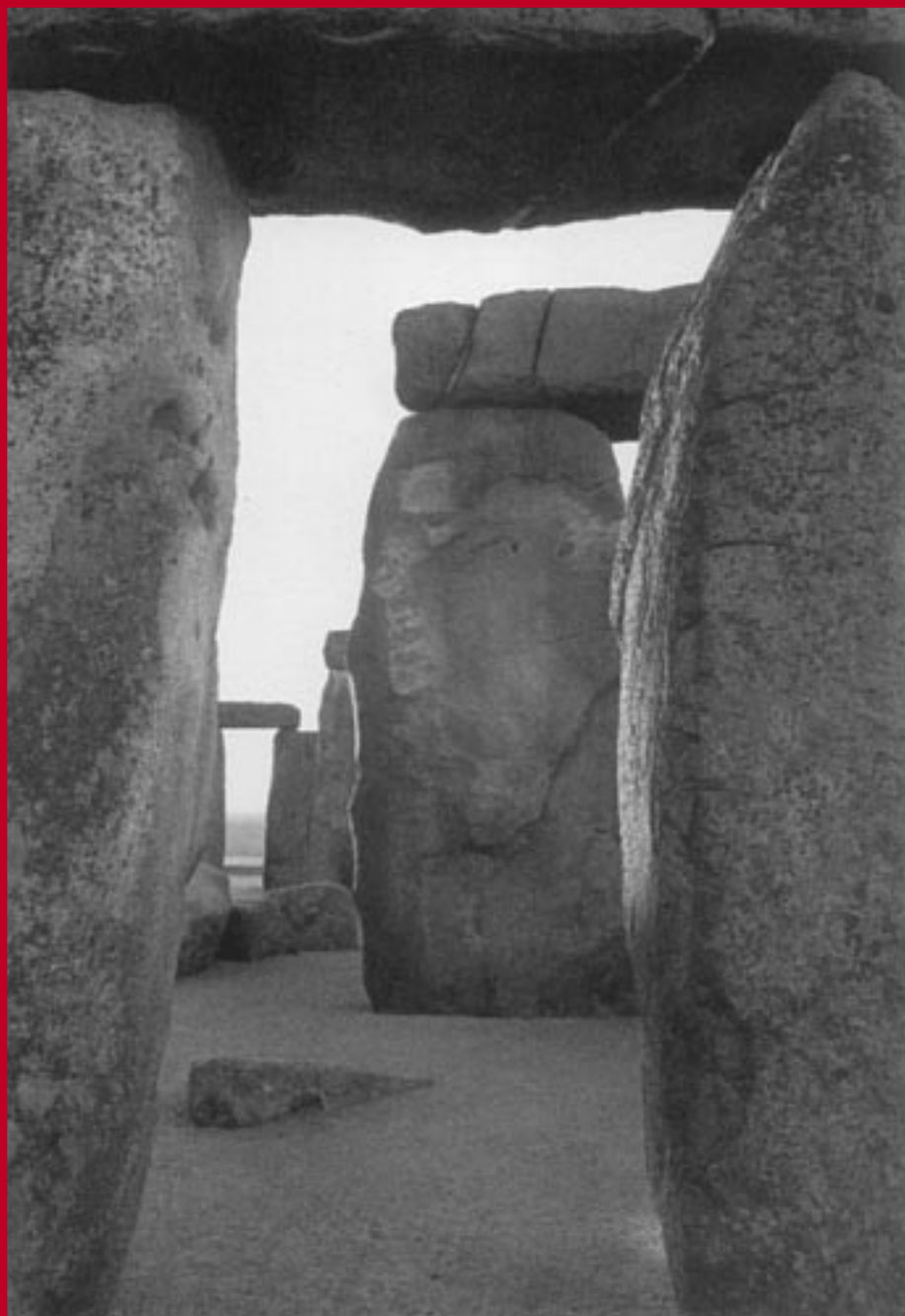


Common Theology

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INSIDE: How seven Melanesian Brothers became martyrs
FORUM—the Lost Soul of Sex
Abused are the peace-makers—Hanan Ashrawi in Sydney

A Quarterly Journal for Australians

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From the Editor

The menu for this edition of *Common Theology* is rich and varied. Thomas Moore, author of *Care of the Soul*, writes on sexual spirituality—a crucial topic considering that the churches' conflicts today are focused upon sexual abuse, gender wars, homosexuality, contraception and the attrition of marriage as a basic social contract.

On the broader front, western society's commodification of sex is one of Fundamentalist Islam's arguments for justifying terrorist acts. It behoves the Church to consider why it has failed to foster a wholesome understanding of sexuality in cultures where Christianity was formative.

Seven Melanesian Brothers were martyred last year whilst serving the cause of peace in the Solomon Islands. Their chaplain, Richard Carter, tells the inside story of this chapter of Church history in Oceania.

The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in Canberra faces Parliament House across Lake Burley Griffin. Professor James Haire took on guardianship of this controversial project last November. He explains why it is apt that Christianity should be represented on a corner of the Parliamentary triangle.

The row when last year's Sydney Peace Prize went to Palestinian politician Hanan Ashrawi was extensively covered by Australian news media. What she actually said was less well publicised. Her text covers the convoluted topic of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Difficult reading but well worth the effort in order to understand something of the current anguish of the Holy Land.

News media is the prism through which we perceive the world today. Although the media has been called the Fourth Estate (after the Church and the two houses of Parliament), the hiatus between its influence and its moral maturity has continued to grow. We can no longer depend upon the media to give us a truthful or balanced reflection of public affairs. *Media Ethics*, a new textbook by Australians Jane Hendtlass and Alan Nichols, provides a vital tool for church groups to practice critical analysis of the mass media, and reclaim public responsibility for the media environment in which we live.

Evil is a lack of something, as if white ants have eaten the woodwork and left only the paint of the house standing. At the heart of the psychopath—often a most charming person—is no 'heart'. Somehow in this person's makeup something went missing. This pathology arose from a systemic failure.

So it is that evil characteristically eats out the heart of governments, institutions, organisations, communities, families and individuals—through a lack of something.

Compassion, truthfulness, altruism—qualities of humanity at its best—when not actively cultivated, are naturally replaced by heartlessness, dishonesty and greed. These vices are self-serving, parasitic upon institutions and individuals that host them, until—like the house of white ants—all that remains is a veneer.

The time has come for all people of goodwill to recover responsibility as citizens—not merely tax-payers and consumers—to actively cultivate truthfulness, hospitality and compassion. These are the foundations upon which the Judaeo-Christian culture was originally built, but are virtues which are vanishing from public life today.

Maggie Helass

Bringing home the Wolf

By Richard Carter

On the Feast of the Transfiguration (August-8) last year the Melanesian Brotherhood was officially told by Solomon Islands' police commissioner William Morrell that all six of their missing Brothers had been murdered on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal.

For three months the Brotherhood—an indigent Anglican Religious Order—had waited, hoped and prayed in vain that their Brothers were alive and would return.

Since 1999 the Melanesian Brotherhood (alongside other religious communities) had been in the front line of peace-making in a nation torn asunder by the now familiar economic and political hangover from colonisation.

Many Solomon Islanders felt they could not depend on the official police force, and turned to the Melanesian Brotherhood for help and support when their lives and property were threatened. The Melanesian Brotherhood thus camped between enemy lines and tried, each day, to stop the fighting.

They helped the displaced and the wounded, the elderly and the children. They located bodies of the dead to return them to grieving relatives.

Their ministry meant they stayed with families in fear, returned property that had been stolen, freed hostages and protected victims of violence. During this time they often went where no one else was prepared to go, answering needs no one else was prepared to answer.

They did this for both sides because they did not serve one ethnic group or another, or politics, or self, but served God and loved their neighbours.

Until the tragic events of last year no Brother was ever harmed.

At Pentecost 2002 the Melanesian Brotherhood decided to help collect guns—for guns were a root cause of injustice and social unrest in the nation. The Melanesian Brothers decided with one mind that there could be no chance of true peace in the Solomon Islands unless the guns were destroyed.



The Revd Br Richard Carter

During the following five months the Brotherhood worked to disarm all sides — this included guns held illegally by members of the police force, Malaitans, Guadalcanal or anyone else holding weapons. The many guns, bullets and bombs handed over to the Brotherhood were taken out to deep sea and sunk, in the presence of the Police

Commissioner, so that they could never be used again.

By 2003 it was increasingly obvious that the situation on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal was growing worse.

Harold Keke (the Guadalcanal Liberation Front Leader) based on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal had not given up his guns. Many Malaitans used this as their excuse for refusing to hand over theirs.

Few were brave enough to speak out in this culture of fear. Rumours of atrocities on the Weather Coast reached Honiara (capital of the Solomon Islands), including the murder of Father Augustine Gave, a retired Roman Catholic Priest. Many people whom Keke suspected of complicity with the government or betrayal of his cause were tortured or executed, including his own followers.

The Solomon Island Police Force was poorly equipped and without trust or expertise to deal with the Weather Coast situation, so had enlisted the support of Keke's opponents. This collusion was causing its own problems. There were accusations of the burning of villages and human rights abuses on both sides. The majority of Weather Coast people, including women and children, were confused and afraid—caught between Harold Keke's militants and a joint-operation militia.

Brother Nathaniel Sado, the first of seven Melanesian Brothers to be murdered, had gone

visit Keke in February last year, with two other brothers. They took with them a letter from the Anglican archbishop, Sir Ellison Pogo, to try and open up a dialogue for peace.

Brother Nathaniel knew Keke well, and had worked with his brother during the disarmament period. He naively believed that Keke could help to bring peace. When his two Brothers—unable to meet with Keke—returned, Brother Nathaniel (against their advice) decided to stay. He made the mistake of believing Keke would not harm him.

On Easter day one of Keke's followers, who had escaped and run away to Mbabanakira, reported on the Solomon Island radio news service that Brother Nathaniel Sado had been murdered.

