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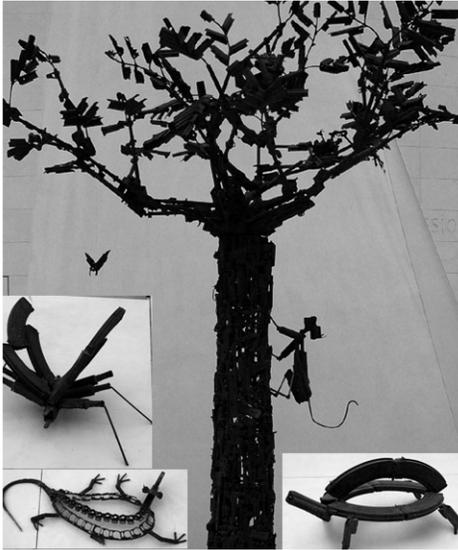
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INSIDE:

- Noel Pearson at the Earth Dialogues
- Eucharist as resistance to terror and torture
- Identity crisis in Israel

A Quarterly Journal for Australians



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Maggie Helass

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From the Editor

The first of the Earth Dialogues in the southern hemisphere brought Mikhail Gorbachev to Brisbane in July. His flagship Green Cross attracted 66 national and international leaders from 11 countries.

The Earth Dialogues were originally inspired by the need to place ethics and human values at the heart of the struggle to forge a peaceful and sustainable future – and to galvanize “the second superpower”, world public opinion.

It was a surreal feeling to watch the former USSR president with the black molasses voice and the signature birthmark quoting J F Kennedy on peace; and suggesting that it may be the will of God that Green Cross finds a home in Brisbane.¹

Tragically, having laid out this feast for the mind and spirit, the host city offered no food or drink, or even a place to sit to the public. Speakers exited backstage at City Hall for refreshments while their audience – many from interstate and venues worldwide – trickled away to kill time in the nearby shopping centre.

A nugget of wisdom I took shopping with me was Gorbachev’s charge that it was the duty of leadership to see that there is no conflict of civilisations because ultimately it is hard to see who would judge the outcome.

Advice from Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, another of the four Nobel Peace Prize laureates present, was to take the United Nations out of the USA and democratise it – that the fate of humanity should not be decided by five nations.

Professor Cordia Chu offered a droplet of hope for the environment: that the ‘healthy city’ movement could cause the Asia Pacific region to leapfrog the industrial age – much as the two-thirds world jumped the age of print media, straight into the electronic environment.

The audience was urged to make the necessary evolution to global consciousness. But such consciousness requires rigorous psychological and spiritual preparation – if one is not to go insane in the attempt. Other societies still have strong cultural and religious scaffolding to support this evolution of consciousness, but in the deconstructed west we confront *Weltschmerz* alone and undefended.

The seer of this grand assembly, in my opinion, was Australia’s own son of the earth, Noel Pearson.

I never cease to be amazed at how each edition of *Common Theology* brings together diverse contributions from all over Australia, and the world, which dovetail with a prevailing theme. This edition addresses identity.

First Noel Pearson’s keynote address to the Earth Dialogues, evolving a new model of identity from his own Aboriginal perspective; then an incisive analysis of Israel’s identity crisis in Susan Sophia’s interview with Susan Nathan. In Home Truths, Tom Frame juxtaposes Don Quixote and Hillsong, in a quirky quest into Christian identity.

A disturbing piece from William Cavanaugh on torture makes discomfoting reading, but every citizen should be informed about the social engineering behind this ancient technique for controlling populations. It is not too long a bow to suggest that torture is designed to destroy identity. House arrest, detention without trial and exile all rate within the ambit of torture and are of concern to our own citizenship.

Maggie Helass

¹ www.brisbanefestival.com.au/earthdialogues

How to peel the onion

Noel Pearson is a lawyer, Director of Cape York Partnerships, and a prophetic figure in Australian Indigenous society. As such he lives on the perilous scree between cultures. He addressed the Earth Dialogues 2006 in Brisbane on July 23 on the subject of identity. Here are some extracts from his keynote address.



How we view ourselves and how we view others in society – in other words how we identify – is critical to whether, in circumstances of diversity, we are able to find and maintain unity.

Identity is key to both violence and peace between the peoples of the earth. If identity is not always the cause of conflict between humans, it inevitably becomes the marker of conflict.

Opponents and friends in any social conflict are marked according to some form of identity, whether political, cultural, religious, social or economic.

Identity is ever-present in most forms of conflict. It is invoked or denied in order to justify the basis of enmity or amity between humans.

I have long considered that we labour under impoverished conceptions of identity, and have long believed that we need a better metaphor for popular comprehension of how peoples with varied identities come together to form a united nation.

The American metaphor of the ‘melting pot’ is the most famous of the identity metaphors. But for people concerned that the melting pot implies an utter assimilation of all the diverse ingredients into a muddy soup – the melting pot is not an adequate capturing of the diversity of identities within a nation.

But when we ask, “Is there a metaphor which captures our common understanding of identity in society?” the answer is no. Rather there are a few

vague concepts that swirl around in the collective consciousness.

Segregation, separatism, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, the clash of civilisations lurk in the background of discussions on assimilation and integration across the world.

We do not have a proper theory of identity upon which to base an optimal model. The prevailing theory of identity, including that theory which underpins multiculturalism, is flawed.

There are two great problems with the dominant popular understanding of identity –

Firstly, the identity of a group in society is assumed to be singular – arising from some salient characteristic such as ethnicity or religion.

Secondly, the identity of an individual within such a group is also assumed to be singular – again arising from some salient feature of the group of which she is taken to be a member.

I first thought about layered identities when I considered my own Aboriginal identity

I have long considered that individuals and groups possess ‘layers of identity’. These layers include identification with cultural and linguistic groups; religions; places of birth, upbringing, residency and death; local and regional geographic communities; regional, provincial and national polities; professional, literary, recreational, philosophical and other sub-cultural groups.

Each individual harbours many layers of identity. She shares many of her layers with her closest kin, but there are some layers that she does not share with them.

She shares these other layers of identity with other members of society, sometimes long distant from and unknown to her. In the same way other members of her family share layers of identity with other strangers in society, which she does not share.

It is the same with groups. Groups may be formed around a dominant characteristic such as ethnicity or religion – but the individuals or subgroups that make up the group will also harbour layers of identity.

I first thought about layered identities when I considered my own Aboriginal identity. I am patrilineally descended from a group whose language, *Guugu Warra*, is now extinct. My great grandfather spoke this language and his estate was called *Bagaarmugu* in the language of the neighbouring nation called the *Guugu Yimithirr*. My great grandfather spoke his own language as well as *Guugu Yimithirr* and many other languages of neighbouring groups. Multi-lingualism was a necessary feature of life in classical times.

My grandfather became a *Guugu Yimithirr* speaker – a language his people spoke, but did not own in classical times

With the colonial destruction of the *Guugu Warra* speakers, my grandfather, who was removed to the Cape Bedford Lutheran Mission, became a *Guugu Yimithirr* speaker: a language his people spoke, but did not own in classical times.

My great grandfather who continued to live a traditional life remained in contact with my grandfather who lived in the mission; my family's connection with our ancestral lands was therefore not broken.

My father and I grew up in the mission as *Guugu Yimithirr* people, which we are in terms of the history of the past century, but not in classical terms.

My mother was born in *Kuku Yalanji* country, *Guugu Yimithirr's* neighbours to the south. From her I learned the *Kuku Yalanji* language.

As well as local clan affiliations, there are larger group affiliations around language and cross-clan kinship and land tenure systems.

It is simply not possible to understand traditional Aboriginal identity in a singular, reductive way.

On top of the complexity of traditional identities, there are the identities that have arisen out of my history.

I am a member of a community that was gathered together by governmental fiat into a mission, where

my paternal grandfather and grandmother rebuilt what would become the Pearson clan out of the ruins of traditional society.

We live in and are intimately connected with a place called Hope Vale – we know its place-names, the events that have taken place there, we know its contours: its sand dunes, rivers, rainforests, mountains, swamps and reefs. We have camped and fished and hunted and walked around this place which we love dearly and which we would not hesitate to call 'home', even though our traditional country is not at Hope Vale.

We also identify as Christians and specifically as Lutherans. We connect with the members of another Lutheran mission nearby at Wujal Wujal, on the basis of our traditional, maternal (my mother is from there), and Lutheran connections. We also feel a connection with our fellow Aboriginal Lutherans at Hermannsburg in Central Australia and Yalata in South Australia – though we do not know them.

