, they offer a variety of services and programs, including: Libraries; Workshops, teacher training and educational materials; Conflict mediation training and programs; Church planting and church leadership; Networking opportunities for people inspired by an Anabaptist vision to connect with one another; Publications and translations; Hospitality for visitors.

The oldest of the centres, the London Mennonite Centre, was established in 1953 to receive guests and house international students. It served in that capacity for many years.

"When we arrived in 1974, (the centre's) influence on the surrounding culture was not extensive," said Alan Kreider, who with wife Eleanor led the centre through some dramatic changes

in its identity and ministry during a 27-year tenure as directors. "The staff devoted its attention to the students, and its impact on them was often very important."

A number of changes occurred over the next several decades. The first Mennonite church in London, later to become Wood Green Mennonite Church, was formed out of a fellowship that began at the centre. As ministry needs for students began to decline, growing interest in Anabaptists and Mennonites led to increasing requests for speeches, books, and educational resources. The result was a shift in the centre's role, from residence ministry to resource centre.

The centre continues to grow and evolve. In 1992, the Anabaptist Network grew out of a desire to create meaningful Christian structures in a society where most people no longer understood basic Christian symbols and ideas. It now features eight study groups in various cities, consisting of "hyphenated Anabaptists" — Christians who draw upon Anabaptist insights while retaining their original church affiliations and traditions.

The network organizes conferences, develops study circles, and convenes annual meetings to bring together Christians from a variety of traditions.

In 1996, the Bridge Builders program was created to serve in the ministry of peacemaking and reconciliation. It seeks to transform conflict within the church through training, mediation, consultancy, and related services for all Christian churches and denominations in Britain.

Current offerings at the centre, now led by Vic and Kathy Thiessen, include teaching resources; a library of more than 5,000 books, periodicals and media; and a guest house, prayer hut and meeting facilities.

Located in a stately townhouse, the six-story Mennonite centre in Brussels has enough space to house its Anabaptist library, a children's peace education library, offices, meeting rooms, guest rooms, and an apartment where mediation services director Juan José Romero lives with his family.

The Brussels centre opened in 1980 "to provide a public face for Mennonites that would allow people to learn about Mennonites, provide hospitality, and offer programs on particular themes," according to J. Robert Charles, a founding director and now Europe director for the Mission Network.

Since the early 1990s, the centre has focused particularly on mediation services under Romero's direction. The mediation work primarily involves training groups such as churches, schools, and families how to work through conflict situations.

"In the last 10 years, the centre has become much more specialized in the areas of mediation and conflict transformation," Romero said. "Our theological expression and the practical living-out of this expression have given our centre a very distinctive profile in the peace culture.

"The work of the centre, and particularly the mediation ministry, is for me like the metaphor of the sower in the parable of Jesus," he added. "We throw out the individual seeds in very different contexts, among the laity, among Catholics, among politicians, among educators, among those in the feminist movement, among pacifists, among Protestants, Mennonites and atheists ... and we allow the Lord to do the work that he wills through us. Often, in a profound way, when we are thanked for our work, we have the impression that we have been the right people at the right time ... his tools, his hands, his voice."

In addition to the centre's impact on Belgians, it offers many ways to reach others, according to Pascal Keller, who

works with Africans living in Brussels, often as refugees.

"Many of them have been (psychologically) wounded by war," he said. "Many are searching for a spirituality that will help them become craftspersons of peace."

In France, the Paris centre helps contribute to the theological and missional identity of Mennonites who speak French and live in French-speaking contexts, according to Neal Blough, who teaches church history at Vaux sur Seine, a local evangelical seminary, and lectures on Anabaptism at an institute of higher studies related to the Sorbonne. In addition to contributions from French-born scholars, Linda Oyer, also of the Mission Network, brings to the centre more than 20 years of experience as a professor at the European Bible Institute, which she also served as dean.

"Janie's English classes have been an important avenue for us to get to know many people for whom religion or faith has little or no importance whatsoever," he said. "Not only can this help to contribute to the identity and mission of Mennonite churches, it is also having an impact in the larger Christian world in France."

