

Brian McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize: Evangelism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002)

Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw

McLaren turns things around and upside-down in this analysis of an e-mail conversation with someone he was a spiritual friend for as she found faith. In fact he redefines evangelism as conversation rather than argument, as making disciples rather than converts, and as a dance rather than competition: 'The whole Christian message becomes for me less an outline of information and more a wonderful song. It is less a thesis to be argued and proved and more a mystery to celebrate and sing and dance' (p.150). He acknowledges evangelism is a word with a bad reputation, though it has a good heart, and suggests people are more ready than we realise for sincere spiritual friendship.

Rather than offering gospel outlines and evangelistic programmes, he says journeying with someone finding faith is more about listening to their story and telling them yours, and God's, and inviting and including them in Christian community (belonging before believing). He seeks to break down insider/outside language (with a helpful description of boundary, centred, process and journey thinking) and maintains that being a spiritual friend for someone will help us grow in our discipleship as well. He says this is a way of evangelism for which you are more ready than you realize: 'Good evangelism is the process of being friendly without discrimination and influencing all of one's friends [NB not using in and out language] toward better living, through good deeds and good conversation. For a Christian like myself, evangelism means engaging in these conversations in the spirit and example of Jesus Christ... Jesus was short on sermons, long on conversations; short on answers, long on stories and parables; short on telling you what to think, long on challenging you to think for yourself; short on condemning the irreligious, long on confronting the religious.' (p.15) He stretches barriers, bemoans the avoidance of mystery in modern conceptions of God, avoids saying the Bible is easy to understand, and encourages good neighbourliness and service.

Darren Cronshaw coordinates leadership and mission training for Baptist Union of Victoria and Forge Mission Training Network. *More Ready than your Realise* was originally reviewed in 'The Emerging Church: Spirituality and Worship Reading Guide' *Zadok Paper* S159, Autumn 2008; see www.zadok.org.au; and then in "Exploring faith Explaining rebirth ... Re-birthing Evangelism", *Witness: The Voice of Victorian Baptists*, No.3 (April), p.21. Darren welcomes feedback to darren.cronshaw@buv.com.au