When the Brotherhood heard the news they were deeply shocked and unsure whether it was true. While the Melanesian Brotherhood had always tried to advocate for others now there was no one to advocate for them.

On April 3 six Brothers, led by Assistant Head Brother Robin Lindsay (who was responsible for the welfare of the brothers in the Solomon Island Region), left Honiara by canoe for the Weather Coast. Their mission, as authorised by the Archbishop, was to visit the Brotherhood households on the Weather Coast to find out what had happened to Brother Nathaniel and, if his death was confirmed, to try and bring his body back for burial. The five Brothers who went with him were Francis Tofi, Tony Sirihi, Alfred Hill, Patteson Gatu, and Ini Paratabatu.

They arrived on the Weather Coast and walked inland towards Keke's village. Then they came upon a group of Keke's followers (Keke was not with them) who attacked them and killed Brothers Robin Lindsay, Francis Tofi and Alfred Hill because they refused to lie face down on the ground.

The other three Brothers were taken back to Keke's camp where, after a night of humiliation and torture, they were lined up in front of a single grave and shot in the chest, falling into the grave. Those who were later arrested for their murders told that they were killed because they were considered to be government spies.

When the Brothers did not return, three months of vigil and prayer began, for Keke claimed all these hostages were still alive and were being held as prisoners of war.

In the meantime Keke took five novices and two Brothers hostage and held them for more than a month. These seven were all released unharmed. Keke had asked them to pray with him, and to preach to his men. When they were released he sent them back with gifts of shell money and pigs for the Melanesian Brotherhood.

A week after their release, in a meeting with the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), Keke announced that the seven brothers originally held were dead, and had been killed on arrival. At the same time he agreed to an unconditional surrender.

All seven martyred brothers lie together at the Motherhouse of the Melanesian Brothers at Tabalia. The day of their funerals was declared a national day of mourning. Thousands lined the roads and gathered at Tabalia to witness their coffins pass. Their burial and their funeral service was broadcast to the nation.

I waited at the airport for Brother Francis Tofi's father and mother to arrive from Makira. I had not seen this tall strong Tikopian and former Brother since his son's admission as a Brother in 1999, when he had worn a traditional tapa cloth (bark) dress and had such pride in his son who would to take on a ministry he had left twenty years before. Now arriving at the airport he looked so frail, so bent with grief. He put his arms round me and sobbed and his cry entered into me and I was crying too. Francis' father had been fasting since he heard of his son's kidnapping in April. Around his neck he hung Francis' faded black Brother's shirt into which he cried continuously.

The full community of Brothers and novices dressed in white stood at the bottom of the hill which leads to our Motherhouse at Tabalia. Behind them a huge crowd, from the Governor General to village children waited.

One by one the coffins were unloaded from three trucks, the wailing of the crowd grew louder, they broke ranks and pushed towards the coffins, yet the Brothers, with dignity and inner strength, took up the coffins one by one and led the huge procession up the hill to the chapel.

In front of each coffin was a banner—Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God, with the name of the Brother who had given his life in the cause of peace.

That night the late Francis Tofi's father called me to the house where he was staying. He told me he had buried his grief in the grave together with his son, and now he would eat again. He bent low over my hands and breathed on them, and I ate fish with him.

Brothers' decision to go in search of Nathaniel is one many of us would fear making. But it showed the kind of men these Brothers were and it showed their love for God and their people. They all knew the danger of their mission and yet they decided, in prayer, to face that danger. They went because they believed the Gospel, not just in word but also in the action of their lives. They believed that the Good Shepherd must go in search of the one who is lost. They believed that the Good Shepherd must be willing even to give up his life for the sheep.

The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) discovered the burial place of our Brothers' bodies. They investigated the crimes committed, and brought them back for burial. They arrested the perpetrators of these murders and have investigated with great thoroughness and professionalism. This has not been without difficulty or personal cost.

Many questions are asked about the validity of military intervention, and it is easy to make mistakes.

I have often been a critic of such intervention in other nations. Yet the experience of our Community thus far is one of deep thankfulness to RAMSI for their help and support in bringing justice and peace. Our experience is one of deep gratitude for the sensitivity and care with which they have helped the Solomon Islands. There are of course many difficulties we still face but there is, throughout the nation, a renewed hope that security is restored and that justice must prevail.

Brother Richard Carter was born and educated in the UK. He worked for four years training teachers in Java, Indonesia. He has worked for the Church of Melanesia since 1990 as a lecturer at Bishop Patteson Theological College and has been Chaplain and Tutor of the Melanesian Brotherhood since 1993. He is much involved in the formation programme of the Melanesian Brotherhoods' Novitiate, which at present numbers more than 170 novices in training.



The Melanesian Brotherhood was founded by Ini Kopuria, a native Solomon Islander from Guadalcanal, in 1925. Its main purpose was evangelistic, to take and live the Gospel in the most remote islands and villages throughout the Solomon Islands, among people who had not heard the message of Christ. The Brotherhood's method is to live as brothers to the people, respecting their traditions and customs—planting, harvesting, fishing, house building, eating and sharing with the people in all these things. Kopuria believed that Solomon Islanders should be converted in a Melanesian way. Today, the work of the Brotherhood has broadened to include work and mission among both Christians and non-Christians. The Melanesian Brotherhood now has three regions—Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu & Fiji. They have recently opened a house in Palawan, the Philippines.

From the Revd Richard Carter's journal

May 10th 2am, Eastertide: The Melanesian Brothers wait in vigil and prayer for news of their Brothers taken hostage.

Grounded by tragedy. But Easter is here and underneath our altar the Easter candle shines on the white pebbles of the empty tomb and the clover hill laced with white frangipanis—the Easter garden we have built.

It is here, kneeling in the dark, watching the fragile flickering candle that I wait out the tragedy of Brother Nathaniel's death, and long for our six brothers to return.

Self-sacrifice in history seems clear and untangled, but here in my subconscious it is painful, confusing and filled with fear.

The blame begins, and the regret, and the constant rerun of events. Their goodness, and the sickening powerlessness of knowing they may be suffering, that there is no one to help.

Pride and confidence have burst, and we are on our knees, touching the earth again, humbled and in the hands of God alone.

Mingled with all the sorrow and longing there is the knowledge that here, truth is to be found.

The pace slows. The tiredness of this 'wait' comes. Each small, daily duty becomes more difficult to perform. I see the Brothers and novices faithfully praying through the darkness, silent and still and I take courage from their presence.

The whole of our community is waiting here, outside the tomb, between death and resurrection—warring mosquitoes soaring round my ears, joints aching, the desire to go, the desire to stay, the longing to pray deeper, harder, more powerfully. The desire in all of me for these prayers to be answered — that the whine of the outboard motor in the night will be their homecoming. That the engine in the distance is a truck bringing news. That they have been into the world of the dead and converted that world too?

I imagine them singing the offices into the darkness of the night. If anything can awaken the hearts of Keke and his men it is the love and faith of these Brothers. But can the lamb really lead the wolf home?

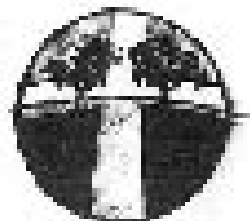
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FORUM — *the Lost Soul of Sex*

By Thomas Moore



Human sexuality is like a huge container, a planet, a world all its own, and yet we tend to think of it, perhaps defensively, as small and almost insignificant. We speak of it in biological terms, or we protect ourselves from its power by moralising and cautioning. Highly spiritual people especially, whether as part of a religious tradition or just because of their personalities, have trouble affirming the full, positive role of sexuality in our everyday lives.

Sex is far more than a physical act. It embraces our past experiences, our parents and their parents before them, our sense of virtue and transgression, the emotions we bring to our own bodies and to relationship, and even our most transcendent ideas of what it means to be alive. In other words, sex embraces body, soul, and spirit.

As a psychotherapist, one of the first things I had to learn on the job was to see how a presenting sexual problem was really a symbol for other issues. I don't mean that sex camouflages the real issues, but that sex pervades so much of our desire and anxiety, and the tendency of life to continually challenge us with new possibilities, that we either lunge into it compulsively or back away in fear.

I used to think that the problem was a confrontation of body and spirit—and I still believe that there are many good reasons why our spirituality, whatever form it takes, is challenged by sexual passion and fantasy. But it is not merely a matter of body against spirit—it is more the challenge that soul presents to spirit.

The soul of sex is about pleasure, desire, the need for union, the meaning and emotion of the body, and the craving for ecstasy that we all have. All of these issues take us away from life management to personal philosophy and spirituality. The problem between sex and religion is not that they are so opposed, but that they are so close.

I think of sex as the archetype of life. Sex embodies many thoughts and feelings connected

with being alive. I noticed in therapy that people at a crossroads in larger terms—finally cutting the cord with parents, moving into their calling in life needing a profound change—might experience that deep shift first as a sexual “temptation”.

A married person might be tempted by an affair, a man or woman formerly straight might be pulled toward a same-sex experiment, or a person might be flooded with dreams and images of wild and dark sex. As a religion specialist, I was reminded of archaic rites of passage that involved carnival and sexual license. I imagined a sexual issue as having to do with a person's basic orientation in life, not just in coupling.

To be alive means to be open to constant possibility and change. It may seem obvious, but we forget that life is incredibly varied and has an immense range of possibilities. It appears to me that the major issue in most emotional problems is resistance to what life wants of us—and that claim might well show itself first as a sexual matter.

People often say, after a good sexual experience or in the midst of a satisfying sexual relationship, that they feel alive and that life is worth living. I

Spiritual people talk as though sexual morality were simple and could be cut in stone—forever the same and applicable to all.

take these sensations seriously as a sign that sex both embodies and symbolises life.

The alternative, as Freud said, is to die—to spend your days saying “no” to life. Of course, you don't say this in an obvious way. You say, “My life is finally in order. I'm not going to disrupt it now”. Or you wrap yourself in your virtue and your innocence, enjoying the persona of cleanliness and righteousness at the cost of vitality. ‘Death-principle’ stuff abounds in spirituality—condemnations,

rules, warnings, defensive structures, tales of corruption and punishment.