In local parlance Down Under, you're either from Oz (Australia) or NZ (pronounced "enzed," and short for New Zealand). And if you're part of a growing network of people interested in Anabaptism, you might also be from AAANZ, the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand. "The AAANZ is a network of people scattered across Australia and New Zealand who are interested in Anabaptism," according to Mark Hurst, a mission worker who has served in Australia with his wife, Mary, since 1990. "People are drawn to the AAANZ through their interest in peace and justice, mission, and radical discipleship issues."

Among other projects, the Hursts publish a quarterly newsletter called *ON THE ROAD*, available at the AAANZ website at [www.anabaptist.asn.au](http://www.anabaptist.asn.au).

"We hope to have a 'leavening' effect and in some ways be a 'subversive' presence in both countries - subversive for the kingdom of God," Hurst said.

Mennonite Mission Network also is linked with two Anabaptist centres in Asia: The Tokyo Anabaptist Centre and the Korea Anabaptist Centre in Seoul.

## GHANA BECOMES NEW LINK IN CHAIN OF PEACE CENTRES

A chain of Anabaptist centres supported by Mennonite Mission Network is growing. While the oldest centre in London celebrates a half-century of ministry, the newest centre is taking its first steps into ministry in southern Ghana in West Africa.

When Humphrey Akogyeram returned to his native land after two years of seminary studies in the United States, he brought a vision for teaching peace.

"Peace and reconciliation are not talked about in African indigenous churches," he said. "In the country of Ghana, peace is not much talked about."

Study at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, whetted Akogyeram's interest in peacemaking. The Mennonite Board of Missions, a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network, sponsored Akogyeram's studies (1998-2000) and helped to found the Good News Theological College and Seminary in Accra, Ghana's capital city, more than 30 years ago.

Upon his return to the Accra seminary, where he had been an instructor before his North American stint, Akogyeram started a comprehensive study program in peace research and conflict mediation.

He hopes to encourage peace studies on two fronts - within the seminary and among the African-initiated churches, whose leaders make up the majority of the school's student body.

The Good News seminary will house a peace library and research centre. Akogyeram aims to make peace studies a regular part of the school's curriculum. Plans also include peace and reconciliation seminars for the African-initiated churches, training of mediators for intervention in church conflicts, and distributing literature on peace themes to local churches.

Akogyeram has collected nearly 300 volumes on war, peace and reconciliation that already are being checked out of the college and seminary library.

Philip and Julie Bender, pastors of the Hamilton (Ontario, Canada) Mennonite Church, launched Akogyeram's peace-teaching seminars in local churches. The Benders, during a sabbatical/service leave, spent February and March at Good News as visiting lecturers. The Benders are well known in Ghana, having served as mission workers from 1989 to 1992.

Eight seminars at different churches and a daylong workshop for the Good News student body constituted the peace education kick-off. "There was a keen interest in peace in the churches," Philip Bender said.

"Many practical questions were raised, such as how to work at forgiveness and how to respond to armed robbers, which is a problem in Accra. In each church, people expressed strong appreciation for this teaching," Bender said.

Through the seminars, Akogyeram said, people have discovered new ways to work at conflicts, both on the interpersonal level and on the larger societal level. He said he hopes the influence of the peace centre will extend beyond the sphere of its partner churches. He said he is exploring ways to collaborate with other West African peace centres.

Several of Ghana's West African neighbours are engaged in devastating civil wars. "Perhaps our peace centre can help avert such conflicts in Ghana," Akogyeram said.

## THE LONG TRAGEDY Australian Evangelical Christians and the Great War, 1914-1918

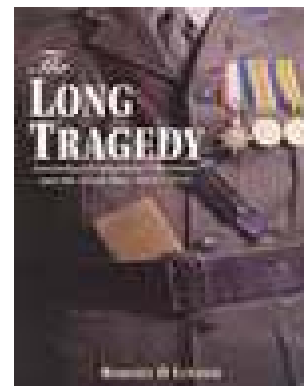
by Robert D. Linder  
Openbook, 2000.

