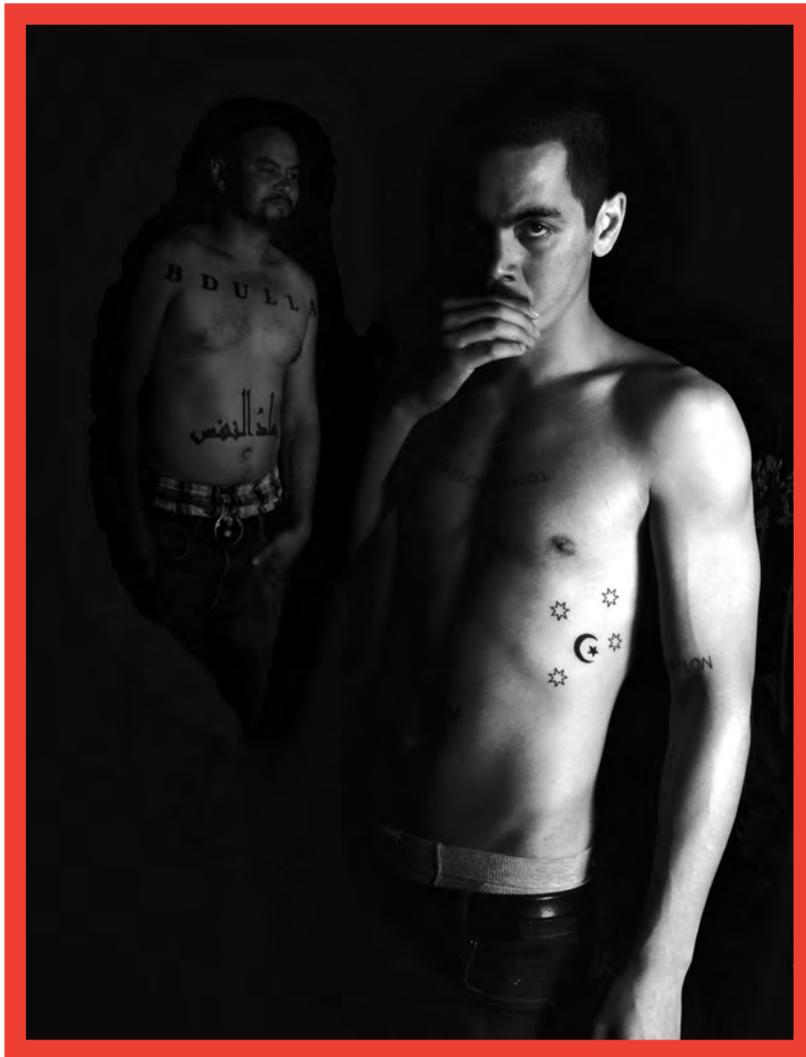


Common Theology

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INSIDE:

- PNG – Getting to know our neighbours
- Euthanasia – the theatre of life and death

A Periodical Journal for Australians



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Cover image: 'Them and Us', a self portrait by Abdul Abdullah, winner of the 2011 Blake Prize for Human Justice.

"Here on the skin of the artist are iconic references to both Australian and Muslim identity that creates something new. This is a mark that confronts my expectations about whether this figure is in my tribe or not, or more correctly whether I can widen the boundaries of what constitutes an Australian identity to include this person who is different.

This tension is best found in the image of the tattoo on the flank of Abdullah that depicts both the Southern Cross and the crescent star and moon."

The Rev Dr Rod Pattenden, Chair of Blake Society

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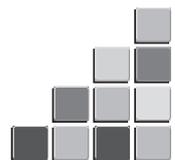
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Contents

From the Editor	4
Getting to know our neighbours	5
— a PNG veteran writes on Melanesian spirituality	
Forum: The Theatre of Life and Death	10
— Frank Brennan on Euthanasia	
PostIts: snippets from the news media	12
Book reviews	
<i>Open Mind Open Heart</i>	17
— by Thomas Keating	
<i>The Shattered Lantern</i>	18
— by Ronald Rolheiser	
Hugh's books	19
Home Truths: An inside view from Woomera	22
— putting a price on conscience	
Subscriptions	Back cover

From the Editor

Papua New Guinea is our closest neighbour, but culturally it is another planet for most Australians. Catholic priest Philip Gibbs has been working in this enigmatic country for nearly forty years and gives us some illuminating insights into the spirituality of Melanesia – insights which could help western theology respond better to the whole created order.

As one of our readers remarks on page 8, addressing the churches, “if we don’t get our metaphor for God matched to the thought-world of the 21st Century we will go down the cultural gurgler”. Our western theology is to date inadequate for coping with the cosmological and ontological issues we are facing in the 21st Century.

One hidden treasure we do have is a mystical theology which has been buried in monasteries in western Christendom, normally unavailable to ordinary folk, since the Middle Ages. This tradition has been exhumed during the past few decades, and is being painstakingly translated into 21st Century conceptual language, using modern sociological and psychological insights. Two books I have read lately about the revival of the Christian mystical tradition and contemplative prayer are reviewed in these pages.

Euthanasia has been a lively subject of debate in Australian politics. Fr Frank Brennan SJ visited the USA in June and investigated what is happening in Oregon, a state which has had a physician assisted suicide law in place since 1997. His findings in our Forum provide a nuanced approach to a very complex subject, which affects every citizen in countries where suicide is legislated for.

Lyn Bender is a psychologist who worked at Woomera and had to do serious business with her conscience as a professional whilst there. In Home Truths she reinforces the message that concentration camps such as those set up in remote areas for detaining immigrants are creating a mental health catastrophe. She also makes the point that any community which condones such inhumane practices becomes complicit in them – a lesson many of us had to learn painfully during the blood, sweat and tears of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.

I have been asked why we continue to produce this journal amidst the blizzard of information available these days – is it worthwhile?

Although many of us suffer data overload, information floods daily life, and opinions are ubiquitous, it seems that wisdom is harder to come by in the media cyclone. We look for material to publish that is worth spending time with and thinking about – in print because that is what most of our readers want, although *Common Theology* is also on-line and available by e-mail.

My task as editor is to find material that encourages and inspires us to seek out a theological perspective on contemporary society – one that should by definition bring hope to daily life.

As long as our readers and sponsors continue to support this journal we will continue to publish it as a small contribution to theological debate in the market place.

Maggie Helass

Getting to know our Neighbours

An Indigenous Theology Symposium met at the Brisbane campus of the Australian Catholic University in June last year. **Philip Gibbs**, a Catholic priest working in PNG, was one of the speakers addressing the cutting edge of indigenous theology in our region. This is an edited text of his lecture.



Papua New Guinea is a nation comprising hundreds of cultures. Despite the plurality of beliefs and practices, there are themes such as Melanesian spirituality that are common throughout the region.

Melanesian spirituality has been defined as a search for, maintenance of, and celebration of life. The primary concern is for growth, fertility, health, wealth and success.

Traditional Melanesian spirituality is non-theistic. In a few cases where there is a high god, it is at best a *deus otiosus* – a “retired god”.

The main practical concern is to keep channels of life open, which means maintaining and strengthening relationships with people and other elements of the cosmos.

This is accomplished through rituals, often in the form of exchange. Such cosmic spirituality is not concerned with an intellectual quest, but rather a quest for life involving survival and wellbeing.

Some have labelled traditional Melanesian spirituality as magical and superstitious. This is because it is not concerned so much with the ultimate source of life-giving power in a transcendent God, but rather with the availability and immediate use of power to bring about life and wellbeing – found in healers, sorcerers and ancestral spirits.

Scholars investigating Melanesian spirituality often use a “biocosmic” explanation for the use of non-theistic symbols representing sacred reality in Melanesian religion. The biocosmic religious experience does not refer to an ultimate called God

(*theos*), but to an ultimate experience as *bios* (life). It is characterised by the experience of “something” which is absolutely necessary for existence; of “something” in which everything participates. Mantovani¹ says that this “something” is *bios* or life. The more a reality participates in that life, the stronger, healthier, richer and more important that reality becomes.

If life ebbs away, then sickness and eventually death follows. Life, in this context, is material, biological and spiritual.

The term “cosmic” is used in the understanding that everything participates in cosmic life in various degrees and everything is bound together by it. Animals and plants may be distinguished from humans, but are still linked together into a *cosmos*. Everything that exists shares in the same “life” – hence the term “biocosmic.”

The symbolism of the biocosmic experience is not vertical as the experience with *theos* tends to be, but horizontal, with a stress on blood, the womb, the tomb, the phallus.

