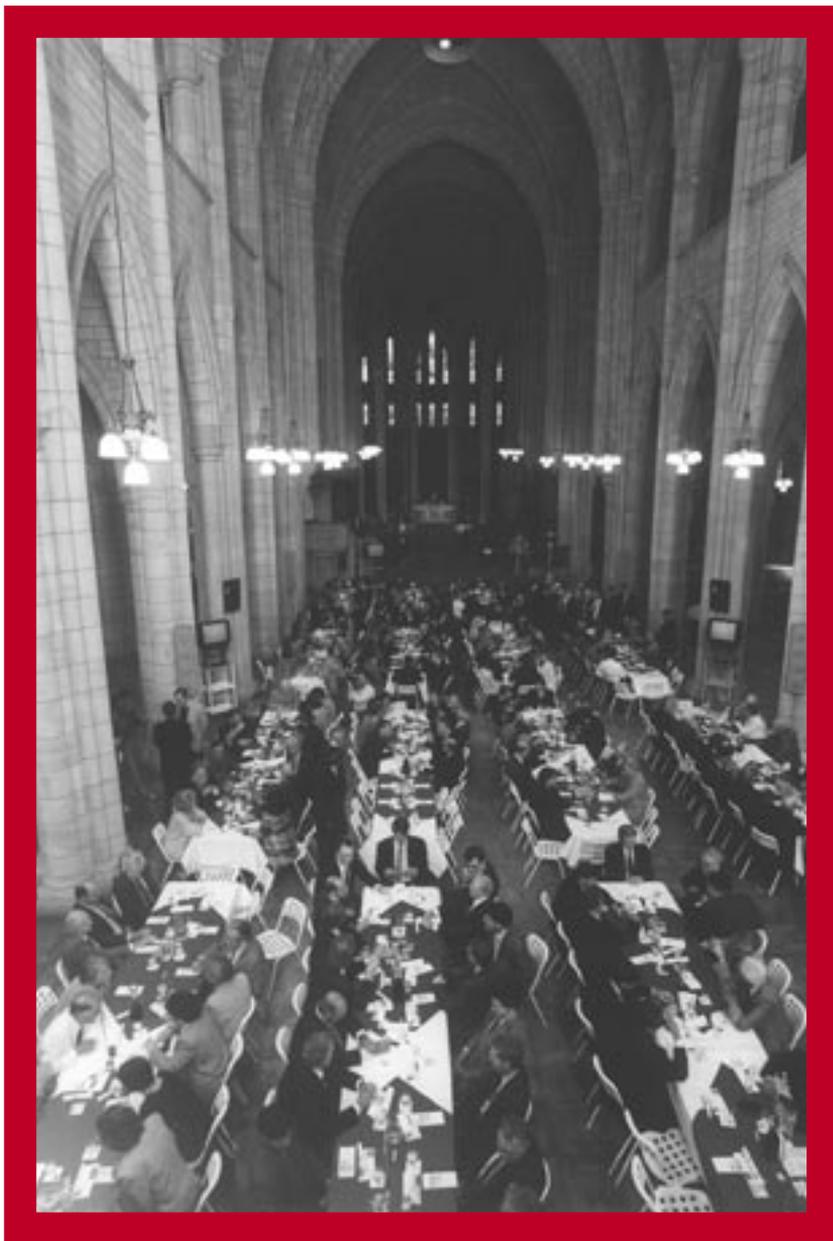


Common Theology

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INSIDE:

**Francis & Clare
— Medieval
subversives**



**Religion back
on the political
map**



**WOMDs spectre
conceals the
real war**



**Protest — a
language of
democracy**

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From the Editor

Weapons of mass destruction are more common than we thought, according to the Forum in this Spring edition of *Common Theology*. A seasoned warrior of words, Jameson Maluleke, shows how language can bring down governments and rescue nations. But of course we know that from the on-going saga of the ‘Children Overboard’ and the ‘Tampa’ crises — both burned into the national psyche by federal spin-doctors.

The hazardous territory between forensic, factual truth and social truth is broached by former Jesuit priest Michael McGirr, in a refreshing new perspective on the gender debate.

A strong current throughout this edition is dialogue with Islam — increasingly urgent as religion struts back on the world map. Who can forget the pathos of those images of Saddam Hussein’s sons’ corpses beamed across the world in July, in a shocking desecration of Islamic law?

The fuse is already lit on a thousand years of enmity between Christian and Muslim. Perhaps only religious leaders are equipped to snuff it out — a case put by Peter Carnley in a compelling argument for full enfranchisement of religious bodies in the political process.

International citizen and Franciscan, Madge Karecki, brings us some practical theology within reach of everyone. Social revolutionaries, St Francis and St Clare, did penance in a time of moral and social upheaval by living differently. Their ‘seachange’ took them to the fringes of society in medieval Italy, where they lived out the dignity of the human person — in defiance of contemporary dehumanising materialist values.

Some more practical advice, on putting the churches’ houses in order, comes from Cara Beed in *Home Truths*. This year the Church in Australia has broken a two-hundred-year-old taboo on child sexual abuse. From being a forbidden topic — or at best confined to scandals within the Church — child sexual abuse has arrived as an issue of public concern on the national agenda. But other forms of abuse are rife in public life (including the Church) which merit prophetic action.

Maggie Helass

Counter-cultural Christianity

St Francis is often portrayed as a rather sentimental personage with a penchant for preaching to birds and planting cabbages upside down. But Francis and Clare of Assisi were in truth a powerful prophetic, counter-cultural force in a world tormented by social and moral breakdown. Sr Madge Karecki SSSJ-TOSF spoke on the topic of Franciscan Life in the Midst of Social Upheaval, at a seminar in Brisbane on September 20. She described Francis and Clare's medieval world as uncannily like our own — with mass dislocation of peoples and breakdown of the moral order. Today Christians have much to learn from these two 13th Century subversives. This is an edited text of her discourse.



We talk today about contextual theology. In one sense theology has always been contextual — that is, people writing out of their experience, whatever that may be.

In order to say something about a Franciscan way of life in situations of social and moral upheaval it is necessary for us to have some sense of medieval times.

I am of the opinion that Francis and Clare — their coming into human history, their conversions — were *kairos* moments in the Church's life. That is to say they carried with them a power and a significance that goes beyond time.

From around 1050 to 1300 Europe experienced a revival of urban life. We know that this caused a tremendous social and moral upheaval.

By the end of the 10th Century we know that the rural (or manor) system was experiencing great stresses and strains.

Towns in classical, biblical times were thriving centres. Then with the fall of the Roman Empire the structures of town life fall apart, and in order to bring stability in Europe we find the rise of the manor system, and its spiritual counterpart — monasticism. These two institutions bring stability to a shaky world.

But by the end of the 10th century the serfs who worked the land belonging to the lord of the manor began raising questions about their relationship. This relationship was contractual. The serfs had to pledge allegiance to the lord of the manor and this was seen as what sociologists and historians call an 'honour/shame' relationship. It was expected that the serfs as well as the lord would act honourably. The 'honour/shame' motif meant "acting within your social status". This is why, in the case of Francis and Clare, they did not meet easily, because they came from two different social classes.

The manor was a world in itself. It was complete, economically and politically. Peasants would have had little contact with the world outside. Since there was little commerce, the needs of the peasant were answered on the manor. Whatever was produced was consumed on the manor. If grain was abundant it might be sold, but only with the permission of the lord to another lord at another manor. Destitution in this context was almost non-existent, because people readily had the produce of the land (keep in mind that was by medieval standards). They really did not have the problem of starvation unless the crop of the whole manor failed.

The economic system on the manor was characterised by what is called the 'gift economy'. In this economic system there were not regular wages. The lord of the manor periodically gave part of what was reaped from harvests to the serfs of the manor. This was seen not as a salary, not as a payment, but as a gift. Money, after all, had fallen into disuse and barter was the normal method of exchange.

The principle social trait of the manor was its small size. It was indeed a village bound by relationships. Sociologists call this a 'strong group'

society. This means that expectations about the behaviour of the individual are formed by a group. This was characteristic of medieval society. There were spoken and unspoken expectations, and everyone understood them. Values were formed by the groups, and individuals were expected to act in terms of those values. Members of the group were accountable to the group. To act otherwise would be to act shamefully.

Monasticism was the religious counterpart of the manor. When monasticism began there was that sense of ‘fleeing the world’ (Francis uses the phrase ‘to leave the world’, but he means something completely different. For this meant to live differently in the midst of society). In the early Middle Ages it meant to enter a monastery where an atmosphere of prayer, penance and harmony could be established.

Benedict (c.480–c550AD) envisioned the monastery as a place where there would be a common obedience to the abbot, common ownership of goods, manual labour, and attention to the liturgy.

At that time Benedict’s vision was counter-cultural. It was prophetic because it gave witness to the values of the Gospel. But eventually we know that the monks settled down and accepted the values of their society.

Once the monks lost the balance which is inherent to Benedict’s vision, namely *ora et labora* (pray and work), and simply stressed the *ora*, they got other people to work their land and the whole vision changed. The monks became concerned about “pleasing the ears of their benefactors” and so spent many hours chanting the liturgy of the hours and lost the natural rhythm and wisdom of *ora et labora*.

When Clare says “we do not sing the office”, she was responding to this specific situation where monastic communities were singing the office so they could collect money — not to praise God. So Clare was not against doing the liturgy well she was simply expressing the need to be clear about the motivation for doing the liturgy well.

In the monastic system charity then became ritualised. At Cluny, for instance, the monks provided for eighteen paupers in residence, but legislated the days on which meat could be given to them! They saw no great contradiction between amassing great wealth for their own security and

their vow of poverty. It was enough, they thought, to have the spirit of poverty.

Around 1050 things changed. Peasants were becoming skilled artisans. Agriculture employed a system of crop rotation which produced a better yield and for the first time, those working the land experienced the phenomenon of surplus.

Once they had surplus they had to ask, what do we do with this surplus? They could not store much because they did not have the facilities. Eventually we have the movement off the manor and the monasteries.

Peasants were leaving monastic service and the service to their lords on the manors. They were becoming aware that, with surplus, they could have power. They were also lured to the towns by the promise of greater freedom, independence and wealth.