For many spiritual people, sex is so much a compendium of the whole of life that in practice they imagine that there is only one sin, and that is a sexual one. How else can one account for the passion amongst churches against anything remotely connected to sex, and the comparative indifference to matters of collective survival such as wars and degradation of the natural world. What is grossly obscene to some is a matter of indifference to others.

When I read the gospels, I am fascinated by the story of the woman caught in adultery. The self-righteous religious leaders want to stone her, but Jesus forgives her. He does not condone adultery, but he doesn't condemn her. I know that religious people argue about the meaning of this tale, but doesn't it make a clear distinction between the attitude of Jesus and that of the authorities? He has great compassion for sexual confusion. The leaders have none. Mysteriously, he writes in the sand, and the accusers leave the woman alone.

Spiritual people talk as though sexual morality were simple and could be cut in stone—forever the same and applicable to all. They rage against any suggestion of what they see as moral relativism. But Jesus writes in the sand—a script that will certainly be blown away by the wind or erased by rain.

That writing in the sand and that broad compassion for sexual confusion is one of the reasons I call myself a follower of Jesus. I want to do the same—I want to be compassionate and careful in my pronouncements.

Jesus heals by his touch, but today we are cautioned not to touch because it implies runaway eroticism. Why is society so worried about eros? Not because we are an erotic society. We are not.

The reason we are surrounded by sexual images is because we routinely repress eros. We're afraid of it. And I think we are afraid of it because we do not want to truly live. We would rather simply survive, clinging to our precious life-denying principles and our sense of virtue, than to live this good life to its fullest.

I often quote an idea from the French philosopher Georges Bataille. Eros always involves a transgression. You cannot be an erotic person—which means to live with your desires and take your

modest pleasures—without breaking your own or someone else's rules. To live means to push forward past new boundaries that are put up either internally or externally every day.

Just think of all the defences against eros that you have inherited from family members, teachers, preachers, political leaders, and counsellors. How many people who have influenced you in your past have supported and guided you in your sexuality and your desires? For most, I'm sure the boundary-makers far outnumber the positive sexual guides.

We think, wrongly, that warnings and prohibitions will keep sex contained and life ordered. In fact, those approaches only serve repression—which is the worst way to deal with any thought or emotion, but especially sexual ones. Again, as Freud said, the repressed always returns in a more outrageous and destructive form. All those sermons against contraception, sexual experiment, and condoms foster sexual confusion and compulsion—they don't restrain it.

The Greeks honored a spirit they called *Aidos*, Restraint. They understood the importance of an interior source of inhibition. They knew that sex could be moderated from within and did not require an excessive external form of suppression. We don't understand the interior life nearly as well as they did. We believe mainly in prohibitions, not cautionary internal inhibitions. We think that if you give sex any leeway at all, it will take over. But the reality could be just the opposite. If we abandoned our useless efforts at suppression, and imagined a morality in tune with eros rather than against it, we might finally know how to live with both pleasure and virtue.

But to live with pleasure and virtue means that one necessarily qualifies the other. Our virtue cannot be focused only on sex, but on a compassionate and just way of life in all areas. And pleasure would not be focused only on sex, but in all areas of life.

Repressed people often cannot imagine pleasure that is not compulsive or hedonistic. Maybe that is how they experience pleasure in a context of repression.

What we need is a theology that affirms both the important role of pleasure in the life of the soul and its inherent inhibitions, which prevent pleasure from becoming hedonism.

How can we finally reconcile spirituality and

sexuality? First, we have to make some major adjustments in our theology. We have to grow up and discern the differences between faith and ideology. Faith means trust and confidence; it doesn't mean a rigid, anxious possession of what we consider to be factual truth. Twentieth-century empiricism and the religion of science get in the way of a subtle notion of faith, turning it into ideology—which kills the soul.

We have to understand that sexuality is not essentially a compulsion or a physical act. It is the very life of the human soul, its vitality and its pursuit of meaning and pleasure. These two—meaning and pleasure—are the *yin* and *yang* of a fulfilling life.

If you don't discover the soul of your sexuality and in that way reconcile it with your spirituality, chances are you will become dry, mean, and aggressive.

We have to understand the basic psychological insight that repression fosters destructive acting-out.

If I had my own church, I would fill the walls with glorious and beautiful calligraphy setting out the Biblical *Song of Songs*. I would do this to resist the ignorant notion in religion that sexuality is inimical to spirituality. But I would also do it because to honor sexual imagery is to foster deep and meaningful vitality in all areas of life. Freud is often ridiculed on this point, but I think he had a valid intuition. At the deepest level, all human activity is sexual or erotic, in service of vitality. I would not want to be too literal in pursuing the implications of that idea, as Freudians sometimes are, but I would accept its basic premise. To be alive is to be sexual in some form.

Like life, sexuality takes many forms, and some of them don't look at all like sex. Celibacy can be either a means of repression, with all the expected distortions and problems, or a valid and fruitful form of sexuality. Sublimation can be a means of defence, or it can be a way to translate passion and desire into beauty of thought and form.

If religious and spiritual leaders could only become more thoughtful and subtle in their understanding of sexuality, they might give up their useless attacks and their occasional sentimentalities about sex.

People need both guidance and a subtle imagination of their sexuality in order to deal with it in a society where the repression/acting-out cycle has reached extravagant proportions. But it is not an intellectual or moral issue. It is a matter of dealing with the crucial business of whether the Church, religion, or spirituality want to serve life or death, vitality or immature innocence.

If you don't discover the soul of your sexuality and in that way reconcile it with your spirituality, chances are you will become dry, mean, and aggressive. You may well become depressed. And surely you will act out your inner conflict in your dealings with others. Better to take on your sexuality and let it meld with your spirituality, thereby becoming a real human being.

I write these words in the sand. Let them blow away. There are no final insights, no rules, no advice. It is best not to act before you have meditated deeply and have confronted your own sexual spirits—demonic and otherwise. I don't condemn you, I don't condemn myself. The time for stoning is long past. It is time for the healing touch.

D H Lawrence once wrote, "The future of religion lies in the mystery of touch". Now is the time to move into that future. Now is the time to help our precious sexuality morph into our precious spirituality—and back and forth, and back and forth. Thomas Moore is a writer and lecturer and lives in New England, USA, with his wife and two children. He was a monk in a Catholic religious order for twelve years and has degrees in theology, musicology, and philosophy. A former professor of religion and psychology he is the author of *Care of the Soul*, *Soul Mates*, *The re-Enchantment of Everyday Life*, *The Soul of Sex*, *The Education of the Heart*, and *The Soul's Religion*.

A copy of Thomas Moore's book, *The Soul of Sex*, will be sent to the writer of any response to this Forum published in the next edition of *Common Theology*.

Public theology —

International responsibility, ecology, reconciliation, the beginning and ending of Life...

by James Haire

Public theology flourishes in the relationship between Christianity and Australian society—and societies globally. It lives in the debates on reconciliation, ecology, international responsibility, the beginning and ending of human life, and so on.



This is where Christian faith and society meet.

Consider human rights—much discussed in public theology. Human rights and religion in recent years have been locked in considerable debate.

Much has been documented of the negative effects of past religious practice on human rights. But much worth has also come from religious consciousness.

Indonesia, to Australia's north, provides a valuable partner, as western society engages with Islam. In recent years a push for the enhancement of human rights in Indonesia has come through the renewal of Muslim intellectual life in that country—particularly through groups associated with the former president of Indonesia, the Islamic scholar Abdurachman Wahid.

Concern for human rights is central to an understanding of the Christian faith. But where does Christianity's authority come from in this matter?

Initially it seems simple. God is the only and ultimate seat of authority, and all authority for the Christian community is founded in God. Yet theologians disagree on *how* that doctrine is to be implemented.

We seem to agree on some things—

- All humans are made in the image of God. God gives the earth and its bounty to sustain our lives physically. Each person is of inestimable value, because they are created in God's image.

- Humans exist in community. Thus the Exodus—the escape from oppression—is seen as a communal act of liberation. Individuality has to be expressed in a communal context.
- We adhere to a prophetic critique of all oppressive power structures—especially in defence of widows, orphans and aliens.

Jesus identifies with the outcast, and the religiously despised. The Church is called into life solely through the solidarity of Jesus Christ with those who are alienated from God, because Christ went to the extremes of alienation on our behalf, so that we might, through him, come home to God.

Mercy is central to human existence. The greatest struggle of the early Church with the Pantheon of Greek gods was with the god of healing, Aesculapius (at Epidaurus in the Peloponnese). There, the commercial nature of medicine was finally overthrown by a merciful and communal understanding of healing. In the Greek world the Christian concept of healing as merciful and communal displaced the commercial concepts of healing associated with Aesculapius. Medicine was not merely to be a commercial transaction between doctor and the one seeking a medical procedure. The new relationship involved the community as well as the patient, where mercy was paramount.

The conviction persists in our public theology that life in community can be fulfilled only if each person can participate as fully as possible in the processes of community. Adequate economic, housing, health and education levels for each individual give access to community. Such provision is to be both a community and an individual responsibility. It matters what happens to the disadvantaged, the sick, the outcast.

Historically, especially within certain strands of Protestantism, the state at times has been regarded as so alienated from the will of God that the only Christian way is its replacement. The state was regarded as incapable of reforming itself, and

therefore the Christian way was to work for its reconstruction.

There have been episodes in Church history which have sought to force the Church's exclusiveness on others. Signs of this can be seen within the early Church. Classic examples since then have been the Crusades; Luther's attitude towards Islam (under the rubric of the Turks); the apartheid doctrine of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. All brought about horrendous human rights abuses.

A classic example of failure to engage in public theology is the silence of sections of the churches in the face of the Nazi persecution of the Jews in the 1930s. It is significant (as the recent movie *Bonhoeffer* shows us) that the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer's concern for the plight of Jews in Nazi territories was stimulated by his experiences in the politically aware Afro-American churches in Harlem while he was a student in New York, just prior to the Nazi ascendancy.

