



March 2008.Issue 3

THANKFUL, HOPEFUL

AT A GLANCE

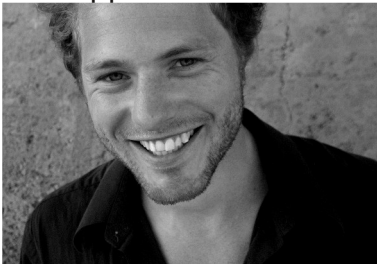
Branch Update p. 1

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EVENTS

Matt Epp House Concert



8pm, April 26 @ L'Abri

Wednesday Night Films 8pm

BOOKS

Humble Apologetics:
Defending the Faith Today,
by Dr. John G. Stackhouse Jr.
- review by Mark Ryan, p. 2

**L'Abri Canada
2008 Terms**

February 4 - April 28

June 2 - July 24

**September 2 -
November 10**

As we approach April, we are aware that we have passed the halfway point in our term. Spring has not yet broken through on Bowen and March has brought heavy rains, but this is not stopping us from tackling the job of maintaining the 20-acre property. We are thankful for the new house, which is now a home, but are also mindful of the added upkeep this involves.

We are grateful for the students and the helper who are here, who have made our lives full and who have given joy to us as we have entered into daily living with them.

This month we want particularly to remember and give thanks for the Hardens, 'good Canadian prairie folk', who joined us at L'Abri along with their children Thayne, Analena, and Matthias, on Bowen Island in Fall 2007. The Hardens came to Bowen Island three years ago, prior to joining us at L'Abri. This is a great gift as they were already acclimatized to island living and had developed friendships here.

They have come to us as 'Artists-in-Residence', a year-long position to work as artists within community living; but they have taken on a much broader role and are integral to this branch. Andre is a playwright/screenwriter and has been working in this field. His expertise on films, story, and genre has translated into enlightening lectures and film discussions. Michelle is skilled as well, as she explores her artistic talent through fabric and textile arts. She also has the gift and added challenge of home schooling. It is a delight having Thayne, Analena and Matthias as part of our life here. We especially enjoy their board game and card playing skills!

The Hardens have become fully immersed in the L'Abri daily routine - this includes opening their home for meals, hosting 'High Teas', lecturing, tutoring and many other small details which are part of the day-to-day running of the branch. Andre especially enjoys cooking and

(continued on p. 3)

If you'd like to apply as a student please visit our website for more information about our branch and a broader treatment of what to be mindful of as you consider joining us on the island. Alternatively you may call or email us, but keep in mind that as we are often engaged outside of the office, email is usually the more effective form of communication.

L'Abri Fellowship of Canada
Q-10, RR#1
511 Cowan Road
Bowen Island, BC V0N 1G0
CANADA
www.labri.org/canada
canadianlabri@shaw.ca

John G. Stackhouse, Jr. *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today* (Oxford University Press, 2002). 262 pages.

John Stackhouse Jr., is professor of theology and culture at Regent College, Vancouver, Canada. He is an award-winning historian, philosopher, theologian, journalist, and teacher. In this stirring volume Stackhouse draws upon each of these areas of expertise in order to persuade us that defending the faith (much-maligned as it is) can be and ought to be undertaken humbly. For Stackhouse, the practice of apologetics can be interesting and important, or offensive and therefore self-defeating; to ensure that it is the former and not the latter which prevails, Stackhouse has authored this volume with the intent of presenting a way "of engaging in worthwhile apologetical conversation without perverting it into a destructive exercise in triumphalism" (p. xvi).

Not dissimilar from recent texts on apologetics and evangelism by a number of L'Abri related authors (e.g. Os Guinness, Bill Edgar, Dick Keyes and Jerram Barrs); *Humble Apologetics* also shares some affinity with the apologetic writings of the late Francis Schaeffer. This is true not merely in terms of tone and awareness of cultural crosscurrents and their impact upon the task of witness-bearing, but perhaps most especially in the way that Stackhouse exhibits his concern for the ones to whom our apologetics are directed. (Like Schaeffer, Stackhouse is eager that our practice of apologetics open up and illumine a way forward and not wound, shut down, or cause someone to turn back from faith).

Full of sage advice and helpful pastoral notes, *Humble Apologetics* is nevertheless uncluttered and can be outlined quickly and easily. Parts one and two helpfully delineate the milieu in which we are called upon to defend the faith and explain what defending the faith means and involves. Here, pluralism, postmodernism and consumerism are cited as crucial challenges to Christian apologetics. The problem of plausibility—i.e. of our culture's particular resistance to biblical Christianity—is also raised and addressed. Apologetics itself is finally defined and defended and the basic epistemological matters underlying a humble apologetic are discussed. Part three, "the payoff section" (p.xvii), weaves the various threads

together by suggesting principles of communication, by endorsing audience-specific apologetics and by listing a dozen guidelines for apologetic conversation. Concerned that theology and philosophy not monopolize, Stackhouse draws attention to other modes of apologetics and offers a concluding chapter in which he once again drives home the importance and necessity of practicing humble apologetics.

While some have balked at the contours of Stackhouse's proposal, labeling it "postmodern" and charging that it harbors too low a view of apologetic argumentation and its outcomes (Groothuis, Books & Culture); others have dismissed it altogether, decrying it as "unbiblical and outrageous" (Cheung, Reformation Ministries International). Though such conclusions seem hasty and tend to overlook the many strengths of this volume (too many to register here), yet there are occasions in which Stackhouse's language can be said to court the disapproval of those committed to a more corpulent and virile apologetic. Examples of this would include his insistence on speaking about worldviews, including Christianity, as "hypotheses—intelligent guesses—that are always subject to further tryouts" (p.87-89); his unnuanced assertion that "No human being knows anything for certain" (p.166); as well as his conclusion: "For all we know, we might be wrong about any or all of this" (p.232; italics are the author's). Nonetheless, while I too feel that Stackhouse may have overreached in some of his comments, yet I remain an ardent admirer of this work for two reasons.