God as *theos* was introduced to PNG by Christian missionaries

According to Mantovani, Christianity was not totally unbiased, as it grew out of Israel which, in order to survive as an ethnic group, had to fight against the agrarian biocosmic religions of Canaan. The fight for survival did not allow Israel to dialogue with the biocosmic religious experience and its symbols (Mantovani 2000: 85)².

Christianity followed suit and it was God as *theos* who was introduced to Papua New Guinea by the Christian missionaries – with seemingly little concern for Melanesian biocosmic issues of gardens, growth, and fertility in all its forms.

1. Mantovani, Ennio. “Discussion: Is there a Biocosmic Religion? A Reply to Dr Garland,” *Catalyst* 16 (4) (1986) 352–366.

2. Mantovani, Ennio, *Divine Revelation and the Religions of PNG: A Missiological Manual*, Goroka: Melanesian Institute. 2000.

Christianity had to introduce sin, as the cause of the lack of true life and as the reason for the death of Jesus.

Theoretically, the “biocosmic” religious experience of Melanesian spirituality could focus on life-giving love without needing human sinfulness as a motive for that love to appear.

For Mantovani this biocosmic experience is part of God’s revelation to the people of Melanesia going back thousands of years prior to the coming of Christianity. He claims that today Christianity does not need an ethnic identity, as was the case with Israel. Christianity subsists in a plurality of local churches and is thus free to dialogue with different forms of religious experience (Mantovani 2000: 98).

Mantovani’s explanation is somewhat akin to other explanations of how “cosmic” religions are concerned with sacred, womanly, earthly matters. They represent the basic posture that *homo religiosus* adopts towards the mysteries of life.³

Mantovani’s insights based on his experience in the field and on comparative religion and phenomenology are valuable; however I am left with remaining questions.

- Is the life of the human person simply *bios*? Could more attention be given to the value of the human person (*anthropos*) in relation to *bios* and *cosmos*?
- Secondly, how does one do ‘theo-logy’ without a *theos*?
- Thirdly, in Christian theology, how can one best include Christ in dialogue with indigenous spiritualities, particularly in the context of changing contemporary realities? I could refer back to discussion on such issues within literature originating in Papua New Guinea – principally that from the Melanesian Institute.

Until now in Melanesia the discussion has been mostly dualistic. It compares cosmic spirituality and its concern for the earth, nature, wellbeing and exchange, with their equivalents in metacosmic spirituality – heaven, transcendence, salvation and grace. I have noted how Melanesian Christians may acknowledge the metacosmic beliefs of Christianity, while cosmic spirituality continues as

part of the deep underlying religious dimension of a person’s faith.⁴

Panikkar⁵ helps support endeavours to think beyond dualism in terms of “as-well-as” rather than “either-or.”

Panikkar’s view of *anthropos* in relationship to matter and divine is also useful in the indigenous worldview that naturally understands the person as self conscious within a web of relationships. The Melanesian person develops independence of character within a socio-centric rather than an individualistic environment.

Broadening the context beyond the social, to the cosmic and the divine could surely enrich our understanding of the person as not just socio-centric but at the crossroads (not the center) of the threefold horizon of being

Panikkar concludes that ‘theo-logy’ too often seeks to entrap God in our human categories

Panikkar concludes that theo-logy or the human science of God all too often seeks to entrap God in our human categories. The only way to redeem theo-logy is to treat it as a subjective genitive; that is, as the word of God to which we may listen.

Indigenous spiritualities such as those from Papua New Guinea appear not to use theistic symbolism. Nor do they entertain accounts of *theos* entering into human history.

The indigenous mythos is about the search for life. The source of life may at times be symbolised in a Dema figure who dies and is buried – the symbol of life emerging from the Dema figure’s grave. Yet the origin of that life is a cosmic energy, not a personal one.

4. Gibbs, Philip, “It’s in the Blood,” South Pacific Journal of Mission Studies. No 31 (Dec. 2004) 22-27

5. Panikkar, Raimon *The Rhythm of Being*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010.

– , *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, 1998 (First published 1993 by Orbis books, Maryknoll, New York).

– , *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003 (First published in Italian by Jaca books in 1999).

3. Pieris, Aloysius, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1988. p 71

If one leaves theistic notions aside and considers Divine mystery as the ultimate source of life and being, then there is room for viewing this as a *locus theologicus* for indigenous theology.

Indigenous spirituality can be considered theology when it enables us to become aware of where the different symbols of the *theos* find a common arena in response to the wonder of existence and the gift of life (Panikkar 2010: 206).

Can insights that seek a different *mythos* from that of orthodox monotheism assist in the dialogue between Christian theology and indigenous spiritualities?

Panikkar is wary of Christologies being a Western product bound by the history of culture and the monotheism inherited from Abrahamic tradition (Panikkar 2003: 4,7).

He introduces the concept of “Christophany” as the manifestation of Christ to human consciousness including both the mystical experience of Christ as being one with the Father and a critical reflection on that experience (Panikkar 2003: 10).

He does not want to reduce the reflection on Christ to a doctrinal or intellectual method proper to Christology, but seeks to go beyond that aided by what he calls the “third eye.”

The first eye is that of the senses; the second, that of the intellect; the third is the mystical vision facilitated by the spirit.

For the “third eye” of mystical vision Panikkar draws upon the Indic notion of *advaita* – a non-dualistic conception of reality as interrelatedness. (It is not limited to Indic notions, since he notes that the polytheism of African religions is *advaitic*) (Panikkar 2010: 164). *Advaita* does not say “either-or” but “as well as”. The focus is not on two poles of a dialectic, but rather on an awareness of the relationship that exists.

For example, “nothingness” is the dialectical negation of “being”. In contrast, “absence” (Spanish – *nada*) is not negation but the awareness of emptiness surrounding being. The awareness of an absence only makes sense together with the presence of whose absence we are aware. There is not the one without the other (Panikkar 2010: 314). This is *advaita*.

Reason alone cannot grasp Christophany, but the third eye of mystical intuition can. The “third eye” of the mystical intellect does not depend on us seeing or knowing, but comes into being when we are conscious that we are seen or known.

A stone may be felt; it may be known; but it may also be a symbol of the temple and the temple may be a symbol of the divinity for those able to participate in the *mythos* that provides a horizon of intelligibility for the symbol.

Too often rationalism blinds us to the wisdom of the “third eye” of mystical intuition. With the aid of the third eye it is possible to view Jesus Christ as one of the most powerful symbols “encompassing (not to say incarnating) in himself corporeality (matter), humanity (consciousness), and divinity (infinite)” (Panikkar 2010: 304).

It is relevant here to note how Panikkar also utilizes the term *incarnatio continua*. Christianity is a historical religion. But Christ is more than historical reality. “Christ has appeared as king, soldier, knight, pacifist, friend of the poor, rebel and madman” (Panikkar 2003: 174).

Too often rationalism blinds us to the wisdom of the “third eye” of mystical intuition

The incarnation takes place in a specific cultural milieu and so in effect is already an inculturation. At the same time it transforms the culture that receives it. Authentic Christians are unique participants in the *incarnatio continua* as persons who have experienced the reality of Christ.

Christ is not an “other”; I am not Christ; we are neither one nor two. This is the non-dual relation of the person in the experience of *advaita* (Panikkar 2003: 77).

Panikkar distinguishes three moments of consciousness: nonhistorical; historical – which includes the rational-scientific; and transhistorical consciousness that amounts to experiencing the sacredness of the secular and includes the cosmotheandric experience (Panikkar 1993: 121).

Traditional Melanesian spirituality would be considered nonhistorical.

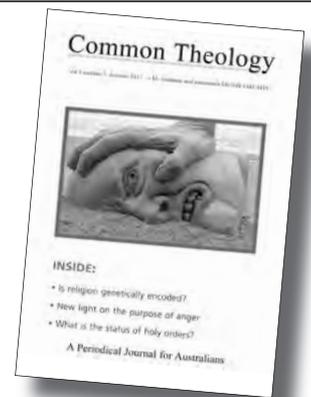
Panikkar observes correctly that the elites of pre-industrial societies are trying to change the mode of consciousness of their people in order to introduce the historical consciousness “which is a prerequisite for industrialisation or revolution” (Panikkar 1993: 126).

Unfortunately, if they have not done so already, they will find that they are exchanging a

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Readers' views

I am heart-warmed by your determination to continue a new format for *Common Theology*. But why 'common', equating in the public mind with ordinary? There is nothing common about theology. In my opinion it has become, in part, a bastion for the status quo. And theological colleges equate to, (in part) a sheltered elitist enclave.

