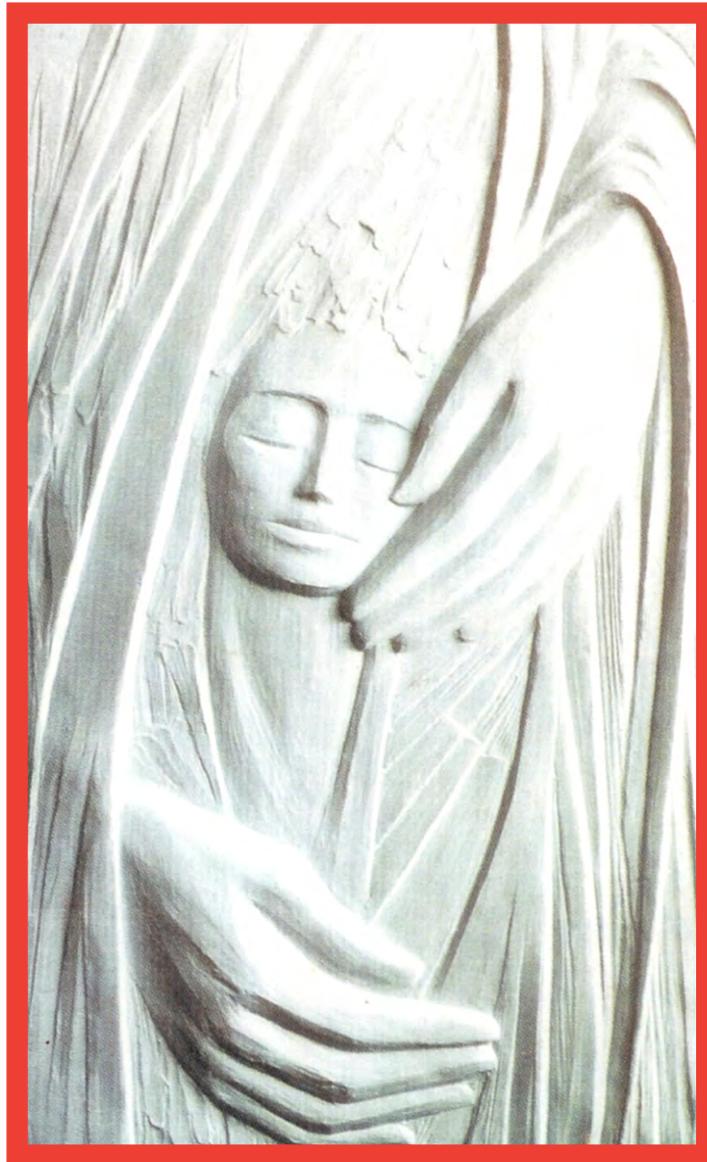


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INSIDE:

- Post-modernism in perspective
- Cross-examining Intelligent Design
- The scandal of stolen wages

A Quarterly Journal for Australians



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From the Editor

A plea that theology should pull its weight with science came from Tom Frame in the last edition of *Common Theology* (Vol 1 no.12). In this first edition of Volume 2, systematic theologian Ted Peters describes the dramatic renewal of the partnership between science and religion.

Intelligent Design has replaced Creationism in the muddy contested ground between science and religion — Peter Sellick takes a look at this ideology and concludes that it is neither science nor religion.

The year ahead promises confrontations in the global village — the cultural tectonic plates of East and West are colliding everywhere, and sometimes it's hard to keep one's nerve amidst the sound and fury of it.

A serious challenge to economic rationalism is coming from Latin America, outlined in these pages by Chico Whitaker of the World Economic Forum — and borne out by the election of socialist leaders in Brazil, Venezuela, Chile and Bolivia.

The former Soviet Bloc is undergoing massive social change, as Robert Braun found on his return to Romania. His Eye Witness account describes transformation in a country where people have taken to “popping in and out of church all week”.

Closer to home the tragedy of wages stolen from indigenous people, while they were in the custody of governments, perpetuates the slur of racial injustice in Australia. In Home Truths Christine Howes summarises this shameful story to date.

For people of good will, the intimacy of the global village can give rise to *Weltschmerz* — a German word for “universal pain”, which has no English translation. *Weltschmerz* arises from empathy with the world's suffering, and Christians are obliged to bear it without despondency.¹

There is talk of a new asceticism that would recognise there is a limit to what a person can actually do as a body in a material world.² Such salutary helplessness might turn our self-reliant hearts to God, for it is still a wonderful world in spite of the all-pervasive news broadcasts.

The long, sultry summer — when politics goes to ground and even television barely rates a spark of interest — has yielded a good swag of book reviews for this edition.