For Christians today, a primary intellectual task in the area of public theology has been to translate religious concepts into everyday language.

With the Enlightenment we saw radical changes in our public dialogue from religion-orientated concepts to anthropocentric concepts. Human beings were, on the one hand, more important than God. On the other hand, they were not fundamentally different from animals.

Capitalism and Marxism were born from this Enlightenment vision of human beings as autonomous individuals without reference to God. Both presented a radical anthropocentrism. Here, Christian faith was questioned or studiously ignored.

Thus the translation of religious concepts of classical Christianity into concepts related to the post-Enlightenment world were problematic. This is still evident in the current human rights debate.

Two factors are of great significance here.

Firstly, post-modernism diminishes individual responsibility for community. It even occurs that individuals can no longer seriously take responsibility for themselves.

Secondly, the Church is a major participant in human rights discussions. This is because of the Church's long experience—both positive and negative—in community life, and because of its painful struggles in the area of human rights.

The Great Cross

In November last year the 25 metre-high Great Cross, which faces Parliament House, was completed at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (or National Christian Centre) on its 16-acre site on a corner of the Parliamentary Triangle in Canberra. This significant institution, at the geographical centre of our nation's life, has a number of purposes.

First, it provides a ministry to the Parliament.

For example, the service for the opening of Parliament has been held at the centre.

Second, it is ecumenical. It seeks to stimulate ecumenical dialogue and action in this country. Australia has a strong record in ecumenical endeavours. Nevertheless, the scandal of Christian disunity seriously weakens our witness. Each separate Church headquarters is a symbol of that scandal.

Third, it seeks to be involved in interfaith dialogue. As the newly dedicated Great Cross demonstrates, the centre is clear about its Christian basis. However, it seeks to engage in dialogue with other faiths. That dialogue is vitally important in our increasingly multi-faith Australia. It is also of immense importance as Australia interacts with its regional neighbours, particularly in Asia.

It is a venue for public seminars and discussions—recently one on poverty with, among others, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndungane, and Professor Julian Disney.

The centre will also host a community of scholars, both PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers. The results of their research will hopefully enhance the life of the churches, and the Australian community as a whole.

The Reverend Professor James Haire is President of the National Council of Churches in Australia, Executive Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in Canberra, and Professor of Theology at Charles Sturt University.

Women who “get it”

On January 17 the Revd Mpho Tutu, daughter of Archbishop Desmond and Leah Tutu, was ordained to the priesthood in Virginia, USA. On October 18 last year she preached at her mother's 70th birthday party which was celebrated in the family's home parish in Soweto, South Africa. Seven hundred people, many from countries all over the world, came to honour Desmond Tutu's wife of 47 years. Here is an edited text of Mpho's sermon, which mused on the role of women through the readings chosen by her father for the occasion—Proverbs 31.10-31, I Corinthians.13, John 12.1-8.

It is said to be the mark of a clear conscience to sell the family parrot to the town gossip. I suppose it is a kindred mark of confidence...or folly... to offer the pulpit to the family chatterbox.

Luke is the Gospel writer usually credited with having a heart for women. He, at least, recognises that they exist, and woven through the story of Jesus are the stories of women—that the Good News of Jesus' death and resurrection must be good news for women if it is to be good news at all.

The interesting thing about Luke is that the women are often anonymous, and that the women seldom have a voice in his writing. So we turn to John's Gospel.

Not only do John's women have names, John's women speak. Not only do John's women speak, John's women “get it”. They consistently show up their male counterparts in their understanding of Jesus' mission and ministry and in their example of true discipleship.

We begin in the second chapter of John's Gospel at a wedding feast in Cana. We watch Mary, the mother of Jesus, who will not allow Jesus rudeness, “Woman, what has this to do with me?” to swerve her from the recognition that he will do what he can do and must do, for he is the incarnate God of abundance. Mary invites the incarnate God to participate in the mundane miracle of hospitality; the voice of faith draws the eyes of Christ from the focus on His final hour to the very present and immediate human hurt.

Then we meet the woman at the well who is not named but is fully described. She speaks her faith in



Leah Tutu (centre) founder of South Africa's first union for domestic workers. “You are beautiful and they don't know how much you helped to make me who I turned out to be,” her husband told her in front of 700 guests.

her own words; even though the disciples and learned men remain mired in doubt and dithering this woman sees, believes and calls others to faith in Christ.

And now we come to Mary, filling the house with the scent of her fragrant offering, Mary anointing Jesus as for kingship, anointing him as for royal priesthood, anointing him as for burial. Mary pours out her worship in an act of extravagant generosity. “She could have saved it for the poor,” says Judas in his greed. “Leave her alone”, Jesus answers. He might have added, “*She gets it!*”.

The thing about these women is that they are very much women. They are women embedded in their own cultural contexts. But they are subversive women. Their subversions of cultural norms are small—small but significant. Who is Mary to assert her authority over the servants of her host? What is that Gentile woman doing in conversation with a Jewish man? How can Mary pour out the oil she has probably saved for her own burial for this man yet alive? When love creates the subversion then no space is too small for God's abundant blessing.

So we come to the poem that concludes the Book of Proverbs. Pious Jewish husbands recite this “Hymn to the Good or Capable Wife” to their own

wives on the eve of Shabbat. I guess loving Xhosa husbands have this poem read to their wives in celebration of their seventieth birthdays. So down through the ages men have used the words of scripture to subvert a small host of cultural norms.

This scripture says that a good wife is more than merely a comely creature who delights the eyes—when most cultures say that comeliness is the full measure of goodness in a woman. This poem reminds a husband that his own public esteem is intimately bound with his wife's—the endless and, seemingly, invisible ministries that are described as “women's work”.

Her husband, says the poem, “is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land, he is well regarded among the elders”... You will notice that the poem does not state what the husband does to merit this respect. We are left to conclude that his esteem is certainly linked to the good that she does.

My mother is indeed a rare woman. The whirlwind of activity this poem describes could well be applied to ma. I am certain that when we were teenagers it was she who woke the dawn...she certainly woke us up. By the simple expedient of storing essential household articles (cleaning utensils, pantry items, etc) in our bedroom she had the perfect excuse for clattering around in our closets at unseemly hours then uttering the innocent

“Oh, good, you're awake!”, as if any, but the dead, could sleep through that noise.

The words of this poem are words of activity. She *seeks* flax. She *works* with willing hands. She *brings* food from afar. She *girds* her loins with strength. She *opens* her hand to the poor. And she *opens* her mouth with wisdom. The choice of words is more usually applied to men than to women. In the Bible it is men who “gird their loins”; men who bring food to provide for their households; who buy land and decide its use. This choice of words turns our thinking on its head. We are reminded that it is well within a woman's capability to be strong, thoughtful, kind, and wise.

The poem from Proverbs sounds like a simple recipe for a good—and exhausted—wife. This is indeed a rare and matchless woman.

Finally, it is not a blueprint for the wife that a man should seek, or for the person a woman should seek to be. It is rather the description of the way of life we are all called to pursue. We are all—male and female—called to be animated by the love of God. We are each reminded that physical beauty and even physical ability are fleeting things. What endures is the beauty of loving wisdom that animates us. Even after seventy years the charm is still there. The beauty has only deepened with age.

“Her children”, says the poet, “rise up to call her blessed”. Here we are, children, husband and grandchildren besides, and you, ma—are indeed blessed.

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Abused are the peace-makers

The row over last year's Sydney Peace Prize going to Palestinian politician Dr Hanan Ashrawi was extensively covered by Australian news media. What she actually said was less publicised so here is an edited text of her acceptance speech. Dr Ashrawi is an Anglican and holds a Lambeth Doctorate awarded by the Archbishop of Canterbury.



It is precisely during such times of adversity and pain, of violence and victimisation, of unilateralism and militarism, of ideological fundamentalism and exclusivity, that the world is most in need of voices and forces of sanity, reason and moral responsibility—the genuine building blocks of peace.

As we witness attempts at imposing a simplistic view of a Manichean universe—of polarisation and reductive stereotypes of good and evil—we are most in need of those who will engage in a redemptive validation of pluralism, tolerance, diversity, authenticity of identity, and comprehensive engagement in collective responsibility. As such, it is up to us jointly to give both a voice and an audience to the silenced, and to grant space and time to the excluded and denied. Such is the nature of intervention that the world requires—not only to resolve conflicts but also to prevent them from erupting, or generating destructive forces that could spiral out of control.

No conflict should take us by surprise, for all the symptoms are recognisable and the components definable. Long-standing grievances and inequities have become all too familiar and have been left to fester or been manipulated by the strong as a means of victimising the weak. The nature of preemptive action must be—by necessity and choice—constructive, peaceful, and therapeutic.

An aspect of globalisation is the redefinition of enemies and allies, friends and foes, across national, territorial, and cultural boundaries.

The process of rectification must utilise the knowledge and information technology revolution as tools of contemporary global realities.

Hunger, poverty, illiteracy, the spread of disease, degradation of the environment, the disenfranchisement of the weak, and suspension of human rights, among other abuses, are universal enemies that require the collective effort of universal allies. Human-based development programs and inclusive systems of governance remain the most appropriate means of empowerment.

Most significantly, the indispensable universal instruments remain those that foster a global rule of law, encompassing both state and non-state actors, capable of assessing culpability, providing accountability, and ensuring redress with justice. Along with multilateral institutions, they remain safeguards against unilateral power on the rampage or destructive military preemption on the basis of subjective criteria.

With that in mind, peace in the Middle East—or the just solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict—can be addressed in its proper context as the longest standing case of military occupation and as the most persistent unresolved case of dispossession and exile in contemporary history.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is also an anachronism—a colonial condition in a post neo-colonial world, using the requirements of national self-determination as a basis of nascent statehood in a world moving towards regional and global redefinitions.

Regionally, the conflict has provided a convenient excuse for the suspension of human rights, evasion of democratic systems of governance, waste of natural and human resources, and the perpetuation of centralised regimes that hold back the challenges of development—all under the guise of “national security” and external military threat.