My subscription to the journal was built on the presupposition that it was an organ devoted to reflecting on lived theology, and its importance to 21st Century living.

Why not start off with the relationship of Jesus to 'common people'. They were 90% of the population in the 1st Century, outside the one percent of powerful political elites and their nine percent of retainers.

Jesus probably had a preference for 'publicans and sinners' because he found religious people insufferably tedious, arrogant and stuck in the status quo of institutionalism. What changes?

Why not in future identify 'flash point' issues in certain areas and rotate them with different

authors? Plus an occasional provocative article from left field. For instance, the devastating consequences of being religiously right! Or, are doctrine and creeds the worst disaster to hit the church? Or how to resurrect worship.

This brings me on target for flash point issues:

~ Who is God for the 21st Century? In my opinion if we don't get our metaphor for God matched to the thought-world of the 21st Century we will go down the cultural gurgler.

~ The liturgical profile for the 21st Century. The process, first, is to establish a God metaphor, and translate it into a theology of worship second. The traditional churches are suffering a leakage of ritual practices.

~ Pastoral guidance. The number of self-help books are thick on the ground. Well something has to flood in, and fill a vacuum! The main thrust is to take old practices and reinterpret them.

Douglas G McKenzie OAM
Moffat Beach, Qld

"*Common Theology* is food for God's 'little people'. I enjoy it very much."



Archbishop Desmond Tutu
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

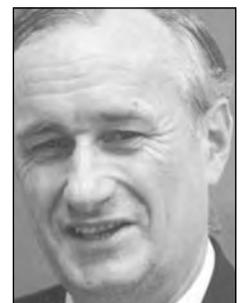


light years away from the 'god spots' of religious journalism in the past."

Kay McLennan
Veteran Religious Affairs Journalist

"*Common Theology* is ecumenical with an Australasian focus and embraces current affairs –

"*Common Theology* is significant to the Christian community and beyond because it avoids the twin dangers facing theology today – that of being populist, trivial and even sectarian; or of being too academic, remote and specialised."



The Revd Prof James Haire
Professor of Theology Charles Sturt University;
Exec Dir Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture;
Director Public & Contextual Theology Strategic Research Centre.

transcendent heaven for the few in the “next life”, for a fulfillment in the future that turns out to be not very bright in either the historical or the vertical dimensions.

The fact is that a substantial proportion of humanity has not reached the minimal level of the *humanum*.

Arguments for the uniqueness of Christ aside, indigenous spirituality becomes Christian theology with the introduction of Jesus Christ as the primary symbol of life who came to reveal life in its fullness, not just *bios*. This is not about incarnation in the traditional sense or fulfilment of pre-existent revelation. Jesus Christ represents a special image of the divine allowing one to have a personal relationship within the divine mystery.

As *anthropos*, we humans are at a meeting point of the three dimensions (spiritual, intellectual and material) and we see this represented in a special way in Christ.

In order for this to happen we need a “new *mythos*” because the myths of progress, science, technology, history, democracy and similar stories to which many of our contemporaries cling are no longer held to be true by an increasing number of responsible thinkers (Pannikkar 2010: 374).

An alternative is still on the horizon; however Pannikkar claims that we will find it in the advaitic myth of the cosmotheandric trinity: *cosmos-anthropos-theos* (Pannikkar 2010: 404).

Indigenous spiritualities exist today alongside a multiplicity of ideologies and beliefs, including the secular *mythos* of the modern industrialised world.

Papua New Guinea is facing a boom in multi-national mining and natural gas projects that strain the physical, human, moral and spiritual resources to the limit. People are competing to acquire a share of the spoils. For example, with regards to land, there appears to be little concern for the sacredness of land in the midst of the skirmish for monetary compensation.

Pannikkar views modern technology in negative terms – calling it technocracy because it reduces life to the sensible and rational, forgetful of the mystical.

He thinks that the only possibility for the future entails “a creative transformation of human culture, taking into account the human experience of the last six millennia in its positive and negative aspects” (Pannikkar 2010: 319).

In proposing a cosmotheandric attitude he wants to rescue the divine from being considered a separate entity floating somewhere above and beyond the rest of reality.

Pannikkar presents three aspects of cosmotheandric spirituality as it relates to the contemporary world:

- Firstly, cosmotheandric spirituality seeks to transform the *cosmos*. Humanity is not simply a part of the *cosmos*, but a part of the very destiny of reality. Humankind is not passive, but can affect the whole adventure of being. “Man is an unfinished ‘product’ of the hands of the Creator because the human task is to achieve the unfinished portions by bringing to fulfilment both oneself and the surrounding world” (Pannikkar 2010: 350). We cooperate with the divine and share in the divine dimension.

Myths of progress are no longer held to be true by responsible thinkers

- Secondly, cosmotheandric spirituality is aware of our ecological responsibility in the *oikos* or household. The *oikos* is suffering from an *oikonomia* out of control. Our life on earth is not an accident and we have the responsibility to bring the *oikonomia* under control for the sake of the human household and the *cosmos* as a whole. “Only if the Godhead, the natural World, and Man are seen to belong intrinsically together in a Trinitarian reality will our attitude to the earth cease to be domineering, and become one of real partnering – a partnership with something we ourselves *are*” (Pannikkar 2010: 353).
- Thirdly, cosmotheandric spirituality includes political involvement.

Philip Gibbs from New Zealand is a Divine Word Missionary priest working in Papua New Guinea. He has a post graduate diploma in Anthropology (Sydney University) and a doctorate in Theology (Gregorian University, Rome). At present he is Secretary of the Commission for Social Concern for the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of PNG.

Theatre of Life and Death

Professor Frank Brennan SJ spoke on 'The Value of Human Life – The Question of Euthanasia' in a lecture in Sydney on June 2, and later that month wrote an article in the on-line journal *Eureka Street* about his visit to the USA. Euthanasia is an active and expanding debate in Australian politics. Fr Brennan addressed the issue from his perspective as a professor of law as well as a Catholic priest, but made the caveat that he is neither a medical doctor nor a moral theologian. This is an edited version of his texts.

Americans love conversation and public disputation about contested moral and ethical issues. I decided to visit Oregon, which has had a physician assisted suicide law in place since 1997.

Last year 96 Oregonians asked their doctors to prescribe a deadly barbiturate which they could ingest causing their own deaths; 65 of them went ahead and did so.

This mode of dying accounts for just 0.2 per cent of deaths in Oregon. In the Netherlands, euthanasia accounts for ten times that percentage of deaths, and almost a third of them occur without the patient's explicit request.

I met with representatives from Providence Health – the largest Catholic health provider in the state of Oregon; Physicians for Compassion – doctors who have strong ethical objections to their colleagues prescribing deadly medications; medical personnel from the Oregon Health Sciences

University (OHSU) – the institution through which most of the suicide procedures are instituted; and with Barbara Coombs Lee, President of Compassion and Choices – the principal national advocacy group espousing 'physician assisted death'.

Coombs Lee eschews use of the word 'suicide', suggesting that it implies that the terminally ill are mentally ill. She insists, "Assisted suicide, committed by a physician or anyone else, remains a felony in Oregon. If a physician aided or abetted the suicide of her mentally ill patient, she would and should be prosecuted."

When seeking my meeting with Ms Coombs Lee, I wrote: "I am an Australian lawyer and Jesuit

forum



priest. I serve on the national board of St Vincent's Health Care, one of the major health providers in Australia. I am attending the Catholic health conference in Atlanta in early June. On my way home, I will take the opportunity to come to Portland to check out your physician assisted suicide law. I am keen to hear a variety of perspectives on the workings of the Oregon law. Is there any chance I could meet with you?"

She replied: "I'm grateful for your curiosity, but would not anticipate your learning anything to impact your Catholic perspective on aid in dying. Our view is Catholic providers should not obstruct a patient's request for aid in dying (distinguished from suicide) and should facilitate referral to cooperating physicians in appropriate cases."

Jack Kevorkian, known as Dr
Death, had just died – of
natural causes

"The states of Oregon and Washington publish yearly reports and these are available on the states' websites. They would be good general data sources. Our website also has a large body of data. We don't get many requests for dialogue from priests, outside a debate setting, but I'm game."

This was too good a challenge for me. I replied, "I'm game if you are".

Jack Kevorkian, known as Dr Death, had just died – and of natural causes.

The liberal New York Times carried an opinion piece headed "Dr Kevorkian's victims", pointing out that 60 per cent of those assisted in death, or killed, by Kevorkian "weren't actually terminally

ill". In several cases, autopsies revealed "no anatomical evidence of disease".