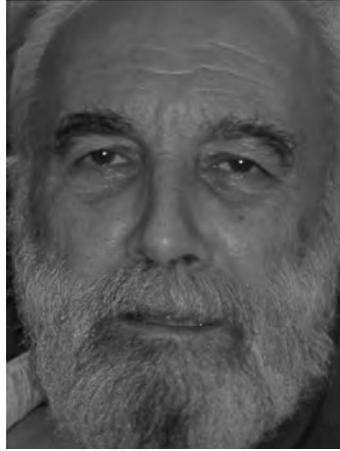
Maggie Helass

¹ *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control.* 2 Timothy 1.7, Revised Standard Bible.

² See review in the Autumn '06 edition of *Common Theology: The Worlds We Live In — Dialogues with Rowan Williams on Global Economics and Politics*, Edited by Claire Foster and Edmund Newell.

Another kind of logic

Francisco "Chico" Whitaker is a Brazilian activist and has had a lot of experience in organising groups for the creation of a just world. He is a founder of the World Social Forum and has worked alongside Paulo Freire and Bishop Helder Camara. He toured



Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and New Zealand last year, and gave an interview to *Common Theology*. His mission was to make the World Social Forum known in Australasia. Tens of thousands of people have attended the annual forum in the six years since its foundation.

Chico Whitaker's lectures were concerned with three questions: —

- What would a just world look like?
- Was it necessary to change the world? If so...
- Was there enough time to do so?

"Everything is interconnected. Things that happen in Brazil can have repercussions in Australia. Things that happen in Australia could have repercussions in China and vice versa — for instance moving a car-manufacturing factory to China means unemployment in Australia.

"Integration of the workforce is built in the interests of capitalism — not in the interests of human beings, but in the interests of profit. So all decisions are made in the interests of capital and not in the interests of people problem solving.

"Brazil has 170 million people, on a land surface about the same as Australia. This population can be divided into two parts. A small percentage of people who live well, even by Australian standards, and the rest who live in poverty.

"Rich people have to drive in bulletproof cars, and have electrified fences around their houses. After ten o'clock you cannot walk on the streets.

So, something is wrong in this country. Two thirds of this country lives in poverty.

"Similarly, the United States dominates world markets and protectionism. But terrorism is bringing insecurity to all parts of the world.

"Each year, the 'owners' of the world — the capital, the big multi-national directors, the people from the most important countries — meet in Switzerland, at Davos, for the World Economic Forum. This forum is centred on the economic issues of the world. They go there to discuss how to continue economic domination, and how to solve the problems of opposition to this. The assumption is that there is no other solution — that we must live with the domination of capital interests.

"The first opposition demonstrated against this kind of domination was in Seattle against the World Trade Organisation. People from all over the world went there, and they got a result.

"To show the Davos summit, especially, that there is an authority not centred in the economic, but in the unity of social issues, the first World Social Forum was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January 2001. We were expecting 2000 people — 10,000 came.

To show the Davos summit that there is an authority not centred in the economic...

"We began this process to show people that it is possible to change things. We said we must not only protest, we must also have solutions. We must meet not to tell others what to do, but to show each other what we are trying to do. Eventually you will find that you have big collectives dealing with the same issues.

"In 2002, 50,000 thousand people came to the World Social Forum. The third one 100,000 people came. The fourth one we held in India, Mumbai with 130,000, and the fifth in Brazil had 150,000 people.

This year in January delegates from 140 countries met in Caracas, Venezuela, for one of three

sessions. The next phase of the 2006 meeting takes place in March, in Karachi, Pakistan.

The World Social Forum has developed worldwide, not working in the traditional method of doing politics to take authority, but through people acting, proposing new ways of doing things on the basis that everybody is important

“They know that it is necessary, they know that it is urgent. But is it possible? And is there sufficient time?”

The approach of everybody learning from each other is the foundation of the World Social Forum.

“We say that it is a space — not a movement, or direction, with leaders. A space where everybody is equal. Even if I have more knowledge than you, we always have something to learn from each other. If we get together we can co-operate and not compete. We can do it better.

“It is the opposite of the competition and pyramid building of our economy and politics and our organisations, even the unions.

“I have been making contacts with the unions in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. We are trying to show the unions that they must be with the rest of society, in fact they must be more democratic. The Brazilian unions are represented on our committee, but even they have big problems with vertical relationships.

“We put the dates of the World Social Forum on the same date as the Davos summit purposely, for us choose which side we were on.

“I am very optimistic about the evolution of the social process in Australia. There have been several social forums in Australia already, but the problem is that they are organised by only one or few groups. They must diversify the organisation. Once a political party, or even a church, captures the forum it is finished.

“The global capitalistic system knows that we are trying to change values, so when I talk about our operation — when I talk about different types of money, for instance — we are trying to do something different from the present system. Inside the system there are many entrepreneurs that know already that this is a foolish thing — to be continually focused on the market.