For decades, war, or the threat of military hostilities, has served to maintain the status quo and has framed the region in notions of self-defence that contributed to the rising power of extremism and fundamentalism, rather than human empowerment and global engagement.

Peace, or the prospect thereof, is possibly the most effective force for preventing such notions and trends becoming de facto the most destabilising factor in a region suffering from an imposed state of suspended animation.

The legacy of colonialism clearly has served the interests of those in power—predominantly client regimes—who sought to maintain control, thereby leading to collusion between internal and external forces, excluding the people as a whole.

Globally, the Palestinian question remains central to any human vision of globalisation as a test of the collective will to intervene and to maintain a global rule of law based on principles of justice and historical redemption.

Granted, the current dynamic is antithetical to the aspirations of peacemakers who based their endeavors on universal human rights, parity before the law, positive intervention, and non-violent resolution of conflicts through redress and the elimination of grievances. A serious paradigm shift is necessary for the restoration of these values which have been subverted in the aftermath of September 11.

The logic of peace that had been formulated painstakingly (and painfully) as the substance of Palestinian-Israeli encounters and dialogues is currently being drowned out by the din of war drums and the frenzied mutual infliction of pain during the last three years. Such tragic and unprecedented pervasive violence is not only eradicating previous achievements and agreements, but is also destroying the prospects of any future reconciliation.

The notion that a whole nation can be brought to its knees by the use of unbridled violence, or that the will of a people can be defeated by military means, must be discarded once and for all. Armies may be able to defeat other armies, but the limits of military power are most apparent when used against civilians and non-combatants. The fallacy that there is, or can be, a military solution to the conflict must be completely and irrevocably discarded.

The emergence of the bizarre concept of a “balance of terror” has reinforced the irrational and immoral killing of civilians and victimisation of the innocent. The drive for revenge—like the escalation of military brutality—has generated the most tragic and futile momentum for escalation and self-destruction. On both sides, a “no holds barred” mindset has taken over as a visceral, repetitive response with horrific ramifications. The erroneous assumption that greater pain and punishment, or the escalation of failed measures, would somehow lead to “success” or the surrender

of one side to the other is at the heart of the prevailing dynamic of death and devastation.

Related to that is a notion that a people under occupation will eventually come to be reconciled to the fact of their captivity, and will accept their fate without struggling for freedom and dignity.

Self-determination to the Palestinian people is not an abstraction, but the realisation and enactment of their identity on their own land—a motivating force for independence and statehood.

For the conflict to be resolved, its causes must be identified and solved, while grievances and fears on both sides must be addressed and laid to rest. Neither side can lay claim to a monopoly of pain and suffering. Nor can either side claim exclusive narrative and legitimacy. Clearly, peace cannot be made incumbent upon converting all Palestinians

theories such as the “clash of civilisations” or “war among religions”, or the imposition of democracy by force of arms increases polarisation

to Zionism or transforming all Israelis to espouse Palestinian nationalism.

The denial or distortion of the narrative of the other has served as a convenient vehicle for dehumanising the adversary, hence as a justification for all forms of violations and atrocities whilst evading accountability.

Historical records must be reconciled in recognition of the horror of the Holocaust and all its horrendous implications, with the historical victimisation of the Palestinian people, their tragedy of dispossession and exile, on the one hand, and oppression and occupation on the other.

Ironically, in this context the Palestinians and Israelis have reached the stage of dependent legitimacies—rather than competition over a singular and mutually exclusive legitimacy.

Since the essential requirement for peace lies in sharing the land of historical Palestine, it follows that there has to be a shared legitimacy based on parity and mutuality. Neither side can (or should be allowed to) destroy the other, physically, morally,

or legally. A full admission of equal value to human life and rights must be internalised, with no claims to superiority on those most essential human values and attributes.

In the same way, there can be no exclusivity of claims—whether to the land or to security, or to the discourse and public presentation of the issues. Shared boundaries exist, both as territorial and as moral/human concepts of proximity and interaction. Security, therefore, is a factor of mutuality and interdependence.

At the opposite pole, the fallacy of fundamentalism (or even divine intervention and dispensation) has been exploited to justify absolutism, exclusivity, and unrestricted license to kill and destroy. Extremist ideologies tend to thrive in times of despair and insecurity and, like the recourse to violence and militarism, they signal an absence of effective, workable solutions and handles on reality.

Such radical apologists have inflicted serious damage and pain from their safe distance in Riyadh, Damascus, Washington, Knoxville, or Sydney

The sweeping ideologies and simplistic generalisations of theories such as the “clash of civilisations” or “war among religions”, or the imposition of democracy by force of arms increases polarisation, widens the gap and warps any vision of reconciliation. Such theories depict the conflict as part of a grand sweep of teleological proportions, and render resolution impossible through available peaceful means of practical and legal disentanglement. ‘Inevitable conflict’, as defined by an abstract universal design, is directly antithetical to responsibility and intervention.

By now it has become apparent that the assumption that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a purely bilateral issue and can be resolved by the two sides without third party intervention is entirely false. This has been variously used to maintain the asymmetry of power, to justify the lack of political will or the impotence of external actors, and to sustain other false assumptions such as the “peace

through exhaustion” fallacy or “intervention following sufficient bloodshed”.

The need for third party intervention is not only a factor of balance, but an indispensable force for breaking the lethal cycle of violence and revenge, while providing a context for legality, arbitration, and guarantees. A genuine form of multilateralism and collective responsibility is the *sine qua non* of the resolution of this conflict.

Artificial, unilateral, and power separation such as that represented by the apartheid wall currently under construction is a recipe for further conflict and greater violence—not least because it involves forms of coercive injustice including theft of land and water, fragmentation, the creation of isolated ghettos, and imposition of political boundaries that destroy the chances of a viable Palestinian state and a just peace.

Palestinian nation-building and statehood are imperative for peace and stability throughout the region. Democracy and separation of powers, the rule of law and respect for human rights, institution-building and good governance, transparent accountability and reform—all are the ingredients of viable Palestinian statehood. The occupation, however intrusive, must not be used as an excuse to avoid responsibility.

Similarly, negotiations and compliance with agreements must not be suspended pending the establishment of a Palestinian Utopia. Devolution of occupation and evolution of statehood must proceed simultaneously with urgency and commitment, as interdependent processes.

An instrument like the Road Map of the erstwhile Quartet could have served as a lifeline for peace had it been implemented with speed and integrity, with clear timelines, monitoring and verification mechanisms, plus the courage to exercise impartial accountability.

The incorporation of the Israeli amendments in the implementation tarnished the integrity of the text and of the external actors as well. Frontloading the process with Palestinian obligations, adopting the sequential and conditional approach, and creating further interim phases without guarantees on the ground have rendered the Road Map inoperative and subject to extremists on both sides.

Third party intervention without political will, even-handedness, or seriousness of intent, could

backfire and aggravate the conflict further through dashed hopes.

The most detrimental external interference is that of the zealots and enthusiasts who embrace the most extreme long-distance stances with “passionate intensity”. Blind loyalty to, and identification with, one side leads to the adoption of strident belligerency towards the other, intensifying the conflict, subverting dialogue and rational communication.

Islamic fundamentalists and regressive brands of Arab nationalists have, ironically, joined forces with Christian evangelicals, Jewish fundamentalists, and

You have taken up a global challenge, and you certainly embody its human dimension. We are indeed heartened and empowered.

ideological neoconservatives to fight their own proxy wars at the expense of moderate Palestinians and Israelis alike. Such radical apologists have inflicted serious damage and pain from their safe distance in Riyadh, Damascus, Washington, Knoxville, or Sydney—demonstrating the type of intervention that no peace can survive.

Blind loyalty or guilt has revived the worst of racist discrimination and dehumanisation, with the additional imposition of false analogies.

It may be convenient to label all Palestinians as “terrorists” and dismiss them from the conscience of the world in the context of the “war on terrorism.” It may be equally convenient to describe the Israeli occupation’s measures of aerial bombardment and shelling of Palestinian civilian areas, of assassinations and abduction, of home demolition and destruction of crops, of siege and fragmentation, of checkpoints and humiliation, of illegal settlements and apartheid walls and annexation fences, as legitimate forms of “self-defence.”

It may be comfortable to dismiss decades of military occupation and dispossession as figments of the victim’s imagination, hence irrelevant to the current conflict.

However, such scoring of points only makes the solution all that more distant.

So far, the solution remains simple and attainable, having been repeatedly defined and having become part of a global consensus. The two-state solution is still possible, though becoming increasingly more difficult with the expansion of settlements, by-pass roads, and the apartheid wall throughout Palestinian territory. The bi-national state as a de facto solution will become the only option should Israel continue its expansion, and its refusal to withdraw to the 1967 lines and to remove the settlements of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Territory will give way to demography, and the issue then will become one of democracy—with Zionism forced to reexamine its most basic premises.

Jerusalem, both East and West, can become an open city and the shared capital of two states, thus encapsulating the essence of peace and regaining its stature as a city much greater than itself and not subject to exclusive possession or greed of acquisition.

Palestinian refugees must be granted historical, legal, moral, and human recognition and redress in accordance with international law and the requirements of justice. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, but there is a need for the will and courage to act against all adverse forces.

Dear friends, sisters and brothers—as we hurtle towards the abyss, as we daily lose unique, irreplaceable lives, and as attitudes and hearts are hardening, may I take a moment to recognize this luminous instant in history that you are affording us. You have chosen to intervene on the side of those who have decided to take risks for peace, rather than those who thrive on hate and conflict. It certainly takes a unique form of courage, tenacity, and distinctive human priorities to challenge prevailing fallacies and injustices.

On behalf of the Palestinian people as a whole, and on behalf of all Palestinians and Israelis who have maintained their partnership for peace, and on behalf of all those who are in solidarity with our joint effort, I thank you. You have taken up a global challenge, and you certainly embody its human dimension. We are indeed heartened and empowered.