Fairs became important in European life, because they brought people together in a new way. For the first time people experienced economic inter-

Who wants their son to be a wild man in the desert?

action without any social links, and so we move from the ‘gift’ economy to a ‘profit’ economy. They experienced the power of money.

Assisi, because of its strategic location in the centre of Italy was on a trade route, linking the rest of Italy with Europe. Francis’s father was a cloth merchant who bought into the new economy. We know this because he was away on a buying trip at one of these fairs when Francis was born. He came back and found out that his wife, Pica, had named their firstborn son Giovanni. He was enraged, because in medieval society the name of a child said something about the future development of that person. Pietro Bernardone did not want his son to be named after John the Baptist! Who wants their son to be a wild man in the desert? So he said, “No, he will be called Francesco”. Pietro had made his money in France and in Assisi selling French cloth so he wanted his son to be named after that country.

In early medieval times the great sin that the Church was concerned about was pride. But with

the re-establishment of towns the Church had to address the question of greed.

Social divisions that were supposed to be flattened in urban settings came to new heights. No longer were the divisions between only the nobility and merchant class, but between the merchant class and workers and the workers and the poor. In urban centres the poor became visible as never before because they had nowhere to go to on the land.

In rural centres the majority were poor people, but they were the community. In an urban setting, where people defined themselves by what they owned and what they had, the poor stood out. This is again significant for Francis and Clare's approach because they say, "We will not be defined by what we own. In fact, we want to own nothing".

When we read of Francis saying, "No one will be called prior, but all will be friars minor", it is not just some pious thought. He is really saying, if we are going to live out of a biblical perspective we want to identify with those (as the English translation says) "considered to be of little worth".

When Clare took the role of foot-washer she was saying she would not maintain the status of her birth as nobility. She was saying "I am redefining myself in terms of the Gospel".

All these things that can be said about medieval society can be said about today. That is why I maintain that Francis and Clare's biblical response to their context is so timely. It is something that we need to grab hold of and reconsider. They are not doing a social analysis, as we would do — a context analysis, looking at all the factors, they simply recognised the great discrepancy between what Jesus says in the Bible and what was happening to people.

They were concerned about the deep spiritual integrity of the human person. That is why Francis said in that fifth admonition — "Be conscious of the wondrous state in which the Lord God has placed you, for he created you and formed you to the image of his beloved Son." Francis was looking at the dignity of the human person and he saw that dignity was diminished in the society that was being shaped by the profit economy. He chose to build people up — "be conscious of your dignity. Do not allow yourself to be defined by what you own, what you have, the money you possess".

A key concept of the Franciscan response is 'sacred exchange'. This is about making choices, setting priorities.

When Clare wrote, "Leave the things of time for the things of eternity," she was saying, you are going to have to be doing this all the time. You are going to have to be changing, giving away those values, getting rid of those values of society, of this kind of economic system, of this concern about power in the Church, and choose the things of eternity. The values of Jesus.

In the Commune of Assisi, where the individual was defined by wealth and success Francis and Clare reminded their followers of the communal dimension of Christian life.

Where there was a concern for economic security they emphasised simplicity of life. When there was rivalry between the cities, between the different classes of people, they chose to be people of peace. When others were falling away from

He addressed this letter to all mayors and consuls, magistrates and rulers throughout the world.

the Church, being critical, they embraced the Church's life, prayed the Church's prayers. So they were acting in a prophetic manner in a situation of social unrest.

We know that Francis did something else. He addressed those in government. He confronted the powers. We have his Letter to the Rulers of Peoples. It is important to read it with its context in mind. Francis has a great breadth of vision. He addressed this letter to all mayors and consuls, magistrates and rulers throughout the world. He was not provincial, he was not national, he was global!

Granted his world was smaller than ours, but he still possesses a breadth of vision. Most of us, I think, get pretty focused on our own situation. Francis wanted to live differently and he did so, but he also addressed those who held the reigns of power. He reminded rulers to pause and reflect, "for the day of death is approaching". He was saying, you had better take the long view. You had better look at life in terms of eternity.

That is something that is as relevant today as it was then. We are living for now. Let's have it now. Let's get it fast. We want to enjoy it immediately.

We are told that if you use the right toothpaste people are going to be attracted to you. It's a pack of lies! It does nothing for our self-worth. That is why Francis says, 'Be conscious of your dignity', it is not because of what you have but because you are made in the image of God that you have dignity. So the biblical truths that Francis and Clare were advocating are as relevant today as they were in the 13th Century.

We only know if we are centred in God by our choices. What kind of 'sacred exchanges' do we make between the values of society and biblical values?

We need a universalist vision that reverences the human person. Once we have that we will think not in terms of 'me' but 'we' — the people of the whole earth.

But to live in a prophetic way we have to start by being self-critical. Not denouncing things 'out there', but denouncing what needs to be changed here — inside. We have to choose to live differently and work for what needs to be changed in society.

Francis and Clare respected and promoted the power of human agency — the ability of human beings to change, to work for what is good in society. That is what they meant by penance — to live differently in a society. We need to work to change whatever militates against the values of the Gospel.

What they give expression to in their Rule, is a way of life that facilitates ongoing conversion, so that the prophetic dimension of life comes to the fore. We see that in the choices that Francis and Clare made about how to live, and where to live and the people that they associated with.

They located on the margins of the towns. They stood at the margins, at the borders, at the edges of society, typified in the fact that they lived outside the city walls. They were not buying into this profit economy of Assisi.

When Francis said, you should locate among people who are considered to be people of little worth, he was making a political and social statement. When Clare finally settled at San Damiano she gave to the Church and to society a prophetic form of monastic living for women, without any secure revenues. It was unheard of! She wanted to not only experience dependence on God in a very real way, but she also wanted to identify with poor people who lived on the margin of society.

In our contemporary situation we have to ask ourselves, is the life we are living facilitating our ongoing

conversion so that we say something to people who are undergoing social and moral upheaval?

If we become like the society around us we become irrelevant, because we accept those values. For example, shopping is becoming a pastime because we have bought into a particular value system. What do we do with our time? Are we living differently?

If we are going to make and be a prophetic witness in a situation of social change, we have got to look at the quality of our witness — be self-critical first.

All of this makes for a prophetic presence in the midst of social, political and moral upheaval.

Chicago-born Sr Madge Karecki is co-founder of the Franciscan Institute of Southern Africa. Dr Karecki is a senior lecturer in the Department of Missiology at the University of South Africa. She has lived in South Africa for twenty years, and has worked with groups in East Africa and other Southern African countries.

Further reading —

Francis of Assisi by Arnaldo Fortini

Religious Poverty in a Profit Economy in Medieval Europe by Lester K. Little

Clare of Assisi by Marco Bartoli

A Franciscan view of inter-faith dialogue

The primary way of doing inter-religious dialogue is simply being neighbours. Simply getting to know a Muslim person. Once we get to know one Muslim person to whom we can relate, they cannot generalise that all Christians are this or that, and we cannot generalise about Muslims.

Secondly, dialogue of common action. We should participate with Muslims and people of other faiths in common projects for the good of humanity, showing that we can work together.

Thirdly, the dialogue of theological exchange. This is going to be done by people who are theologically informed — usually on commissions and councils.

Fourthly, the dialogue of shared religious experience. This is becoming more important as Christian contemplatives share their religious experience with people of other faiths.

Religion struts back on the map

On August 27 foreign minister Alexander Downer threw down the gauntlet to Australia's Church leaders, by censuring their role in public debate in an address in Adelaide. The move marked a new tactic in federal political spin, and followed prominent clerics' criticisms of Australia's role in the invasion of Iraq.



On September 12 Anglican Primate **Peter Carnley** defined the role of today's Church in national and world politics during an address to the Canberra/Goulburn Synod.

Religious traditions are once again setting public agenda in the world. Today, religion has a particular relevance, significance and influence for fostering the common good.

I would like to focus your attention on the years 1977, 1978 and 1979.

In May 1977, for the first time in the history of the State of Israel, Labour failed to win enough seats in the election of that year to form a government. Menachem Begin, a religious conservative became prime minister.

This election signalled a breakthrough for Zionist religious movements — which had suffered a long eclipse.

As a result, Jewish settlements in the occupied territories were stepped up. This was in accordance with a policy driven by the religious belief that God looked with favour on his Chosen People, and that a special covenant prevailed over the land of Israel.

In the following year, in September 1978, Karol Wojtyła, a Pole, was elected Pope. Without doubt this strengthened the resolve of the Catholic people of Eastern Europe in a religious revival that challenged an already ailing Communism.

In Poland the Solidarity movement, led by Lech Walesa, was only one of a number of similar developments across Europe. By 1989 the Berlin wall had fallen.

In the next year, in 1979, Jerry Falwell founded the Moral Majority in America, and embarked upon an agenda designed to achieve social and political ends in the New World of God's promise — especially in relation to abortion law.

Ever since, the born-again New-Christian Right has exercised an increasing influence in US elections. Following Jimmy Carter's moral and religious purging of 1976 — after the Watergate-weakened Nixon era — the statistics show that an increased evangelical and fundamentalist vote certainly contributed to the Regan victories of 1980 and 1984. This is also said to underpin the more recent success of George W Bush.

Earlier in the same year, in February 1979, the Ayatollah Khomeini returned from exile to Teheran and proclaimed an Islamic republic.

In November of that year the Great Mosque in Mecca was attacked by an armed group opposed to Saudi control of Holy Places.

These latter events opened the eyes of the world to the social and political potential of Islam, long since imagined by most of us in the west to be a picturesquely turbaned religious curiosity.

The assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981 and Afghan resistance to the Soviet invasion quickly followed, not to mention subsequent deeds of politically radicalised Islam, whose images are burned into our memories.

In a book by Gilles Kepel¹, a French student of the resurgence of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism in the modern world, it is argued that these momentous world events of the late 1970s were not unrelated.

In *The Revenge of God*, Kepel argues that these key events hold something in common — they represent simultaneous movements of renewal amongst the three Abrahamic religions.

He describes these as —

- the re-Islamisation of Islam

¹ *The Revenge of God* by George Kepel

- the re-Christianisation of Christianity
- the re-Judaisation of Judaism

The coincidence of these renewal movements is significant because, together, they signal the end of the Enlightenment — the so called Age of Reason, which began in the late 17th Century.

