

Preface

IT WAS THIRTY YEARS ago on a warm summer evening when I sat down on the grass under a tree outside the local Anglican church where I had been baptized, confirmed, and subsequently nurtured. I was still in my teens but had volunteered for the “Parramatta Youth Mission” held in the two weeks prior to Christmas. The mission was primarily for the street-kids but attracted many passers by. I recall the first night vividly. A large and rowdy group of “head bangers” (it was the middle of the 1980s) were gathered near the street and directly in front of the main stage. Most of the volunteers steered clear of this crowd. I was young and naïve but earnest and direct. I went and sat in the middle of this group. They were only a couple of years younger than me. I was there because I loved Jesus and was trying to follow him faithfully and in practical ways. I was raised in a stable and loving Christian home where I had been well fed and educated. I knew nothing about justice. My ignorance dissolved the moment Chris held a knife to my throat asking if I was a “shark-f•••er” (slang for “surfer”)? I was wearing a Bali singlet, a gift from my cousin after her recent trip to the tropical paradise, renown for its great surfing. Wearing a Bali singlet among street-kids in the western suburbs of Sydney, I discovered, was tantamount to wearing an orange vest at a nationalist rally in Belfast. For reasons I have never been able to explain, I was not afraid of Chris nor the knife at my throat nor what might happen next. Chris recognized my lack of fear, pulled away his knife commenting: “you weren’t scared by that, were you?” I replied with honesty; “no, I was not scared_ (he still had a knife in his hand). Then a long conversation began about fear, life, Jesus, *and* justice. The conversation with Chris eventually ended. That was nearly thirty years ago. But a longer conversation has continued in the churches and on the streets of inner city of Sydney; in theological seminaries in Australia and America; and,

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more recently, in academic research and teaching. This book is the fruit of the continuing conversation about Jesus and justice that began under a tree, outside a church, with a young man, living on the street, armed with a knife. The manuscript began as a doctoral dissertation with the title “Restorative Justice and Jesus Christ: Why Restorative Justice Requires a Holistic Christology” presented to Charles Sturt University in 2011. Readers seeking more detailed scholarly argument and Scriptural exegesis should consult that work which is available through “Digital Theses Online.”

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