An edited text of the acceptance speech delivered by Dr Hanan Ashrawi at the Sydney Peace Prize ceremony on November 5 last year. The full text can be found at <http://www.miftah.org>



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Unlocking the door to dreams

If we continue to pile up the world's problems in front of the public they will eventually give up...But if we offer alternative visions, that excite ideas for a realistic and achievable future, we could arouse and energise quests for change.

Chris Richards-

By Harry Throssell

It's Monday morning. A young Murri (Queensland Aboriginal) woman with a big smile needs a cup of tea so pops into the kitchen of Dinmore Murri Baptist Church where we're sitting around the table. She reminds us she's here for the driving instructor course which should not only give her a job but open the way to creating her own business.

A big strong young Murri bloke, bristling with energy, bustles into the kitchen and outlines plans for his career. First to gain tickets for driving a forklift and for warehousing to give himself better prospects for employment. Down the track to become a courier driver, first locally, then eventually—the ultimate—to work for an international transport company. He's been driving seven years without any demerit points, so there's also the possibility along the way of becoming a driving instructor. He's prepared for the bookwork involved.

"You could do both—courier driver and driving instructor," says Sandra Keller, manager of Goodna and Surrounds Community Training Partnership Program (CTP). "Is that your dream, to be a courier driver?" asks Narrella Simpson, community worker, tutor and longtime member of the Murri Church. "Yes", he replies, "but first I have to get a foot in the door".

"And I have to find five other people for a forklift course and appoint a teacher", says Sandra, "that shouldn't be too hard".

Dinmore Baptist Church, which has a lived-in, worked-in, homely feeling, became a Murri Church twenty years ago, and doubles as a local education and training centre—part of the CTP program since May 2002. Pastor Nick Bennett, has always believed in getting involved in the local community, with special concerns for Murriss.

He runs a community development employment program providing gardening, mowing and landscaping employment two days a week. He negotiated with a TAFE College to teach industrial sewing skills for personal as well as business needs, with a dozen women now enrolled, and there are courses for computer literacy, driving instruction, and JP training.

The church has received funds for community renewal. Plans include buying the house next door for art, dance, and tourism industry training. It is hoped to go beyond employment towards setting up businesses such as gardening services and retail shops selling art, thus also creating opportunities for others to be employed.

Also at the church the Reverend Graham Paulsen is starting a one-year Bible Study College for mixed cultures this year, and over the next few years certificate courses in leadership and ministry.

"We start here, at the church, and expand out", says Narrella. "The church has come a long way in the struggles of Aboriginal people, but they still have great needs. The door was closed but it has now opened for them. When people come here we like to look at their potential and gifts, not suffocate them. They know what they want to be, they just need help and guidance".

The CTP project focuses on the educational and training needs—from the basic to the advanced—of a large industrial community in the eastern suburbs of former coal-mining city Ipswich, southwest of Brisbane, which remains a centre of industry, hospitals and prisons, with dormitory suburbs for workers often in public housing—which, by the way, looks smarter than it used to, with fences and carports.

The community is a mixture of cultures—Murriss, whitefella Australians, Torres Strait and South Sea Islanders, Kiwis (New Zealanders), Chinese, south-east Asians, Spanish speakers, Middle East and European migrants. Some speak little English

because of their cultural background, some have never learned to read and write, or dropped out of school early.

Financial, social and personal hardship is reflected in high unemployment figures. Government reports for this year show jobless rates for the East Ipswich suburbs covered by the CTP program vary between 20 and 25 per cent, compared with the Queensland rate of seven per cent. Among Ipswich Murriss 32 per cent were unemployed in 2000. These are likely to be underestimates because government defines being employed as working only one hour a week, and some people stop looking for work and are therefore not counted as unemployed. Martin Watts and others believe the real national unemployment rate is double the official figure. In addition many employed people remain poor because their jobs are part-time, casual, and badly paid.

“But,” says Sandra, “there’s no shortage of the will to learn. We find, given the right opportunity, there’s a hunger for schooling, with many moving on from basic literacy to mainstream courses up to university level. In this area we also find unemployed people are very community-minded, with jobless and retired people spending many hours doing all kinds of voluntary work”.

While funds for the CTP program are from the Queensland State Government, and educational services are provided by Bremer TAFE College in cooperation with local community centres, the main ingredient, the impetus, of the project is the will to learn, train, take steps forward by members of the community, given a helping hand by instructors, counselors and volunteers also living or working in the neighbourhood.

Goodna TAFE House, the headquarters of the project, like other community centres at Gales and Riverview and the Murri Church, provide information, advice, courses, as well as more general services such as counseling, parenting skills, playgroups, men’s social groups, cooking, hobby activities—all free of charge.

The CTP program started in July 2001 to assist local residents gain employment in a proposed new industrial development—Synergy Park. A research study found training for the expected industries needed to focus on literacy, computer operation,

administration and supervisory skills, warehousing and transport, including forklift and truck driving.

The state government invested \$250,000 for one year, repeated for a second year, and left it to local people to suggest the best ways of using the money to meet both industry’s need for workers and the work needs of local people.

The original goal was to train 200 people—400 applications were received, and 300 finished training. At the end of the first program 40 per cent were in employment and 37 per cent in further training.

Synergy Park remains a few large, empty pad-docks—no factories yet. Even so, the approach to training has demonstrated its value.

Nine mature-aged people, seven women and two men, are crowded into a former bedroom, now a neighbourhood centre classroom, learning the basics of operating computers. The course, on five Monday mornings, is free, the machines donated by a computer firm, the instructor paid by the state government. As participants spill out to the kitchen at morning tea break there’s a sense of excitement, a feeling of getting somewhere as they discuss the test they’ve just completed. A single father from New Zealand explains why he’s here: “I want to get a job with better prospects than I’ve had, and encourage the kids in their education”.

“Computer skills have become almost as basic as reading and writing. Not to have them these days is almost to be disabled,” says Sandra. “These skills help people get jobs, make possible neat letters and documents, give access to job information on the Internet, and provide spin-offs like keeping in touch with distant families”.

On the campus of nearby Bremer Institute of Technical and Further Education (TAFE College) several huge, metre-wide tree trunks recline on the ground, waiting to be hewn into outrigger canoes, traditional in Pacific Islands. In a joint project of the College and Goodna Youth Service, a Samoan carpentry teacher plans to capture the interest of twenty or so teenagers, particularly of Pacific Island background but not excluding others, especially street kids. They will learn woodwork skills, initially for

building the canoes but which could also equip them for further training and work careers.

At the college sixteen students are enrolled in a photography course run by a Murri program officer, some hoping to become journalists, some models, some magazine photographers.

Transport is a major issue in this community with limited public transport, a journey which may take minutes by car requiring three bus trips. But few own cars, and quite a few middle-aged people have never had a vehicle or driving license. Young people find learning to drive relatively easy, but without the ability to read and write can't pass the driving test, so can get into deep trouble with the law if caught in charge of a vehicle, especially if involved in an accident.

These basic needs—to read and travel—link together in the Literacy for Learners Permit course, with far-reaching consequences. This is the most popular course because it's the start of acquiring a driving license, but it's also important because it provides the incentive to learn to read. Further, a learner's permit and a driving license provide evidence of who you are—'ID' increasingly necessary in a security-conscious society, and worth a hundred points for opening a bank account. "A passport into society, promoting self-esteem," as Narrella points out.

The next step was finding people to teach driving, so a driving instructor course was started, followed by a course on mechanical skills.

Sandra tells of a Murri man who couldn't read and had never had a car but his dream was to become a bus driver and get into the tourism industry. It didn't all work out, but he eventually acquired his driving license and now happily drives a bus for elderly people.

Ipswich police contacted CTP to help them develop a Learner Driver project, particularly for South Sea Islanders, with funds from Queensland Police, and with CTP assisting in the literacy component. They are hoping to develop this into a Queensland-wide project, also with mechanical instruction, driver instructor training, and driver education campaigns to stem the large number of breaches of the law.

Bremer TAFE College may be only a short drive from home for those with cars, but for many people it's an intimidating prospect. It seems too far, too difficult to get to, too big, an unfamiliar, daunt-

ing world with too many clever people about. On the other hand, a class in a neighbourhood centre down the road, in a building much like your own home, is a different proposition.

Narrella explains people are more comfortable in their own area, a community centre is only walking distance away, there are other local people, probably someone from the same cultural background. "People don't necessarily want to go back to work, but may still want to learn to do different things. Some dropped out of High School, couldn't go on with further study, so we help them achieve their goals, whether it's learning to read, getting to TAFE College, university—fulfilling dreams".

'Dreams' is a word often used in these parts.

Narrella sees another facet of studying close to

In the '60s we had all our education in one class, but it's now broken up—you go here, you go there, but the body can only cope with one thing at a time. It's too fast. They don't stop and ask 'where do you want to go?'

home. "Our classes here in the Murri Church are not just for Indigenous people but for mixed cultures. We're trying to break down barriers, trying to bring cultures together, making pathways. Some programs for Indigenous people aim at ensuring their society, their identity, doesn't disappear, because Indigenous people were the first founders of Australia and we're trying to respect that culture, the art, elders, communications. But we're not trying to paint just one colour, Indigenous, or create one 'milky way' and one 'chocolate', but trying to make it 'caramello', an equal society and workforce—that's our aim".

"Just this year", Sandra adds, "we held a Literacy for Learners Course for thirteen people—Asian, Samoan, Chinese, European, Indigenous, a lady with a disability—here at the Murri church. Think of that! While the services are for individuals the consequence is a different kind of community. We

see much less friction between cultures than we used to”.

Narrella believes in reconciliation but, “You don’t just plant a tree and leave it to grow, you have to feed it, nourish it, so it spreads its seeds. Community care includes necessary funding and knowledge”.

She sees shortcomings in the present school system. “It’s too fast. A lot of children can’t keep up. In the ‘60s we had all our education in one class, but it’s now broken up—you go here, you go there, but the body can only cope with one thing at a time. It’s too fast. They don’t stop and ask ‘where do you want to go?’”.