The Enlightenment has fashioned the prevailing intellectual mood and institutions of the liberal democracies of the western world for the last three hundred years. It has also projected an unwelcome and intrusive global influence — especially into the nations of Islam. In this context these events of the late 1970s become very significant indeed.

From the late 1970s onwards, the aspiration for a better world changed register and passed from the secular domain to the religious.

Movements of re-Judaisation, re-Christianisation, and re-Islamisation have in common the view that the competitive individualism resulting from the Enlightenment experiment is socially inadequate.

The Enlightenment fostered individualism — allowing each individual, using only his/her own unfettered reason, the freedom to choose a personal life-style, religious affiliation (or none), and values (or no values in particular).

But there comes a point where the passive tolerance of individual diversity leads to the smothering of any interest in sitting down together to work out what might be most desirable for the community.

Mere tolerance of diversity, can lead to an attitude of indifference, ‘You do your thing and I’ll do mine’.

It has become questionable in the west whether a tolerance bordering on indifference can lead to a healthy and robust sense of shared purpose, to genuine social cohesion, and a sense of mutual well-being in community.

In the Islamic world, liberal individualism, particularly with its morally permissive face, is despised as a threatening and corrupting force to be resisted at all costs.

Kepel argues that what became increasingly common within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam towards the end of the 1970s, was a growing sense of the futility of reason alone, without faith, to give adequate shape to community or to supply the necessary values for a community to hold together.

From the late 1970s onwards, he says, ‘The aspiration for a better world changed register and passed from the secular domain to the religious.’²

The Enlightenment and the sovereignty of reason alone had come to an end.

Of course, these key events of the late 1970s were anticipated by discernible movements in the respective historical backgrounds of the three Abrahamic religions.

Within Islam, for example, a movement founded in 1928 in Egypt, known as the Muslim Brothers, formed a network of sympathisers numbering over a million before President-Nasser and his comrades, the Free Officers, seized power in 1952.

Though initially helped by them, Nasser cut free of the Muslim Brothers and turned on them in 1954, eliminating them or scattering them so that the movement went quiet.

But they re-emerged revitalised in the mid 1960s following the execution of their leader, Sayyid Qutb, who was the theoretician of the movement.

Though the Muslim Brothers originally complained that their society was imperfectly Islamic they at least sought to work within it.

Qutb radically dissociated Islam from other human societies of his time, even including Islamic societies, which he thought had got too close to western culture. In his view there was nothing left in the world but societies infected by what he called *jahiliyya*, a word which denotes the period of ignorance and barbarism before the advent of the civilising preaching of the Prophet Mohammed in Arabia.

In the year 622 Mohammed and his companions were forced to leave Mecca where the ignorance and barbarism of *jahiliyya* prevailed. They went to Medina, from whence eight years later they returned as conquerors, overthrowing polytheistic idols and proclaiming monotheistic Islam.

² Kepel p.17.

Likewise, according to Qutb, the true Muslim should break with *jahiliyya* and then struggle to destroy it and raise up a truly Islamic state out of its ruins.

Qutb died before he could expound exactly what he meant by ‘breaking with society’ and ‘struggling against it’, but this idea of a break with *jahiliyya* is what is at the root of contemporary movements of re-Islamisation. It considers surrounding society to be a *jahiliyya*, a very model of godlessness, injustice, and despotic control.

I think we all now well know something of this mentality at first hand from what we have seen of the footage of the trials of the Bali bombers, railing against western culture, and particularly against America and its allies — including of course (despite the denials of Alexander Downer), Australia.

Within Judaism, the *Gush Emunim*, the ‘Bloc of the Faithful’, committed itself to the proclamation of the re-Judaisation of Israel and the religious renewal of what had been a secularised and quasi-socialist Zionism.

The *Gush*, sometimes labelled ‘Jewish fundamentalists’, shocked even the local Jewish community when some elements within it got involved in terrorist activity in 1984.

This, however, was only one Jewish movement committed to the re-Judaisation of Israel.

Within America, and to some extent here in Australia, the Lubavitch version of Hasidism, under the Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson — its leader in Brooklyn since 1950 — is a good example. By 1990 the Lubavitch had become the most important of all movements of re-Judaisation.

But how are we to understand the historical background of the re-Christianisation of Christianity, which Kepele also dates from the late 1970s?

If it is true that the Enlightenment is effectively over, further, if it is true that the political agenda of the world has been transposed from a purely secular to a religious key, where are we now in relation to —

- the re-discovery of our faith tradition as the source of insights with which to shape authentic community
- the values for living life well in community?

Kepele points to the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s; to 20th Century fundamentalist movements, particularly in the United States; and the Charismatic Movement of the 1970s and ’80s

which influenced both Catholic, Protestant, and some Anglican responses to the Gospel.

When he speaks of liberation theology he seems to have its South American embodiment in mind, which he interprets it as an accommodation of Christianity to Marxism. He believes this was eclipsed amongst Christians by the more enthusiastic phenomena of charismatic and pentecostal renewal in the 1970s and 1980s.

While much liberation theology certainly emerged out of Christian dialogue with Marxism, there was another version of liberation theology, which sought to offer a theistic alternative to the secularised utopianism of Marxism. Insofar as it restored faith in God and in the Gospel of the dawning reign of God in the world, liberation theology was actually of a piece with other movements of re-Christianisation, particularly in its desire to fashion true community out of religious insights, and to draw on religious traditions for the values for living life well in community.

The impact of this kind of thinking on Christian

Mere tolerance of diversity, can lead to an attitude of indifference, ‘You do your thing and I’ll do mine’.

theology of the late 1960s and through the following two decades was enormous.

Prior to the mid-1960s the predominant Christian theologies of the western world were Word theologies, which in one way or another understood the revelation of God to occur through the medium of his Word. Twentieth century fundamentalism was one version of this. In this case, revelation tends to be understood in propositional terms — objectively descriptive propositions — whether about past history or about ultimate heavenly reality.

Word theologian Rudolf Bultmann talked about the need to demythologise, to de-objectify the language. To proclaim the Word on a Sunday morning so that it was heard — not as a description of some objective reality or state of affairs other than us — but essentially as a word of address in which

the hearer understood him/herself as a creature of God.

For Bultmann, God's self-disclosure, or revelation, was not found either solidified in a book or located in past history, but was a living occurrence between 10am and 11am on a Sunday morning.

The moment of illumination in which I understand myself as a dependent creature of the Creator, and determine to live in faithful obedience, is the moment of revelation. The preaching of the Gospel thus causes a revolution within the believer, as she/

...the Church is the advance publicity of coming attractions!

he really hears the call of God, takes it to heart, and is thus in faith remade by grace.

From the mid-1960s onwards theology underwent a seachange. The theological world came to see that the dawn of the Kingdom, which the Gospel proclaims, is not confined to a pietistic moment of illumination and inner enlightenment, experienced in Church, beneath the pulpit on a Sunday morning.

Rather, the Kingdom of God belongs to the historical future, which is even now dawning, not just within the heart of the believer, but within this whole world — a Kingdom of justice and peace, love, care, Christian service and righteousness.

From the late 1960s onwards we came to appreciate that what the Church's proclamation of the Kingdom heralded was a revolution, not just within the individual believer, but within the whole of society.

In 1965 Jürgen Moltmann, the chief theological architect of the new perspective, wrote in *Theology of Hope*, that the Kingdom of the future, for which we hope, sets up a revolutionary dynamic within society. What we Christians hope for calls in question the world as it is, and moves us to work in active hope for a better day.

God's Word, from this perspective becomes not just a propositional word, or a word of address to the individual, but a word of promise to the world.

In the Bible, the good purposes of God are worked out not in an epiphanous³ moment but within the more expansive dimension of promise and future fulfilment.

The community of believers — the Church in this understanding of things — becomes the anticipation of the Kingdom. The Church is that part of the world where the promised reign of God is already dawning in human responses of faithful obedience, care and loving service.

Thus the Christian churches began, in the late 1960s, to adopt a much more revolutionary stance towards the world.

Christ's Kingdom is not of this present world, but of the world to come — in the future of the God of hope. In this way the Church is the advance publicity of coming attractions!

More recently, the re-Christianisation of Christianity has taken the form of a very lively renewed engagement with the Doctrine of the Trinity.

The idea of identifiably different and diverse Persons in one Unity of Being, and the unifying reality of love and inter-personal communion, give us insights into the shape of godlike human communities — united in one bundle of interpersonal life, being drawn into God's own life in Christ, into the communion of God.

The Enlightenment's privatised view of religion has been rejected, as religious people around the world increasingly appeal to a raft of spiritual precepts and religiously grounded moral values to inform their contributions to public debate and their involvements in public affairs.

Fundamentalist manifestations within the three Abrahamic religions are tending to come into conflict as they each seek to shape community in accordance with their own religious identity at the expense of others.

Those who are most hostile to western culture as a manifestation of *jahiliyya*, work with stereotypical sets of misperceptions about Christianity which only dialogue can begin to break down.

For the Muslim the readily apparent family fragmentation, moral permissiveness, and social dislocation of western societies like ours is thought to be due to their Christian character. Christianity

³ An appearance, revelation, or manifestation of a divine being; a perception of some essential truth.

is often therefore condemned as an integral part of western society.

The Enlightenment virtue of tolerance, in its degenerated form of moral indifference, is mistaken for the teaching of Jesus Christ. Only in dialogue will we be able to break these misperceptions down.

Those of us who are committed to occupying an ethical and religiously peaceable terrain, and above all, are committed to human reconciliation as a

means of building a more harmonious world, must search out fellow travellers in other world religions so as to build networks of reconciliation, peace and mutual respect. We must work together in active hope towards the Gospel ideal of an international community of peace and harmony, which we Christians express in images of the Kingdom.

Archbishop Peter Carnley is Anglican Primate of Australia. This is an edited text of his sermon.

Male and Female He Created them

By Michael McGirr

Our obstetrician was running late. We didn't mind. She had come back from filling in for a colleague up the bush and had been delayed by frost and fog on the road. We live in a small town ourselves and know the difficulties communities face gaining access to medical services, especially in the area of obstetrics. We were content to wait our turn and read the old magazines which we had already read last time. Somebody once said that a doctor's waiting room is the one place in the world where you can pretend that Diana is still alive. Our obstetrician has brand new rooms; she's only been in them a few months. New desks, new chairs, new computers. But, sure enough, the magazines are as old as the hills.