This book is co-published by the Centre For The Study Of Australian Christianity and grew out of a larger study being written on the history of the evangelical church in Australia. The author is an American history professor who since 1995 has been the Senior Research Fellow at the centre. Linder has spent every winter since 1986 in Australia doing research and writing.

The history of evangelical Christians in Australia is one of "the hidden histories" of this country. Linder is seeking to give this group its due in Australian historiography and also trying to show that Australian Christians played a major role in World War I, something historians have neglected in the past.

I found the book fascinating because I knew so little about the subject. Linder brings the age alive with firsthand accounts from those who lived through the period. He corrects the view that all Diggers were the "romantic larrikin in uniform" while showing that around half of those in Australian uniforms "were also devout Christians who enlisted to serve 'God and country' (15) ...wowsers and larrikins in approximately equal numbers." (45)

Australian churches were caught up in the hysteria around World War I and got swept along with the rest of society. "No Australian Christian leader had given much thought to a formal theology of war before 1914. This is not surprising since Australia was still very much a continent in the process of settlement in the last half of the nineteenth century. Theological reflection is a luxury when survival and civilization-building are pressing issues." (25)



## TWELVE WAYS THE MEDIA MISREPORT VIOLENCE

Norwegian peace studies professor Johann Galtung has laid out twelve points of concern where journalism often goes wrong when dealing with violence. Each implicitly suggests more explicit remedies.

1. **Decontextualizing violence:** focusing on the irrational without looking at the reasons for unresolved conflicts and polarization.
2. **Dualism:** reducing the number of parties in a conflict to two, when often more are involved. Stories that just focus on internal developments often ignore such outside forces as foreign governments and transnational companies.
3. **Manichaeism:** portraying one side as good and demonizing the other as evil.
4. **Armageddon:** presenting violence as inevitable, omitting alternatives.
5. **Focusing on individual acts** of violence while avoiding structural causes, like poverty, government neglect, and military or police repression.
6. **Confusion:** focusing only on the conflict arena (the battlefield or location of violent incidents) but not on the forces and factors that influence the violence.
7. **Excluding and omitting the bereaved,** thus never explaining why there are acts of revenge and spirals of violence.
8. **Failure to explore the causes** of escalation and the impact of media coverage itself.
9. **Failure to explore the goals** of outside interventionists, especially big powers.
10. **Failure to explore peace proposals** and offer images of peaceful outcomes.
11. **Confusing cease-fires and negotiations** with actual peace.
12. **Omitting reconciliation:** Conflicts tend to re-emerge if attention is not paid to efforts to heal fractured societies. When news about attempts to resolve conflicts is absent, fatalism is reinforced. That can help engender even more violence, when people have no images or information about possible peaceful outcomes and the promise of healing.

(from *Sojourners*, quoted in *The Mennonite*, October 15, 2002, p. 30)



Linder argues, “Most of the pro-war sentiment among the churches...was fuelled by British civil religion – and its little brother, Australian civic Protestantism.” (26) “The line between piety and patriotism became increasingly blurred and the flag at times seemed to replace the cross in the thinking of many church leaders.” (26, 27)

One value of the book is to point out the reasoning used at that time to support the war and observe how the same tactics are used today. The dualistic thinking about good and evil is a common theme as in this quote: “The war is morally right because Germany has shown herself to be morally bad.” (38) Just substitute “Iraq” for “Germany.”

While a number of individuals spoke out against the war, Linder says, “There was no organized opposition to Australia’s entry into the conflict.” (39) The author also illustrates how difficult it was for evangelical Christians who got into the military to continue living a godly life. “In most cases, then and now, the dynamics of military life are not the sort calculated to reinforce or encourage Christian values and the development of the higher Christian life.” (44, 45)

Linder concludes his study with a chapter entitled “Making Sense of the Bitter Fruits of Victory”. The war left many bitter. “At the beginning we believed everything that we were told; at the end we believed nothing...the story of the war was the story of the wrecking of Australian optimism and happiness, and the creation of a social context where negative thought and destructive criticism became the norm.” (155)

