

Interview of Daniel Hales by Peter Goers, broadcast in Australia on ABC West Coast SA Radio on or before 10th October 2008.

PG: You may have heard last week I interviewed Michael Bachelard, the author of the book *Inside the Exclusive Brethren*, and I made the offer to the Exclusive Brethren if they would like to come on they would be very welcome, and Daniel Hales who is a senior member of the church has taken up this offer. Welcome to the show, Daniel.

DH: Good evening, Peter.

PG: Thanks for coming on.

DH: Thank you to you and your audience. It seems like a good night for Adelaide.

PG: It is with winning the soccer there, yes. Thank you. You're brother of Bruce Hales the elect vessel of the Exclusive Brethren – the leader of the church worldwide and the son of a former leader, aren't you?

DH: We don't use the term 'elect vessel', Peter. That's a term reserved in the Old Testament by the Jewish people for the Messiah to come and in the New Testament it refers to Paul, but I'm certainly... have Bruce Hales as a brother, and my father was the late John Hales.

PG: And, but, Bruce Hales is the seventh minister of the lord in recovery?

DH: We would suggest that he was a minister that helps us and more on the principle I would say, Peter, of a first amongst equals. It works very much on a charitable family brotherhood...

PG: Yes

DH: I don't mean brotherhood as opposed to sisterhood; I mean it's a fraternity and umm...

PG: Will your brother be the last leader do you believe, Daniel?

DH: I would have no idea about that, Peter, at all - no idea at all.

PG: Because you wait for the rapture don't you?

DH: We like many Christians, many, many Christians, await for the coming of Christ. We don't know when that will be, we have no idea.

PG: There's much in your faith that I find admirable, Daniel Hales, and I must say the care expressed for one another within your church is, from cradle to grave in terms of welfare both spiritual and financial, is admirable. The good business sense that you promote throughout your membership, the fact that there's no poverty in your sect is again admirable and also something that I admire very much, you don't proselytize. You don't convert.

DH: We would seek, as many, many other Christian groups to put the name of Jesus as the Saviour,

Peter, before anybody we met, but not in terms of bringing them into our church or bringing them into our group. We would leave that with anyone's individual exercise – all we would want to do would be to preach the gospel in a subdued, gentle, approachable way.

PG: But you're not ... it's very difficult to become... in fact you can't really become a member of the Exclusive Brethren. You are truly exclusive unless you're born into it really, Daniel, can you?

DH; Not at all, Peter, not at all. My mother-in-law is 93 and she would blow a couple of the things you've said apart. She's a very happy pensioner living frugally on the pension and she was not born into the brethren at all. She ah... her father went from church to church and place to place, seeking a place of worship that they were happy with as German migrants in the city of Sydney, and they ended up amongst the brethren. So she was born, and her father and her mother... nothing to do with any Christianity really.

PG: But I find this difficult, Daniel Hales, because I can't find you. You have a presence in Adelaide and yet I can't find you. You're not in the phone book – I don't know where you are. So, if I wanted to visit your church which should really be a public place of worship - I can't think of any other church or temple or mosque or any other place of worship that is not open to the public - but I can't come to you.

DH: Peter you could certainly come if you showed an interest and you spoke to one of our members and you were interested in coming to hear one of our sermons or observe one of our bible readings that would be certainly appropriate and certainly possible to be arranged. In fact in the great city of Brisbane our church because of regulations in that city has its doors open and people are able to come in at any time to any of the public meetings, and I think a total of about 12 have come in over the last two or three years.

PG: Sure.

DH: So there would be no problem with you coming to one of our gatherings if you so wished to observe – as with any church, Peter, you would know whether it was a mosque or a synagogue you couldn't come to some of the sacred meetings, but the general meetings which are basically bible readings, sermons and prayer, would be possible to arrange to come as an observer.

PG: Well, no, I can go to a mosque, Daniel Hales, and have gone to mosques and to lots of churches during all kinds of events and services – they are open.

DH: Yes

PG: I don't know where you are – where are you in Adelaide?