Kevorkian believed people had a right to commit suicide and a right to receive assistance in committing suicide, regardless of whether they were terminally ill or in great pain. Coombs Lee was very careful to distinguish the aims of her organisation from the *modus operandi* of Kevorkian.

She said, "We don't think euthanasia is good public policy. For us, the patient being in control from beginning to end is crucially important. Even if very restricted in movement, we think it important that the patient have the consolation of knowing that they are always in control; that they can stop the procedure at any time".

Since then, she has told the *Medscape Medical News* that Kevorkian was a flamboyant provocateur: he never said to other physicians, "Let's develop a standard of care".

Critics of physician assisted suicide and opponents of Compassion and Choices claim that physician assisted suicide is a step on the slippery slope to euthanasia, which has been pragmatically abandoned by such groups for the moment because of its rejection by Californian voters in 1988.

Ed Pellegrino, the greatest American bioethicist of the age, once pointed out that: "[T]he slippery slope is not a myth. Historically it has been a reality in world affairs. Once a moral precept is breached, a psychological and logical process is set in motion which follows what I would call the law of infinite regress of moral exceptions.

"One exception leads logically and psychologically to another. In small increments a moral norm eventually obliterates itself. The process always begins with some putative good reason, like compassion, freedom of choice, or liberty. By small increments it overwhelms its own justifications."

The highly respected Daniel Callahan from the Hastings Center speaks of the organised obfuscation of the advocates for physician assisted suicide. Having abandoned euthanasia after 1988 they now want to avoid the term 'suicide', as one newspaper reporter has called it "a killer at the ballot box".

Using phrases like 'medically assisted death', 'has-tened death', and 'patient-directed aid in dying', Callahan thinks the advocates are disguising their real activity and purpose which is the 'medicalisation of autonomy' and the 'medical legitimisation' of suicide.

Barbara Glidewell, who had been the OHSU Ombudsman for 35 years, was responsible during the first twelve years of Oregon's Death With Dignity Act for facilitating the patient-provider process for terminally ill, adult patients making a voluntary request to access the law.

She told me that in 2010 the most frequent end-of-life concern expressed by patients seeking physician aid in dying was loss of autonomy (96 per cent), with only 10.2 per cent expressing concern about inadequate pain control.

Chuck Bentz, one of the Physicians for Compassion, shared with me the story of one of his patients, a 76-year-old athletic man with a melanoma. Chuck had known this patient and his wife for over a decade. He provided a referral to a reputable oncologist.

According to Bentz this is what happened: "As he went through his chemotherapy and radiation therapy, he became less able to do this activity, causing a depression, which was documented by his radiation oncologist. At his final visit with his medical oncologist, he expressed a wish for doctor-assisted suicide.

Bentz is concerned that this law impacts adversely on professional relationships between doctors

"Rather than taking the time and effort to address his depression, or ask me to respond to his depression as his primary care physician and as someone who knew him, the medical oncologist called me and asked me to be the 'second opinion' for his assisted-suicide.

"The oncologist told me that secobarbital "works very well" for patients like this, and that she had done this many times."

Bentz objected and advised that there were better ways to address his patient's needs at this time. Next he knew his patient was dead, from a lethal overdose. He obtained the death certificate which wrongly listed the cause of death as melanoma.

Bentz is concerned that this law impacts adversely not only on the doctor-patient relationship, but also on the professional relationships between doctors.

> continued on page 14

PostItsPostItsPostItsPostItsPostItsPos



Cyber terrorists

– evolution at work?

by Shelly Palmer

The US Government says they have credible intelligence that al-Qaida's newest bombs are people with surgically implanted explosives or explosive components. This is the logical extension of the current arms race.

But something else is happening here.

When I read this report, I couldn't help but think of the first viable artificial life forms created by man – computer viruses. Yep, you read it right. The first self-replicating, non-biological life created by us (human beings) was a malevolent computer virus. There are something like two million species of active computer viruses floating around the Internet.

Which brings me to this week's thought experiment. We are already Cyborgs. According to Wikipedia, a Cyborg is a "being" with both biological and artificial (e.g. electronic, mechanical or robotic) parts.

Looking at a typical connected person in 2011, you can clearly see that we augment our biological abilities with digital tools. From search engines to cloud-computing services to GPS to communications tools like text, voice and video, our handheld devices empower us in ways that we could hardly imagine just a few years ago. And, while all of these tools are external, they combine in a symbiotic way to make us Cyborgs.

What fascinates me is that it's al-Qaida, not Big Brother or the NSA or Skynet, who is going to take the first steps implanting technology in

humans for interaction with the outside world. (We've been implanting pacemakers and other medical devices to keep us alive for years, but those devices have worked in a closed system.) It looks like history is repeating itself. The first human machines, the very first Cyber-Symbiont is going to be a human being with explosives surgically implanted in them – a malevolent life form – just like the first artificial life form.

Why couldn't the first Cyber-Symbiont be a combination of electronic computer components to help us see better or think faster or give us better access to facts? Why does it have to be a weapon? To me, the question is more terrifying than the terrorist.

Shelly Palmer is the host of NBC Universal Live Digital, a weekly half-hour television show in the USA about living and working in a digital world. www.shellypalmer.com



Public Trust Journalism?

The commercial model that has historically funded large-scale "public trust" print journalism is collapsing, and so far in the media revolution nothing on the same scale has emerged to replace it. Although this trend has been evolving for several years, it has reached a new inflection point this year due to a combination of cyclical and structural factors.

Which raises a seminal question: if the free market can no longer fund it, should quality civic journalism be supported by some form of government funding? As it is in countries such as France and Sweden.

Such a suggestion may seem radical. But if government support becomes the only way to maintain public trust journalism, just as

government support is the primary funding source of the arts, culture, museums and libraries, surely that's preferable to watching it disappear. www.savethenews.org

Getting the Media we Deserve

by Justin Glyn

The News of the World phone hacking scandal has exposed newspapers, police and politicians to uncomfortable questions about relationships at the top of British society. One question less aired but equally relevant (in Australia, as much as the UK) is the nature of the relationship between the public and the media more generally.

The media often present themselves as lenses on the world, upholding the public's 'right to know'. They can be right.

For some time, however, people have suggested that, even in a democracy, media outlets can be quite selective about what they report and how they do it.

In 1988, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman stated that the interests of advertisers, political elites and media owners (among other factors) have a disproportionate influence on the media and its focus. Drawing on an essay by Walter Lippmann in 1922, they used the term 'manufacturing Consent' to describe this distortion.

It is certainly true that in this Internet age, we rely on the media not only for information, but often also for our opinions about the world around us. In short, the (print, broadcast and electronic) media all too often tell us what to see and think.

On the other hand, it is too easy to wring our hands and blame the media for bias and shoddy practices. There is a symbiotic relationship between media and the public. The brutal fact is that media present to its readers/viewers the world that they wish to

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view, whether it's 'sleb' gossip, football or anything else.

We like our fix of gossip and outrage; viewed, of course, through our favourite political spectacles – and are not always too concerned how we get it. That is notoriously why tabloids sell. As Billy Bragg puts it in his recent song about the scandal, 'Scousers Never Buy the Sun', "Everyone who loves that kiss and tell, You must share the blame as well"

Crikey.com.au 20/7/11



Efficiency versus Humanity

Eureka Street's Consulting Editor **Andrew Hamilton SJ** wrote on the collapse of Bluescope Steel on August 28.

(T)his crisis cannot be seen simply in terms of economic abstractions.

It has to do centrally with human beings. The loss of jobs immediately affects the employees. The ways in which Australia shapes its economy also creates a society in which human beings may flourish or be diminished. Bluescope and similar events invite reflections on the ways we can shape a humane society.

We should think first about the workers and their families. But the closures affect neighbourhoods and cities, too, because the workers' ill fortune will be visited on local shops and businesses and be felt in community organisations. It will be translated into depression whose results will be seen in families and schools.

The closure also raises larger questions about how the economic arrangements of society support human development and humane relationships. Economic efficiency is not the sole or decisive value.

The structuring of a humane society also involves encouraging people to connect with one another in local communities. This can conflict with maximum economic efficiency.

The transformation of Australian rural life has led to more economically efficient production. But it has also hollowed out rural communities and the resources available to them.

It is not self-evident that the quality of Australian society has been better served by this process than has France by the protection it offers to its small farmers.

The social justification of withdrawing support from small, remote Indigenous communities in the name of economic efficiency is even more questionable.

Good and Bad Religion

British theologian **Peter Vardy** made the following comments on Eureka Street TV on June 30, admitting there is much bad religion out there.

