

Book Review - *Credible Witness*, Darren Cronshaw, 2006

In this, his first book to be published, Darren Cronshaw lays the groundwork for effective and relevant mission in Australia.

Flicking through this book before I bought it, I was reminded of John Smith's *Advance Australia Where?*, written in 1988 as a search for the reasons behind the extraordinary lack of meaning in a nation like ours which has everything one could materially ask for in life. In fact, Cronshaw refers to Smith in *Credible Witness*, and provides us with a detailed and fascinating recollection of the spiritual history of this nation. I must admit to a sense of cynicism when I began reading that Australia has a long history of spirituality, as I was always of the opinion that this 'Great South Land' is one of the most godless nations on the planet.

Cronshaw however debunks that myth by describing the very deep sense of spirituality of the first Australians, then delving into the history of Anglo-Irish settlement, looking at the perspective of bush workers, Eureka, the labour movement, servant leadership in the context of the Anzac legend, and the strong sense of multiculturalism that draws Australians together from many walks of life. He cleverly uses all these analogies to develop effective models of mission to the various aspects of Australian culture.

Referring to theologian Frank Rees and his term 'fair dinkum ministry' Cronshaw wants to go further by showing that this term does not apply to our indigenous people, or to people who have come to settle here from distant shores. Still seeing this term as a useful analogy though, Cronshaw says, "being a credible witness involves being fair dinkum to both Scripture and culture. We need models of mission that are both faithful to the Bible and authentically Australian".

However, far from saying that his models are the only way to do mission in Australia, Cronshaw goes on to state that "mission can be imagined and expressed by various models that describe different emphases...models derived from our own culture and history...will best enhance the theology and practice of mission in Australia".

While not expressly stating it, Cronshaw clearly draws us to the best example of mission that we could have - God Incarnate, coming to our world in a form of credible witness that we could relate to, speaking to our own defective humanity, revealing to us Himself in order that we might become more fully alive, more whole, more fully in His image. For those with a passion for credible, contextual, relevant mission to Aussie culture, I recommend this book unreservedly.

by Nils von Kalm
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