Some church leaders at the beginning of the war said it would bring about revival and people would flock to church. If anything, the war had the opposite effect. “This pro-war posture, with its attendant calls for sacrifice and more sacrifice, marked the beginning of the decline of popular acceptance of Anglicanism as the unofficial ‘national church’ as the real causes of the war became increasingly apparent in the post-war period.” (158) One writer of the time said, “Few, if any, true followers of the Prince of Peace would regard the great war of 1914-1918 as anything but the greatest set-back Christianity has experienced since its inception.” (160)

Rev. J.W. Burton wrote this in 1932:

*Can we wonder that the Church lost moral leadership in the world...War is, without question, the negation of all that Christ taught and meant, and yet, as in bitter irony, there are professedly Christian men who defend it, as their forefathers defended slavery...Think of the price this generation paid – for what?* (162)

A good question. What did World War I and the wars since bring us? Linder said one result was “a spiritual malaise descended upon most of the churches following the war.” (164) Many of the church’s “brightest and best” were either dead or disillusioned. “After the hell and heroism of the beaches of Gallipoli, the ultimate heartbreak for many evangelicals was to find so many of their former co-religionists sunning away their lives at Bondi.” (165)

One reason to study history is to learn from it and not make the same mistakes again. There is plenty in this book to learn. As the drums of war beat again, what will be the church’s response? - reviewed by Mark S. Hurst

## HORIZON IS WHERE HEAVEN AND EARTH MEET

by Diana Williams  
Bantam Books, 2001.

“The pain of the earth and the joy of the heavens meet at the horizon that there is balance.” This sentence sums up the feeling and the heart of the book. Diana, raised in Vermont and Oklahoma who had lived and worked for some years in New York City came to Australia in 1982 to work with desert Aboriginal people.

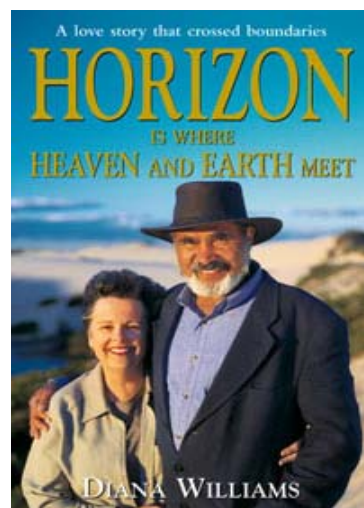
Her mission was to help to encourage the Aboriginal leadership to take its place in the church. On New Year’s Eve, 1983, she met the well-known Aboriginal pastor, Ron Williams, in Kalgoorlie. He knew immediately that she would make a good wife for him. This desire came true for both of them when they were married the next year at Skull Creek, WA, where Diana had been working with the local Aboriginal people.

The book traces their life together and the massive adjustments that Diana had to make in order to adjust to a new culture- one that did not always accept her. The details of trying to adapt to a generally nomadic lifestyle and the arrival at Ron’s house at the old Carrolup settlement taxed her coping abilities to the utmost. This is the story, told from the heart, by one who saw God’s will above all else and who does not gloss over the pain of having to review nearly all of her values in an often hostile environment. She shows Ron’s side as well, describing his struggle to deal with the injustices done to his people and how to make life better for them.

The book gives some interesting biographical and historical information about the ancestors of both Ron and Diana. It brings the reader into a world unknown to most Australians, increasing our understanding of Aboriginal culture at a deep feeling level. It also follows the life of an American woman, showing how her life was changed by God and what that meant for her.

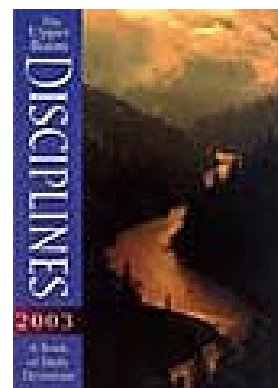
The book does not really come to an end, as it follows Diana and Ron to Canberra, where they live now. I found that I was most curious to see what has happened since page 339. Because I live in Canberra myself, I suppose it is up to me to find out. In any case, I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to understand how Aboriginal culture and Christianity can exist together.