THE challenge of the new atheists, that religion has been responsible for much evil and suffering, is a point that is well made. I think the mistake they make is to move from that statement to say all religion is bad.

That religion feels obliged to respond to the new atheist challenge by feeling religion must be defended at all costs, whatever it's manifestation, needs more sophistication.

We need to differentiate between bad religion, which would be opposed both by atheists and by religious believers, and good religion which I would hope would be admired by atheists as well as religionists.

So the differentiation shouldn't be between atheists and believers, although there clearly is a differentiation there, but between both atheists and believers who are opposing manifestations of bad religion – which

are corrupting, damaging to the human spirit, dehumanising and not faithful to the religions they profess to represent.

There is an enormous amount of damage being done in the world by religion being used as a tool, and it is up to the followers of religion to stand up against bad religion in their own ranks – that's not happening enough.



Feral Bishop disrupts Zimbabwe church

The Anglican Church in Harare is under attack from an ex-communicated bishop, Dr Nolbert Kunonga, a supporter of President Mugabe, who left the Anglican Province of Central Africa (CPCA) in 2007 to try and set up a rival church.

Kunonga, with the support of police and henchmen, has seized CPCA church property and used violence to break up church services.

On September 11, sheriff's deputies accompanied by supporters of Dr Kunonga ejected the staff of the Arthur Shearly Cripps Children's Home – an orphanage 100 kilometres south of Harare in Chikwaka. Three nursing sisters were ordered to leave the premises immediately, while the five other staff were given 24 hours notice to vacate the property

Visiting Zimbabwe from 9-10 October the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, preached at a Eucharist at the National Sports Stadium in Harare and met local bishops who continue to serve the community despite an environment of disruption and intimidation.

> from page 11

The American Medical Association still regards physician assisted suicide as unethical.

Callahan says, “In the case of Oregon, we have been assured that all is well, that no abuses are occurring. In their confidence and firmness those assurances are the equal of those expressed in the Netherlands prior to its confidential surveys” – which revealed that doctors regularly euthanase patients without their consent or without sufficient regard for the mental state of the patient.

The US Catholic Bishops, worried that physician assisted suicide will spread beyond Oregon and Washington, have just issued a statement, ‘To live each day with dignity’.

Coombs Lee replied, “We welcome the bishops’ clear statement that opposition to aid in dying is a matter of religious belief. We find it unacceptable to impose the teachings of one religion on everyone in a pluralistic society”.

But you don’t have to be Catholic to think that doctors should do no harm, that patients are free to forego futile or burdensome treatment, and that palliative care be utilised to relieve pain. Suicide will occur from time to time, but why the need to enact laws conferring medical legitimation on it and increasing its likelihood?

Laws and social policies have to be designed for all citizens

If we look at the original Greek meaning of the word euthanasia, it means nothing more or less than a good death: from eu ‘well’ and thanatos ‘death’. Nowadays euthanasia means the direct causing of death, usually by the administration of a lethal injection by a medical practitioner. There is also the idea of physician assisted suicide or physician assisted death where the doctor prescribes the lethal drugs which the patient then ingests at a later time, perhaps with direct assistance from a loved one or carer.

Laws and social policies have to be designed for all citizens. The law is not a vehicle for imposing one set of religious or moral beliefs on others. We do not live in a theocracy. I am one of those Catholics who delights and thanks God daily that I am a citizen in a free, democratic, pluralistic society

where the laws are not determined by unelected bishops but by elected members of parliament and judges trained in the law.

In 1995 John Paul II issued a papal encyclical entitled *Evangelium Vitae*. He said: For a correct moral judgment on euthanasia, in the first place a clear definition is required.

Euthanasia in the strict sense is understood to be an action or omission which of itself and by intention causes death, with the purpose of eliminating all suffering. “Euthanasia’s terms of reference, therefore, are to be found in the intention of the will and in the methods used”.

Euthanasia must be distinguished from the decision to forego so-called “aggressive medical treatment”, in other words, medical procedures which no longer correspond to the real situation of the patient, either because they are by now disproportionate to any expected results or because they impose an excessive burden on the patient and his family.

In such situations, when death is clearly imminent and inevitable, one can in conscience “refuse forms of treatment that would only secure a precarious and burdensome prolongation of life, so long as the normal care due to the sick person in similar cases is not interrupted”.

To forego extraordinary or disproportionate means is not the equivalent of suicide or euthanasia; it rather expresses acceptance of the human condition in the face of death.

Pope John Paul II then went on to make a formal declaration: I confirm that euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person.

This doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon the written word of God, is transmitted by the Church’s Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium.

Depending on the circumstances, this practice involves the malice proper to suicide or murder.

Moral theologians and canonists delight in debating how authoritative this papal declaration is when couched in all this high sounding language.

I suggest that it is no disrespect to the papacy nor to Catholicism to assert that very few of you are likely to lie on your deathbeds debating with your relatives just how authoritative this teaching is. In any event you will note that the Pope has acknowledged that there is a need to take into

account various distinctions and qualifications when declaring the immorality of euthanasia.

A generation ago, many Catholics thought it was wrong to administer large doses of morphine to a dying person if that would shorten their life. They failed to draw a critical distinction. It is wrong to do something intending to shorten the life of a person. It is not wrong to do something intending to relieve someone's pain even if that action would have the unintended side effect of shortening the life of the patient.

A generation ago, many Catholics thought you were obliged to avail yourself of whatever medical treatment you could afford to lengthen your life. No, we believe death awaits us all on the journey to the Father. We are not obliged to endure therapeutically futile or overly burdensome treatments.

You will know enough of my involvement in the public square to know that I think it is not simply a matter of saying: I believe X is wrong, or my Church teaches X is wrong; therefore there should be a law prohibiting X. Take the simplest case. We all believe that except in some circumstances (such as the Nazis demanding to know whether you are harbouring Jews) it is wrong to lie, even if it be right not to tell the whole truth or acceptable to maintain some moral reservation about telling the whole truth. But that does not mean there should be a law against lying.

Yes, it is appropriate to have a law prohibiting lying in some circumstances such as when swearing

a statutory declaration or when entering into an insurance contract. But it would be just plain silly to make a law prohibiting lying in all circumstances, or even in all morally clear circumstances. In any event, such a law would be completely unenforceable and capriciously and arbitrarily applied.

In 1995, the Northern Territory Parliament passed Australia's first euthanasia law: The Rights of the Terminally Ill Act (NT). In 1997, the Commonwealth Parliament overrode the Territory law with its own Euthanasia Laws Act. The Commonwealth law did not repeal the Territory law but it rendered it inoperative.

I was a strong supporter of the Commonwealth law because I thought the NT euthanasia law would impact very adversely on the health of Aboriginal Territorians, many of whom said they would be scared ever to go to hospital if white doctors were able to kill them.

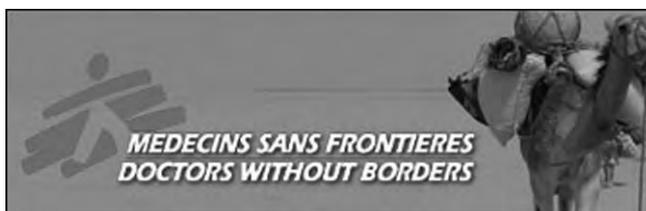
We are not obliged to endure therapeutically futile treatments

Three years ago, I said to the (Australian) Senate committee:

[W]hat has changed in ten years? In terms of what has changed, if you look at the United States, Oregon is still the only state which has euthanasia. Since the Commonwealth exercise the US Supreme Court has said there is no right to euthanasia. Lord Joffe's United Kingdom legislation has gone down, and we have had very clear statements from the medical authorities in the United Kingdom and a quite eloquent submission here from the Australian Medical Association. So it would seem to me that on balance nothing has changed or, if anything, the anti-euthanasia case is probably slightly strengthened if we look at developments in equivalent jurisdictions.

But there is gradual change occurring. There is still no law permitting euthanasia or physician assisted suicide in the UK. But in the US, Montana and Washington State have now gone down the path of Oregon. And here in Australia, there have been recent failed attempts to introduce euthanasia laws in Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania.

Not all persons agitating these laws are morally insensitive, callous individuals. Some of the



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advocates are the most humanitarian, caring individuals you could hope to meet. Usually they are concerned to protect the human dignity of that small group of persons whose pain cannot be appropriately managed, or who fear the loss of control on approaching death, preferring to have the final say on how they exit this world. Those of us who espouse human dignity must always have a concern for unmanageable pain and for human autonomy.