We got chatting with the young receptionist. She was new to the job, having left school last year and done a course in medical receptionism or something like that. She hoped to save to go to university, perhaps to become a teacher, she wasn't sure. The curious thing was that she had done most of her own schooling at home. The reason was that her family was Christian. Her parents were anxious about her going to a school where she would be taught the theory of evolution and not creation as it was laid down in the Bible. I did not think these two explanations of where we come from were by any means mutually exclusive. The receptionist cheerfully disagreed. The world and all it contains were made in six days. God saw that it was good. The receptionist's parents evidently didn't think it was good enough, not for their daughter. She needed to be shielded from it.



Both Jenny, my wife, and I warmed to the young woman. But we couldn't miss the irony in what she was saying or, at least, where she was saying it. If you want to think about creation, there is no better place to start than an obstetrician's waiting room.

As the doctor fell more and more behind schedule, the waiting room started to crowd. The receptionist stopped chatting and got back to work. A teenage expectant mother arrived with her own mother, a woman who looked like she should be the one having the baby. The teenager sat down and was soon lost in an image of Nicole Kidman from an old copy of *Who Weekly*. Another couple emerged from the surgery. They had just discovered that they were having another boy. "We don't mind but grandma will be disappointed."

As they left, a man in his sixties then arrived hand in hand with an expectant mother in her early twenties.

It was during the next appointment that the waiting room went tense. After a time, the doctor came out briefly because she needed some information. She only said one word. It was ‘*amniocentesis*’. The room went still. It seemed that people stopped turning pages. The appointment was a long one. When the couple finally came out, the doctor was with them. She asked the receptionist to make them both a cup of tea. They looked stunned. Nobody said anything and no confidences had been broken. But the whole room was guessing by now that this couple had just received some serious news. They were at the beginning of a very different journey than the rest of us.

Jenny, my wife, had taught dancing to people with intellectual disabilities, many of them with Downs Syndrome. Something in her wanted to reach out to this couple and share the moment. She wanted to tell them how creative their lives were going to be. But, of course, she didn’t. They were in a private space.

Finally, it was our turn. The doctor felt Jenny’s tummy with her hands. She is an old fashioned kind of doctor in that regard.

“That baby weighs about 2.2kg at the moment,” she said.

“How did you work that out?” I asked.

She looked at me like I was the dumb bloke.

“I’ve been doing this for a long time,” she said.

I carried the events of that afternoon with me as I followed the discussion, if you can call it that, in the media of the appointment of a gay bishop in the Anglican Church. It struck me how often some of the speakers referred to the creation narratives in the Book of Genesis, especially the line “male and female he created them”. They were arguing from a strong sense of natural order — that sexual identity was one of the things that had been specified from the beginning of creation. It was all laid out in the manufacturer’s handbook.

The creation narratives are complex beasts. Most people with a passing interest in scripture accept that there is an older one (Genesis 2-3) and a more recent one (Genesis 1). They are both wonderful and both subtle. The more recent one sees God as an architect working with lines, the older one as a

builder working with raw materials. In both cases, however, there is a sense of order being brought to chaos — of potential being realised. In both cases, there is also a strong sense that there are limits to what might be appropriately regarded as human. We are not God. That is the underlying theme of both narratives. It is, indeed, the first and deepest insight offered by the Bible. It is still the hardest to accept.

It is easy to overlook the obvious. The Book of Genesis has learnt that there are boundaries that define and protect human being. We are made free but there is a world of difference between freedom and just doing what you want. On the other hand, there are no boundaries around God. Creation is what God does; we help.

Both Genesis narratives suggest strongly that there is no past tense when it comes to creation. The job goes on and on. God keeps breathing life into the earth; keeps speaking creatively; keeps seeing how good it is. The text says that God rests from the work he had been doing; it never suggests that the work is over. The work is still going on in the waiting room of an obstetrician on a cold Monday afternoon. Scripture is not like an old magazine. It is different every time you go back to it with an open heart. God uses it creatively.

Creation is God’s sacred text. That’s what the Bible actually says. It is a book whose purpose is to point beyond itself and in that sense to draw attention to its own limitations. In one way or another, with story and image, the Bible keeps pleading with us to look at the wonders the Lord has done. It is the program for God’s musical; the menu for God’s feast.

Human sexuality, like so many things, is part of God’s creation. God is still working on it. I am sure that God is leading us into a deeper and more challenging understanding of our capacity to love — body and soul. Sometimes people ask us what sex our baby is. We tell them we don’t know yet. Indeed, we like to joke, we may never know.

Michael McGirr is the author of *Things you Get For Free* (Picador) which has just been read on Radio National. He is the fiction editor of the journal *Meanjin*.

He lives with Jenny and their baby, Benedict, in a small town in a beautiful part of NSW.

Until 2000, he was a Jesuit priest in which capacity he was the publisher of *Eureka Street* magazine and editor of *Australian Catholics*.

WOMDs not the only bogey-man

forum — just war

Thank you for the most helpful articles about war and the Christian conscience in the Pentecost issue of *Common-Theology*.

The first moves in the Maccabean war presented the Israeli forces loyal to the Law with— conflicting ethical objectives — to keep the Sabbath holy, to protect the lives of their wives and children, or to ensure that there would be survivors to be loyal to the Law and the Covenant. (I Macc 2:29-49).

A second ethical issue confronted them over renegades. Their answer was to circumcise the male children, forcibly.

Up to the time of Solomon, in its three-tiered society, the Israeli policy assumed genocide as the way to keep the nation pure and loyal to the Law and the Covenant.

In Mattathias and his sons we find a much livelier consciousness of the ethical demands of a righteous Father, The LORD, the God of Israel.

Whether or not they thought of themselves as kings, the Maccabees acted as with Divine Right. So also did the High Priest in scheming to get Jesus condemned to death. So also have President Bush and Prime Minister Howard, in propounding the doctrine of pre-emptive strike, stated explicitly as “the decision I have to make for the nation”.

A different kind of authority is claimed by Mahatma Gandhi with the doctrine of non-violence — the need to reject destructive oppression by converting the oppressor.

He is quoted, “...that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence ...”;¹ but the actual choice is ‘cowardice!- yes, or no?’-Whichever answer is chosen, further options confront us.

Assuming ‘no’ to cowardice, the next question could be ‘retreat’, or ‘sacrifice’, or ...

Simplifying the issue into this (cowardice), or that (violence), leads into an equivalent of the Divine Right of Kings — a deceptive fundamentalism, such as confronts Australia over our treatment of asylum seekers. Are we justly using force? Are we just using force? Are we legally covering up injustice?

The validity (as the legitimacy) of our action depends, not only on the government being accountable to the citizens, and having its actions condoned by the international community, but also on the intention of this country’s citizens towards those of other countries.

The intentions may be profit-taking, mutual defence, self-protection, dominance, interactive economies, subservience to a major power, a mixture of these and others.

Justice lies in the will to act ethically. This may involve force, but eschews violence — the violating of people (cf. the force of gravity, and the violence of a volcano).

Intentions can be hidden by false assumptions about the current bogey-man, be it financial, medical, military, religious, political, or ...

The currently promoted bogey-man is weapons of mass destruction (WOMDs). Our attention has been focused on the international military threat of atomic, chemical, and biological weapons.

This has been linked to terrorism, which ensures that we look no further.

Thus our conscience is dulled to the economic and political weapons of mass destruction.

Debt is a major weapon of mass destruction, destroying not only people and their society, but also the lands on which they lived.

Political weapons include fudged facts or lies, policies which institute beggar classes, marginalising and alienating groups of people. Saul’s persecution of the Christians is a clear demonstration of a political weapon. (Acts 7 & 8)

Thus our conscience is dulled and we focus on defeating terrorism, using the wrong weapons.

Acknowledging that no war (using violence) can be good in itself, sanctions seem more acceptable, but that is still the use of force, and history sug-

gests that it is not the guilty leaders, but the mass of innocent citizens, who are traumatised by them.

Therefore I suggest that the first task of the Christian conscience is, “Come to grips with causes of our involvement in violence, and dulled consciences”.

The first step would be recalling the ancient tension between fear, love, and worship.

The world confuses love with wishful thinking, desire, self-justification, satisfaction. Surrounded with its suspicion of love, we fail to recognise where our own worship is focused, and confine the warnings of both the prophets and Jesus to the past.

Worldly wisdom, urging us to prepare for the worst, does its worst. We fear.

Fear perceives threats of violence in unknown situations — there lurks the power to destroy us, we are told. Fear then drives our thinking into the spirit that makes for war, hiding our greed from us, and covering our arrogance in a mantle of defensive judgmentalism.

Nations enter into self-defensive and aggressive postures, and all the time — unknowingly — we

are fixing our thought patterns in concrete by the tasks we give to our police forces, and what we commission them to do in fulfilling those tasks. By identifying with their endeavours we can see that we expect war to be won, no matter what we think we believe.

Consider the differences of intention, authorisation, and direction, in our response to massacres we have condemned as wicked in each of the following countries — Rwanda, The Sudan, East Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq, Solomon Islands, the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

What we need is international (commonwealth) policing, to investigate all crimes against humanity, not just individual states acting on their own. We must find the policies which could put in place social changes offering structures for conflict resolution by reconciliation, rather than by litigation.

We have to make it possible for the Church to ensure her administration can practice her teaching.

Gordon Hewitson
Whyalla Stuart SA

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PROTEST — A Language of Democracy

eye witness

By Jameson Maluleke

An African perspective on the language of protest in the struggle for justice stresses the importance of culture. Jameson Maluleke is a Johannesburg journalist, academic and author. He trained in print media at the headquarters of the South African Council of Churches during the late apartheid years in a project funded by Australian foreign aid through the Australian Board of Missions.



Foto: Mariola Biela

Amongst lethal and non-lethal weapons in a democratic country's arsenal, protest language is by far the most reliable weapon of mass destruction in defence of people's interests.

The United States of America, the United Kingdom, France and India would not have survived were it not for the free flow of general debate and free speech.