Stranger still we feel a connection with that relatively small group of German and Scandinavian descendants of Lutherans in Australia – one of the more culturally insular denominations it must be admitted – with whom we share a common conviction in Martin Luther's theological proposition that we are saved by the grace of God, and not by our own straps.

Even stranger still, we feel some remnant connection with Neuendettelsau in Bavaria, from which the Lutheran mission to Cape Bedford was launched in 1886. It is, in the striking words of one of our Indigenous pastors, a spiritual wellspring for the people of my village.

We also identify as *Bama*. Variants of the word *Bama* mean Aboriginal person in the languages across Cape York Peninsular. Of course we also identify as Murri Aboriginal people from Queensland, as distinct from Kooris down south and Noongahs out west. We also identify as Aborigines of Australia, who share a common layer of identity from Tasmania to Cape York, from Brisbane to Perth. The Aboriginal flag – one of the world's greatest flags if I may say so – is also a potent symbol of our identification.

When it comes to patriotism my feelings about identity are more volatile. Of course I am an Australian, but I am not necessarily a proud one. I feel too troubled about

the place of my Indigenous Australian people in this their own country.

I have a strong intellectual appreciation for all those who serve in our country's armed forces. I consider few things more honourable in citizens than service in the armed forces. In this I share the humility of Samuel Johnson.

But on ANZAC day, which is the subject of a growing patriotic identification on the part of younger generations of Australians, I feel a faint nausea. Two of my maternal Aboriginal grandparents served in France in World War I, but still I feel alienated about ANZAC Day. I suspect I feel alienated because my grandparents' service to their country did not make them citizens when they returned to Australia.

I feel alienated because I find it hard to stomach the sight of white Australians saying "Lest We Forget" at the shrines of ANZAC whilst vigorously seeking to forget what happened to the country's indigenous peoples.

People once used a dead metaphor – "balkanisation" – to evoke the splitting of a field into sects, groups, little nodes of power. Now, on the dismembered corpse of Yugoslavia, whose "cultural differences" have been set free by the death of Communism, we see what that stale figure of speech once meant. A Hobbesian world – the war of all on all, locked in blood-feud and theocratic hatred, the *reductio ad insanitatem* of America's mild and milky multiculturalism.

Against this ghastly background we now have our own conservatives promising a "cultural war", while ignorant radicals orate about "separatism". They cannot know what demons they are frivolously invoking. If they did, they would fall silent in shame.

Reasoning and individual choice must guide the resolution of these competing affiliations

Indigenous Australian identity is often said to be so intimately connected with the organisation of our traditional society that it will cease to exist if we embrace modernity.

In the modern world people are far too eager to categorise all other people according to a system of singular, exclusive identities.

As is obvious from the title of his recent book – *Identity and Violence* – Amartya Sen is trying to find solutions to much more severe conflicts than we will ever face in Australia. However, his general argument is, I believe, useful for us Indigenous Australians and for non-Indigenous Australians when we try to find the answers to the questions about my people's place in this country.

Sen's main thought is that we should recognise 'competing affiliations' or 'competing identities'. Taken out of context, those expressions may sound alarming. But Sen is not at all referring to 'competing loyalties' or lack of loyalty to the sovereign state where one lives. On the contrary, Sen's thought is that globally we could reduce what is usually labelled 'sectarian' or 'ethnic' or 'religious' conflicts by recognising the plurality of our identities and their diverse implications.

I do not think that recognition of Indigenous Australians' identities must lead to disunity and isolation. The goal of indigenous policy should be simultaneous successful integration and recognition of the survival of Indigenous Australian distinctness. Rather than being mutually exclusive, I believe that successful integration is a precondition for the survival of distinctness and *vice versa*.

Sen does not ignore the fact that what I have called the layers of identity often compete with each other. It is reasoning and individual choice that must guide the resolution of these competing affiliations – not fundamentalism and an illusion of singular identity. Individuals and groups are assisted in this process of reasoning by having a more mature theory of identity and a model for unity and diversity which is not reductive or essentialist.

I wish to add a dimension to the concept of layered identities that is borrowed from the literature on social capital. Professor Robert Putnam, in his now well-known writings on social capital, identified two forms within societies – bridging social capital and bonding social capital.

Bonding social capital refers to relations among relatively homogenous groups (such as an ethnic, religious or socio-economic group), and it strengthens the social ties within the particular group. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, refers to relations between heterogeneous groups, and it strengthens ties across such groups. Examples of bridging social capital include the civil rights movement and ecumenical religious organisations.

The unity of the nation depends upon the strength of its bonds and the bridges. This is both a matter of quality and quantity of the bonding and bridging institutions, networks and relationship facilitators.

A country that relies on bare patriotic devotion of individuals and groups to the nation does not gain the strength that comes from the overlapping connections between citizens based around a full range of commonalities.

Bonding ties are important because they give expression to primary and proximate relationships in society. Bridging ties are important because they increase recognition of wider affiliations between individuals right across society – even between cultural strangers.

Sen puts his finger on the main problem with multiculturalism, and this crucial insight flows from the analysis of what I have called layered identities and Sen has called ‘affiliations’.

‘Culture’, implying ethnicity and religion is not the only layer of identity. There are many other layers of identification with which individuals in a particular ethnic or religious group will affiliate. Societies that sponsor ‘cultural’ diversity to the exclusion of other affiliations reinforce the problem of ethnicity/religion being seen as the dominant singular affiliation. Cultures become identity blocs.

A mature society will be one where individuals ultimately prioritise their competing affiliations according to a reasoning which is alive to all of their affiliations across society. The challenge for policy is to supply this understanding of layered affiliation, and how this can be consistent with diversity and national unity.

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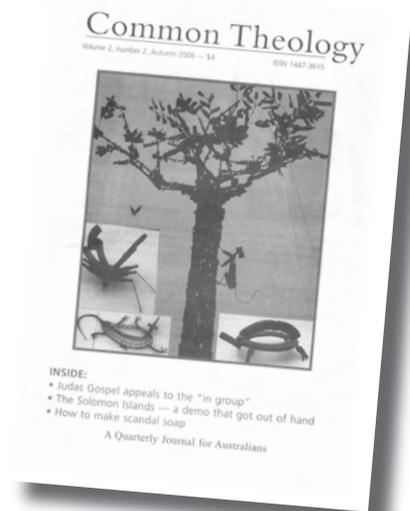
A Lay Ministry of the Australian Church committed to the demystification of theology — a forum for theological views in plain language on matters which affect the daily lives of Australians.

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Many thanks for the latest *Common Theology*. Some very good articles. Quite a scoop having Tom Wright and Rowan Williams in the same issue – though I do not think that either of them touch the mind of “the man in the street”; and I was surprised that Rowan Williams did not do more to debunk gnosticism, and be explicit about it.
Archbishop John Grindrod KBE
Helensvale, Qld

Thank you for a great magazine.
Margaret Brickhill
Wangaratta, Vic

I’m still pouring over your article on Tom Wright’s lecture ‘Uncovering “thin” places’ - and so far as I can understand him, its quite magnificent!
The Revd David Macgregor
Port Elizabeth
South Africa



I look forward to receiving your magazines as their contents are so topical with a thoughtful content. Please continue your good work.
Dr Howard Quinlan
O'Connor, ACT

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Dismembering/remembering

The 2006 Dom Helder Camara Lecture was delivered at the University of Melbourne on June 1st by a theologian from the University of St Thomas in the United States,



Dr William

Cavanaugh, under the title 'The Sacrifice of Love: The Eucharist as Resistance to Terror and Torture' We publish some extracts here.

In my book *Torture and Eucharist* I describe the Church's response to torture and disappearance in Chile, under General Augusto Pinochet's regime.

'Torture' and 'Eucharist' denote two different types of enacted imagination. Torture and Eucharist are not imaginary, in the sense of being unreal, but rather are ways of seeing and narrating the world that are integral to ways of acting in the world.

Torture is an extreme example of the imagination of the nation-state. The nation-state is not just a given, natural reality, but is a peculiarly modern way of dividing up the world between fellow-citizens and foreigners, friends and enemies.

The imagination of the state can evoke compassion and solidarity for people we have never met, as in the case of a rural Minnesota town donating a fire truck to distant New York City in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The imagination of the state can also convince Minnesota farm kids to travel to the other side of the world – Iraq – as soldiers and kill people they know nothing about.