“One of the founders of the World Social Forum was an entrepreneur. He was always a member of the organisation of the forum. He is also president of an institute in Brazil — an institution that works

with enterprises about the social responsibility of enterprises.

“We must move from profit motive in enterprise to social motive in enterprise. This is happening already in some parts of the world. The social economy not only accumulates profit to use for the individual, but accumulates profit to enlarge the offering of products and possibilities for people.

“The biggest question for me is whether there is enough time.

“We have a very important methodology commission — because we must organise forums to make sure that they remain open space. The Charter of Principles is our essential guide. For instance we make sure that our events are self-organised as much as possible — not organised by us from above, but organised by the participants.

“Each organisation finances itself. We find a place. We prepare. We must have money to prepare the halls and the rooms and the translations. Everybody pays their own ticket. So money is only needed for the infrastructure.

When we are covetous we begin to enter into another type of logic

“We have money from many organisations that are linked to this process. Oxfam, for instance, or even local governments that want to help — we can accept their money. “Mainly these organisations help Third World countries, or are organisations linked to the World Council of Churches. They offer without conditions — we say always, “Please, no conditions”.

“Now we have the expansion commission. We must go everywhere, quickly [speaking about the World Social Forum]. We must change minds quickly, because, if not, the world is headed for destruction. As quickly as possible, we must build this new social force.

“It is power — it is not taking political power, but it is building a collective power with co-responsibility. Everybody is subject and everybody is co-responsible.”

Accountability is always a problem for people’s organisations, but Chico Whitaker believes that people must discover for themselves that they are happier without wanting to dominate.

“They will find that they are happier if they serve in this process. In religious language we call it conversion. If we see that love is better than hating people — better for us, for each one of us — we live more happily. When we are covetous we begin to enter into another type of logic. Capitalism is a system of the profit logic, a system of the individualistic logic.

“Faith motivated this forum, but we are ecumenical, and last year we had eleven spaces. One was all about the spirituality of religions.”

The World Social Forum is not shaping up as a third world versus first world organisation. Chico Whitaker is firm that it is not *against*, it is *for*. Even inside the first world there are third world situations.

Naturally, economic interests try to discredit the forum. “Especially through the media, they try to

say that we are not serious people. That we are wanting to destroy things. Even when they speak about our meeting, they don’t say that we are trying to understand things, learn with each other. They say that we are doing a festival — like Woodstock — that there is no commitment.

“They try to destroy one of the most important ideas of the forum — the idea of not having a final document. Our forums do not have a final document because really, final documents are the worst thing. You discuss for hours the final document — to introduce a comma, to introduce a phrase that we think must be there. We have not one final document, but hundreds of final documents.”

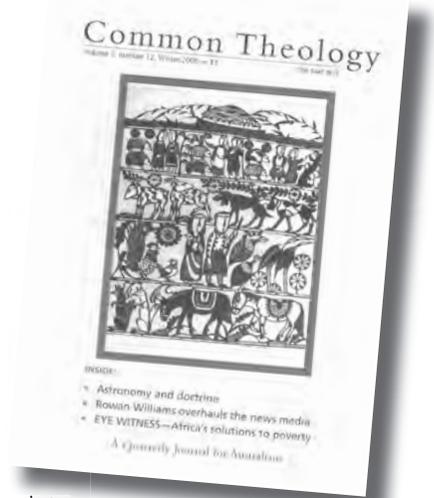
www.worldsocialforum.org.bz

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Subscribers’ comments—

Thank you for your journal, especially for Vol 1 No.12 — the Rowan Williams article was superb. I am circulating it among neighbours in the school of journalism at Deakin University.
*Dr David Wetherell
Senior Lecturer
Deakin University*

Another inspiring edition! Many thanks.
*The Ven David Chambers
Woodend, Vic*

I particularly appreciated the ‘Jesus Pop Culture’ reviews by Greg Jenks and would like to pass them on.
*Mary Cleary
Norman Park, Qld*

I am enjoying the (Winter 05) edition of *Common Theology*. Tom Frame’s article on the need for theology to turn its attention to science was very clear and timely.
*The Revd Ted Witham
Consultant Religious
Education, Perth WA*

I subscribe to *Common Theology* and appreciate its journalism and endeavours to be a forum in theological content that is accessible. I thought that Fr Jenk’s writing was excellent and his views refreshing and well-balanced. Best wishes for the future.
*Ronald Nichols
Alexandria, NSW*

Your magazine is of great interest. Thank you.
*Glenda M Mill
Jindalee, Qld*

Thank you for your remarkable vision and efforts in producing this wonderful, hopeful magazine. *Ad multos Annos!*
*Bernie McIntyre
Pastoral Care Team
Mater Hospital, Brisbane*

I think what you are doing in publishing *Common Theology* is superb.
*Dr Howard Quinlan
O’Connor ACT*

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Back to the Future...