In defiance of the German guns in the 'forties, the British Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, made a revolutionary speech in the House of Commons which was an inspiration and a source of courage to a terrified nation —

"...we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it

were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the new world, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old."¹

In the US, no story of protest or democracy can be fully narrated without quoting Dr Martin Luther King's vision or a line thereof —

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."²

Language was also used with great power in India, where the Gandhian philosophy of passive resistance brought freedom, liberty and independence.

All these famous personalities were sociolinguistics practitioners long before scholars in higher learning centres told us that language forms part of social action.³ By this means they fostered democracy in their respective countries.

In many countries where the citizens groaned under the yoke of oppression, protest language has rendered despotic rulers powerless. South African democracy was won mainly through protest language rather than through the barrel of a gun. Protest language played a pivotal role in the demise of apartheid.

For us to gain an insight into protest language it is imperative that we look at the concept called democracy. What is democracy and what does it entail?

Democracy has become a buzzword. People may have a scant understanding of the word, but they know that it is one concept which belongs to the public. People give their business ventures names such as 'The People's Bank', 'Democratic Café' or 'Community Tuck Shop'.

In South Africa political parties are called the Democratic Alliance, the United Democratic Movement, the African Christian Democratic Party and the Independent Democrats, to mention

1 Heath, FW (chosen and arranged). 1962. *Churchill Anthology. Selections from the Writings and speeches of Sir Winston Churchill*. Long Acre, London. Odhams Press Limited. p 674

2 Scott-King, Coretta. 1983. *The Words of Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Newmarket Press, New York. P 95

3 Sonderling, S. 1998. *Language as ideology in South African media texts and discursive practice*.

but few which boast the word democratic as part of their identity.

The Athenian version of democracy as a participatory form of government in which people govern themselves was described by US president Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg in 1863 when he spoke of ‘government of the people, by the people, for the people.’⁴ This definition has stood the test of time as the standard definition of democracy until this day.

If democracy is a people’s form of government, then protest language is a collective expression of people in a democracy — it is dynamic, transparent, communal and people-centred.

Generally, protest language is used as the voice of the majority, as South Africa’s spiritual and moral leader, Archbishop Desmond Tutu revealed on being awarded the Nobel Prize —

“This award is for you; Mothers, who sit near railway stations trying to eke out an existence, selling potatoes, selling mealies, selling pigs trotters.

“This award is for you; Fathers, sitting in a single-sex hostel, separated from your children for eleven months of the year.”

“...The world recognises that we are agents of peace, of reconciliation, of love, of justice, of caring, of compassion. I have the great honour of receiving this award on your behalf. It is our award, and not Desmond Tutu’s prize.”⁵

Protest language belongs to the confrontational mould of sociolinguistics, which views language in its social context. Sonderling⁶ calls this kind of discourse verbal combat, reciprocal name-calling and stylised verbal tongue-lashing.

“Democracy may sometimes require that your interlocutor does not wait politely for you to finish but shakes you by the collar and cries ‘Listen!’... We call these situations social movements, strikes, demonstrations. We call the people who initiate such departures from civility driven, ambitious, unreasonable, self-serving, rude, hot-headed, self-absorbed — the likes of Newt Gingrich and Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela. All of these people are willing to engage in democratic conversation but are also pugnacious beyond the point of civility, even willing to make their case to

opt out of conversation altogether, at least temporarily and strategically.”⁷

Protest language sprang into being during the Civil Rights movement, which swept through the western world in a spectrum of social activism during the ‘sixties, and spilled into South Africa in the form of student power that became the 1976 Soweto uprising.

Protest language is a revolution whispering in monologues — that force against which, according to Proudhon, “no power, divine or human, can prevail ... the force which cannot be crushed, deceived or perverted, all the more cannot be conquered.”⁸

**This award is for you;
Mothers, who sit near
railway stations trying to eke
out an existence**

Protest language can loosely be classified as —

- Constitutional
- Institutional
- Spontaneous

Verbal combats such as parliamentary debates and court cases are the epitome of constitutional protest in that they operate within the confines of legal environment.

Academic literature, research and polemics are all manifestations of institutionalised protest — what I would like to call armchair protest or intellectual resistance — in that they fight or eradicate our ignorance in a formal, gentle way.

Another form of institutionalised protest is religious teaching. A sermon is likely to enlist idle curiosity amongst the majority of the congregation, as it is merely seen as another step towards the end of the service. What may be unclear to the congregation is that a priest or a preacher is a protest language activist, grappling with the forces of evil.

The most prominent style of protest language is informal and spontaneous, an action-laden discursive practice.

4 Hasley (ed). 1973. *Collier's Encyclopedia*, MacMillan Educational Corporation, US.

5 Du Boulay, Shirley, 1996 *Tutu: Archbishop without Frontiers* p 15

6 Sonderling, S. 1998 *Language as ideology in South Africa media texts and*

discursive practice.

7 Ibid p 27

8 Almond, Mark. 1996. *Revolution, 500 years of struggle for change*, Ontario

The Soweto uprising is a salient example of spontaneous protest language. It is for this reason that protest language has come to be associated with war songs, battle cries, shouts and violent gestures — all ingredients of revolution.

Because of the emotional baggage involved, protest language has the power to incite protesters to commit revolutionary acts.

In South Africa, protest language articulated the anger of African school children protesting against third-rate Bantu Education used in their schools for 30 years.

The Soweto uprising was a turning point in the country's history — “It exploded into a momentous event, leading to major repercussions that are still with us today. It reinvigorated the ailing African National Congress (ANC) as well as the Pan African Congress (PAC). It led to the re-examination of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). It aroused world abhorrence of apartheid's child killers and resulted in a dual response from the South African regime: further ruthless repression and ineffective reforms.”⁹

The mood was carried by the rolling mass democratic movement during the height of the war of liberation. African communities were forced into mass protests through words and deeds.

As a new phenomenon, protest language has generated new words which were unknown to the public before the uprisings. Words such as ‘terrorists’, ‘prison graduates’, slogans and posters enabled most indigenous languages to express the concepts and actions of the new social movement.

Finlayson said of this word-enrichment to previously disadvantaged languages —

“What is of particular interest in the volatile political climate of present-day South Africa is how there has been a shift in meaning to accommodate the political actions around us. Most of the terms used with political overtones are unknown to whites and therefore have an even greater relevance in their usage.”¹⁰

In my language, Xitsonga, words such as *mu-therorisi* and *xi-payi* (spy) had entered our vocabulary through the radio in the early seventies.

Literary works by most African writers of the struggle years are collectively known as ‘protest literature’, because the language of protest was instrumental in portraying the rape and plunder of Africa by her colonisers. Who can deny that greed, theft and other forms of socio-economic injustices in the name of civilisation are popular themes in protest literature?

Cook and Henderson rightly contend that western civilisation meant education and exploitation, hospitals and haughtiness, Christianity and segregated churches, money and misery, knowledge but not wisdom, progress, but not partnership.¹¹

As such, African literature is indebted to protest language for being elevated from folkloric and mythical writings to protest literature. The language of protest conveyed the message of militant African writers narrating the experiences of their people's shame and servitude in the grip of the rule of

**As a new phenomenon,
protest language has
generated new words which
were unknown to the public
before the uprisings.**

apartheid. Through protest language, African writers became the voice of the masses, and chroniclers of this soul-destroying tyranny. It articulated Africa's resolve to deliver both the oppressor and the oppressed from socio-political bondage.

There were indeed many voices against the heartless regime, but former President Nelson Mandela's voice was the most aggressive and audible as revealed by the last paragraph of his famous statement at the Rivonia Trial in 1962 —

“Our struggle is a truly national one. It is a struggle of the African people, inspired by our own suffering and own experience. It is a struggle for the right to live. During my lifetime I have dedicated my life to this struggle of the African people.

⁹ Ndlovu, Sifiso Mxolisi. 1998. *The Soweto Uprisings: Counter-memories of June 1976*. Ravan Press, Johannesburg.

¹⁰ Finlayson, R. 1989. The Changing Face of Xhosa, an article presented at the 20th African Linguistics Conference, University of Illinois, April 1989. p 186

¹¹ Cook, Mercer and Stephen Henderson. 1969. *The Militant Black Writer in Africa and the United States*. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for, and to see realised. But my lord, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”¹²

Almost forty years after the historic trial the octogenarian is still at the forefront as a protest language activist.

He used protest language to add his voice to try to stop the recent war in Iraq as well as to advocate an AIDS cure in this country.

Tyrannical rulers in all sectors of public life — from a president down to a gang foreman — do not take kindly to protest language, as they rightly

¹² Mandela, N, 1994: *Long Walk to freedom. The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. Little, Brown & Company. Lancaster House, London. p 354

see it as a forerunner of revolution. However, as Africa gears up to claim its seat in the global village, a democratic government is better able to reflect on its skill at governing, as well as to assess the state of the nation, by allowing the wind of protest language to blow. Without it, democracy is dead.

Jameson Maluleke is a published author and final year MA student in Sociolinguistics at the University of South Africa. English is his third language. He has been working as a reporter on the Johannesburg metropolitan daily newspaper *The Citizen* since 1998. This paper was presented at the 21st World Congress of the World Federation of Modern Language Associations/Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes (FIPLV) at the Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg, South Africa in July 2003.

Common Theology

A Journal for Australians

Readers' comments on previous editions —

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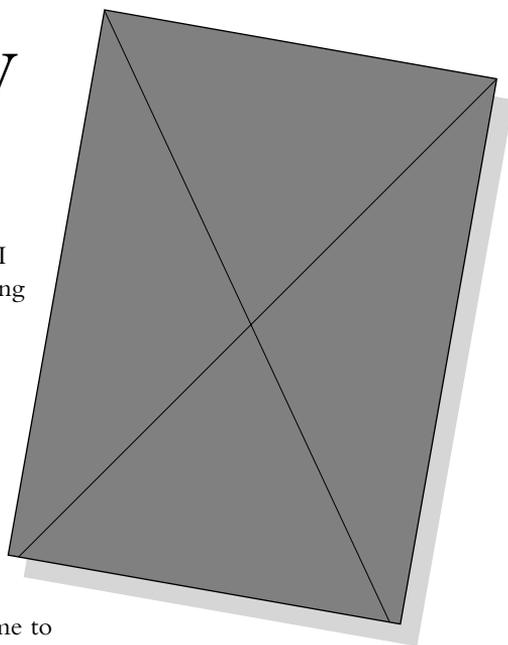
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reader's view

A friend recently introduced me to *Common Theology* (Vol 1, no. 4) and I liked what I saw. I especially appreciated your review of *At Home in the Cosmos* by David Toolan SJ.