Torture is part of this latter movement – the creation of enemies. Torture is the ritual enactment of the imagination of the state on the body of an individual person. The effects of torture go far beyond the body of the tortured individual. Torture is a social, one might say 'liturgical', enactment of the imaginative power of the state.

The Eucharist is the ritual enactment of the redemptive power of God, rooted in the torture, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this

sacrifice, Christ overcomes the distinction of friend and enemy, and reconciles us to God and to one another. In my book I describe some of the ways that the Church in Chile used the practice of the Eucharist to resist the imagination of terror and torture imposed by the military regime.

I lived and worked with the Church in a poor area of Santiago under the Pinochet regime. I now work at a university in the United States with a comfortable middle-class identity. The two situations seem worlds apart. But now I see the government of the United States resorting to torture in its Global War on Terror.

The Bush Administration's legal justifications for the abuse of prisoners have been the subject of intense debate in the U.S. Here in Australia, the case of Mamdouh Habib¹ and the justification of torture published by the head of Deakin University's Law School² have sparked similar debate. Torture, it seems, does not only find a home in medieval times or so-called underdeveloped countries or brutal military dictatorships. Torture has surfaced at the heart of the liberal democracies' War on Terror.

That torture is about the extraction of information tends to be the accepted story among both those that defend "aggressive interrogations" and those that oppose them. Defenders (such as Deakin University's Mirko Bagaric) commonly use the "ticking bomb" scenario – a terrorist who has planted a bomb on a

¹ Mamdouh Habib is an Australian citizen who was held in Guantánamo Bay for three years before he was released without charges in January 2005. Habib said that he was tortured with electrical shocks, sexually assaulted, smeared with menstrual blood, burned with cigarettes, and told his wife and children had been killed. Upon his release, the Australian government took away his passport and announced that he would be kept under surveillance.

² Mirko Bagaric and Julie Clarke, "Not enough (official) torture in the world? The circumstances in which torture is morally justifiable"; for a summary, see www.deakin.edu.au/news/upload/torturedebate.doc

³ Bagaric and Clarke. For another example, Alan Dershowitz, *Why Terrorism Works: Understanding the Threat, Responding to the Challenge* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).

commercial jetliner is tortured to reveal the bomb's location.³

Opponents argue that information should only be obtained without compromising our shared moral principles.

What tends to go unnoticed by both sides, however, is how few cases of torture actually involve the extraction of information previously unknown to the interrogators.

It seems that gathering information is only part – maybe even a small part – of the story behind the use of torture by the modern state. The rest of the story has to do, I think, with fostering a certain kind of collective imagination. One significant part of that imagination is fear – not just among the detainees themselves but in the subject population as a whole.

As Michel de Certeau remarks, “The goal of torture, in effect, is to produce acceptance of a State discourse, through the confession of putrescence”.⁴ The omnipotence of the state depends on the manifestation of its other – the Marxist or the terrorist – as filth. Such filth assumed an important role in the (Pinochet) regime's morality play; witness one of the members of the Chilean Junta, Admiral Merino, publicly justifying the actions of the regime by referring to Marxists as “humanoids”.⁵

Despite the troubling increase of government surveillance under the current administration, neither the U.S. nor U.S.-occupied Iraq is the same kind of authoritarian regime imposed in Chile under Pinochet. In general, people in the U.S. do not fear to speak out. Nevertheless, fear is an important dynamic in the War on Terror.

Fear is constantly stoked, but it is not the fear of the state, but of the enemies of the state against whom the state protects us. The tragedy of 9/11 is incessantly invoked, not so that history will not be repeated, but so that – to the contrary – it will continually recur in our imagination.

Torture is part of this theatre of fear. Terrorists are our humanoids. It is not simply that the demonisation of people as terrorists allows us to justify their maltreatment (i.e. “why should we bother with human rights when the enemy is subhuman?”).

⁴ Michel de Certeau, “The Institution of Rot,” chap. in *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 40–1.

⁵ *El Mercurio*, August 31, 1988, C4.

Torture also helps to create the enemies that we need. Torture is a kind of theatre in which people are made to play roles, and thereby reinforce a certain kind of social imagination.

Torture reinforces an imaginative distancing between us and the tortured. Not only the actual torturer but the rest of society must guard against identifying with the tortured body. The sympathy we might feel toward another body in pain is cut off by the beastly extremity of torture. The tortured person is not like us. As Ariel Dorfman says, if we felt their pain, we could not go on living.⁶ So we make believe it is not happening, or call it an aberration, or think darkly, “They must have done something to deserve it”.

The extremity of torture helps to erase such gray areas by identifying all righteousness with the torturer

It is not as if the U.S. has a deliberate plan to make others hate the West. The point is more about our imagination. If we did not think of opponents of Western policies in the Middle East as enemies and backward fanatics we would have to reconsider our own policies, and consider the possibility that opponents might have some legitimate grievances. The extremity of torture helps to erase such gray areas, not only by reducing the tortured to subhuman status, but also by identifying all righteousness with the torturer.

This too may seem counter-intuitive, given the moral condemnation with which torture meets in civilized discourse, but those who torture tend to think of their work in extremely high moral terms. Torture helps guard the nation against diabolical threats. Torturers sometimes imagine their acts as a kind of moral self-sacrifice on their part – “What terrible things I must do in order to defend my beloved people!”

The private motto of the DINA, the Chilean secret police, was “We will fight in the shadows so

⁶ Ariel Dorfman, “The Tyranny of Terror: Is Torture Inevitable in Our Century and Beyond?” in Sanford Levinson, ed., *Torture: A Collection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 9.

that our children can live in the sunlight”⁷ It is a dirty business, but those who “take the gloves off” and “get their hands dirty” do so for a higher moral purpose. Indeed, and this is the crucial point, the moral purpose is made more righteous, is pushed to the extreme of righteousness, by the extremity of the act of torture itself. The threat against the nation must be extremely severe if such an extreme procedure as torture is used, and therefore the defense against such threats is invested with the highest moral seriousness. Only the most morally righteous nation could be trusted with the capacity to use torture for a good purpose.

This type of exceptionalism and amnesia is not restricted to the United States alone. The whole Global War on Terror in which many nations participate depends on this type of imagination. Consider what it means to be fighting a war on ‘terror’. Terrorism is not really an ‘ism’; it is not an ideology, but a tactic.

If we are fighting a war on terror, then there is no need to consider the ideas, the aspirations, the historical grievances of the people who oppose us. We are simply fighting “terrorists”, people who believe in nothing, other than the blowing up of innocent civilians. History is erased.

We have no need of examining, for example, the Western overthrow of a democratic government in Iran and the installation of the Shah’s brutal regime of torture – with full Western support. Muslim fundamentalism is simply the irrational source of terror. The Global War on Terror is thus inherently amnesiac. When the enemy is imagined as crazy people who believe in nothing more noble than blowing up innocent people, there is no need to examine one’s own historical sins.

I hope it goes without saying that I am not justifying terrorism or making all acts of violence morally equivalent. What I am trying to do is to understand that the way that we imagine our enemies can cut off any possibility of the resolution of conflict. These dynamics are not limited to the United States, but seem endemic to modern nation-states.

According to political theorist Carl Schmitt, “The specific political distinction to which political

actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy.”⁸ This distinction is what makes an action political.

The problem with liberalism, according to Schmitt, is that in its illusory search for peace and comfort, it threatens to deprive us of our enemies, whom we desperately need. If the state is deprived of enemies, then the friend-enemy distinction will break out into religious, economic, and cultural arenas, and chaos will reign. To have common enemies is the true source of political unity.

The ghost of Carl Schmitt continues to haunt the international stage. We can scarcely imagine common life without mortal enemies. Torture and terror give us the enemies we so urgently need. At the same time, the friend/enemy distinction tempts us to remember only the victims on our side, and never the victims of our own sins. We thus find it difficult to tell the kind of truthful narrative about our common life on which any imagination of peace depends.

If the state is deprived of enemies,
then the friend-enemy distinction
will break out and chaos will reign

Where do we look for the kind of truthful narrative we so desperately need in these times of rampant self-deception? I suggest that the Eucharist is the heart of Christian resistance to torture and terror. The title of my book *Torture and Eucharist* is jarring because we are not accustomed to seeing the connection.