-reviewed by Grace Koch



## DEVOTIONALS

The birth of a new year is a good time to begin spiritual practices. A discipline we follow is using devotional guides to lead us through the year. One book we use is *The Upper Room Disciplines*, published by Upper Room Books. Fifty-three different writers from various backgrounds offer daily devotions based on scriptures from the Revised Common Lectionary. Below is an edited sample from the 2002 *Disciplines*:  
Saturday, December 21 – Read Luke 1:26-38



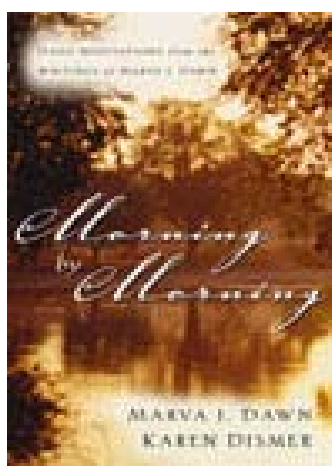
Mary may have been inclined toward pondering. Luke says she pondered Gabriel's greeting. In Chapter 2 she ponders the shepherd's report of an angelic visitation in the fields, which climaxed with a heavenly chorus praising God. The shepherds shrewdly decide to go check out the manger.

Even in its fulfilment, a promise invites pondering, especially when the promise involves a lasting or continuing change...Pondering is a valuable use of time. It might seem trite to say, but in an age whose communication gadgets can invade anywhere and anytime, saying it can't hurt. Pondering recognizes both the present and future quality of promise, and it values both dimensions.

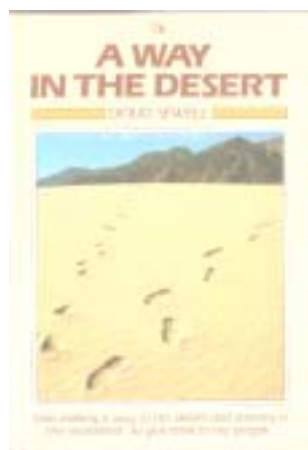
Good pondering promotes patience, discernment, wisdom, and compassion...

**Prayer: All-knowing God, give me zeal of eye and soul to join the faithful watchers of all the years Amen.** (368)

Another book we use is *Morning by Morning/ Daily Meditations from the Writings of Marva Dawn* published by Eerdmans and Lime Grove House Publishing. Selections from Marva Dawn's many books are chosen for each day of the year along with a Bible passage and a prayer. Her writings challenge us to follow Jesus radically each day.



These books may not be for you. You may have other guides that help you follow Jesus through the year. Write and share with other **ON THE ROAD** readers what feeds you. We would all like to know.



Speaking of devotionals and books of meditations, we have an author of just such a book in our network. Doug Sewell, from Sydney, wrote *A Way In The Desert*. It has eighteen short meditations about life in the desert and photographs he took while living among the Bedouin of the Sinai Desert. David Watson says, "In the hostile wilderness of today's world, our faith

and hope need constant encouragement. I found Doug Sewell's delightful meditations creative and refreshing. He shows how, in the midst of confusion and pain, God is always to be found." (Book Cover) For a copy contact the author at: doug.sewell@tpg.com.au.