“Toolan,” you said, “builds on the work begun by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin”.

People such as England’s Sir Peter Medawar were infuriated by Teilhard’s “problem” — that he persisted in putting together what the eighteenth century Enlightenment had insisted in putting asunder¹. That was creation and its Creator — Christ becoming the “missing link”.

In 1945 Teilhard offered a new mysticism — to recombine “two fundamental attractions that hitherto have so woefully divided mankind’s power to worship between heaven and earth — between theocentrism and anthropocentrism”.²—

Thirty-five years later, Pope John Paul II said, “While the various currents of human thought have tended to separate theocentrism and anthropocentrism — even to set them in opposition — the Church, following Christ, seeks to link them up in a deep and organic way.—This, he said, was perhaps the most important teaching of the last Council.”³

Teilhard sought to put together what had largely been put asunder following the death of St Maximus the Confessor in 662.⁴ By that time the first Muslims were vigorously spreading their revised version of Arianism. They revered Jesus as a prophet, but less than Muhammad, as a human being, not a divine being.

In response, whereas eastern Christianity continued to focus on Christ and his gracefulness as Pantocrator or ‘Lord of all’,⁵ western Christianity focused increasingly on us and our sinfulness — our constant need to be saved from the world, the flesh and the Devil.

It is bio-logical for living organisms to ‘draw the line’ (or semi-permeable boundary) between ‘self’ and all that is ‘not self’ — namely the rest of reality.

But that urge to detach one’s self from all worldly attachments in order to ascend to the super-vision of transcendence has been described in many ways.

As R H Tawney said of the ‘purists’ otherwise known as Puritans — “Too often contemning [despising] the external order as unspiritual, they made it — and ultimately themselves — less spiritual by reason of their contempt.”⁶

Ironically, today’s neo-Puritans, the environmentalists, commonly revere the rest of creation while despising mankind [*Homo sapiens*]! Richard North says, “Having fallen out of love with God, we are falling in love with the environment. It makes for a pretty deficient religion; but as an object of worship, Nature takes some beating!”⁷

It makes for a pretty deficient religion; but as an object of worship, Nature takes some beating!

In the months before he died in New York on Easter Sunday in 1955, Teilhard prayed for “a new Nicaea”⁸ to affirm not only [not only!] Christ’s human nature and his divine nature, but also the cosmic nature, dimensions and implications of his incarnation.—

Seven years later, Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council (1962–65).

In its document *Gaudium et Spes* on The Church in the Modern World, the Council affirmed the cosmic nature, dimensions and implications of our incarnation (n.14). But it was left to Pope John Paul II to extend that doctrine specifically to Christ. In the first words of his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), he declared that the Redeemer of Mankind, Jesus Christ, is also the on-going centre

1 Robert Speaight, R V Wilshire, J V Langmead-Casserly 1970, *Teilhard de Chardin — Re-Mythologization* Chicago, p.41

2 Pierre Teilhard SJ 1945, p.185 in *Christianity and Evolution* 1971

3 Pope John Paul II 1980 *Dives in Misericordia* n.1

4 George A Maloney SJ 1968 *The Cosmic Christ from Paul to Teilhard* p.15

5 Joseph [Cardinal] Ratzinger 1969 *Introduction to Christianity* p.52

6 R H Tawney 1922, p.229 in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* 1962

7 Jonathan Porritt & David Winner 1988 *The Coming of the Greens* p.252

8 James A. Lyons SJ 1982 *The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard* p.41

of the universe and of its history, which extends from the beginning to the end of time.

For all creation is “on the move” not only in space — as Copernicus and Galileo had insisted — but also in time.

The whole universe is advancing from out of the past and into the future at the speed of light and increasing in molecular complexity and reflective competence, culminating thus far in our genes and the brains that stem therefrom.

As Teilhard sensed, as well as its concentric spheres of solid, liquid, gaseous and reproductive or ‘living’ forms of matter, Planet Earth has been acquiring what he called a *noo-sphere* of reflective or ‘thinking’ forms of matter.⁹—

As Teilhard described it in 1922, in association with Edouard Le Roy and Vladimir Vernadsky, Earth’s *noo-sphere* consists of our brains (now numbering about six billion) potentially linked together globally by a world-wide-web or internet of communications media able to convey messages around the world and beyond at the speed of light.

Further, by way of our brains (if we choose to use them) we are collectively able to gain reflective insight into the inner form or *information* of everything, even the depths of God (1 Cor.2:10).

The one thing necessary in this context is for us (*homo sapiens*) to “seize the tiller of the world” and to “keep a steady hand on the tiller.”¹⁰

Because Teilhard was silenced by the Church during his lifetime, the notion of the *noo-sphere* was introduced to the English-speaking world by Vernadsky by way of a paper in *American Scientist* in 1945.¹¹—

Although the Russian gave full credit to Teilhard, Eugene Odum ignored the French Jesuit, and rubbished the idea. “This is dangerous philosophy,” said Odum, “because it is based [in Odum’s opinion] on the assumption that mankind is now wise enough to safely take over the management of everything!”¹²

In fact, Teilhard assumed nothing about our wisdom.—But he was realist enough to sense and acknowledge that — whether we like it or not — we are increasingly responsible and accountable for

the intelligent management and careful husbandry of everything. Starting with planet Earth but already extending to the nearest islands of outer space.

As Mikhail Gorbachev said [*inter alia*], “We are witnessing the emergence of the first truly *GLOBAL* civilisation. Paradoxically, we live simultaneously in the best and worst of times.—The choice for society is clear and we have not much time to act.—We either simply drift in a rudderless existence and face the grim prospect of scarcity, degradation or worse. Or we undertake the first steps to change our course.—What is really needed is a new synthesis.—We have reached the point in cultural evolution where we must assume full responsibility for our power.—In thinking of the future, we need to remember what the ancients knew — that self-restraint is the most fundamental and wisest aim of a person who is truly free.—This is the key to future progress.—Knowing and reaching our fullest potential within the constraints of the biosphere must be the ultimate goal — the driving vision of the 21st Century.—And the *noo-sphere* concept suggests a philosophy for such a necessary balance.”¹³

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Errata — Vol 1 no.4

In Drew Hanlon’s article on ‘Finding Australia’s prophets’:

Footnote 7 should read Tacey, D, (1997), *Australia in Search of a Soul*, Eremos Magazine Essay Supplement No.22, March 1997, Eremos Institute, Sydney

Footnote 8 should read Gebser J, (1985), *The Ever Present Origin*, p.530

Footnotes 8 to 17 should be renumbered 9 to 18.

In the review of *Number Two to Tutu — A Memoir*, the date of the Defiance Campaign on page 26 should read 1989 and not 1990 as printed.

9 Paul R. Samson & David Pitt 1999 *The Biosphere and Noosphere Reader*

10 Pierre Teilhard SJ 1942, p.91 in *The Future of Man* 1964

11 Vladimir Vernadsky 1945 *The biosphere and the Noosphere — American Scientist* 33:1-12

12 Eugene Odum 1962/1971 *Fundamentals of Ecology* p.26/35

13 Mikhail Gorbachev 1999 Foreword in [9]

review

Islam — A Short Introduction — Signs, Symbols and Values, by Abdulkader Tayob. One World, Oxford. 180pp

Reviewed by John Grindrod

Abdulkader is a considerate author — the last paragraph of each chapter is a summary of the chapter's contents. Each is focussed on the symbols of the Mosque and in this way he introduces us to the five pillars of wisdom —

- belief in the unity of God
- public worship of the Muslim people
- their duty of almsgiving especially for widows and orphans
- the requirement of pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca
- the fast of Ramadan.

In the course of the pilgrimage the powerful sense among all Muslims worldwide of “*ummah*” (one community) is reinforced. Strengthening the human will and obedience to the will of Allah are powerful elements in the religion of Islam.

The call to prayer from a Minaret was first given by a former African slave, Bilal.

The words of the call to prayer are also an affirmation of faith, the daily disciplines of prayer, the month's fast of Ramadan, the freedom from intoxicating liquor, the discipline of morality, the bond of the family, the submission to Allah's will — for which in the end one may be rewarded in the heavenly life.

The Prophet Muhammad was undoubtedly a remarkable man. He could understand the Hebrew prophets, their visions and the voice of God in their hearts, because he had these experiences himself — particularly that there is only one God (Allah).

This orphan boy started his life in the 7th Century AD in Mecca, a polytheistic place — the leaders and people there did not like his message and punished him. He suffered, and eventually had to flee to Medina where he gained followers. Being the last of the Prophets, his was the final word. The sword was needed as well as the visions of God's word, especially in relation to Mecca's polytheists.

Followers of Muhammad seemed to be permanently on horseback, travelling West and East, sweeping along the trade routes known well to

Muhammad. And suddenly the world had a vast Islamic Empire.

Scholars and jurists emerged and were stimulated by great Greek thinkers. Amazing architects began constructing wonderful buildings, artists covered them with designs, but not of the human form. There was a renaissance in the East before the Renaissance in the West, but it was different.

Like St Paul, Muhammad saw that morality was a vital issue in human behaviour. Man, woman, slaves and free were all equal in God's sight. Muhammad knew that not only was morality essential between the sexes, but in the whole ordering of society, truth and trust were essential. His dealings as a trader had taught him this.

Leadership has always been a major problem in Islam. Muhammad's visions and teaching set down in the Quran are the guide for all Muslims — but scholars and jurists are often needed for interpretation. They may ascend the minbar (the pulpit, the symbol of leadership in worship through preaching) in the Mosque, though in prayer they stand on a level with the people.

If the preacher and teacher were of the Prophet's family they seem to have become leaders in the wider sense. But the Prophet, as was custom then, had four wives, so there were a variety of descendants — and some set up dynasties.

Muslim may fight Muslim, as in the Iraq-Iran war, but underneath, in spite of the divisions there is a sense of “*ummah*” (community) among all Muslims.