If what I have said so far makes sense – if torture is a ritual drama that helps to create the enemies we think we need – then we can see the Eucharist as the ritual drama that helps undo this imagination. The Eucharist does not only help us see the world differently. It also creates a social body – the Church – that cuts across our loyalties to our various nation-states.

Torture is the ritual inscribing of the state’s power upon a victim’s body. Where else would we look for the Christian response to torture than the ritual remembrance of the death by torture of Jesus Christ – that is, the Eucharist?

In the Eucharistic rite, the commemoration of the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of

⁷ Quoted in Constable and Valenzuela, 90.

⁸ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1976), 26.

Christ spoken after the words of institution is called the *anamnesis*. This is the Greek word used by the New Testament in rendering Jesus' command "Do this in remembrance of me". The Greek word *anamnesis* is the opposite of amnesia; it is literally an 'unforgetting'.

The forgetting that the *anamnesis* seeks to undo is the forgetting that takes place whenever violence is justified, for the death of the Son of God on the cross has shown all such justifications to be a lie.

Catholic theologian Johann Baptist Metz has written over the last thirty years of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ as a "dangerous memory" that disrupts the forgetfulness of the world.

According to Metz, the modern world is entrapped in a linear view of history, such that the past is forgotten in the onward march of progress toward unlimited freedom and consumption. Those who are left behind in this march – the poor, the exploited, the non-Western subject who does not believe in such things – are to be marginalised or converted by force.

The dangerous memory of Christ's torture and death at the hands of the powers disrupts the march of the powerful.

The order of excommunication had the effect of telling the truth in a society fogged in by lies

The unforgetting of the Eucharist involves telling the truth. In 1980 in Chile under Pinochet, the Catholic bishops issued a declaration of excommunication for anyone involved, directly or indirectly, in facilitating torture. Of concern were not just the souls of the individual torturers, but the greater sign value of the Eucharist for the Church and the wider society.

What could be a greater forgetting than the fact that both torturers and tortured approached the same communion table? Amid the many sins of the military regime, torture was singled out because of its dramatic significance in the imagination of the state.

The order of excommunication had the revelatory effect of telling the truth in a society

fogged in by lies. As Bishop Jorge Hourton put it, "When an entire society, because of the scandal given by the authorities who are justly in charge of the common good, has things so confused, so hidden, so distorted... we are enveloped in a social sin. Excommunication reveals it to us."⁹

Excommunication is not the expulsion of a person from the Body of Christ; it is a recognition that the person has already placed him or herself outside the body of Christ, and it is an invitation to repent and come back into communion.

The Eucharist is the construction of a new sacrificial body

Social imagination is not merely a mental act. The Eucharist is about the construction of a social body – the Body of Christ – that is capable of resisting the imagination of the state when resistance is called for.

In the early Church, the term *anamnesis* was not a recalling to mind, but a re-membering of Christ's body, that is, an action that knit together the members of the Body of Christ. The Eucharist is not a recalling to mind of Christ's sacrifice, but the construction of a new sacrificial body.

The Eucharist builds the Church, as Pope John Paul II says, by both expressing and bringing about the reality of the Body of Christ.¹¹ This image is used over and over by Paul. The idea of individual bodies being members of a larger social body is not new to Paul, but is found in the ancient Greek idea of the body politic.

If it is the case that the Eucharist makes the Body of Christ, then the Church does not simply commemorate God's "no" to violence, but embodies God's answer to violence in the world.

We do not simply offer sacrifice to God, but, as St Augustine says, God "wanted us to be ourselves his sacrifice".¹² We ourselves prefer to absorb the violence of the world rather than to perpetrate violence. For this reason, there is a close link in many patristic writings between martyrdom and the Eucharistic sacrifice.

⁹ Bishop Jorge Hourton, "¡Si no dejan de torturar, dejen de comulgar!," in *Combate Cristiano por la Democracia* (Santiago: CESOC, 1987), 90.

¹¹ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, §21.

¹² Augustine, Sermon 227, in Hill, ed., vol. 6, 255.

What would this solidarity of friends mean in our own situation today, as we confront a world of torture and terror? It would mean, I believe, first and foremost affirming our primary loyalty to the Body of Christ and not to the nation-state in which we live. We are Christians first, Americans and Australians second.

This redrawing of imagined boundaries can have a dramatic effect. It helps us to unimagine the enemies that the nation-state has made for us.

The Body of Christ is an international body, transgressing the boundaries of nation-states. In the Catholic Church, we have popes who are German, Polish, Italian, and so on to remind us that the Church is beholden to no national agenda. The 700,000 Christians in Iraq are just as central to the Church as we imagine ourselves to be.

This does not mean that we are only concerned with the welfare of other Christians. Being a sacrificial body means being open to love others, especially our fellow children of Abraham. Our concrete solidarity should be with victims of all nations, the tortured and the disappeared, the victims of bombs in backpacks and bombs dropped from sophisticated aircraft.

Remembering all victims will help us to tell the truth, both about others and about ourselves. If we live inside God's imagination, we will see that even the people we most demonise as enemies – fundamentalist Muslims, for example – are made in the image of God.

In Roxanne Euben's phrase, Muslim fundamentalists are the "enemy in the mirror" for the Western world. Our fear of Muslims can tell us what we fear about ourselves.

But the Church cannot wait for the state to change. To be the Body of Christ means not merely to speak the truth to power, but to live the truth, to embody the coming Kingdom. The Church is the politics of Jesus, and must oppose the politics of the world when it brings death instead of life.

We have much to learn from the example of Chile, where the Church eventually realised that the government was not listening, and decided to act more concretely on its own. In our own context, this might mean protest and concrete acts of solidarity with the victims of our violence. It would mean especially that Christians must simply refuse to fight in unjust wars, and refuse to use unjust means.

newman.unimelb.edu.au/camara

Eye witness

The Taizé Community in France had profound impact on **Tim Booth** during his pilgrimage there in May. Taizé is an ecumenical community of Religious Brothers, formed after the Second World War, with a particular commitment to youth. Over the years it has evolved a form of common worship which is firmly rooted in the traditions of the Christian Church, both intensely biblical and contemporary, and accessible to people of all nations.



People stood in groups talking in front of a flat-roofed building – nondescript except for the surprising Eastern Orthodox-looking minarets emerging from it. I decided this must be the church as I shuffled past signs with single word announcements: *Silencio* and *Stille*. Here was a meeting place for people from all over Europe and beyond. I followed a steady flow of pilgrims through a low and unspectacular room towards a doorway – picking up the familiar Taizé song book.

I found myself in a space that suddenly overwhelmed my senses. My vision was drawn forward at the same time that I found myself being swept with an overpowering desire to weep. Tears did come as I stood transfixed by colour and light and space – impressions that danced on the edges of my awareness amidst an emotional catharsis that at once confirmed and exceeded everything that I had hoped for in coming to this unique place in the east of France.

A vaulted area at the front burst with the orange, red and yellow colours of passion and warmth; towering triangular sails and twinkling masses of candles nestled within honeycombed frames; a simple, free standing wrought-iron cross incorporating hearts, emanated a sense of laughter, playfulness and a simple reverence; subtly shaded electric lighting; a side area with the famous crucifixion icon, with attentive pilgrims kneeling, sitting and even prostrate; and a central channel bounded by a low hedge with a regular distribution

of prayer stools that the white-robed Brothers would soon inhabit.

Then the music started, welling up from all around me. I could feel it resonating on and in my body.

*Community prayer is at the heart of life at Taizé.*¹ Here I was almost suspended in a space that felt sacred unlike any other. The lack of visual clutter allowed the carefully chosen and ordinary symbols to present a spiritual ‘transparency’ that challenged my dualistic notions of the ‘immanence and ‘transcendence’ of God.²

Then, there were the prayerful arrangements of simple scriptural mantras to music; multi-lingual renderings of brief scripture passages that homed in on Christ; and a five to ten minute silence in the middle of the worship that dripped with significance. To experience a liturgy so liberated from the density of words and explicit doctrine lifted my spirit.

Coming to Taizé is an opportunity to seek communion with God through common prayer, singing, personal reflection and sharing... you are welcomed by a community of brothers who have made a lifelong commitment to follow Christ in common life and celibacy, in simplicity of life.

The Taizé community bases its life on the qualities of mutual trust and peace, “a pilgrimage of trust on earth”. Sharing together in the basics of worship, talking, learning, eating and sleeping allows retreatants to participate in Taizé’s community life in a tangible and powerful way.