Narrella believes the literacy programs have played a part in overcoming dependence on drugs and alcohol because they raise self-esteem and hopes of overcoming frustration and disappointment with better employment prospects.

When Narrella applied for employment at Bremer TAFE as a tutor she had to show proof of identification needing the signature of a JP. “There are many documents needing a JP’s signature,” Sandra explains. “To apply for education or a job, birth certificates or other documents may have to be witnessed, and any warrant the police serve has to be approved by a JP, so it’s quite a significant role.

“We realised the value of having locally-based JPs from the various ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the local population. A JP course has been run at Goodna House, and currently twenty-five are enrolled in a JP course at the Murri Church, eighteen of them Murriss, others Samoan, Asian, European.

“We particularly thought it would be good for Murriss to have this position in the community and they have shown great keenness. It’s an unpaid position, but with important social status and symbolic significance. It’s amazing the number of people who say ‘I want to do this course, can you help me?’”.

Narrella and Sandra agree that this community is also crying out for aged care courses. Because so many people at home and in nursing homes badly need support and help, this course will be the next cab off the rank. The Certificate of Aged Care at the TAFE College is only by correspondence, so students have to be proficient in reading and writing, which cuts out some candidates. “In any case, it’s difficult to learn this kind of work by

correspondence, so we want to have face-to-face classes to start them off, then they can finish the training by correspondence,” Sandra says.

The course, which will focus on Indigenous workers—although there are no restrictions on who joins the program—will combine aged care, community services and disability studies. Narrella explains how in Indigenous society there’s no money for private hospitals or nursing homes, so kinship and care in the community, looking after family, create their own nurses and doctors. Diabetes, lost limbs, and neglect are common, not only among the aged. Even though blindness caused by diabetes is common in the Murri community few have access to Braille, so this will be part of the course in cooperation with the Braille Association of Queensland.

“Some people are born to be nurses and doctors and if they get to Bremer TAFE they can go on to university to become qualified,” Narrella says. She tells of a local Murri who went to school in Ipswich, eventually graduated from Curtin University in Western Australia, and is now back in Queensland as a Health Worker.

In spite of much media talk of globalisation the enduring reality is that people remain individuals, living their lives locally. The East Ipswich experience gives a sense of hope growing from small beginnings and rippling through the community.

On 4 September last year Narrella Simpson received a national award for Outstanding Contribution to Literacy and Numeracy presented at the Sydney Opera House by Federal Minister of Science, Education and Training Brendan Nelson.

Sandra Keller, the Project Manager of the Goodna and Surrounds Community Training Partnership Program can be contacted at sandra.keller@det.qld.gov.au

Harry Throssell originally trained in the social sciences and worked as a child welfare officer and psychiatric social worker in England, then became a university lecturer and newspaper journalist in Australia.

His *Levellers Essays*, collected on website www.geocities.com/youngmick/levellers/ focus on global social justice issues, are directed towards the general public, and are freely available for copying, distribution and publication.

reader's view

I wish to express my appreciation of this publication. The wide field of interest covered makes it very valuable in following a variety of trends in thinking.

It may be of interest to you to know that I have celebrated my 90th birthday and still retain a lively interest in information from a wide range of fields. I wish this journal long life.

I found Michael McGirr's article (Spring 2003) interesting for several reasons. It seemed on the surface a very simple story, but pondering on the contents it led to much deep thinking, in particular his reference to the continuing creation. Perusing this led to new and inspiring ideas.

Isabel Baltvilks

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review

Wataboshi Music Festival

Reviewed by Cheryl Jorgensen

Wataboshi is Japanese for “the seeds of the Dandelion” which are carried by the wind to spread a message of peace and harmony across the world.

The Wataboshi Music Festival has been around for almost thirty years. Only not here, never before here. Brisbane is the first Australian venue to host it!

It started in Japan, has been in Seoul, Singapore, Kaohsiung, Shanghai and Bangkok and this year was at Brisbane’s Powerhouse for eight days.

What is so fascinating about it? Well it features the work of artists with disabilities, people who have to work at least twice as hard to get their special gifts to the rest of us. This can be very challenging for some, of course. But once people with disabilities have perfected their art to the extent that they are among the best in the world, nobody thinks of them as disabled. Try these names on for size: Izaak Perlman, arguably the world’s greatest violinist; Andrea Bocelli, one of the world’s four top tenors; Ray Charles, jazzman extraordinaire. Do we worry when they are performing that Izaak cannot walk without his crutches, that Andrea and Ray are blind? No, we are swept away by the sheer brilliance and beauty of their art, which has transcended their humanity, their disabilities and put them in touch with the divine.

Let’s face it, we all have disabilities, only some are more apparent than others.

This is what made the Wataboshi opening day such a remarkable, spiritual event for me. As observers we were allowed to share each artist’s striving for that transcendent plane where we are unexpectedly aware—even if only for a split-second in time—that we are suddenly closer to God.

The inaugural parade included people in wheelchairs in gorgeous costumes—shiny, metallic, spacey confections, with at least one Count Dracula and a clown or two strutting their stuff. A big band struck up, followed by a drum combo, a Japanese man, flanked by two young Australian women belting large skin-covered drums and cowbells. The rhythm prompted a man in a silver lame gown, who had been in the parade and who apparently has cerebral palsy, to suddenly dance. This was



Wataboshi International Ambassador, David Helfgott taking a shine to New Zealand pianist Zeb Wulff. Photo: Sonja de Sterke (QUT)

totally impromptu—he looked as if he just *had* to dance, to express the delight that was brimming out of him. When he was exhausted, another took his place, then another. These were young men with Down’s Syndrome who improvised some rap-dance actions. Now they may not have been as slick as those practiced home-boys on the sidewalks of New York, but their unalloyed joy at sharing their dance was both moving and humbling.

Confessions of a Blind Trainspotter presented by pianist Jeff Usher, was our first treat. To the stylish and mellifluous tones of Jeff’s piano-playing we were also regaled with video and sound recordings of trains and a running narrative of Jeff’s philosophies and trainspotting activities. Now I’ve always liked trains, even lived by a railway track for a too-brief time in my life, but Jeff opened my eyes to the loveliness and the sexiness of trains that I had somehow missed before. Here was a blind man teaching me to see. His musical composition was masterful, sensuous and haunting, the whole experience of the blind trainspotter totally absorbing and exhilarating. Queensland Railways should purchase Jeff’s video and soundtrack (which I believe is available on CD) for nowhere have I seen such a loving tribute to its wonderful locomotives. It occurred to me as the last train left Jeff sitting on the station, and the last notes of his jazz interpretation faded into the night, that this was going to be a very hard act to follow.

Yet the second part of the performance was equally astounding. Called *The Unknown Sister* it was a one-woman show presented by Liz Navratil who has cer-

bral palsy. Liz was inspired by the life of Elizabeth, the schoolteacher sister of Marlene Dietrich, who was abandoned by the actress when she left Germany for the US when Hitler and the Nazi Party were on the rise. At the end of the war Dietrich went back to Germany, to find that Elizabeth had been interned in a concentration camp. Marcus Hughes, who directed the play, says *The Unknown Sister* explores obsession and jealousy. But there are some hilarious moments, too, set against a lyrical backdrop of excerpts from Dietrich's movies, which new-media artist Michael Vagg designed.

"One of the most exciting things about working with Lizzie is her ability to challenge traditional notions of what performers ought to be like," Marcus Hughes said in an interview in *The Australian*.

One could equally say this about everyone who performed at The Wataboshi Festival. They challenged our stereotypes about performance and performers, making us rethink our notions of what is relevant, what is meaningful. And isn't this what true art is all about?

Cheryl Jorgensen is an author and publisher. Last year she published an anthology of Queensland writing entitled *You're a Legend!* She has also written a crime novel entitled *A Quality of Light* and a novel for young adults entitled *Morag Bane* published by Blake Publications. Contact blakepublications@yahoo.com.au

review

Media Ethics—ethics, law & accountability in the Australian media

(with case studies for classes and groups)

Jane Hendtlass and Alan Nichols, Acorn Press, 2003. 80pp

Reviewed by Maggie Helass

This textbook is an essential tool for church groups, particularly for people over forty who missed out on media studies at school.

Everyone in Australia is influenced by the media, whether we like it or not. We are obliged to take up the tools of critical analysis of the

mass media, if we do not want to be at the mercy of this powerful, and often exploitative, Fourth Estate.

Indeed, the authors urge critical analysis as a Christian duty, in a world of technical innovations which make us ask new questions about the nature of reality.

"...human beings are not thoughtless cogs in a machine, but thinking intelligent beings with choices to make about the use and application of technology." (p 72)

The book tackles the problem of the homogenisation of views because of cross-media ownership—a particular problem in Australia which has arguably the highest saturation of news and current affairs media coupled with the narrowest media ownership profile.

"Our public discourse on values, laws and how we live together is altered by the way films, newspapers, radio, television and the Internet do our storytelling. These have replaced the Town Crier of earlier times as the most important way we learn about what is going on in the world." (p 8)

Journalists are guardians of the public interest but, with the exception of very few independent commentators, are pressured by the culture of the newsroom. Increasingly in the last decade, reporters and journalists have found it more and more difficult to leave the newsroom as travel budgets are cut in favour of the 'fast food' news outlets of the Internet.

One is reminded of Keith Murdoch's advice last century—"Beware the desk habit. It is one of the curses of journalism".

The authors point out that new information technologies not only throw up new ethical challenges, but also provide subversive and alternative sources of information. The success of an independent information website during the Sydney Olympics spawned a new network of independent journalism committed to exacting newsgathering and analysis.



Commercial interests naturally acquire too much clout in a free market economy and a mass media industry which is self-regulated. The only defence against misinformation and the insidious influence of vested interests, particularly through advertising, is the absorbing pursuit of critical analysis, for which this textbook provides the elementary skills.