DH: We have a largish hall in Chandlers Hill, in the Happy Valley district, and then we have about a dozen smaller little churches in various localities around the city, and about 400 members in Adelaide, Peter.

PG: Yes – and about 1500 members across Australia.

DH: Probably 14-15,000, Peter.

PG: Thousand, I beg your pardon.

DH: No, no fine.

PG: About 43,000 worldwide?

DH: I don't have an exact count, but I would've said if you'd asked me, about 40,000 worldwide, Peter.

PG: Led by your brother.

DH: Led by... Each assembly is totally autonomous; each assembly has its own meetings and its own responsibilities. Leadership ebbs and flows and emerges, just as it does with any group of people. You send twenty students out on a bivouac, the leaders become obvious, the helpers become obvious and various levels... water finds its own level doesn't it, in society?

PG: Yes.

DH: And I would say first among equals, someone whom we respect and on which as time has developed, has shown to be one who has leadership qualities.

PG: Do you have windows in your halls and meeting places? – A listener is asking.

DH: Very good question, Peter, and I'm very glad once again that you have given me the opportunity to clear up a misunderstanding. Certainly, we have windows in our churches – it's a question of architecture, Peter. My small church is round the corner here in Epping, in one of the old suburbs of Sydney, has lovely windows and curtains and some of the bigger halls which would be akin – as you would have in a public hall, like I was in the Melbourne... um... Exhibition Hall the other day, a beautiful new building. You don't have windows in buildings of that size, so larger buildings would not tend to have windows but the smaller ones would purely be... would have... and it would purely be an architectural decision.

PG: I have Daniel Hales, a senior member of the Exclusive Brethren with me here on the show. I'm very glad to speak with you, Daniel.

DH: I appreciate your openness and your frankness, and I'm enjoying it as much as my blood pressure will allow. (Both laugh)

PG: Now why the separation from the world? This is very intriguing. Your brother has written in a press release in 2007: "We have to get a hatred, an utter hatred of the world." Why?

DH: Let me put it in context, Peter: we don't live apart from the world, we don't live separate from the world, and we don't live in communes or in little enclaves of our own. We live, work, shop, educate, ah, enjoy err the privileges of being a citizen of this great nation in our cities and everywhere else. Separation is the principle on which our fellowship is established.

PG: Just to – excuse me there Daniel. You have many schools and successful schools, but they are for brethren children, aren't they?

DH: In the school we have here in Sydney we have a non-brethren student - very happily there.

PG: But for the main part the schools are separate?

DH: The schools would be the same as they would for many Christian schools wouldn't they, Peter? They would mainly be attended by the Baptists to the Baptists, or the various groups to their own schools.

PG: Carry on, Daniel. Yes.

DH: But separation is not that we are setting ourselves above or apart from the world. I like to use the expression: in the world, Peter, but not of it.

PG: But there is – there's the concept of you will talk to me now, Daniel.

DH: Certainly.

PG: Of course – but you will not eat with me or drink with me.

DH: Peter, we regard - as I'm sure most people do - the act of eating, having a meal together is really an act of fellowship. I often see it in journalists who say, "The Prime Minister broke bread with so and so last night," which as you know as well as me, is a reference to perhaps the Lord's Supper as well as the fact that they had a meal. So eating together, socializing together, is fellowship and we don't do that with any other than those with whom we've taken holy communion. Let that be the standard, Peter.

PG: Is it true that you regard that as a defilement; that you would defile your members if they were required to eat and drink with others who are not Brethren?

DH: I wouldn't use the word 'defilement' at all, Peter. I would use the word: that we just avoid eating and socializing intimately with others. I mean, once again, I can draw on a very very little anecdote that comes to mind. My father was a senior executive with BOC, it was known as CIG in Australia for a long time, and I remember him telling me many years ago, Peter, that he was in London meeting a very high businessman whom he respected and regarded – he was a very, very high up businessman - and he went through trauma in his own mind that he would have to explain to him that when dinnertime came, he couldn't eat with him. The man leant across, patted him on the arm and said, "I'm of the Jewish faith - I shouldn't be eating with a Gentile either."