Being in Taizé is also a preparation for taking on responsibilities back at home with a view to being bearers of peace and trust. Everyone is here to discover or rediscover a meaning for their life and to find a new vitality.

Authors like David Tacey tell us there is a spiritual hunger amongst many in Generation Y. Helping youth orient themselves spirituality – through simple worship and through deep listening, dialogue, and small group interaction – is vital to Taizé’s popularity with young people in Europe. Brothers stand around the church after evening prayer daily to listen to anyone who wants to approach them.

¹ This and following quotes are from the Taizé Community welcome brochure, May 2006.

² Categories from Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion: and the healing of the global village, humpty dumpty and us*, Minneapolis, Winston Press, 1979, 45.

The emphasis is on meaning-making and developing a sense of shared mission as common members of God’s human family, rather than emphasising denominational difference and doctrine.

A German Lutheran pastor who retreats at Taizé annually (adults are restricted to annual visits while youth have unlimited access) put it to me this way: “Taizé is the future of the church”.

Tim Booth is Deacon at St Clement’s-on-the-Hill Anglican Parish, Stafford, Qld and Chaplain Coordinator, Mission Australia.

Eye witness

By Susan Sophia

As a Jewish woman from Britain, Susan Nathan had undertaken *aliyah* (immigration to Israel) in the late 1990s, in order to contribute to the Zionist dream of a Jewish state.

Nathan established herself in Tel Aviv where she taught English and worked for a number of progressive social organisations. It wasn’t until after the *intifada* of 2000 that she began to realise that something was wrong.

The more Nathan learnt about this situation the more troubled she became on a personal and political level. She began to question herself in terms of where she stood in Israeli society and what her contribution was to this “chaos”.

In 2003 Nathan put her principles into practice and moved from her comfortable and familiar environment in Tel Aviv to Tamra, an Arab town in the north. To this day, she is the only Jewish person amongst the 25,000 indigenous Arab townspeople.

She is determined to demonstrate that Jews and Arabs can live together whilst still keeping their distinct identities. “You can show that you can be yourself and stay with others,” is how she described it.

Nathan’s book *The Other Side of Israel* is being revised and will be re-released shortly. The book has received world-wide attention and Nathan is a sought-after speaker, especially in Europe and lately in the Middle East. She is working on another book about Israel which has an unusual focus related to the decay of the ‘health’ of Israel.

My own confrontation with Israel’s apartheid structure first occurred in Haifa when I inquired

—Identity crisis in Israel—

about the bus timetable for Tamra, on the day before I was to meet with Susan Nathan.

Israel's bus network is perhaps superior to anywhere in the world. So I was surprised to find that the first bus to Tamra — a town of 25,000 people — left Haifa just after midday and that there would be no bus to take me back at the end of the day.

There was a bus early in the morning that took the residents of Tamra out, and one at the end of the day that brought them back. I took a taxi there and back and this was a considerable expense.

Nathan began the interview by telling me that she felt traumatised about being part of an “ethnocratic” regime and the moral, social and physical destruction that this creates. She said that Israel had become an unhealthy society and that “...you don't learn compassion and tolerance for others outside your community if you live within an ethnocratic society”.

multi-ethnic and multi-cultural phenomenon that refuses to recognise itself as such, then where is the possibility for an additional identity — beyond the dominant *Ashkenazic* (European) ideal — to embrace the whole society and not exclude its minorities?

The issue of unemployment is also tied up with identity. In Tamra, despite many of the youth having gained access to tertiary education, the unemployment rate is 40%. Nathan said that the streets of Tamra are “...packed at night with the bright, young youth, many of whom have managed to overcome the barriers to gaining a tertiary education only to be excluded from the employment market because they are Arabs.

“In addition to this, there are particular industries that they, by virtue of their background, are barred from for ‘security’ reasons.”

Arab Israelis are barred from serving in the army and people not serving in the army are excluded from much of the employment market.

Transfer is always a hair's breadth away...
life with no psychological security is disastrous

She felt that this ethnocratic regime lies at the heart of Israel's problems and has been its greatest failing. She added that Israel had made a mistake “...to concentrate on its victimhood in order to justify its exclusion of others”.

Because of this, both Arab and Jewish people inside Israel are malfunctioning politically, socially and economically.

Nathan says that both peoples have a missing identity — there are gaps or holes in their identity. She believes that this has serious consequences on the individual level and hence on the social level.

Some of these consequences are that people don't internalise the values of democracy and hence are not able to visualise themselves living a democratic lifestyle. For both peoples, cultural values are weakening, which adds to the confusion about identity. There is for many a fear of expressing one's culture.

For Nathan the question of identity also involves asking about its source. Is it taken from national, state, economic or other indicators? If Israel is in fact a

In Palestinian society “...education is everything but the question is what will this achieve ... (if) a graduate can rarely get beyond the position of a teacher? ... Palestinian academics are a tiny percentage and have to walk a thin line between the Palestinian and Jewish communities and also in compromising their ethics”.

Nathan said that such a high unemployment rate as found in Tamra is typical in every Arab area within Israel and that this, with all the issues related to it, is breeding a future *intifada* within Israel.

The occupation is within the state and not just in the West Bank and Gaza, as there is no freedom of speech for Arabs within Israel. Above all, says Nathan, transfer “...is always a hair's breadth away...life with no psychological security is disastrous”.

Nathan told me that government polls indicate that 64% of Israelis believe that Arabs should be ‘transferred’.

The term ‘apartheid’ came up frequently in our discussions, as it does in Nathan's book. She

explained that a Jewish person who is focused on the Zionist vision need never worry about the Palestinians, or come into contact with them. They can ignore the Palestinians. Nathan stresses that the international community must see what is happening to the Palestinians *inside* Israel, and to see the extent of the apartheid system and systematic destruction of the Palestinian identity.

On the international level, Nathan mentioned that she is constantly asked to speak at conferences about peace but she wants to talk about the apartheid in Israel. She goes back to the issue of victimhood – that this includes Israel's Arab population.

She says that people inside Israel seem to have an inability to look beyond history, and that this failure is linked to victimhood. She goes on to say that there is an unhealthy 'suffering' competition going on and that this is wrong as the whole world "focuses on our suffering" – largely because of the strategic element of Israel.

"Or does it derive from something else? From the feeling of 'being different', being on the 'outside' – an identity which is predicated on being in opposition to, rather than in harmony with, the values of the country in which one lives?"

"I have always felt that my very existence is a political statement – this may in part explain why an allegiance with the state of Israel was formed inside me at an early age. My loyalty to this state – a feeling that is hard to articulate but which I felt very powerfully – derived from the sense of security that it offered me. It was a country where I had no need to explain my needs or myself; a place that might be a refuge for me should my life become intolerable in Europe.

"Throughout my childhood and much of my adult life, the feeling of always being on the edge of disaster was part of my environment, and I internalised it at a very deep level. But little did I realise that I was committing myself emotionally to a state that was perpetuating the same discrimination

It is because of my personal history that I find myself in conflict with my Jewish/Israeli identity and the politics of my country's government

For Jewish people, Nathan explains, there is a constant feeling of one's identity being under threat, and this has come from an upbringing amongst generations of refugees, and a constant state of transience. This threat has been deeply internalised.

Young Israelis however have never experienced this and they are the new Jews... "tough, blonde, serving in the army – not the oppressed outsiders, but lords of the country".

Nathan said that the "naked power" she felt as a Jew coming to Israel – as part of the majority finally, not a minority, was a very powerful experience.

In a recent speech at Haifa University Nathan analysed the identity issues that Diaspora Jews and Israeli Jews grapple with.

"Identity, of course, means different things to different people, and the way in which it is formed is a matter of debate.

"Does it come from being a citizen in a nation state, where one can relate to a flag and a national anthem, developing a sense of pride in one's citizenship, a feeling that one belongs in, and is valued by, one's country?

that my own family had suffered from...

"It is precisely because of my personal history that I find myself in conflict with my Jewish/Israeli identity and the politics of my country's government.

"The irony of the Palestinian dispossession inside the state of Israel – its 'internal refugees' – has not been lost on me, the child of refugees, always unsettled, always insecure."

To address the discrimination Israel imposes upon its Palestinian citizens and upon its far greater number of Palestinian non-citizens, Nathan believes that it is important to turn away from focusing solely on ethno-nationalistic interests and instead start from the humanitarian focus. She believes that if enough people come to this realisation change is possible.