There are Sunnis, among whom political leadership can be non-clerical; Shi'ism where it remains clerical, and then there is Sufism, probably the most attractive grouping to those outside, focusing on prayer and mysticism. The Sufis rescued Islam in a period when Muslim empires were disintegrating.

Christians and Muslims lived amicably in Spain for several hundred years, until the Christians decided they wanted Spain to themselves. At the other end of Europe the Ottoman Turks (who seem initially to have had a fairly light veneer of Islam) decided to charge across the Bosphorus, with damaging results.

The final chapter of Abdulkader Tayob's book ‘Challenges and Opportunities in the Twenty-First Century’, which takes account of colonisation and globalisation, provides an important step into the future.

The author assumes certain historical data, e.g. Muhammad's date of death and the succession of the Umayyads and Abbasids. But then this small but significant book is a search for meaning, rather than an historical survey.

Bishop John Grindrod KBE is a former Anglican Primate of Australia

review

***A Long Way From Rome — Why the Australian Catholic Church is in crisis*, Edited by Chris McGillion. Allen & Unwin, 2003
211pp.**

Reviewed by Alan Dwight

This book, edited by Chris McGillian, has six contributors (plus a foreword by Geraldine Doogue), but each speaks mainly as one on why the Roman Catholic Church in Australia is in crisis.

The book has a wider interest with other Christian churches sharing some of the same problems.

Michael Mullins sees a problem with young people inhabiting “a world of surface” and “a culture of moments”, with a reduced attention span as the result of the constant “rapid-fire entertainment” of television, computer games and the Internet. And they suffer “historical amnesia” which leads to ignorance of such great salvation events as Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Paul Collins believes that attendance is not helped by turning the sacred transcendent Mass into “a banal, familiar, everyday show accompanied by bad music”.

In Rome during November 1998 the Synod of Oceania brought together regional bishops, the majority of whom were Australian. They expressed problems faced by the Australian Church — decline in membership, declining numbers of priests, religious and vocational recruits. Women were seeking more active participation in the Church, wanting discussion of women's ordination and the use of gender inclusive language in services. This instead of what Damian Grace describes as ‘The Feminist soul — condemned to invisibility’.

Consideration should be given to the marriage of priests, seen as a possible way of increasing the number of priestly vocations.

The Synod noted that episcopal and also papal authority was being ignored — “Vast numbers of the laity ignore the ban on artificial birth control methods, pre-marital sex and abortion”. Many have deserted the pews.

Episcopal authority was being undermined by ‘self-appointed protectors of orthodoxy’ acting as spies at masses and reporting ‘misdemeanours’, such as the use of the Third Rite, directly to Rome.

Clergy sex-abuse of minors was causing much-publicised scandals, especially when the culprits were merely re-located. On this McGillion refers to a 1999 report which decided that such abuse was a “direct consequence of the Catholic Church's failure to treat men and women equally in the Church”, together with the all-male environment of seminaries and community living arrangements.

While the thirty-eight bishops were in Rome thirteen of their number were selected to meet separately. This resulted in the Statement of Conclusions, issued on December 14. It was given as the official view of the Catholic Church of Australia.

This made clear that the Synod's conclusions had been mainly ignored and the Vatican's response was to impose its own version on the local Church.

Its response to the changing world was to require uncritical obedience to traditional dogma. “Serious weaknesses” included “too much tolerance of different views”. The Australian sense of equality was seen as having “a corrosive impact on the authority and status of priests”. The statement dismissed the bishops' concern for increased women's participation, more sympathetic treatment of divorced and civilly remarried persons and practising homosexuals.

Sex abuse scandals were ignored and the increasingly popular Third Rite — communal confession — was condemned.

The Vatican in the late 20th Century was clearly reversing the way the Second Vatican Council had cast off “fatigued rituals”, superstitious veneration of saints and relics and hostility to science, democracy and other faiths. Damian Grace put it of Vatican II, “Catholicism had at last embraced the insights of the Protestant Reformation”.

But power is now given to reactionary groups such as Opus Dei, and intellectual discussion stifled, leading to what John Carmody calls “a flight” of thousands, including intellectuals.

Mullins in particular, has a very useful chapter in which he deals with the present intellectual background of our lives — postmodernism, deconstruction, etc.

The message of this book is that Rome is a long way from Australia — and even further in understanding the Australian Church today. Like Canute it is trying to control the rising tide of change. It is refusing to listen, demanding blind, uncritical obedience.

review

Q, by Luther Blisset.

Translated from the Italian by Shaun Whiteside. Published 2003, by William Heinemann, London.

Reviewed by Cameron Taylor

*To my most reverend lord Giovanni Pietro Carafa,
My Most Honourable Lord,*

*The news that has reached Bologna from Trent over
the past few months can only delight this zealous heart.*

*Indeed, not only has the emperor seen his own hopes of
the Lutherans taking part in the council go up in smoke,
he has also been obliged to witness the definitive con-
demnation of the theology of the Protestants, the doctrine
of original sin and the justification by faith alone. Right
now the Protestant princes of the Schmalkaldic League,
his adversaries, are to be considered apostates and enemies
of religion; and this has shattered Charles' hopes of reas-
suming control of the whole of Germany and bringing the
German princes on to his side to fight the Turk.*

*Cardinal Pole's efforts to resist the council's decrees
endorsing the definitive separation of the Lutherans from
the Holy Roman Church have proved to be in vain, and
that is perhaps the greatest triumph of Your Lordship and
the party of the zelanti.*

*...But long years in Your Lordship's service teach me
that we should not claim victory before the enemy is
completely routed. Reginald Pole remains the emperor's
favorite, the man on whom the Hapsburg places all his
hopes for a change of attitude towards the Protestants,
and there is no doubt that he will plot to promote the
Englishman's career and fame.*

*For that reason the excommunication of The Benefit
of Christ Crucified by the council fathers gives Your*

*Lordship an additional weapon to employ against the
underground strategies of the spirituali and the Calvinist
sympathisers within the Papal territories. The inten-
tion that Your Lordship announced to me, to make the
Congregation of the Holy Office set up an Index of
forbidden books, is now assuming enormous importance.
Benedetto of Mantua's dangerous little book has actually
continued to circulate, and to stir up minds predisposed
to heresy, so much so that possession of the work might
now be enough to identify Pole's sympathisers and indict
them for heresy. I myself would already be in a position
to hand them over to the Inquisition.*

*But there we are. Today it may be enough to enjoy
our immediate victories, and wait to assess what is to be
done when this enthusiasm has died down, making way
for wisdom.*

*Imploring Your Lordship's continuing favour and
awaiting new directives, I kiss your hands.*

Your faithful servant,

Q

Bologna, the 27th day of July 1546.

Q is a work of historical fiction by four authors working collaboratively. Its theme is the conflict between differing aspects of Christianity in 14th Century Europe.

Q follows the adventures of a man with many names, servant to his ideals of religious freedom, driven to fight by those who wish to keep the status quo.

Of course, the book has then to explore this man's hidden nemesis — Quolet, spy and agent provocateur of the Holy Roman power, a skilled betrayer of the radical protestant communities who take him in as one of their own.

The book itself is an exploration of the sword edge linking *real-politik* and religious transformation in society.

The book abounds with excellent characterisation. For example, a rakish Jewish family, who enjoy all the benefits of world-class education and the most graceful lives to be had in old Venice. They must also always keep an eye on escape routes, in anticipation of the persecution to come when the wider community inevitably turns on its minorities.

Another is the dwarf Italian book smuggler who knows everything before anyone else, and has the charming habit of saying "*capito?*" at the end of his (often postposterous) exclamations. He never fails to

surprise the underworld with how much money there is to be made in smuggling books.

Religious figures are treated sympathetically but realistically. Following the personal transformation of Luther, as a result of his rise from small town preacher to player on the European stage, is fascinating.

The letter above, reproduced from the book, gives an idea of the style of writing, the themes addressed, and the machinations of Q himself.

Rest assured we also get to read about those whom the letter refers to, and witness the effects of these plots and counter plots on their lives.

The level of historical detail is impressive, but it is the realism of the human elements caught up, willingly or otherwise, in the evolution of their society that gives the book its ability to keep you reading deep into the night.

The human life, made up of idealistic struggles, unknown enemies, and the odd turns of fate that lead one to discover true friends in the strangest places, is laid out in grand style, with all the passion expected of an Italian masterpiece. If these themes are of interest, this book will provide much pleasure and insight.

review

***Dark Victory* by David Marr & Marian Wilkinson, Allen & Unwin 2003.**

Reviewed by Harry Throssell

Dark Victory, by leading Australian investigative reporters David Marr and Marian Wilkinson, chronicles in awesome detail the period August to November 2001 when Australian gunboats kept asylum seekers from Australia's shores in spite of risk to human rights, democratic values, the country's reputation as the 'fair go', and even human life.

The authors examine closely the border control policy of the John Howard Liberal-National Government, a policy supported by then opposition Labor Party leader Kim Beazley, in the lead-up to the federal election.

It reveals fundamental moral and political values of Australia's political leaders, both Lib and Lab, and how they and senior public servants manipulated the desperation of refugee boat people to capture votes.

In a supreme irony, nearly nine hundred of those barred from Australia in spite of their plight at sea were eventually found to be genuine refugees, including 550 Iraqis fleeing the regime against which Australia later sent troops.

The account follows what happened to the passengers and crew aboard the *KM Palapa* and thirteen Suspected Illegal Entry Vessels, numbered SIEV 1 to 12 and SIEV X, as they left Indonesia in the hope of reaching peace and security in Australia.

Their desperation to leave such murderous regimes as the Taliban in Afghanistan and that of Saddam Hussein in Iraq is forcefully indicated by the risks taken by non-swimmers, elderly people, young families with babies, in overcrowded boats in poor condition, inadequately-equipped to cope with rough ocean seas, and with limited provision of food, water, toilet facilities, and life-jackets.

The authors take us through Operation Relex, the government show of force to frighten asylum seekers and people-smugglers from trying to land in Australia.