PG: There you are! (Daniel laughs loudly) Daniel Hales from the Exclusive Brethren here on the evening show on 891. Now let's – there's also the separation from the world, in that is it true that your members are disallowed television, radio, you have a form of the internet, a sort of proscribed form of the internet with emails. Why is that, Daniel?

DH: Well, Peter, I've grown up all my life – I'm nearly 60 – I was brought up in a household and I've brought up five children and I've got three little grandchildren and we've had houses in which we've never had a radio or a TV and it's an amazing thing, Peter. Everybody I talk to, even if they don't know that is my position - whether it's journalists, businessmen, medical experts - whenever I talk across a vast cross section of society, the first thing that comes up about TV: everybody tells me how they like to limit it, how they have parameters for their children, how they wish they didn't have it. One of my famous examples, it wouldn't mean much in Adelaide but Mr. Ross Gittens, who's probably one of the

leading economics writers of our country in the Sydney Morning Herald every day, often on the front page, especially in these uncertain times, and he let it be known a year or so back that he put a TV in his home for the first time in twenty years.

PG: But you're using the radio now, Daniel Hales.

DH: I'm talking to you, Peter, and you're using the radio to get my message across which I greatly appreciate.

PG: Fair enough. Do you read newspapers?

DH: I certainly do, Peter.

PG: Yes. Novels?

DH: Rarely these days. I don't have a lot of time for novels.

PG: Garage door openers were disallowed at one point, because they use radio waves?

DH: That's one of the many myths, Peter, I'm afraid.

PG: Yep?

DH: Unfortunately because we've tended to live to ourselves, live quietly and not seek to justify ourselves, there's been some terrible malicious slanderous malevolent things said about us. That's why I'm talking to you.

PG: Thank you. Daniel Hales from the Exclusive Brethren here on the evening show 891ABC. The Exclusive Brethren began to advertise politically in 2004, in that election. Now, you don't vote, as is your right; you're excluded from voting on religious grounds. Many would find this strange, Daniel, that whilst you don't want to directly influence the democratic process with a vote which is every Australian's right, you still want to influence the process in a 'paid' way.

DH: Thank you Peter for that opportunity to clear up another myth! The church itself is not involved in any advertisements, any political work, political activity, of any side, of any party, at all.

PG: But members are?

DH: Individual members act on their own individual rights within the law, to do what any individual member would feel right to do. As would my friends in the local Baptist church: they would do various political things - that isn't labeled against the church!

PG: But is it approved, by the church?

DH: It's not anything to do with the church.

PG: So your brother had no knowledge of these advertisements?

DH: My brother did not instigate, set on, or have anything to do with the advertisements...

PG: But did he know about them?

DH: I don't know what he knew and what he didn't know, Peter.

PG: Did you? Do you approve of them?

DH: I don't know of them. I knew one or two individuals had... after the event I knew they'd gone to the trouble of putting a little ad in the paper or do something; I said that was their own morals, that was their own exercise, that was their independent right and I couldn't adjudicate on that, Peter.

PG: But that began a great deal of scrutiny of the Exclusive Brethren. We've all seen the stories on the Current Affair shows on television, Daniel, although your members clearly wouldn't have, and we see cyclone fences and we see rather ominous-looking brick buildings and we see men in suits coming out - often in the employ of the Exclusive Brethren - and security guards coming out and turning away media, and so forth. Your involvement in the political process has opened you up to a great deal of scrutiny which hitherto you had not looked for, nor found. Do you regret this, Daniel?

DH: No certainly not at all, Peter. Anything that we've done, that any of our members have done, they've done on their own conscientious belief... but once again I come back to the point that you said as to what you see on Current Affair's programme: some of that, Peter, has been absolutely incredible. I saw an extract from one, some months ago, where a journalist was standing in front of a picture of one of our churches, on a TV show, and he had bullet points that he was pointing to behind him, and one of them was that we don't pay income tax, another one was that we don't pay registration on our vehicles.... I mean it was just absolutely slanderous! I mean I've got two vehicles in my carport now - of course they're registered with the RTA; of course I pay income tax and rates. Some of the stuff that's said against us, Peter, is terrible!