By Maggie Helass

It's happened! After three hundred years of modernism and dualistic thinking, westerners can discover the world as a whole again.

During the 1960s social foundations in the western world were shaken by student/intellectual revolt against technology,

capitalism and hierarchical authority. Flower power accompanied the orgasmic reunion of body and soul in the Summer of Love. But in the course of this revolution familiar, reliable parameters of good and evil, science and religion, public and private, vanished — to be replaced by a general existential unease called postmodernism.



Professor Ted Peters

In his book *Science, Theology, and Ethics*, Ted Peters has this to say about the church's response to postmodernism:

“So preoccupied have the church's twentieth century intellectuals been with making the gospel relevant to the modern mind that they have scarcely noticed that the modern mind itself is now breaking down and giving way to something new.”

This ‘something new’ is being investigated by the New Physics, by philosophy, and — in the absence of theological participation — by New Age religion.

Ted Peters served as Principal Investigator at the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences in the 1990s, on a grant from the US Institutes of Health, to study theological and ethical questions raised by the Human Genome initiative.

Peters' struggle with the theology/science dichotomy in his own field as a Christian systematic theologian is evident at times in his text.

He writes that he discerns hostility on the part of church leaders toward science — hidden behind cloaks of prophetic self-righteousness — and he asks whether the church wishes to greet the

— *welcome to postmodernism*

scientific community with open hands or closed fists?

“What is primary is to treat scientists as they see themselves, as researchers producing new knowledge about physical reality. This knowledge about the physical world then becomes data for the theologian to assess, evaluate and incorporate into our understanding of God's creative and redeeming work.”

‘Theology’ he defines as that dimension within any religion where truth is rigorously and critically pursued. Natural science is rigorously rational and intellectual in character. Both science and religion are dedicated to truth — although the overlapping domains of truth may have separate centres.

Peters urges theologians to pull their weight in future-oriented debate in order to contest the ground colonised by evolutionary ideologies such as the Intelligent Design School, and by gene mythology.

Genetics and the neurosciences are already challenging culture and theology in new ways. And ‘exotheology’, he says, needs development to provide a theological perspective on extraterrestrial life. “One would expect... that theological leaders would want to respond to the rise in space consciousness by providing some intellectual guidance”. (126)

Positions between science and religion vary from pitched battle to uneasy truce. Peters places himself in the ‘hypothetical consonance’ camp, which works to identify common domains of exploration. As an ethicist he is alongside the theologians who (together with secular moralists) are struggling to gain ethical control over technological and economic forces that — if left to themselves — would drive the human species towards destruction.

Peters concludes that doctrines of creation are not adequate for this struggle. Only a doctrine of new creation — God's redeeming work in a created order that has somehow gone awry — will provide the necessary clues to a new world order.

The iconoclastic transition from the Newtonian world-view to the Einstein revolution could take place only when science let nature speak for itself.

Equally, argues Peters, authentic theology attends to its object — God.

Systematic theologians have taken the lead in developing a working relationship with the natural sciences. Peters himself belongs to the group seeking common ground by attempting to demonstrate overlap between scientific and theological reasoning.

For instance, the second law of thermodynamics seems to make nature historical. Time runs in only one direction. Events are single and unrepeatable. And nature is composed of events — not just universal principles endlessly repeating themselves.

Big Bang cosmology has raised again the reasonableness of talking about the Christian doctrine of creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*).

Peters points out that the senior generation of today's clergy and theologians went through seminary when neo-orthodoxy was dominant. The most recent generation was influenced by

“When postmodernity does draw the attention of the church...”

liberation theology. Both put a barrier between the church and the laboratory. The first because of its emphasis on faith (it perceived science to be secular, neutral and objective), the latter because of its emphasis on praxis — changing the world instead of understanding it.

But because salvation must come from the future, the world now needs a theology that addresses the future.

The New Testament draws a picture in which the age to come has intercepted the present age. Easter brought the appearance of something radically new. Sunday worship is therefore a participation in a universal reality which is yet to be revealed. What that future time will bring, and its impact on us while we anticipate it, is the subject matter of eschatology.

In the chapter ‘God as the Future of Cosmic Creativity’ Peters affirms that human creativity is tied to divine creativity.

“God does new things and we, made in God's image, are capable of transforming the old into the new.”(79)

It is when science poses questions that go beyond itself that theologians need to employ distinctly theological resources to speak to those questions.

For instance, ‘vacuum energy’ provided the hypothesis of a ubiquitous, exotic energy in the universe. Theologians project significant metaphysical implications from these findings.

Holistic thinking characterises the interdisciplinary world of postmodernism. Its cardinal principle is that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. This has the important corollary that everything is related to everything else.