When is the state entitled to place limits on the exercise of individual autonomy? We would usually answer that question in the same way that we answer questions about the limits on human rights. My right to X is limited by your right to Y. For example, my right of free speech is limited by your right to a good reputation. Also my right to Z is limited by the extent to which the exercise of that right would impact adversely on the public interest or the common good. That's why we have no problem in limiting the freedom of the person to ride in a car without a seat belt.

If you were forcibly to insert a feeding stent in me without my consent that would be an assault

If we do not legislate to permit physician assisted suicide or euthanasia, there will still be cases where individuals decide that they have had enough of life, requesting the withdrawal of even hydration and nutrition. Even if we would regard such withdrawal as wrong, we need to respect the bodily integrity and moral autonomy of the mentally competent person who makes such a request whether now or by means of an advance directive.

If I am mentally competent, I am entitled to lock myself in a room depriving myself of food and water. And you have no right or obligation to interfere with my bodily integrity. If you were forcibly to insert a feeding stent in me without my consent that would be an assault.

If the person is not mentally competent, such withdrawal could not be justified. There is the difficulty of providing adequate safeguards for vulnerable individuals in their dying days.

Two years ago there was a lot of attention on Mr Christian Rossiter's request for termination of hydration and nutrition. The WA Supreme Court

gave the go ahead. But he decided not to continue the request.

A month after the judgment the media reported on Mr Rossiter's condition, speculating that he might die soon from a respiratory infection. *The Sunday Age* reported: "The sad irony here... 'is that [after the court case] he'd picked up a bit in himself, because people have been paying him attention'. He'd been particularly cheered by the ministrations of an outreach carer from Perth Home Care services.

"*The Sunday Age* understands the woman, who has been refused permission to speak to the media, had encouraged Mr Rossiter to record his life story, notably about his childhood in South Africa, with the idea of publishing a memoir."

What then was the court case about? He may well have been suffering intense pre-mortem loneliness, as distinct from depression. He died of a chest infection more than a month after the court gave the all clear for his carers to terminate hydration and nutrition should he request it.

Euthanasia advocates usually concede that there is a need to set limits on the class of patient entitled to seek euthanasia – usually mentally competent adults who are not depressed and who are terminally ill and enduring unbearable pain. But no advocate has yet come up with a draft bill containing watertight definitions.

As we contemplate the increasing demands of our ageing population on scarce health resources, let's not demonise all those who advocate euthanasia or physician assisted suicide. But let's hold them accountable for the unintended but foreseeable consequences of their policies.

Above all, let's remember: even if there be a euthanasia law passed, there is no compulsion on any of us to avail ourselves of it, and there ought be capacity for all medical practitioners and health care facilities to opt out on the grounds of conscientious objection.

In short, as my mother said, "Don't kill, and look after people when they are dying".

Fr Frank Brennan SJ is Professor of Law at the Public Policy Institute, Australian Catholic University and Adjunct Professor at the College of Law and the National Centre for Indigenous Studies, Australian National University.

book reviews

Open Mind, Open Heart, by Thomas Keating,
Continuum, 9780826418890, pp 190

Reviewed by Maggie Helass

MY 20th Anniversary Edition of this book vaunts ‘half a million English copies sold’. Which indicates a healthy revival of Christian mysticism, and possibly heralds a reversal of the exodus of spiritually-minded westerners to Eastern religion since the 1960s.

Thomas Keating, Cistercian monk, former abbot and spiritual advisor, is the father of the Centering Prayer Movement, which during the past thirty years has attempted to recover Christian contemplative prayer from its long exile.

Mysticism has been regarded with suspicion in the churches since the end of the Middle Ages, when its proponents St John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, among others, described in detail the pathways of contemplative prayer.

Centering Prayer is a method which exhumes contemplative prayer from the treasury of medieval monasteries, and restores this spiritual tradition to ordinary people – where it belongs.

Unfortunately we are like starving people when it comes to spiritual things

This is a work book, intended to show the ways to establish oneself in the contemplative dimension of the Gospel – that is, to be born anew into a transformed state of consciousness.

Descriptions of the method of Centering Prayer make use of modern psychological insights in order to throw light on dangers to the psyche which may be encountered along the way – which are amply but archaically described in the spiritual classics.

The practice of Centering Prayer involves the revival of our spiritual faculties, much attenuated by disuse; the gentle but firm unmasking of the false self, to which we are all inordinately attached; and a slow initiation into silence – God’s first language.

“As you persevere you will gradually develop new habits and new capacities, one of which is the ability to be conscious of two levels of awareness at the same time,” Keating writes.

St Benedict’s Monastery at Snowmass, Colorado, has hosted retreats on Centering Prayer for three decades, and this edition of the book features some frequently asked questions from retreatants, which are particularly useful in translating an ancient discipline into the 21st Century.

In Centering Prayer the chief act of the will is not effort but consent. Transformation is completely God’s work. This is a frightening prospect for westerners weaned on ideas of independence and control.

There are consolations along the way, but even these have to be jettisoned. “Unfortunately, we are like starving people when it comes to spiritual things,” writes Keating, “and we hang on to spiritual consolation for dear life. It is precisely that possessive attitude that prevents us from enjoying the simplicity and childlike delight of the experience”.

The fruits of contemplative prayer are not found in prayer itself but in daily life: “Your capacity to keep giving all day long will increase. You will be able to adjust to difficult circumstances and even to live with impossible situations.” This promise unmistakably bears the more acerbic message of the Gospel, rather than its commodification.

Keating writes: “Not contemplative *prayer*, but the contemplative *state* is the purpose of our practice... the permanent and abiding awareness of God that comes through the mysterious restructuring of consciousness”.

Centering Prayer is an exercise in letting go of everything including one’s self identity. It is not for the faint-hearted, but it leads to integration and healing at a profound level of consciousness.

“Eventually you will reach the centre of your human poverty and powerlessness and feel happy to be there.” This mirrors the gospel imperative to give up one’s life in order to find it.

A useful section on what Centering Prayer is *not* relates the discipline to current movements including alternative therapies, paranormal phenomenae, and the charismatic movement in the churches.

book reviews

An overview of the development of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition shows how spontaneous and affective prayer fell out of favour, and how our Cartesian-Newtonian devotion to the rational process further eroded our capacity for this form of prayer.

'Guidelines for Christian life, growth and transformation' wraps up this valuable little modern classic.

I wish this book had been around when I set out on my own spiritual path. It would have saved me many alarms and excursions.

The Shattered Lantern, by Ronald Rolheiser, 2004, The Crossroad Publishing Co, NY, ISBN 084522753, pp 190

Reviewed by Maggie Helass

THE title of this book refers to the dramatic context of Nietzsche's infamous phrase 'God is dead', when a madman smashes a lantern in the market place; its subtitle is 'Rediscovering a felt presence of God'.

Rolheiser's thesis is that we have indeed lost the mental capability to think of, imagine, and feel God's existence in our western society. He asks how we lost a cultural currency which used to be *dominated* by a sense of God's existence? Can we murder God by the way we live? And, what is the route back? For the loss of the consciousness of God does not mean that God no longer sustains us at every breath.

The struggle for the contemplative life, that life-giving, terrifying journey back to a consciousness of God, takes place for us in a social environment which militates at every turn against our best intentions. This book essays to give some perspectives on how to undertake such a journey.

Going to church won't do the trick, Rolheiser tells us, as God is not only absent in our market-places, but is frequently absent from our religious activities as well. We often kill God by bad religion, he remarks in a footnote, whereas atheism is most often generated by bad theism. Valuable discussion of the place of agnosticism, and the category mistake of modern atheism is inserted throughout the book.

The definitive task is to restore our sense of the presence of God in everyday life.

Rolheiser uses the resources of classical Christian mysticism, primarily St John of the Cross because of his systematic and reliable synthesis of the tradition, which is characterised by 'unknowing' and obscurity.

Purity of heart is the touchstone of contemplation, which involves a painful process of purging anything that clouds one's awareness of reality – for contemplation is about waking up

Narcissism, pragmatism and restlessness, all besetting sins of modernity, block this awakening. For the yuppie, self-development *is* salvation, the religious project.

As for pragmatism, when it comes to God and religion, our problem is not so much badness as busyness (a comment from Thomas Merton). Prayer and contemplation is not a utilitarian effort; it is, from the practical point of view, a waste of time.