PG: Now what about the role of women in the Exclusive Brethren. This would worry many people I think, Daniel, and many people would be interested to know the position here. As I read in Michael Bachelard's book - have you read it?

DH: I've looked through it, and I've read certain chapters, yes.

PG: Now it's alleged - not just by him but by others - that women have a lesser role in your church. For example: in their work, they can't have authority over men; they can't speak in your church services. Is this true, Daniel?

DH: Not at all, Peter. I would go so far as to say that in our church services, the position of women is more prominent than in generally in Christendom at large. For instance, take just one thing: just take our Holy Communion. We're sitting in two little circles of men and women; we've got a table in the centre, which would be like an altar or like a similar thing in any other church. The sacraments of the bread and the wine are placed on the table at the beginning of the service by one of our senior women. Once again done on a roster or...

PG: And she can speak in the service?

DH: She would... they would all, down to the littlest ones, would give out a hymn. Our...

PG: Yes, now that's choosing hymns, that's not speaking. Can they stand up and speak?

DH: They wouldn't stand up and praise.

PG: So they don't speak in the church.

DH: They give out the hymns; they would ask a question in bible reading if they were so moved, but they tend not to, but umm... Our place... What's a little bit hard to understand, if I just say this for one minute: our services are totally unscripted. Where in other churches they follow a pattern or a liturgy the same every week, ours are totally spontaneous.

PG: But does... it sounds as if a woman doesn't enjoy the same rights, Daniel?

DH: Certainly enjoy the same rights. Regarded as equally before God, and as equally with rights.

PG: And yet she's not speaking in the church.

DH: She's respecting the err... what we would consider the divine ordering.

PG: Well what would happen to her if she did speak in a church?

DH: If she were to ask... you mean speak in a bible reading?

PG: Yeah... or no, in a church service.

DH: That's our church services, Peter. Our church services fall into three categories, Peter, if I could just very briefly touch on them for you? Firstly the Holy Communion, which is made up solely of hymns being sung not by an orchest... not by a choir, but by the entire congregation...

PG: And the women choose the hymns?

DH: The women choose the hymns, and then we all sing together. Then the prayer... Interspersed with hymns and prayers, and the prayers is just a very short prayer by the male members.

PG: Daniel Hales from the Exclusive Brethren. Another thing that would worry many people I'm sure, Daniel, is the fact that you disallow your members to have a tertiary education.

DH: We encourage tertiary studies and ongoing education, Peter, completely.

PG: But not at university.

DH: We don't encourage them to go to university.

PG: Why?

DH: We feel that they will be drawn away: they will be drawn away from their friends, they will be drawn away from their family, and they'll be drawn into a...

PG: Values?

DH: ...values, and drawn into a new circle – which is their choice to make – but that eventually, they would find themselves wanting to take a course other than the quiet simple life that we live as Brethren.

PG: But not... Why, if for example - you work in business, Daniel Hales...

DH: I do, yes.

PG: ...and very successfully.

DH: Not very successfully; once again that's a... if I can have one minute to clear that misnomer up, Peter, I'd appreciate it. I mean our friend Mr Bachelard said it in his book, that he takes a figure for turnover for all Brethren's businesses, divides it by the number of Brethren, and says that's their wealth each, each year. I mean to confuse turnover with net profit, shows a total ignorance of business!

PG: He said it would be the 'equivalent', I think, or something like that.

DH: He says \$170,000 per person (laughs). Look if business makes three or four percent net profit after expenses and taxes... so you're probably looking at about \$3000 per person!

PG: Nonetheless, you have had success in business. You're still going! (Daniel laughs) ..which is a measure of success!

DH: This week (more laughing)

PG: Fair enough, but you do that with the general public?

DH: Yes, absolutely.

PG: Of course. So surely if one of your students, one of your young people, who's doing very well in school – and many of them assuredly do, in your schools which are very highly regarded I believe...

DH: Yes Mr Bachelard himself said – without any sort of err ... anything with strings attached – he said they were excellent.

PG: Hmm, and fair enough. But, to deny that child tertiary education and development of professional...

DH: We don't deny it, Peter, we don't deny it.