## WEB INFORMATION ON ALTERNATIVE MEDIA AND OTHER RESOURCES:

*Sojourners* magazine - <http://www.sojo.net/action/index.cfm/action/home.html>  
 Common Dreams Newscenter - <http://www.commondreams.org>  
*Mother Jones* magazine - <http://www.motherjones.com>  
*The Nation* magazine - <http://www.thenation.com>  
*Z* magazine - <http://www.zmag.org>  
*American Prospect* magazine - <http://www.prospect.org>  
[www.911peace.net](http://www.911peace.net)  
[www.notinourname.net](http://www.notinourname.net)  
[www.nonviolence.org](http://www.nonviolence.org)  
[www.alternet.org](http://www.alternet.org)  
<http://www.worldwire.org/> Brings together mainstream and alternative media reports and news about events and issues of interest to peacemakers.  
<http://www.oneworld.net/> News, special reports, campaigns, perspectives, and job database from 1,250 partner organizations.  
<http://www.idealists.org/> **Action Without Borders** created this list of nonprofit and community-based organizations.  
<http://www.igc.org/index.html> Beginning in 1987, the **Institute for Global Communications** (IGC) played a formative role in bringing advanced communications technologies to grassroots organizations worldwide working for peace, human rights, environmental sustainability, women's rights, conflict resolution and worker rights. Over 250 nonprofit organizations host their websites with IGC.  
<http://www.vicpeace.org/index.html> The **Victorian Peace Network** works to bring together diverse organisations in pursuit of peace and justice principles listed on their website; including education campaigns, public events and rallies.  
<http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/> **Conflict Research Consortium** and **The Conflict Resolution Information Source** are good gateways to anything having to do with conflict resolution.  
<http://csf.colorado.edu/peace/> **Peace and Conflict**, The Home of Peace Studies on the World Wide Web.  
<http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/departs/cpacs/index.htm> **The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies** (CPACS) was established in May 1988 as a specialist research and teaching centre within the University of Sydney.  
[www.just-international.org](http://www.just-international.org) **The International Movement for a Just World** (JUST) is an international non-profit citizens' organisation which seeks to create public awareness about injustices within the existing global system.  
[www.micah6.org](http://www.micah6.org) **Micah 6** is a congregational initiative for integrating the ministries of justice, service, and spiritual growth into all areas of their church life and personal live.  
<http://peace.mennolink.org/resources/prayflag.html> Peace Flag information.  
<http://www.unc.edu/~eoslavic/projects/bombsites/index.html> Places the United States has bombed.  
[www.erc.org.au](http://www.erc.org.au) The latest **Just Comments** from the Edmund Rice Centre can be viewed by clicking on the following links. The changing face of poverty in Australia:  
 In html (web page) format - <http://www.erc.org.au/issues/text/pa02.htm>  
 or PDF format - <http://www.erc.org.au/issues/pdf/pa02.pdf>  
 Wrestling over the Timor Gap: In html (web page) format - <http://www.erc.org.au/issues/text/et99.htm>  
 or PDF format - <http://www.erc.org.au/issues/pdf/tg02.pdf>

## TOM AND CHRISTINE SINE EVENTS

### SYDNEY

#### A Day with Tom and Christine Sine

##### "Living on Purpose"

8 March 2003 9.30 - 4.30

Trinity Chapel Macquarie

Corner of Herring & Waterloo Roads, North Ryde

Co-sponsored by the

AAANZ and Macquarie Christian Studies Institute

Bring or Buy own Lunch

Cost: \$40 (Students Half-Price)

Join us for an interactive time with Tom and Christine.

The day's themes include:

- Changes likely in our global future and their impact on our lives, congregations and poorest neighbours
- How we got off the track in modern culture and a biblical vision for the challenges to come
- Creative ways that Christians in different countries are seeking to put "first things first"
- Small group work on new possibilities for us and our churches, and drafting a personal life mission statement

For more information contact:

Mark and Mary Hurst

[ontheroad@today.com.au](mailto:ontheroad@today.com.au)

02 9545 0301

### MELBOURNE

#### CACE CONFERENCE

in conjunction with

AAANZ and Zadok Institute.

Friday 21st February, 2003.

Tom & Christine Sine

will speak on

'Ceasefire: Resolving Conflict in Church and World'

4-6 and 7-9 p.m. at Stanway Alpha Lecture Theatre,

Ridley College, 160 the Avenue, Parkville.

Cost \$30, \$15 concessions. Free to Ridley students.