The book has a useful index and list for further reading.

review

Matrix – Revolutions

Directed by the Wachowski brothers

Reviewed by Cameron Taylor

Matrix Revolutions is the final instalment of a trilogy that seeks to weld state-of-the-art storytelling technology with classical themes.

As an action movie, *Revolutions* delivers an incandescent 129 minutes. At times the pace and sheer volume of action can strike the viewer numb. Staging and atmosphere combine effectively with

choreography and drama. Acting truly ranges from the sublime to the ridiculous—with the balance in the movie's favour. The larger story and key individuals' experiences merge as the plot progresses. Much is made of the emotional power human beings tap into when faced with disaster.

Comparison with the machine's hyper-rational warfighting ethos is a key to how *Revolutions* takes us further into the Matrix mythology.

The Matrix originally posited that each world (human, machine and Matrix simulation) were by their very nature forever closed to each other's influence. *Reloaded* (Part Two) established that actions in one world carried direct effects in the others. In *Revolutions* we discover that the characteristics of the instigators can also be carried across. The issue of personal choice raised in *Reloaded* is also taken to a new level.

Choices of action open to each protagonist become more limited, and more demanding, and are very much individual choices, founded upon the level of sacrifice each character is willing to make in order to follow the 'right' course of action—often a course which friends condemn.

Almost every level of conflict is portrayed during the movie, culminating in an emotionally-driven individual unaware of the final goal, battling a sterile rationality unaware of its driving purpose.

Words and language are crucial in *Revolutions*. Words such as 'love' and 'Karma' are used by a computer-generated program seeking to explain its behaviour to the human, Neo. The program explains that the words it uses are simply symbols of living experience. A machine can therefore act from love, and accept the workings of Karma.

Revolutions is perhaps asking whether the machine can feel love, and be inspired by the revelation held within the principle of Karma. The difference is important—and the fact that this difference goes unremarked in the contemporary world is raised in graphic form in the movie trilogy.

Patterns of relationship constitute perhaps the only structural integrity throughout the trilogy. In *Revolutions* the final courses of action are chosen because of relationship, not because of circumstance.

The heroine, Trinity, is recognised by Persephone as an entity that truly feels love for Neo, and through expressing this as courage, is able to enter Hell and force its ruler's hand to release Neo from a limbo.

home truths

Michael McGirr

The visionary human Morpheus' faith in Neo carries both himself and a score of others through their trials, and faith is finally recognised as a more powerful (and, it is hinted, perhaps more true) way of living than one based solely on logic.

Rogue program Agent Smith can only replicate himself, creating a wasteland from the simulated world he inhabits. He has no relationships with others beyond taking control of them through the viral transfer of his image.

The Oracle seems to have relationships with almost every aspect of the three worlds. It is intuitively understandable that an Oracle who can trace events into the future is in fact a creature of chaos. She gives advice that contradicts itself, and withholds essential knowledge that could affect many outcomes. Her reasons remain her own. In the moment Agent Smith takes the passively resistant Oracle into his viral form, the resulting creature laughs maniacally. One cannot be sure whether Agent Smith has added the Oracle's powers to his own, or whether the Oracle has finally succeeded in adding some entropy into a previously closed system.

Revolutions leads to a series of conclusions that do address themes explored throughout the trilogy. *Revolutions* presents no certain answers and this has been seen by some as a failure. But powerful imagery alludes to the limitations of intellect. The ruler of the machine world chooses to ally itself with humanity in order to save itself from one of its own creations. Trinity accepts death because she has achieved satisfaction through her experience of living. Neo chooses to accept the viral image of Agent Smith, thereby introducing an element into the virus that immediately destroys its power. The avatars of law and chaos agree to continue their relationship.

The closing shot is of a cityscape cradling and illuminated by a spectacular dawn. One analysis would lead one to conclude the trilogy had ended with a typically Hollywood paucity of meaning. The effect of the scene is a living experience of nature, refulgent with emotion, blended with the soaring achievements of humanity's intellect.

Cameron Taylor is a webmaster, proficient in martial arts, and custodian of a ceremonial didgeridoo. He lives near Stonehenge, in England.

People are saying that the Pope is not well. I don't believe them. He looks fine to me. Besides, he still has work to do.

There are two major tasks which the Pope has delayed. He still has time for them both, but he needs to get busy.

The first oversight may have been occasioned by a false humility. The Pope has canonised hundreds of saints. If you include blessed, he has named almost 1800 people who, to his sure knowledge, have made it through customs and immigration at the pearly gates. The vast majority of these people have been Catholics. The Pope is a Catholic. Yet he has never canonised himself.

Pre-posthumous canonisation is rare in the church. I can't think of another example although Mother Teresa came close. St Christopher, one time patron of travellers, may qualify. He never existed. Therefore he never died. Therefore his canonisation was pre-posthumous.

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But John Paul II has always been a great innovator. He has done things that no other Pope ever dreamed of. He has prayed in both synagogues and mosques.

Different people highlight different achievements of the Pope, invariably reflecting their own interests. This is one of the qualities of a saint. People remake them in their own image and likeness.

I draw attention to John Paul II's support for indigenous people and the environmental movement, as well as to his scepticism about rampant capitalism. He doesn't get much press for those beliefs. He was staunch in his opposition to the war in Iraq.

I am one of the few practising Catholics still left in the pews who has been neither canonised, beatified nor made a cardinal by the current Pope. One reason I would like the Pope to live on longer is that my turn for one of these positions will inevitably come around.

Getting into heaven needs to be removed as an incentive for the Pope to die. He needs to be canonised without delay. The only man who can do this is himself.

There are theologians who argue against pre-posthumous canonisation. They say that heaven is different from any place on earth. These people have not seen the Vatican. It is really quite nice.

They also say that it would be a shame if somebody was canonised and then committed a mortal sin and then died without confession. This would present the theological dilemma of a saint in hell. I can't see the problem. Mother Teresa was a saint in hell. Besides, John Paul II is unlikely to do anything sinful at this late stage because he is unlikely to do anything at all.

Traditionally, canonisation takes place after death. But so does burial. Yet John Paul II has practised pre-posthumous burial. He has buried the aspirations of women aspiring to be priests in the Catholic Church, he has buried the hopes of gay people who would like the most important relationship in their lives blessed by the Church, he has buried the concerns of those who have divorced and would like to remarry in the Church, he has buried the voices of those who do not believe that, in the English language, 'man' also means 'woman'. He has filled a pretty big cemetery, when you think about it.

It is false modesty for John Paul II to refuse to canonise himself. It only leaves the job for the next guy, who will be under suspicion if he has not canonised John Paul in the first year of his pontificate.

If John Paul acts now, he could do the job on a small scale, and save the adulation that a successor is likely to pour on his head. It is the most humble thing he could do.

Failing that, a mischievous monsignor might slip his name onto the list when he is canonising a group of others. He wouldn't notice.

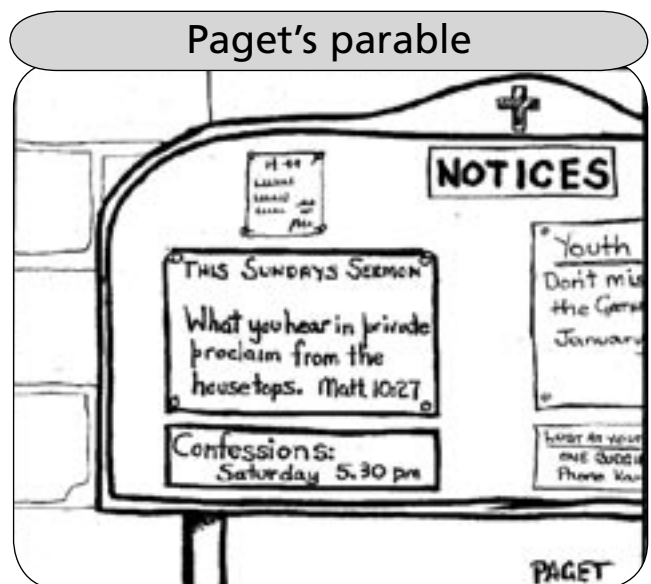
It's lucky he doesn't have too many Australian monsignors buzzing around. He would have canonised both Slim Dusty and Johnny Cash by now.

The second job the Pope has to do is to get married. Why not? Nelson Mandela got married when he was eighty and hasn't looked back. Besides, the Pope does have a romantic side. He can also be tender. Nevertheless, he has always given the impression that life is a battle. For many people it surely is. But there's no point in making it tougher than it needs to be.

I am sure that the Pope genuinely believes that God wants him to keep running this vast organisation, even when he is in great pain.

What sort of God would expect that, especially from a man who has done so much already? I'm afraid I see that God as a stone idol. The God I worship would be telling John Paul II to put his feet up. Or packing him off on a honeymoon.

Michael McGirr is the author of *Things you Get For Free* (Picador). He is the fiction editor of the journal *Meanjin*. He lives with Jenny and their baby 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*.



For the God who sang

“I am horrified to hear that Kay McLennan’s program is going to be moved to the night time slot of 10.30pm on Sundays. That will mean I will certainly be one who will miss it. As it is, it is lovely to hear ‘For The God Who Sings’ in the car between 6am and 8am Sundays as I go off to various appointments.”

Archbishop Peter Carnley, Perth

“It is good to start the day with a song, with a presenter who sets us singing. Please put the program back to its early morning spot.”

The Revd Bob Thomas, Moderator-elect of the Presbyterian Church in Australia

“I have always found ‘For the God Who Sings’ uplifting and a wonderful start to the day. I can’t listen late at night and anyway, it wouldn’t have the same purpose.”

Archbishop Denis Hart, Melbourne

“This marvelous program is prodigiously researched, so comprehensive in its scope and so elegantly presented by one of the best speaking voices presently heard on ABC, it is an essential part of our aesthetic heritage.

Dr Robert Boughen, City Organist, Brisbane

If you are upset that the liturgical music program *For The God Who Sings* on ABC Classic FM has been retired from early Sunday mornings to late Sunday nights, write to the person responsible for this decision.

Send petitions to —
Ms Kate Dundas,
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