"My chosen way of life means that I confront my society and take responsibility for policies that are allegedly perpetrated in my name and are arguably supposed to benefit me and my fellow Jews worldwide.

"My strong sense of my Jewishness, and culture and humanness are what enable me to live within

the culture of another without feeling that I lose any of my own identity.

“As Jews, we have a history of demanding social equality and egalitarianism, and yet there is to me an evident contradiction between this demand and our retreat into separation from our fellow citizens and neighbours, the Palestinians.”

“An essential part of what it means to me to be a Jewish citizen of any country in the world, but especially this one, is my total commitment to the notion that a truly democratic state is based on justice.

“Justice is not obtained by violence or military force – one cannot achieve true democracy by means of oppression, by destruction, home demolitions, targeted assassinations, locking people up or killing them.”

“I am not challenging the right of the state to exist, I accept it, but I am challenging the particular way in which political Zionism has permeated every spectrum of life here. The state of Israel is not the center of Judaism; God is the center of Judaism.”

Nathan describes herself as “still very much a child of the Holocaust” and she has memories of people trying to trace relatives through posting signs up around the place.

It bothers her that Germans could not see what was happening to the Jews, and she doesn't want it to be like that in Israel.

Susan Sophia is an Australian who has worked in the social justice field for more than 20 years. She interviewed Susan Nathan at Tamra Village in March as part of a research project.

Book reviews

Presences Felt: Encounters in a Lost Century

by **Andrew Chandler**

Darton Longman & Todd, London, 2005

pp 117. Rrp \$34.95. ISBN 0 232 52570 6

Reviewed by Maggie Helass

The author's focus is the power of the institutional landscape to incarcerate the individual.

It is one of the hybrid books straddling academic disciplines – in this case history, ethics, political science and theology – which are the fruits of post-modern intellectual fusion.

Chander's premise is that institutions maintain themselves by recording themselves. On the other hand “Private lives are generally irretrievable, except when momentarily observed by what has become, in our day, the greatest institution of all: public authority”.

In the 20th Century, democracies and dictatorships alike decreed that the life of every single man, woman or child should be thoroughly regulated within an administrative and legal paradigm. Mass politics brought with it a new culture of expertise.

A striking number of elected governments in the century were explicitly racist and new democracies proved horribly prone to violence and corruption. By 1938 all but one of the democratic states created by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 had been superseded by dictatorships.

Totalitarianism was likewise justified by the rhetoric of the majority. The same culture of control and efficiency was driven to extremes only possible in a technological age – relentless propaganda, prophetic figures of leadership, juxtaposed with a construction of mass assent. Totalitarianism used heroic imagery “to appeal to that fatal susceptibility to the grandiose which is found lurking in most societies, and disillusioned ones in particular”.

Chandler suggests that the nuclear arsenals of the second half of the 20th Century showed how pervasive totalitarian dialectic and scale had become.

Historically, the Christian churches of Europe had been eager participants in the culture of public identity — and in the pursuit of legitimisation through self-definition.

It is fashionable to criticise the German churches in the Third Reich for their ‘failure’ to speak on behalf of the Jews, but Chandler maintains that it is too simple to write Christian history as the story of good leaders and bad, or of good or bad theology.

The relationship between the policies of authority and the conversations and activities of the untitled believer is fragile – and authoritarian cultures often contain the most active and resistant sub-cultures.

Chandler describes the suppression of the Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union. Hitler used the fear this provoked by displaying a sincere

religiosity, and in 1933 the Catholic Church traded its political influence in Germany for concessions for churches, schools, charitable concerns and religious journals.

But the terms of the agreement were not honoured. Catholic youth groups were absorbed into the Hitler Youth, prompting the Pope to challenge the National Socialist movement in 1937.

Protestants were generally more sympathetic to National Socialism, but there was a minority of stout resistance, particularly to the party's racial policies. By 1934 the Confessing Church had emerged, but it was deprived of legal approval and material resources, and its pastors were subject to conscription.

In the summer of 1940 the Vatican, as a state in the heart of Fascist Italy, chose neutrality as a calculated policy. But this appeared to many to be a suspension of moral judgement and proved to be a deep ethical hole for the Pope.

friction between “the criteria of the corporate apologetic and the quite independent force of moral and spiritual individualism”.

The Nazi occupation of Germany began without fanfare. The public was gradually deprived of its political rights, but its opinions were studied assiduously by the new instruments of oppression.

Gleichschaltung was a policy of social engineering which took power by stealth. It was not enough for people to be governed – they must become supporters, evangelists.

German resistance to Nazism is usually defined by the assassination attempt on Hitler on July 20th 1944. But this was but one manifestation of a far more widespread phenomenon. Following the failure of the plot to kill Hitler 11,448 opponents of the National Socialist regime were killed before the surrender of Germany the following year.

Chandler is at pains to point out what incredible processes of resistance took place in a short time. Insights and loyalties of individual conscience must

the life of every man, woman or child should be regulated within
an administrative and legal paradigm by democracies and dictatorships

There was no pronouncement from St Peter's when Poland was devastated. But this was a time of annihilation and fear; thirty-three million Catholics lived in Germany. If the Pope pronounced against Hitler, what would become of them? Whatever the allegations of betrayal, if the church had ceased to exist the debate would have died with it.

With totalitarianism, the individual became wholly expendable in the great purposes of the day. Even the Christian language of self-abnegation unwittingly fed into a movement towards structures which conspired to isolate and strand the individual conscience. Out of this matrix came what Chandler dubs ‘irresponsible moralities’.

“In this book I have adopted the idea of irresponsible morality to explore a persistent and resilient strain of moral conduct which denies the power of these orderly regulations.” He includes case histories of expressions of an intense sense of individual responsibility for colossal affairs.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, like Oscar Romero, was an embarrassment to his superiors in life, although both were embraced post-humously by their churches. For the churches too are subject to the strictures of their institutions, and experience the

form into a state of dangerous conviction; become explicit; seek, find, and harmonise with other independent minds. Under danger of arrest at every turn the architecture of meaningful resistance must be built and acted upon, in conditions of utter secrecy in the midst of a major war. Men and women did this at extreme personal risk, in their ‘spare time’.

It was in circles of friends that the most articulate and persistent source of resistance emerged (e.g. the correspondence between Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the English bishop George Bell).

Chandler makes his point about the clash of ‘responsible’ and ‘irresponsible’ moralities with the poignant reminder of secret envoys from Germany risking their lives to go to Whitehall and Washington, only to be disregarded, or even dismissed as traitors to their country.

This absorbing ramble back into the past century ends with a contemporary warning: “As our models of corporate life grow more intricate still, their burdens enforce a narrowing of perceptions which, in turn, commands a culture of defensiveness and conformity.”

A useful early harvest of historical insight into the 20th Century..

Book reviews

Alexander the Corrector – the Tormented Genius Who Unwrote the Bible

by Julia Keay

HarperCollins, 2004. pp 269.

Reviewed by Alan Dwight

“Strong’s for the strong’uns, Youngs’ for the young’uns and Cruden’s for the crude’uns.”

Despite such a summing-up of different Bible concordances, my well-worn 1934 Cruden’s remains an indispensable companion, along with my equally well-worn *Authorised Version* of the Bible.

Yet Julia Keay has set me thinking for the first time about the man, Alexander Cruden, behind the colossal task long before the computer age – 2.5 million words, four times the Bible’s length.

He was a Scotsman at a time when Scots were much in demand in England because of a thorough system of education that emphasised much repetition and required long hours of childhood immersed in Latin, Greek and French, as well as theology, philosophy, history etc. And for Calvinist Presbyterians the Bible was the *sine qua non* of living.

At times the account of his life reads as the diary of a madman – to borrow a title from Nikolay Gogol (1835) and Lu Hsun (1918).

Cruden was the victim of unjust accusations which led to terrible sufferings. In diaries he asserted his sanity and we believe him – especially because of these rational accounts. His experiences in madhouses are a horrifying indictment of the treatment of the ‘mad’ in 18th Century Britain, even when perfectly sane. In one case he was ‘put away’ to get rid of a rival in love.

Early in his life Cruden spent time in an Aberdeen lunatic asylum. His love for a young woman was the cause, but it appeared that the woman’s brother, not Cruden, had made her pregnant. The asylum experience put a cloud over the rest of his life. Cruden and later biographers refused to name the woman, but Julia Keay’s detective work named her. In this fascinating story Keay tells how Cruden later met the *femme fatale* in London – to the shock of both.