The container ship *Tampa* and its captain Arne Rinnan did the right thing according to Norwegian law, age-old maritime custom (and a request from Australian rescue authorities) in picking up 438 survivors, including forty-three children, at risk of drowning following engine failure on the *Palapa*. Only to find the Australian government went to extraordinary lengths to deny another traditional maritime custom of allowing survivors of a sea rescue to be disembarked at the nearest port — in this case Christmas Island.

The federal government finished with international mud on its face, Arne Rinnan finished with a pageful of awards and medals. In the end, ironically, many of the refugees finished happily settled in New Zealand.

Marr and Wilkinson — "Howard said of the people rescued by the *Tampa* and sent for processing to Nauru, 'We have always stood ready to take our fair share'. In the end, New Zealand took 186, Australia took one."

Veteran political columnist Laurie Oakes is quoted as saying the Tampa episode was the message Howard needed to take over the votes of former One Nation Party supporters, and some Labor voters worried about danger from asylum seekers.

Marr and Wilkinson comment — “Howard had by this time crossed a crucial line,” in that he “crudely linked boat people with terrorists” even though domestic intelligence (ASIO) director-general Dennis Richardson was later to report “the possibility of terrorists arriving disguised as asylum seekers [is] extremely remote”.

The ‘Children Overboard’ affair was a dramatic Operation Relex episode which to this reader showed some navy personnel at their best and some leading politicians, aided by senior public servants, at their worst.

SIEV 4, the *Olong*, which had set out from Sumatra for Christmas Island with 223 asylum seekers aboard, was described as “marginally seaworthy with no lifeboats”.

Norman Banks, experienced commander of the Australian Navy frigate *Adelaide*, who was ordered to intercept *Olong* and prevent its passengers reaching Christmas Island, was conscious of the dilemma — “how could naval officers square their duty to render assistance to those in distress at sea ‘even illegal [sic] immigrants’ with orders to turn their overcrowded boats back to Indonesia?”

After repeated orders for *Olong* to turn back, *Adelaide* eventually fired a total of twenty-eight warning shots around the boat, in the middle of the night, to encourage it to obey orders — not surprisingly causing terror and chaos. Then a naval boarding party transferred to *Olong* so it could be towed away from Australian waters.

But it was hopeless. “Banks was aimlessly towing ‘a crippled boat’ there was a hole below the waterline... Its two main pumps had stopped when its engine died.”

When the boat started to roll heavily, panic-stricken passengers began jumping into the water.

At this critical time Banks was phoned for a report by Brigadier Mike Silverstone of Northern Command, Darwin, who noted during the conversation, “Men thrown over side. Five, six, or seven”. Later, Marr and Wilkinson report, “Silverstone added the word ‘child’ to the note believing, he would say later, that Commander Banks told him a child about five, six, or seven-years-old had been thrown over the side”.

So started the drama which would “embroil the Australian Defence Force in its biggest political trauma since the Vietnam War”.

But there were heart-lifting stories too. Able Seaman Laura Whittle, on the *Adelaide*’s upper

deck, saw a mother struggling in the choppy water with her young child. Without her life jacket, she dived twelve metres into the ocean to help the frightened pair into a life raft.

A mate, Leading Cook Jason Barker, also dived in to help. The *Olong* sank but no lives were lost. Adelaide crew looked after traumatised survivors — including a three-week old baby who was wrapped in a navy towel while his mother, in navy combat overalls, bottle-fed him.

“Banks had seen a surprising change in the ship’s company. Many whom he thought were ‘white Australia’ types were some of the most compassionate and humane towards the survivors.”

In the case of SIEV X, the lives of 353 asylum seekers were lost only thirty hours after their boat left Sumatra. It was not surprising. There were only a hundred lifejackets for the four hundred people crammed on board, so overcrowded the vessel was lying very low in the water and twenty-four of them immediately hailed a passing fishing boat and returned to shore.

Arguments flared about safety, there was no functioning radio, the engine was ‘dodgy’, and packed up in heavy seas. The boat immediately disintegrated and sank. It was a tragedy waiting to happen. The smuggler Abu Quassey served six months in a Jakarta prison, but only for visa offences.

At the end of this period, Australia had shut its doors to 2390 people at a cost of five hundred million dollars, plus large military and other expenditures.

This thoroughly-researched, sometimes sickening, study shows this rich country’s government — not opposed by the Labor Party — expected to gain votes by treating the most vulnerable people without respect, consideration or humanity. They seemed not to care what happened to them, including young children, as long as they didn’t land in Australia.

This is a very dangerous path to take, because this kind of state violence creates retaliation sooner or later.

Levellers Essays focus on a wide range of Australian and global social justice issues, independent of any pressure group. The author’s working life has been in social work, university teaching and newspaper journalism. www.geocities.com/youngmick/levellers/ If you would like them mailed, send a postal-or email-address to harold@austarmetro.com.au

Apathy is the real killer

home truths

By Cara Beed

Problems in the church? We can find the way through! But that way will not be neat and tidy.

It has not been easy to wrench out hidden abuses and secrets. Changing church structures will mean further disruption. Learning new ways of thinking, behaving and relating will be difficult. All change in the Christian churches has been hard-wrought. But such challenges are the essence of our mission as Christians.

We do not need to fear change. We need to fear apathy.

In this turbulent time on our planet — when extremist groups and individuals attack, maim and kill, and members of our churches abuse in secret — we Christians need to question our collective and individual roles, to ensure we have something to offer the world.

Safeguarding everyone in the Church from all forms of abuse — bullying, secrecy and misuse of power — is our first responsibility. Prayer, contemplation, service, liturgy, communion and Bible study offer inspiration, and then there is action. The first action must be to put our house in order.

Calls abound for church leaders and members to behave in truly Christian ways to overcome sexual abuse, child abuse, power abuse and the cultures of secrecy and bullying within the Church. In some churches, secrecy that has dominated church responses to the symptoms of these hidden crimes is slowly being overcome.

Brave archbishops are establishing enquiries and protocols for complaints. Some permanent staff are being appointed to handle complaints.

However, brave leaders, struggling in semi-isolation need support to achieve change. Isolation of



leaders and their families because they are carrying the burdens for the Church only hinders healing.

To acknowledge past abuses is all well and good. But structures and processes that allow abuses, secrecy and bullying are yet to be adequately addressed.

Churches do not thrive with powerful hierarchies making decisions about what will and will not happen. Few changes are apparent in the demeanour of powerful cliques deciding who will be welcomed, acknowledged and heard. Power must be shared.

Lay members must not only be heard, they must be encouraged to examine the structures of the church, and expect to be heard when they contribute to the Body of Christ.

At present, structures and processes allow the powerful not to share power. Lay criticisms and recommendations are not welcome. If acknowledged at all, there is little recognition of the essence of

Paget's parable



critiques, and little wide-ranging discussion of recommendations within parishes.

Indeed, when radical perspectives are offered to the churches, hierarchies prefer not to dignify a proponent of that point of view with an adequate hearing. Those maintaining the status quo may make passing reference to alternative views, but prefer not to engage in public debate on radical challenges. This, even when the ideas are expressed by folk who pray.

It is those outside the Church — who tend to disregard the Church in their daily lives — that focus the Church hierarchy on issues about the Church. These people seriously question the ethics of those in the Church, their behaviours, mistakes and crimes. Indeed the last three years have seen wide-ranging demands for accountability in Christian organisations.

What a hopeful sign! Where the world seemed to have turned away from the Church, it is now inspecting church structures and processes and finding them wanting.

There is real anger in the wider world that, where cultures of secrecy and abuse have festered, the essence of the Christian message has been lost. It is good the world understands sufficient of the Christian message to be defending it against corruption within the churches.

Yes, it is hopeful that people still believe churches can be the Body of Christ. I have gained great strength from expressions of interest in the Church, because of the call for churches to do the right and Christian thing. My book, *Cultures of Secrecy and Abuse: A Paradox for Churches* (1998) shows I believe churches can change. My Zadok paper *Power, Secrecy and Abuse: Changing Churches* (2001) emphasised that we can check organisations for misuse of power, and cultures of secrecy and abuse.

Blaming individuals is not the way to heal our churches. Individuals wander clear off the Christian path when human structures and processes allow, even encourage, evil to flourish.

Poor structures and processes propagate abuse of power.

Bullied individuals and groups lose track of the Christian message, especially when individuals comfortably conform to church structures.

Slowly we are inculcated into the dominant cultures — we tacitly keep secrets, listen to gossip,

reject and belittle others, obey edicts against our better judgement — thus allowing the Body of Christ to lose Jesus.

The present structure of churches, working from a top down hierarchy, encourages silence from lay members. But church leaders must not be appointed and then left to carry responsibilities for the Church. A new structure is needed where we all contribute expect to contribute, know we are responsible.

Intense, co-operative work is needed to uncover the structures that hold, and misuse, power between individuals and within groups and cliques. We need education about what encourages secrecy, abuse and bullying.

Moreover, we need education about the freedom that comes through autonomy in God — a concept explored in Christian theology for centuries — knowing God so deeply within oneself, that depth of faith prevents group or individual control from corrupting personal growth in God.

The book *Cultures of Secrecy and Abuse: A Paradox for Churches*, is available for \$17.95
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<http://www.netspace.net.au/~cncbeed/>

Cara Beed TPTC; Grad. Dip Rec. (PIT); M.Ed. Prelim.; M. Ed. (Monash) retired in 1995 as lecturer in sociology and Graduate Advisor in the Education Faculty, Christ Campus, Australian Catholic University. Cara's main research interests focus on how cultures and ideologies affect 'personal autonomy' in contrast to the abuse of power in organisations and the community. She has been engaged in researching aspects of culture, ideologies and 'legitimate knowledge', as these relate to 'personal autonomy', power in organisations and limiting community action. To date, this research has been published in two strands: on homeless young people, and on secrecy about abuse in organisations such as the family, work place and in the church. Ideals held by homeless young people on the cohesion of home life have been published (Scripture Union Victoria, 1991; Interlogue, 1994; and Millenium, 1996). Two of her articles have been published on Youth Suicide (*Kairos*, Oct.–Nov., 1993 & March 1994) and the paper on 'The culture of secrecy' appears in a book: *Bullying: Causes, Costs & Cures* (Beyond Bullying Association Inc., 1998).

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ADVENT EDITION — Professor James Haire, President of the National Australian Council of Churches writes on the controversial Centre for Christianity and Culture in Canberra.