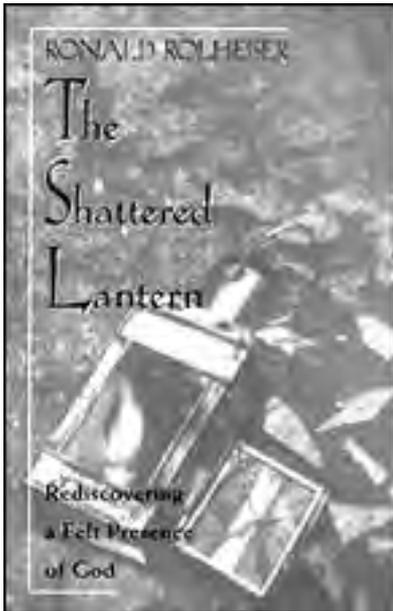
The solution to atheism is not finding better proofs for God's existence

Restfulness is a primal craving for humans, Rolheiser says, to the point where we identify it with heaven: "Grant us eternal rest." True restfulness is when ordinary life is enough – but excessive greed for experience quenches such simple satisfaction.

The contemplative believes that, since God is radically other than ourselves and our reality, we can live patiently and believe in God, despite seemingly unanswerable paradoxes, and despite pain and injustice.

But when manipulation of reality replaces wonder, there is by definition a reduced awareness. "Preoccupation with measuring land and testing oxen reduces the chances of being aware that there is a divinely initiated banquet going on at the heart of everyday life."

Rolheiser's description of the "dark night" which must be traversed to move beyond manipulation to



empathy, beyond clouded vision to understanding, is a succinct unpicking of the classical mystics' experience, which tends to be shrouded in unfamiliar images and symbols.

We spontaneously guide our lives by conceptual knowledge, possessive love and control designed to guarantee our own security, all

of which veil another way of knowing, which is faith; of loving, which is charity; and the alternative security of hope. The transition to the contemplative way is painful, which is why it is universally characterised as 'dark'.

Rolheiser quotes Jürgen Moltmann: "Our faith must be born where it is abandoned by all tangible reality; it must be born of nothingness, it must taste this nothingness and be given it to taste in a way no philosophy of nihilism can imagine."

A concise philosophical discussion of classical theism provides an intellectual scaffolding for mystical experience – or what is, in Rolheiser's words, perceiving everything against a divine horizon. Consequences for secularism are very interesting in the context of the current debate inspired by the new atheists.

However, the purpose of this book lies elsewhere: "The solution to the atheism of our time is not finding better proofs for God's existence but finding a proper way of living, a proper *praxis*."

The author gives some concrete guidelines for the contemplative way, and finishes with, for me, a most comforting comment: "Normally it does not feel like prayer".

The book's style is chatty, mostly well-supported by endnotes, but its production lets down its content. Typos are manifold, and there is no index.

Ronald Rolheiser is a Roman Catholic priest and member of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas.

www.ronrolheiser.com

Hugh's books

Reviewed by Hugh McGinlay



The Contented Life – Spirituality and the gift of years, by Robert Atwell, Canterbury, 9781848250765

Here is a series of talks given by the author on the spirituality of growing older and the gifts that wait to be discovered; the talks generated an unprecedented response, not only throughout his diocese, but on blogs and websites around the world. The author's background in Benedictine life, with its profound understanding of what makes for a balanced and rich life, flavours a book of timeless value.

The God Debates – A 21st century guide for atheists and believers (and everyone in between), by John Shook, Wiley, 9781444336429

A comprehensive, non-technical survey of the quest for knowledge of God, allowing readers to participate in a debate about the existence of God and gain understanding and appreciation of religion's conceptual foundations

Keep Your Courage – A radical Christian feminist speaks, by Carter Heyward, SCM, 9780334043782

One of the most influential and controversial theologians of our time reflects on how movements for gender and sexual justice reverberate globally and witness to the sacred struggles to topple oppressive power. These pieces illustrate feminist theology's bold and transformative engagement of its cultural, political, social and theological contexts.

Faith, by Margaret Silf, DLT, 9780232527940

A simple but profound exposition of the nature of faith in our contemporary world. In fifteen concise chapters Margaret Silf opens up searching questions, offers her insights, and invites the reader to think about his or her own responses. A gentle yet profound exploration of what we mean when we speak about 'faith'; from a well-loved spiritual writer.

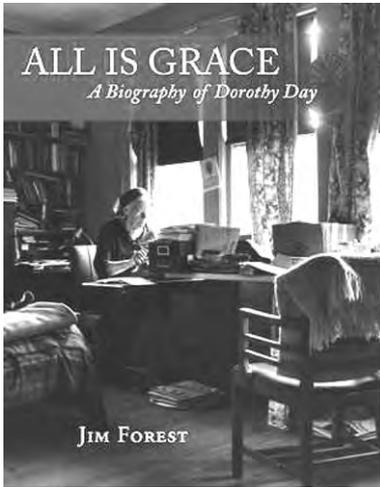
Dancing With Dinosaurs – A spirituality for the twenty-first century, by Mark Hederman, Columba, 9781856077354

The abbot of Glenstal Abbey in Ireland describes a spirituality for the 21st century that requires us

book reviews

to recognise the dinosaur nature of all institutions, including the Catholic Church. We would do well to study the species in depth and in detail to learn how to dance with them without doing serious damage to ourselves.

All Is Grace – A biography of Dorothy Day, by Jim Forest, Orbis, 9781570759215



Dorothy Day (1897–1980), founder of the Catholic Worker movement, and one of the most prophetic voices in the American Catholic Church, has recently been proposed as a candidate for canonisation. In this lavishly illustrated biography, Jim

Forest provides a compelling portrait of her heroic efforts to live out the radical message of the Gospel for our time.

Disruptive Grace – Reflections on God, Scripture and the Church, by Walter Brueggemann, SCM, 9780800697945

Walter Brueggemann has been one of the leading voices in Hebrew Bible interpretation for decades. These chapters gather his recent addresses and essays on every part of the Hebrew Bible, many of them never published before, bringing his erudition to bear on prophecy, lament, prayer, faithful imagination, a holy economics and more.

Passion of Christ, Passion of the World, by Leonardo Boff, Orbis, 9781570759093

A new edition of this 1970 classic work of liberation theology explores the meaning of the Cross, both as it has been interpreted in the past and how it should be interpreted in the context of contemporary faith and circumstances. Originally written in the context of military dictatorship, torture, and violent repression in Latin America, Boff notes in his new Preface that this context must be enlarged today to include the passion of the Earth – a continuation of the Passion of Christ in our time.

New Feminist Christianity – Many voices, many views, Mary Hunt and Diann Neu (eds), Skylight, 9781594732850

The contributors to this book are the leaders of the future who are shaping, and being shaped by, the emerging directions of feminist Christianity. They speak from across the spectrum, and from the many racial and ethnic groups that make up the Christian community.

The New Spiritual Exercises – In the spirit of Teilhard de Chardin, by Louis Savary, Paulist, 9780809146956

During the 20th Century, Jesuit priest Teilhard de Chardin developed a truly revolutionary spirituality, integrating into it the discoveries of science and a comprehensive evolutionary perspective – a perspective never conceived of before by traditional spiritual writers. Through his integration of science and faith, Teilhard offered us a new way to understand the Word of God and the immensity of the universal Christ.

Process Theology – A guide for the perplexed, by Bruce Epperly, Continuum, 9780567596697

Provides an accessible introduction to process theology, aimed at nurturing the theological imagination of priests, ministers, theological students and interested laypersons. It describes the major themes of process theology and relates them to the everyday lives and spiritual commitments of people today.

Alive To The Word – A practical theology of preaching to the whole church, by Stephen Wright, SCM, 9780334042013

Offers a constructive introduction to preaching as an existing and varied practice throughout the church and reflects on its nature and the context, not least in a communications culture; and sets a constructive agenda for the development of preaching as a core practice of the Christian church for the preacher, the congregation and the wider church.

On Shepherding – Reflections on the priesthood, Gearoid Dullea (ed), Columba, 9781856076814

Eleven Irish priests who are working at home and abroad, offer some reflections on various dimensions of priestly ministry.

book reviews

Reimagining Ministry, by David Heywood, SCM, 9780334043676

Considers our understanding of ministry, in particular ordained ministry, in the context of the social and cultural setting of the 21st Century, several significant theological developments and a perception of the way God through the Holy Spirit is leading the church; and offers a new and different paradigm of ministry for the church of the future.

God And Evil – in the theology of St Thomas Aquinas, by Herbert McCabe, Continuum, 9780826413048



The Dominican theologian who died in 2001 left many unpublished manuscripts. Here, he tackles the problem of evil through a Thomist lens. As God is the highest good and is the benevolent creator of all, how can he be the cause of evil? As God is the first cause, surely the secondary cause of evil must be attributable to him? How

do we solve this apparent contradiction, of a God who is the highest good with no apparent defect? How can we say evil is caused by a defective agent and not by God?