PG: Well, to 'recommend against it'. Surely you're only denying, or 'recommending against', what you're doing. You're going out and working with people. Surely that child could go out and study with people?

DH: Yes certainly, but they would... we encourage them to do err business studies, or to do ahh trades and all that sort of thing.

PG: Would they learn too much?

DH: No, no, no, they wouldn't learn too much! Not at all - it would just draw them apart, from the lifestyle to which they've been accustomed. And, I add, if they want to make that decision that would be totally their decision. If one of my children had decided he wanted to go to university, I would care for him, and nurture it, and I would hover round him; he would ever be my son, they would ever be my daughter.

PG: But he wouldn't be excommunicated?

DH: He wouldn't be excommunicated for going to university, no, but he would gradually find himself being drawn away and he probably would not want to continue with the two lifestyles.

PG: But aren't you more confident in the values of your church that you've had a lot of time to instill into that child – you've had 18 years to instill the values, fine as they may be, in that child. What do you fear by the child going to university?

DH: We fear nothing, Peter We just consider it that universities having moved very dramatically in the last 40 years as becoming – going from being ahh conservative bodies to being really at the forefront of social engineering that we feel that it would be incompatible with the lifestyle that we're living. If that child makes that decision, it's a simple matter and I'm not conscious of any in recent years wanting to go that way or .

PG: But isn't that a shame? Because you use – you would have to use in your working life accountants, and dentists and doctors who cannot be Exclusive Brethren.

DH: Certainly we would use non-brethren doctors or lawyers . .

PG: Well, you have no choice because you're not allowing your students or recommending or helping your students to go to university. To get higher education qualifications.

DH: They find themselves very happily following on mainly in family businesses, working in family businesses. Their whole lifestyle, Peter, has been built around .. ahh . . the family unit and the church unit and following the truth of a separate way, so that they generally would not want to go that way. But if any particularly wanted to, were particularly self-motivated to, then they would not be ostracized at all – they would ..

PG; What about the doctrine of excommunication, Daniel Hales? People are excommunicated from your church and people are shut up, aren't they?

DH: People are suspended from membership, certainly, if they've committed some crime or there was something in the eyes of the law or for some reason there was ..um.

PG: Or they offended rules of the church?

DH: Normally, they wouldn't – I'm passing my mind back over Sydney, because once again, Peter, the churches are autonomous, every assembly, small or large looks after its own matters . I can think of two young people who have left our church in Sydney over about the last, I would say, my mind is going back over eight or nine years. Out of 700, two have gone, one came back, the other was a mature aged woman in her mid-twenties who decided to marry outside the church and wanted to leave. What I'd like to add here, Peter, is that when people make a conscious decision, especially young people, to

leave our church, they don't want to come back next week to Sunday lunch and bring their new friends to meet mom and dad. That's chosen (?). .

PG: But what if they do?

DH: They would gladly meet them but what I'm saying is what they are doing is when they are going away from it is they're wanting to get life in the fast lane, they're wanting the high life, their wanting a completely different lifestyle. It's not until 20 or 30 years later that they cast a **nostalgic** look over their shoulder.

PG: Why do they then complain to the media that they have been shut away from their families that their family will no longer accept them or speak with them, Daniel?

DH: That's a family matter. As we all know, family breakups, family differences, family feuds, family fights are sad, sad matters. And they happen in every society, in every religion.

PG: There's a story which haunted me in Michael Bachelard's book, Daniel Hales and I appreciate your time here and I'm very glad to speak with you Daniel ..

DH: Thank you very much, Peter.

PG: In which he tells the story of Dr. Vernon Seeley who was a very distinguished maxio/cranial/facial surgeon living in Albury in NSW and at 82 had long since been excommunicated from your church and was having to live in the garage of his wife's house with his wife unable, or unwilling, or whatever to be able to be with him and deposited meals at the doors of the garage. It's haunting – why? Why? Why?

DH: I don't know the facts about that at all, Peter. I'm afraid I do remember Dr. Seeley as being a very, very prominent dentist in Melbourne in the 50s and 60s when I was a young chap and I knew him - as I understand some of his family, I think his only son, is in the fellowship, but what happened in that situation I'm not aware of at all.