“There is a soteriology¹ implicit in holism... if we think holistically we will not only reflect reality better but we will also heal the lack of wholeness.”(83)

Holism in its twentieth century form was developed by the South African philosopher Jan Smuts, who identified that ‘the pull of the future’ is as essential to the life of an organism as ‘the push of the past’. Peters’ thesis is that God creates from the future, not the past: “God is continuing to bestow upon us a future, even at this very moment.” (86)

Although the future is largely inscrutable, revelation of the end can be discerned in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Peters includes a discussion of the Bohm project, which delves into the sub-quantum level of physics and finds that answers are to be found as much in philosophy as in physics. David Bohm raises a scientific voice on behalf of the widespread yearnings for wholeness that characterise the emerging postmodern consciousness.

“When postmodernity finally does begin to draw the belated attention of the church, we can expect that one of the first things systematic theologians will do is search for a philosophical system that is both authentically postmodern and potentially compatible with the Christian faith. At that time Bohm’s scientific theory will quite likely be considered as an aid to theology in a manner parallel to the roles previously played by the systems of Aristotle and Whitehead.” (116)

Dualism served to separate human consciousness from the world process and resulted in a fragmentation of the sense of reality. The new physics has brought us to the brink of a new postmaterialist era which is currently contested

¹ Theory of salvation.

on scientific, philosophical and cosmological fronts. On the basis of this post-modern consciousness, ethical decisions which affect the future of the world are being made.

Peters discusses major ethical questions of genetics; abortion; patenting DNA; cloning; the gene myth; therapy and the Human Genome.

- Is meddling with nature ‘playing God’?
“(T)o presume that human technological intervention violates God’s rule is to worship Mother nature, not the creator...”²
- On cloning: — “The unique relation of a person to God is not determined by DNA. It is determined by God’s active grace, by God’s desire to love us as we are.” (169)
- On stem cell research: — “The genetic potential for making persons is virtually ubiquitous. In principle, it lies in every cell of every human body.” (187)
- On ‘designer children’ and a biological underclass: — “Already the population of Down’s Syndrome people in the USA is dropping, making this a form of eugenics by popular choice.” (196) “Jesus... spent so much of his time with the disabled... it seems that no disciple of Jesus could lightly acquiesce to the wholesale aborting of this group of people.” 19720

Peters writes that the American ethical psyche is schizoid on the issue of choice. On the one hand it is committed to the libertarian vision which assumes that each of us is born free and that the ethical or political task is to prevent criminals or government from eclipsing this freedom. In complementary contrast the egalitarian vision assumes that we are imprisoned by cultural prejudices, economic forces or political structures, so that the ethical and political task of government is to liberate us. (205)

“The colossal mistake we in America currently make is that we are relegating values and morality to the personal or private sector.... Goodness is being reduced to personal preference.” (256)

“Ethics is the discipline which asks about what is good or bad, right or wrong. It is not concerned primarily with public acceptability.”

“To think ethically, then, is to begin with a vision of the unity of the whole human race united over

time as well as space. It is to live as a world citizen.” (265)

Peters uses the issue of hazardous waste (some nuclear waste remains toxic for 250,000 years) to focus on an understanding of the common good which must necessarily include future generations.

Finally Peters examines the concept of resurrection through the lens of philosophy, science and theology. He makes the observation that most of the peoples of the world do not accept the scientific naturalist position that when once you are dead you are simply dead. From Plato to the New Age notion of universal mind, theories of an afterlife are abundant.

“There is a deep cleavage between European culture and Indian-based religion that often goes unnoticed. What the Eastern heirs to the Upanishads view as the equivalent to eternal life, namely, the escape from ego existence into the oblivion of the infinite, appears to those of us in the West with our strong egos and essentially materialistic disposition as eternal death.” (298)

“it is a pity to restrict such an energising text to academia”

He suggests ‘everlasting’ as a more western-user-friendly concept than ‘infinity’ — one that includes our future.

Peters’ final point and central thesis is that human destiny is inseparable from cosmic destiny. “The key to understanding the resurrected body is placing it within the broader horizon of God’s promised new creation.” (315)

The dialogue model pursued by Peters is searching for an actual advance in the human understanding of reality. In Australia, Ted Peters cites Paul Davies, Mark Worthing and Denis Edwards as world leaders in the emerging field of Theology and Natural Science.

The Ashgate Science and Religion Series, of which this book is one, is aimed at academics and graduates, but it is a pity to restrict such an energising text to academia. If you can work out what “ontological” and “epistemology” mean it is worth making the effort to read this important book.

Science, Theology and Ethics by Ted Peters, Ashgate Science and Religion Series, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2003, pp 347. Rrp \$49.50 ISBN 0754608255

Maggie Helass is Editor of *Common Theology*

² Hessel Boiuma, *Christian Faith, and Medical Practice* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1989), 4-5

Churches on the daily round

By Robert Braun OGS

Last year, I made a return visit to Romania, where I had been Anglican Chaplain through the early years of the 1980's.