Bonhoeffer – Pastor, martyr, prophet, spy, by Eric Metaxas, Nelson, 978159553188

A definitive, ground breaking and highly readable biography of one man's moral courage in the face of the monstrous evil that was Nazism and who, since his death, has grown to be one of the most fascinating, complex figures of the 20th century.

Up With Authority – why we need authority to flourish as human beings, by Victor Lee Austin, T & T Clark, 9780567020512

Authority is something we experience every day, but is it necessary? While it is true that authority

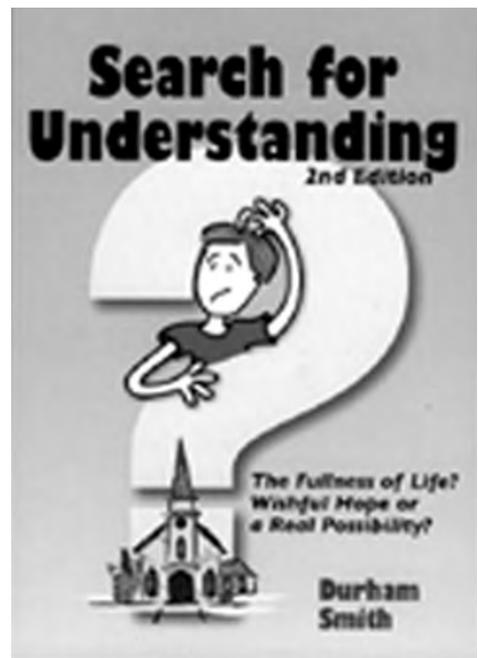
can be used to remedy human inadequacies, it has a higher and nobler function: to enable us to do more complex activities, to understand more of the world we live in and to transmit that understanding, to flourish in political communities, and ultimately to enjoy God. This book shows the human importance of authority.

The Future of Preaching, Geoffrey Stevenson (ed), SCM, 9780334043621

Preaching remains a central feature of almost all Christian worship, with thousands of men and women who preach on a regular basis. This book, edited and contributed to by some of the leading authors in this field, makes a substantial and authoritative contribution to the teaching and learning of preaching.

Hugh McGinlay is Academic Theological Representative for Mosaic Resources. www.mosaicresources.com.au

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A Letter from Kevin Pius Nedumpallikunnel

Common Theology supports this student from the Ernakulam district of the state of Kerala in southern India. A small amount of money annually, administered by St Veronica Welfare Committee, pays for his books.



My dearest Uncles and Aunties,

I am very happy to receive the amount of \$100 that you have sent. I thank you sincerely and pray fervently that the Lord Jesus may bless you abundantly. I hope you are keeping fine, and I keep you always in my prayers. Please convey my best regards to your loved ones. How is the climate over there in Australia?

Here, our school re-opened on 1st June. We are back in school with great enthusiasm. I am in the VIth Class. My elder brother Ebin Pius is in Class X. this year I will study well so that I may get a good mark. At home my parents are keeping fine.

With best wishes, your loving son

Kevin

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Home Truths

By Lyn Bender

In 2002 I was employed as a psychologist at Woomera Detention Centre. I witnessed riots, hunger strikes, escapes, attempted suicides (including by children as young as ten) and depression that was so profound as to render the sufferer mute and inert.

I sat in the dust with detainees and heard accounts of war, persecution, torture and loss. It was clear that the environment was retraumatising and toxic. No treatment could neutralise this impact. What was needed by detainees was 'normal' life.

I realised I had a profound ethical dilemma. There was a deep conflict of interest. In being compliant to the administration and its political allegiances, I was unable to ensure the protection and my duty of care towards these vulnerable people.

To reconcile the situation with my conscience I became a kind of mole. I appeared to toe the line with management and perform my normal duties as requested. These included ineffective, box-ticking welfare checks, and paperwork documenting that psychological assessment/treatment had occurred.

Dependent like children upon their captors, they become hostages

I also wrote off-the-record reports for lawyers on behalf of detainees, whose stories I listened to.

The arguments over the relative merits of location and of onshore or offshore detention mask the awful truth. All prolonged mandatory detention of those fleeing persecution is catastrophic for detainees, violates human rights, and demeans those who inflict and have oversight of the system.

Is this the opinion of a fringe of unrealistic soft on border protection, bleeding hearts? Actually no. The Australian Medical Journal has added its voice to the call for an end to prolonged mandatory detention, warning that time in detention is associated with poor mental and physical health.

Sadly it seems little has changed since the Howard era when voices of concern were raised

An inside view from Woomera

— putting a price on conscience

regarding the alarming rates of self harm in detention centres and the damage done particularly to children

If anyone had set out to construct a place that replicated the original trauma of those fleeing war, tyranny and persecution our detention centres would be perfect.

Australia's detention system detains without trial or charge for indeterminate periods of months and years. Remote and offshore centres are out of sight and out of mind and beyond accountability.

There is little stimulating activity for children or adults, who become bored and institutionalised. The inmates are under 24 hour surveillance. There is separation from family, friends and culture, and uncertainty of reunion. Procedures are unclear and inconsistent. Detainees hover in limbo, their fate manipulated for the political ends of the government of the day.

Within high fences, they are confined with distressed fellow detainees. There are systems of punishment that include physical restraint, isolation cells and separation.

Dependent like children upon their captors, they become hostages, experiencing a form of Stockholm Syndrome. They perceive that they must be submissive to enable emotional survival or release.

Loss of hope and dammed-up tension and despair then erupts as riots and self harm. The prisoners live in fear of being sent back to their persecutory or war torn country and of torture and death.

The paperwork required is a Kafkaesque joke, and a test many are doomed to fail.

Driven to save their lives and those of their children, asylum seekers display uncommon resilience and courage. They need to be accorded their legal rights under the Refugee Convention, and to receive justice and respect rather than ill treatment.

After release, psychological treatment can help with the management of previous trauma that now includes the detention experience. Most become valuable Australian citizens.

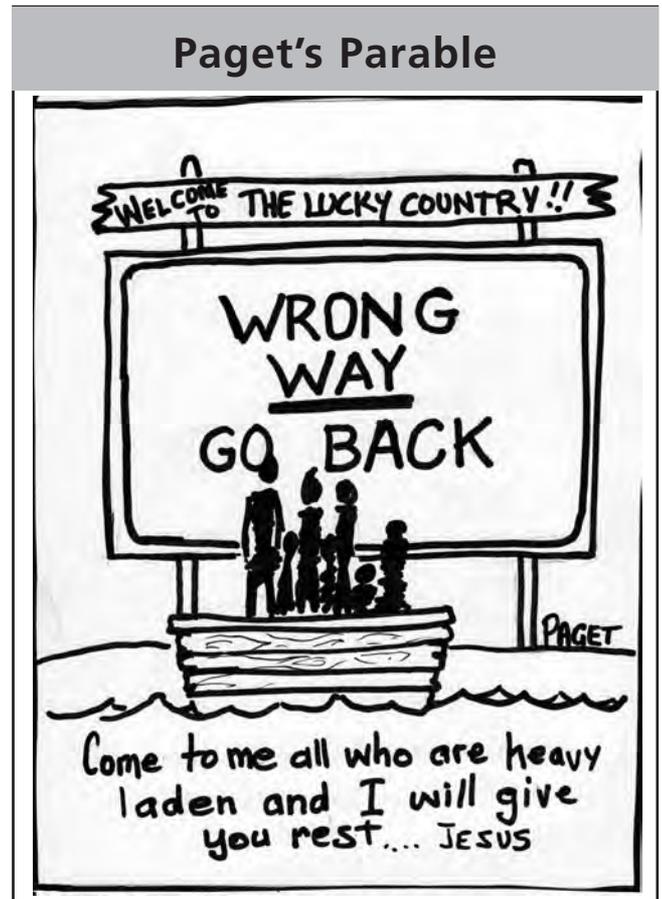
I recently heard an interview with a 20-year-old former Afghani detainee; a boy in Woomera during my time there, he was now studying at university and sounded really happy.

Brief assessment and release into a receptive community would eliminate many moral psychological and financial problems.

However, being part of the current detention machinery remains ethically untenable. Psychologists are used to mask and deny the systemic damage to the hearts, minds and souls of vulnerable people.

The system also demeans and harms the staff and the community who become complicit.

Lyn Bender is a psychologist and social commentator. This article appeared in the on-line journal *Eureka Street* on September 27.



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