RSVP 14/2/03 92074800

**Tom Sine** is a consultant in futures research and planning for both Christian and secular organizations. He works together with his wife Christine, to assist organizations to evaluate how their world, nation, and communities are changing so they can adapt more adequately to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Tom also works to help Christian organizations develop a holistic theology of mission. Tom Sine speaks widely at colleges, churches, and missions conferences and leads creativity seminars for a variety of Christian groups. He is also an adjunct professor for Fuller Theological Seminary in Seattle and teaches a course on Christian World View. His most recent book is *Mustard seed vs McWorld: Reinventing Life and Faith for the Future* (Baker 1999). Other books include *Cease Fire: Searching for Sanity in America's Culture Wars* (Eerdmans 1995) and *Live It Up! How To Create A Life You Can Love*. (Herald Press 1993) He has recently co-authored *Living On Purpose: Finding God's Best for Your Life* with his wife, Dr. Christine Sine. It was published January 2002. Tom and Christine are the founders of Mustard Seed Associates, a network of Jesus' followers involved in revealing and facilitating the scattering of God-planted mustard seeds in our communities and around the world.

**Christine Aroney-Sine** is an Australian physician who developed and directed the healthcare ministry for YWAM's Mercy Ships. She has a broad background in international health and travel medicine and has worked in Africa, Asia, Central America, the Caribbean, and the South Pacific. Christine works as a consultant in international healthcare and travel medicine as well as conducting seminars to help prepare people for overseas mission service. She also speaks on issues relating to changing our timestyle and lifestyle to develop a more spiritual rhythm for our lives. Christine teaches a course on mission to the urban poor for Fuller Theological Seminary in Seattle and works together with her husband Tom Sine to help Christian organizations prepare for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Christine speaks widely at colleges, churches and missions conferences and has written two books *Tales of a Seasick Doctor* (Zondervan 1996) and *Survival of the Fittest: Keeping Healthy in Overseas Travel and Service* MARC 1995.

### Pontius' Puddle



# The Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand Inc.

## Background to the Association

The initiative for the establishment of the Association came out of a meeting in Tasmania in May 1995 of Christians from a variety of denominational backgrounds who had been influenced in a variety of ways by the Anabaptist tradition. To provide a means of building on the contacts established at the meeting the Anabaptist Network of Australia and New Zealand was formed which became the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand following its incorporation in 1998.

## Purposes of the Association

The purposes of the Association are:

To nurture and support the Christian faith of individuals and groups in Australia and New Zealand who identify with the Anabaptist tradition.

To network and link individuals, churches and groups of Christians who share a common Anabaptist understanding of the Christian faith.

To provide religious services including teaching, training, pastoral care, mediation, and counsel to its members and others interested in the Anabaptist tradition.

To provide resources and materials relating to the tradition, perspectives, and teaching of Anabaptists to both the Christian and general public.

To convene conferences and gatherings which provide

opportunity for worship, teaching, training, consultation, celebration, and prayer in the Anabaptist tradition.

To extend the awareness of Anabaptism in Australia and New Zealand assisting individuals, churches and groups discover and express their links with the Anabaptist tradition.

To provide an opportunity for affiliation for churches and groups who wish to be known in Australia and New Zealand as Anabaptists.

## What is Anabaptism?

Anabaptism is a radical Christian renewal movement that emerged in Europe during the sixteenth-century Reformation. Whilst Anabaptism was a grassroots movement with diverse expressions in its early development, its enduring legacy usually has included the following:

- ◆ Baptism upon profession of faith
- ◆ A view of the church in which membership is voluntary and members are accountable to the Bible and to each other
- ◆ A commitment to the way of peace and other teachings of Jesus as a rule for life
- ◆ Separation of church and state
- ◆ Worshipping congregations which create authentic community and reach out through vision and service



AAANZ publications available online or from the AAANZ postal address



## AAANZ Homepage on the internet

<http://www.anabaptist.asn.au>

### ON THE LIGHTER SIDE: THE POTATO PATCH

An old man lived alone in Palestine. He wanted to dig his potato garden, but it was very hard work.

His only son, who would have helped him, was in an Israeli prison. The old man wrote a letter to his son and mentioned his predicament. Shortly, he received this reply, "For HEAVEN'S SAKE, Dad, don't dig up that garden, that's where I buried the GUNS!"

At 4 o'clock the next morning, a dozen Israeli soldiers showed up and dug up the entire garden, without finding any guns. Confused, the old man wrote another note to his son telling him what happened, and asking him what to do next.

His son's reply was: "Now plant your potatoes, Dad. This is the best I can do for you at this time."

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