Eastern Europe has undergone profound changes in the fifteen years since the fall of Communism. Many former Communists have come back to the Christian faith — presuming of course they ever left it, in their own hearts. And that includes Vladimir Putin, who is quite a devout Orthodox believer.

In Romania, King Michael has returned to Bucharest as a private citizen. And in Bulgaria, the second half of my old Chaplaincy, Simeon, the would-be King of the Bulgarians has gone back to Sofia as the leader of the political party in power. In both countries, the ancient Orthodox Church continues as the focus of faith for millions of Eastern Christians.

The Anglican Chaplaincy responsible for Romania and Bulgaria carries on regardless, and as there was an inter-regnum during August, I found myself taking the weekend services in Bucharest.

When I lived there, the place was an extreme Stalinist dictatorship, where one man and his wife — Nicolae & Elena Ceausescu — led a brutal regime that ruled over the lives of 24 million Romanians.

The Ceausescus are gone — lying at different ends of a Bucharest cemetery. Someone has erected crosses over their graves, which is almost like putting stakes through the hearts of a couple of vampires! However the Romanian Communist Party, which still exists in miniscule, has erected a plaque over Ceausescu's grave that says, "A tear on your grave, from Romanian people".

But I didn't see any tears myself. Only a completely changed public face — people relaxed, well-dressed, and no longer fearful of the ever-present surveillance that was exercised by the Secret Police, and also by more than a million 'informers' who kept tabs on their neighbours, and reported to the authorities on everything that went on.

Eye Witness

The grey stony piazzas patrolled by gun-toting soldiers have been transformed into public spaces lined with gardens, where people can walk unrestricted and unintimidated.

The third-world open-air market places, which had only sold a few sad vegetables in my day, have been replaced by supermarkets. Romanians look forward to going into the European Union in just a couple of years.

In the bookshops, Harry Potter and the Bill Clinton biography have replaced the dusty piles of Ceausescu speeches, that were just about the only things that were published under Communism. And in the newspapers, politics is debated openly — something unheard of in the old days.

I had a chance to catch up with some of my old friends in the Romanian Orthodox Church. There was still some resentment against clergy who had collaborated with the Communist authorities, to safeguard their own positions, over the 45 years of Communist rule.

"Fr Nicholas had been persecuted by the Communists in the past"

The Patriarch (Archbishop) of the Romanian Church is a wily old 90 year-old, who has had many irons in the fire during his 50 years as a bishop. After the people's revolution in 1989, he was forced into retirement in a remote monastery for a time. However he made a comeback, and still governs the Romanian Church in a shrewd, but benign manner — a church to which eighty-nine per cent of the Romanian people belong.

I spent quite some time with one priest I knew very well in my time in Romania, twenty years ago. In a sense he represented the vast number of Romanian clergy who faithfully served their people in the past under very difficult conditions, and today under constrained financial circumstances, trying to keep ancient buildings in repair, and congregations together in rapidly changing times.

Fr Nicholas had been persecuted by the Communists for various reasons in the past, and in recent times has been trying to restore his church in Transylvania — geographically the very middle of the country. I was able to give him some assistance with that work (thanks to a kind parishioner here in Brisbane). I intend to try and help him complete the work in the near future. His church has no roof and no windows at present, and the congregation complains about the damp!

Church buildings are very important to the Romanians. They represent most of the historic buildings of the country, and are the repositories for the many sacred icons they use in their devotions.

One old friend I met in the Orthodox Cathedral said, “I come here to pray because I was married here, forty years ago. I also go to St Demetrie’s because it’s my family church. I also go to the Cretescu Church because my dearest friend was buried from that church. And I worship in the Anglican Church in Bucharest because I studied at

St Hugh’s College Oxford, and I like to hear the liturgy in English from time to time”. Romanians pop in and out of their churches all through the week — the Bucharest churches are always a hive of activity.

The buildings provide important sacred spaces in people’s lives, places where their ‘rites of passage’ can be celebrated, and they can take ‘time out’ for reflection and prayer. From what I could see, the old, and many of the young Romanians, still respond vigorously to the call of the Gospel, and their ancient liturgy, which has kept them together as a Christian people for nearly 2,000 years.

Time, and human history have challenged these people to take a stand for the things they believe in. When it was almost impossible for them to proclaim their faith publicly, their liturgy did it for them — week by week, and year by year.

The Venerable Robert Braun OGS, is Anglican Archdeacon of Brisbane, and was Chaplain to the British Embassy in Bucharest from 1982 – 1984.

A letter from Kebin pius Nedumpallikunnel

Common Theology subscribers support Kebin pius Nedumpallikunnel who goes to school at St Ann’s Carmelite Convent in the Ernakulam District in India.