His alleged lunacy led Cruden to abandon a vocation to ministry in his church but his belief in the sacredness of every word of the Bible led him,

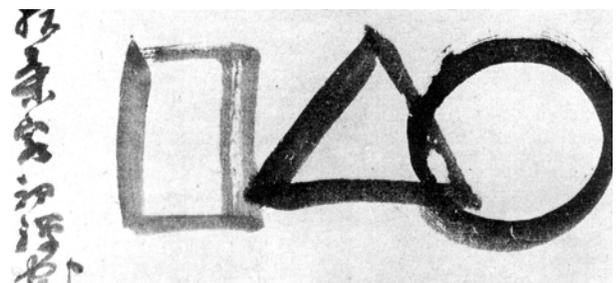
in his spare time as a proof-corrector, to work on a Bible concordance. His apartment filled with a multitude of long strips of paper filled with Bible texts. While others used large teams to compile dictionaries, he worked alone in the belief that a concordance would aid “the means of propagating ... the knowledge of God”.

After twelve years of hard work the First Edition of 1,200 leather-bound copies appeared in 1737. It has been estimated that in today’s money it would altogether have cost him \$34,000 – but there were many pre-publication subscribers aware of the work’s value to them.

Later he was pleased that the universities of Oxford and Cambridge honoured him for his great achievement.

Julia Keay tells her story exceedingly well, having accumulated much detail of the *dramatis personae* of the story. She illuminates more than just Cruden’s life, especially life in madhouses and prisons.

The subtitle is intriguing – Alexander Cruden was certainly “a tormented genius” but how was it he “unwrote the Bible?” Does it mean he pulled it apart? He is revealed as a man who suffered, but also a man of great charity. Over the years millions have found cause to bless him for his concordance. And now we can thank Julia Keay for doing him justice.



The Revd Alan Dwight, distinguished historian of Chinese and Japanese culture, died on February 20. He was 85. A veteran writer and art critic, Alan Dwight had been a contributor and subscriber to *Common Theology* since its inception in 2002. He is survived by his wife Florence.

In a recent letter to the Editor Alan Dwight wrote “I’ve seen many examples of the Circle of Infinity calligraphy. Thanks to the Chinese brush and ink there’s an infinite variety”. He enclosed a copy of Sengai’s extension to Triangle and Square (above).

Book reviews

Seeing in the Dark – University Sermons

by Nicholas Lash

Darton Longman & Todd, London, 2005

pp 163, rrp \$39.95.

Reviewed by Maggie Helass

This book of sermons from a Cambridge scholar reflects on two decades when theology was well and truly out in the cold as far as western society was concerned.

The collection begins in 1969, during the Cold War and when Existentialism was cool. “We are lost, badly lost, in the fog,” remarked the young Nicholas Lash.

He broaches ethical problems of the day, such as President Reagan’s electoral appeal to disenfranchised Christians, and proves himself to be a prophet, ‘seeing in the dark’ on behalf of his generation.

The appeal to nostalgia influences significant congregations of the church today.

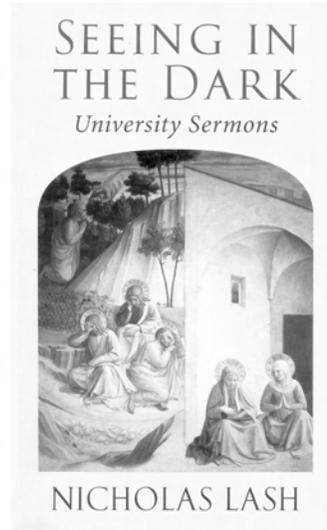
By the 1980s – notorious in Australia as the decade of greed – Lash is giving his university audiences practical advice on Christian living.

“Hope is not a feeling, but a quality of action... the achievement of what I have called the integration of sensibility is a necessary condition of hearing and responding to the prophetic message.”

Marx, so influential in the period, gets insightful mention: “What Marx well understood...were the terrifying costs of the processes whereby, under capitalism’s Midas touch, the abundant richness and vast diversity of things is drained away, homogenised, as everything becomes transformed into only one kind of thing: commodity.”

And laying bare the worm in global politics Lash tells an Oxford congregation: “One fundamental form of self-deception is self-interest disguised as altruism. Egotism walking in its sleep. Thus, for example, in East-West relations, we identify the defence of the West with the defence of human freedom, the freedom of all mankind.”

These sermons affirm the preacher’s prophetic ministry, but in their time they would have been subversive, unafraid to discomfort the comfortable in the congregations of academia.



At Edinburgh University in 1982 he lambasted those for whom every point of view has something to say for it: “It is really very difficult to see why anyone should sustain, even with a cup of water, these apostles of shapeless benevolence. They will, it is true, escape crucifixion-why

should anyone bother to kill those who have nothing disturbing to say?”

He describes the dark bewilderment – the absence of criteria on the basis of which values are to be chosen, goals selected, truth affirmed – which pervaded the times. Post-modernism, nameless then, was already overturning religious complacency.

“There is, in our culture, a deep-laid and most unbiblical assumption that God’s Word is spoken for comfort rather than for truth.”

We are, said the preacher in a 1978 address to Trinity Hall, Cambridge, disturbingly aware, perhaps more than any other generation in human history, of our complicity in the world’s evil.

In the 1990s Lash turns to the costliness of creation and redemption. “It may be out of nothing that the world is made, but it does not follow that its making is uncostly”.

In these sermons he is urging the re-embodiment of the human narrative – a palpable response to the end of the reign of rationalism.

Lash’s acerbic orthodoxy is very refreshing. I wish I had heard his sermons when he preached them – they would have encouraged me in dark and difficult times. Besides being a chronicle of those times, this is a useful little book for devotional reading.

Tilting at Hillsong

By Tom Frame



Last year marked the passage of 400 years since the first part of Cervantes' masterpiece *Don Quixote* was published.¹ The commercial success of the book was extraordinary and astonished Cervantes who had previously known only disappointment and despair. Four centuries on, it is possibly the world's most published and translated book after the Bible (it has appeared in 85 languages), while the central character has become one of the most popular in literary history. And yet, a debate continues about why Cervantes wrote the book and what readers should make of Don Quixote's adventures.

Given all that was said and written in 2005, I was surprised that little attention was paid by commentators to what I regard as one of Cervantes' principle concerns – the pursuit of virtue; and that Christians were conspicuously absent from among those celebrating this important milestone.

I want to argue that *Don Quixote* ought to be read as a religious book; to assert that Cervantes would have taken issue with Hillsong's presentation of Christianity;² and, to claim that its main message is important for the Australian Church.

It is remarkable that the character of Don Quixote is still so widely known. On first inspection he appears to be an eccentric whose absurd behaviour lacks both authenticity and appeal – especially to a modern audience with little interest in what he aspires to do and longs to be.

Writing while he was in prison, Cervantes tells the story of an unremarkable middle-aged gentleman, Alonso Quixano, who becomes obsessed with medieval books on chivalry. He styles himself 'Don Quixote de La Mancha', after the noble knights of the Middle Ages. Mounted on his horse Rocinante, Don Quixote, with his squire Sancho Panza – a rustic buffoon apparently attracted only to material

¹ Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's (1547-1616)

² Hillsong is a pentecostal-style 'mega church' in Sydney.

Home truths

things – leaves his provincial village to deal with injustice and promote equity, on a great quest that takes them across Spain. But the world is not ready for the 'Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance'.

Don Quixote's disillusionment with the world turns into delusion. He enters a fantasy land which simultaneously delights and destroys him.

He mistakes windmills for giants (from which the famous phrase 'tilting at windmills' is derived); inns for enchanted castles; flocks of sheep for armies; and a horse trough for a baptismal font, as he struggles to reconcile appearance with reality.

As the American literary critic Lionel Trilling has noted, Don Quixote acts as if the world were what he would have it be – as if the ideal were the real. But it isn't and he descends into madness.

On returning home he resumes the persona of Alonso Quixano and announces that his sanity has returned. Shortly afterwards, he dies. Death, the final injustice and the ultimate bondage, seems to have triumphed as the world apparently continues to scorn the virtuous.

a "funny book about a silly man"

What are we to make of Cervantes' novel, four centuries on? The celebrated American poet Mark Van Doren commented somewhat facetiously in 1958 that theories about Don Quixote may outnumber theories about anything else in the literary world.