PG: Well, you can read more of it in the book ...

DH: Unfortunately, that wouldn't necessarily be the truth of it, Peter, because sadly to say the book is not formed on a . umm. neutral level playing field basis where various groups have been interviewed – I don't see any interviews with our neighbours, I don't see any interviews with persons who have known us in business and can – they only ever seem to have spoken to a bunch or a group of disgruntled ex-members. I could put you with many ex-members who are totally restful and happy.

PG: Yes, there seem to be a lot of them, though, but that's a fair point.

DH; (Can't make out his statement as he's talking over Peter!)

PG; He does say, Michael Bachelard, and I'm not here to fight his battle, Daniel, my interest is more general.

DH: That's good (again interrupting the interviewer).

PG: In his defence, he does say that he has a long-standing invitation with your brother to be

interviewed and I'm sure any media outlet in this nation would hasten to interview your brother, of course.

PG: Can you explain the concept of spoiling the Egyptians, Daniel Hales?

DH: (Chuckling) I did hear from someone else that that had come up in one radio interview, but that's a very obscure reference from the bible, as you probably know, relating to our Jewish brethren when they left Egypt thousands of years ago. I don't think I've ever been to a bible reading or listened to a sermon in all my years amongst the brethren at which that verse, that text, has been read, Peter. It would mean to me that the Jewish people were not to have – to feel overly obliged to the Egyptians as they were fleeing to the land of promise. I – just to relate it to us not paying taxes is disgusting.

PG: Well, I'm not relating it to that, Daniel,

DH: (Over the interviewer once again) We pay our taxes

PG: I'm merely asking about the phrase which intrigues me.

DH: Yes, well as I say that's a reference – I think it's taken from the book of Exodus – and it relates to the relationships between the ancient peoples, by the Israelis as they were leaving Egypt, and it would relate to their – the fact that they were to be separate and not to have obligations that they felt they would have to discharge.

PG: Like, in a different matter, give unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar.

DH: Exactly, exactly.

PG It's kind of the reverse of that.

DH: No, it's a corollary of it, Peter.

PG: All right, corollary – there you are!

DH: (Laughs loudly) It's a corollary.

PG: Daniel Hales, my guest from the Exclusive Brethren. A caller asks, Daniel, do the brethren have dialogue with other churches?

DH: Yes, certainly. Yes, certainly.

PG: Ecumenical. Libby, a Christian herself, says that the Christian ethos is to draw people in not keep them away. Jesus ate with the sinners, says Libby, which is true enough.

DH: Certainly is.

PG: But you choose the opposite.

DH: No, No, Peter. I would say that the ones that ate with Jesus were the ones that loved him and had already come under his word and under his gospel and under his care and forgiveness of sins. Look at

the thousands who mocked him. Look at the thousands who poured scorn on him when he was taken to the cross. So there were two classes, Peter. There were those that were with Jesus, loved him and felt that their sins were met and their souls were satisfied by him.

PG: Yes, but he was always reaching out to those who weren't with him.

DH: So are we. We would gladly – we preach on the street corners, we hand out tracts, and as you said so fairly, and honestly to us before, but we're not trying to draw people necessarily to our church. We want to draw them to Christ – where they go from there is a matter of their faith.

PG: Did you ever meet the Prime Minister, John Howard?

DH: I've never met the Prime Minister, no.

PG: Your brother has.

DH: I met him maybe 10 or 15 years ago when he was not even a leader of the opposition. I'm in his electorate – I live in Bennelong and I met him on the hustlings (he really says hustlings!) as any one of tens of thousands of people might.

PG: You were sorry to see him go?

DH: No, no, I thought it was time for a change, Peter, time for a change.

PG: Daniel Hales, this has been an extraordinary experience and I thank you very much for being on our show and for answering the questions honestly and for representing the Exclusive Brethren. I thank you very much for being here.

DH: And I appreciate very much your giving me the opportunity and I wish you and your listeners the very best.

PG: Thank you very much, Daniel Hales, senior member of the church of the Exclusive Brethren.