“Greetings from Kebin pius. My name is Nancy, I am the Mammy of Kebin pius.

Thank you very much for your kind help for my child’s education. We received your money with a grateful heart, joyful mind and smiling face. From that money we are paying tuition fees at school. We bought all the text books for him, and a uniform too.

In our house there are five members at home. Kebin has his elder brother Abin pius. We have our grandmother also with us. She is over eighty.

Every day we are having common family prayer from 7pm to 8pm. At that time our first intention is praying for you.

I am sending you a picture from Kebin. He drew it for you.”

Nancy



If you would like to provide for an Indian or Sri Lankan child’s education with \$75 a year please contact:

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Let's value-add with altruism

Father Timothy Radcliffe's essay in *Common Theology* (Summer 2005) has set me thinking about fundamental moral values. The following statements struck home to me—



"As fish were made to swim in water, human beings were made to thrive in the truth. It is our home".

"Lies pollute our natural environment. We die spiritually, like fish in a polluted river".

"In a society which is a marketplace, in which we are first of all consumers, how can we sustain another way of seeing the world — a clarity of sight?"

A number of years ago Sister Veronica Brady talked to a group of us about words and the ideas behind them that have died out. One of the words she mentioned was "probity".

Probity *n.* integrity of character.¹

Like "truthfulness" and "probity" there is another word that is going the same way. That word is "altruism".

Altruism can refer to being helpful to other people with little or no interest in being rewarded for one's efforts. This is the least tortuous of the alternatives.

Eugene Peterson's interpretation of Romans 15.1-3 focuses on the importance of altruism for Christians today, when he says, "Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status. Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, 'How can I help?' That's exactly what Jesus did. He didn't make it easy for himself by avoiding people's troubles."²

¹ © From the Hutchinson Encyclopaedia.

² Eugene H Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*, Navpress, Colorado Springs, 2000

Forum

From Barry Paterson

Here from the outset Paul challenges the market economy as the norm for a Christian. For at the heart of the market economy is the notion of self-interest, of consumerism, that is one of its significant driving forces. Self-interest is the antithesis of altruism, of selfless behaviour.

Is the notion of a Christian standing against the centrality of the market economy in our world simply a naïve dream?³ After all, watch any news broadcast, or stay away from church on a Sunday morning and experience the interlocked power and influence of the two great forces in Australia today — sport and the market economy.

Those of us who have followed teams like St Kilda in their journey to find a home, driven by the economic necessity of finding paying members and sponsors, know the truth of this observation. The great football codes are openly making decisions based not only on the players or the supporters but on solely economic marketing grounds. As I write this I hear you saying "dump the nostalgia, dump the feelings — get real — football is big business now".

The moral code of football was revamped by Steve Mortimer, then the Captain of Canterbury-Bankstown Rugby League Club when he replaced the old stalwart, "Play up and play the game" with the phrase, "Winning's not the main thing — it's the only thing". Competition then began to be cloaked increasingly in economic language, "trading players" as though they were cattle. "The players draft" has echoes of drafting bullocks for the slaughterhouse.

In every news broadcast there is one kind of guru or another who informs us of the behaviour of the market that day as though it were deeply significant for the way we live our lives. Yields on stocks and shares and exchange rates are our new

³ See story on page 5 for Chico Whitaker's comments on the market economy.

daily bread. As the early Christians unsettled the Roman world by persisting in telling people about the new way that Christ had ushered in, so we have to unsettle our world by pointing out the cracks in the economic façade and encouraging altruism — selfless behaviour — as the only viable option if we are to survive.

But where are these cracks?

Listen to Alan Kohler any night after the ABC television news. He is a very smooth presenter and speaks with authority. But listen to the subtle change of tone in his voice, that smidgeon of confusion, when he cannot explain why a company that produces a larger than normal profit result is sold off. The canons of microeconomics say the good result should make the stock more attractive and so drive up the demand for the stock. This increase in demand should drive the price up, but it does just the opposite.

That is when we should ask the question made famous by the beetle-browed Professor Julius Sumner Miller “Why is it so?”, and wait politely for an answer. If enough of us ask the questions, then we have a chance to discover the truth. The truth may well be that there is no rational explanation — that the Emperor has no clothes.

Jean Baudrillard, the French philosopher links this situation with the spread of globalisation.

“We believe that the ideal purpose of any value is to become universal. But we do not really assess the deadly danger that such a quest presents. Far from being an uplifting move, it is instead a downward trend toward a zero degree in all values.

“In the Enlightenment, universalisation was viewed as unlimited growth and forward progress. Today, by contrast, universalisation exists by default and is expressed as a forward escape, which aims to reach the most minimally common value.