Interpretations have quite predictably changed with the times and yet no consensus regarding even the central theme of the work has emerged. This is despite Cervantes' claim in the prologue that "he has no other object in view than that of overthrowing the authority and prestige which books of chivalry enjoy in the world at large and among the vulgar".

In his 1991 study *The Sanctification of Don Quixote*, Eric Ziolkowski explains that the earliest views of the "funny book about a silly man" held that it was "a mere burlesque, and of its hero as merely

a ridiculous fool”. But he proceeds to show that responses to this knight have become increasingly more generous and diverse through time.

I believe that *Don Quixote* ought to be read as a religious book. To me, the Don represents the noble hero fighting for lofty ideals and sublime values in a hostile and uncomprehending world. In my interpretation of Cervantes’ work, Don Quixote can readily be seen as a Christian saint who holds fast to his faith in a world that can neither share nor live up to high standards of moral virtue.

This is, in part, a reflection of Cervantes’ own experience of life as a one-time soldier, prisoner of war, undischarged bankrupt and failed tax collector. He spent time in gaol for offences committed by others, suffered permanent disability from a war injury, and was temporarily excommunicated after a dispute with the Dean of Saville. It is crucial, therefore, to remember in studying this novel that the author was a religious man possessing religious beliefs living in a world largely shaped by religious institutions.

Throughout his life Cervantes tried to live morally and virtuously but repeatedly found himself a victim and an outcast.

The world in which Cervantes lived and about which he wrote was in a state of flux. He is afraid that religious commitment and moral virtue have become more of a hindrance than a help in the new world where money, position and power are highly sought after and widely esteemed.

In this thoroughly pragmatic world that is evolving before his eyes, Cervantes observes that shrewdness, influence, wealth, gender, and youth appear to be what matter most.

Through the character of Don Quixote, Cervantes laments that noble values have actually become ridiculous. They are pitiable at best and dangerous at worst. Humility, integrity, compassion and love itself create painful realities, whichever way one looks at them.

Standing back from the novel to observe both its author and the broader context in which he writes, the conclusion must be that the virtues Cervantes seeks to honour and the conflict with contemporary culture he depicts are a Christian worldview.

But how is this relevant to Australian Christianity? In my view, the novel speaks directly and intuitively to the prevailing

mood of our times. There is a push among Australian churches to make religious faith relevant, acceptable and ‘cutting edge’ – whatever that means.

There is a feeling that Christianity needs to be freed from social or cultural baggage in order to remove all non-biblical and non-theological obstacles to believing and belonging; to declare that Christians are no different from the undifferentiated population in their appreciation of, and participation in, public life.

Many churches now stress the continuities between themselves and their core convictions and prevailing social mores and cultural attitudes. This is largely because these churches promote religion and spirituality as a form of therapy and self-realisation rather than as the pursuit of truthful living marked by the acquisition of moral virtue. This is apparent in the themes and tenor of the Hillsong conferences – the biggest annual Christian gathering in Australia.

These churches promote religion as therapy rather than as the pursuit of truthful living

Last year’s conference was held at the Sydney’s Olympic Superdome and featured an array of speakers from Australia and the United States. It was estimated that nearly 30,000 people attended.

Prime Minister John Howard and Opposition Leader Kim Beazley sent official representatives. They were joined by five Federal Cabinet ministers, New South Wales Premier Bob Carr, eight Liberal backbenchers and two National Party Senate leaders. The event was reported in every Australian metropolitan daily newspaper and several evening television news bulletins.

Politicians spoke in fulsome praise of Hillsong and its ability to “pull a crowd”. Although an agnostic, Bob Carr told the conference he liked the idea of “Christianity shorn of its medieval accretions”.

“I like the idea of each believer reading the Bible and finding his or her path to individual salvation. I also like the spontaneity and informality of Hillsong’s worship. It’s actually very Australian.”

Federal Treasurer Peter Costello was inspired by the conference theme – strength: “We at the

Australian Government level think about that a lot... How do we make our industry strong, our economy strong? How do we make our schools strong, and how do we make our public strong, and where does the strength of a nation come from?" As a political leader in a religiously plural society he could not be too precise!

Viewed from a distance, it is a conference of very mixed and, in my judgment, confusing messages. The conference theme was 'strength' and yet St Paul is adamant that 'weakness' and humility are more likely to be routes to blessing and fulfilment.

The promises of material prosperity and personal success stands in stark contrast to the poverty of Jesus and the humiliations suffered by the apostles – most of whom died violent deaths because they refused to conform to the customs and convictions of the day.

The promotional material for this year's Hillsong Conference at the Sydney Superdome in July promised –

(M)agnificent wisdom from many of the world's finest leaders, magnificent worship which will ascend into the heavens and bring His glory to earth, and magnificent inspiration and perspective that will enable us all to make a difference in our world. Our labour this year will be to roll out the red carpet and make Hillsong 2006 a wonderful experience for you, your family, your team and your church. We love you, we believe in you, and we can't wait to celebrate with you in July.

Everything, from trendy logos to personal endorsements, gives the impression that Hillsong is attuned to the spirit of the times and responsive to market research. It is a professional and effective organisation committed to the achievement of its corporate objectives by satisfying the needs and aspirations of its target audience.

Would Cervantes have shaken his fist at Hillsong's social, cultural and political conformity, as Don Quixote 'tilted at windmills'?

To my mind, there is much in this contemporary presentation of Christianity that seems far from Jesus' invitation to carry one's cross and to follow even unto death. At Hillsong there is no mention of the trials of personal sufferings (because they reflect a lack of faith); the torment of unanswered prayer (because one is not praying in the right way); the persistence of besetting sins (because they are usually of the devil); the eschewing of private wealth (because the faithful are rewarded materially

by the Lord); the possibility of personal ridicule (unlikely among the culturally compliant).

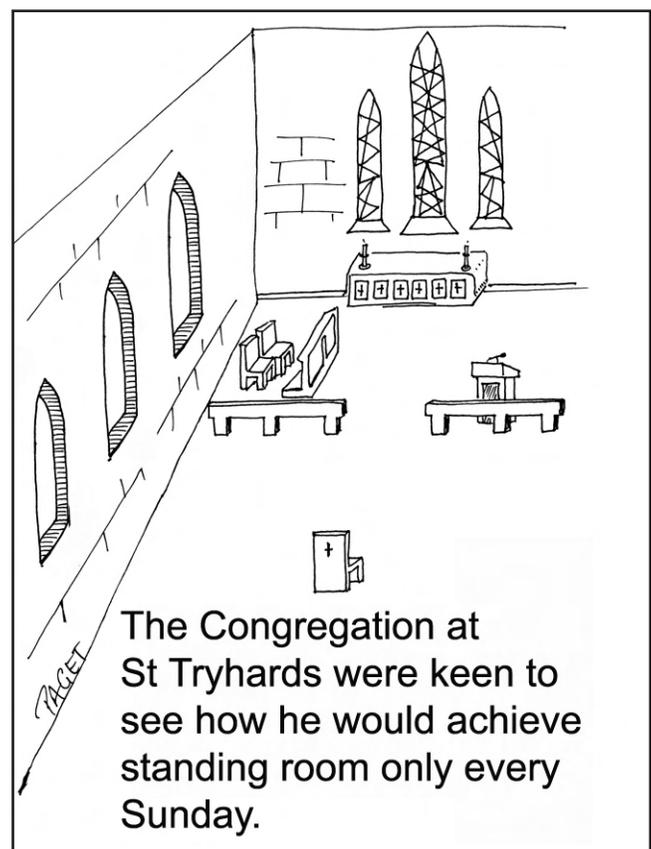
There is, of course, no virtue in being irrelevant, second-rate, or 'daggy'. But there must remain scope for recognition that Christianity will at times be unfashionable, counter-cultural and disruptive; while Christians will be non-conformist, peculiar and out-of-step with prevailing social customs and the cultural mood.

Only by a conscious promotion of the Church as a community that upholds a different account of individual identity and human destiny can Christians discharge their obligation to be light and salt in a perishing world.

There is, in my view, much of value for Christians in the novel *Don Quixote*. Although never promoted as a handbook for religious life, it contains much that will sustain Christians as they seek to be the hands and the heart of Christ wherever God has been pleased to place them.

Dr Tom Frame is Anglican Bishop to the Australian Defence Force. His latest book is *Church and State – Australia's Imaginary Wall*, published in August by UNSW Press, pp 95, rrp \$16.95. ISBN 0 86840 916 2

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