First, it simply must be admitted that certainty is a problematic concept. For even though God wants us to be certain of our salvation and of the truth of Christianity, and even though He supplies us with the resources we need to come to a point of confident assurance regarding the essential elements of the gospel message (the concern of Groothuis and others), yet this does not prevent doubt from arising and neither does it nullify the difficulties Stackhouse addresses. Therefore, disagreement withstanding, I am certain (oops!) that I stand to gain much from interacting with this work.

Second, although I reject E. J. Carnell's

Thankful, Hopeful cont'd

discussion; Michelle looks forward to gardening and enjoys spending time with students.

Please pray for us as we now turn our attention away from the new house, the Hardens' home, and toward the old house and the property. Both of these are in need of much attention and repair. Our private road is losing the battle with the potholes, the paint on the old house is peeling, the decks are in need of mending, etc. This feels overwhelming, but we remain hopeful that God will provide. We begin to look forward to Summer Term and engaging those who will come into our homes. We are grateful that we are part of the greater L'Abri work and that for this branch in particular we are experiencing unity and new vision for the future.

- Julia Scheibe

Spring Lectures 7:45 @ The Snug Cafe

MAR 28 Comic. Tragic. Brutal. The Life and Writings of Flannery O'Connor (Clarke Scheibe)

APR 04 Diminished by the Absence of Dogma: A Personal Plea for Theology as Part of the Christian Life (Mark Ryan)

APR 11 Sexuality: What Do You Long For? Finding a Healthy Balance in a Sex Obsessed World. (Carrie DeJong, Addictions Counselor, The Orchard Recovery and Treatment Center)

APR 18 Hayao Miyazaki: Conservative Godfather of Japanese Animation (Andre Harden)

APR 25 John Calvin: All Sweetness and Light or a Tyrant Justly Caricatured? (John Craig, Chair. Dept. of History, Simon Fraser University)

Humble Apologetics cont'd

verificationist approach to apologetics (his offering of God and Christianity as hypotheses to be tested by autonomous man) and although I continue to have questions about the Reformed epistemology of Plantinga and Wolterstorff (which informs and gives shape to Stackhouse's epistemology); yet I can happily utilize and endorse this work when I bear in mind the author's intent. For having read and re-read Humble Apologetics, it does not seem that Stackhouse has capitulated to postmodernism and wants to topple the edifice of sure knowledge as much as he wants us to recognize the milieu we are a part of and the apologetic impact of respecting our epistemic limitations. Neither does Stackhouse suggest that other religious and philosophical options are equal to or better than Christianity, only that for various cultural and sociological reasons such alternatives may and often do appeal to others with a force that we must not underestimate or ignore. In short, Stackhouse is alert to the fact that in our present culture we cannot go out and argue from a position of obvious certainty, we must argue from a position of plausibility asking those in front of us to consider "Might not this be true?"

So then, bearing in mind the author's intent, I find Stackhouse's reflections on how we do or approach apologetics to convey a welcome and much-needed emphasis. Indeed, whatever might be said about the idiosyncrasies of this work, it remains a solid contribution towards creating and encouraging a gentler, more respectful apologetic (cf. 1 Peter 3:15). In his reconfiguring of apologetics Stackhouse has removed trumpery, clipped the wings of pride and managed to exalt character and loving respect for others without dumbing down apologetics. In essence, he pushes us to engage not just ideas, but people; to reject not only arid intellectualism but acrid uncharitability as well. Such factors make Stackhouse 'highly recommended reading' for all would-be apologists.

--Mark P. Ryan,
L'Abri Fellowship Canada

We are often asked how people may donate to the work of Canadian L'Abri. Canadians may send their donations to our main address (cover page). We issue tax deductible receipts for gifts sent to our ministry. For tax deductible receipts in the U.S. send the donation to Rochester L'Abri with the memo "for Canadian L'Abri".

Rochester L'Abri:
L'Abri Fellowship
1465 12th Ave NE
Rochester, MN 55906-4383
United States of America

Praying Through April 2008

"I call on you, O God, for you will answer me."
Psalm 17:6

Please join with us as we mindfully bring ourselves and our cares to God our Father. Each day is marked with a specific prayer suggestion. Our serving families appear regularly as a reflection of our deep and continuing need for God's daily provision of grace that we might be more like His Son, Jesus.

	april 1 Board Members Keith McAlpine Dave Greenway George Bradford	2 Scheibe Family	3 Our helper Simeon Pang helpers for summer	4 Clarke Scheibe lecturing on Flannery O'Connor	5 Harden Family	6 Bowen Island Churches & Community
Day of Prayer: Dutch L'Abri	7 Ryan Family	8 Scheibe Family	9 Our helper Simeon Pang helpers for summer	10 Mark Ryan lecturing on Theology as part of Christian Life	11 Harden Family	12 Provision of Students & Finances
Day of Prayer: English L'Abri	14 Ryan Family	15 Scheibe Family	16 Our helper Simeon Pang helpers for summer	17 Carrie DeJong lecturing on Sexuality	18 Harden Family	19 Bowen Island Churches & Community
Day of Prayer: Rochester L'Abri	21 Ryan Family	22 Scheibe Family	23 Our helper Simeon Pang helpers for summer	24 Andre Harden lecturing on Hayao Miyazaki	25 Harden Family Matt Epp (singer/songwriter)	26 Provision of Students & Finances
Day of Prayer: Korean L'Abri	28 Ryan Family	29 Canadian Trustees Dick Keyes Andrew Fellows	30			