“This is precisely the fate of human rights, democracy and liberty today. Their expansion is in reality their weakest expression....universalisation is vanishing because of globalisation...the triumph of a uniform thought over a universal one”.³

To follow Baudrillard’s line and the line of the early Christians, we cannot confront these ideologies directly. We must work to undermine them by promoting and encouraging the spread of altruism, of selfless behaviour.

³ Baudrillard, Jean, *The Violence of the Global*, 20 May 2003, www.ctheory.net, Aurthur & Marilouise Kroker, editors

The first generation of Christians were willing to sacrifice themselves so that others would have a chance to hear the Good News.

A competitive system like market capitalism understands and excels at head-on mortal combat. What it cannot understand is someone who will not stand up and fight for what they believe. They cannot deal effectively with the person who continues to ask questions that are not confrontational. They cannot deal with a person that cannot be suborned or coerced into becoming part of the system. People who insist on asking for the truth in the way Fr Radcliffe talks about.

From the globalist perspective this is the person who asks whether it is right to pay an Indonesian worker something like a dollar for producing a \$200+ pair of running shoes. This is generally countered in economic terms by talking about the different cost of living in Indonesia and Australia. A simple photograph of a sweatshop puts that argument where it deserves to go. Is it right that people are cooped together in such degrading conditions to produce our luxury goods? Not, “Is it economic?”, but “Is it right?”

It is only by doggedly questioning the rightness of actions and the teaching and practising the importance of altruism as a motivating force that we can open up the soil of our depleted world to allow the possibility of new life to come. There does not seem to be any other way.

The Revd Barry Paterson is Teacher of Theology at Wontulp-Bi-Buya College, Cairns

RESEARCH ON FORGIVENESS

Research participants are being sought for research that explores the role of forgiveness in the way that churches have responded, and are responding, to child sexual abuse by clergy.

This research specifically seeks to explore the perspectives of those individuals who are, or have been, involved in ministry or leadership in a church or church affiliated service.

Please direct inquiries to Jodi Death on

Email: jdeath@csu.edu.au

Mobile: 0423 386 090

Work: 02 63384893

“Is it a bird? Is it a plane?”

By Peter Sellick



The idea of Intelligent Design is that the universe, particularly the life contained therein, is too complex to have happened by chance as the theory of evolution would have it.

Therefore its sole basis lies in a negative — the failure to imagine how natural selection could arrive at the complexity of life we see all around us.

We can perhaps sympathise with this notion since the fossil record has not preserved enough to demonstrate the continuity of the process and we must rely on our imagination to fill in the gaps. Nonetheless, modern biology continues to grow from strength to strength in fields as disparate as palaeobiology, neurophysiology, evolutionary psychology, molecular biology and genetics to name but a few.

It seems that biology is doing very well with only one underlying theory — Darwin’s theory of evolution. There is therefore no pressure from science to incorporate another theory, especially one for which there is no positive evidence.

But there is pressure from some sections of the church, who look at the theory of evolution with dismay because it appears to lack any kind of teleology — any goal towards which it seeks to progress. Apparently, not only are human beings on this earth entirely by chance but also there is no meaning to their existence. The push to teach Intelligent Design theory — the idea that there was a guiding hand involved in evolution — is an effort to insert God into the teaching of science and to correct nihilistic conclusions.

Intelligent Design has displaced, at least in the public sphere, the push to teach creationism. Creationism is derived from a literal reading of the first two creation narratives and would have it that the universe was created in seven days a few thousands years ago — and that God placed dinosaur bones in the fossil record to amuse palaeobiologists.

Intelligent Design is a more sophisticated version that attempts to escape from the absurdities of

creationism. To do that it has jettisoned the biblical texts that creationism relies on, relying instead on an unadorned concept — the idea that God created the heavens and the earth. It is as if the biblical texts are an embarrassment and have been disregarded in order to make the theory more palatable to the modern mind.

You would think that the church would welcome the teaching of Intelligent Design in school because it places God in the syllabus. After all, the stocks of the church are so low in our society we need all the help we can get. But I will argue that the church should not support such a notion and that science should be left to the scientists.

The central objection to Intelligent Design is that it seeks to posit the activity of God from nature. The logic runs: if God created the universe then we should be able to see his fingerprints on it. We should be able to see his intelligence worked out in the fine-tuning of the physical constants so

The creative act of God is not confined to the beginning

that exactly this universe was created, that would be able to harbour life. We should be able to see God’s intelligence in the complexity of molecular biology and in the organisation of the nervous system.

There are two objections to this idea. First, it is wrong to identify the creation stories that we find at the beginning of the Bible as being about the creation of the material world. What God creates is not a thing, a cosmos, but the setting for the covenant between God and his people. God does not create a world that subsequently has a history but a history that is a world.

When the prophet stands in the community and says, “Thus says the Lord,” the creative speech of God is present and active to create a new future for the people. When God raised Jesus from the dead he did not perform a medical miracle but vindicated the one in whom his Word dwelt in its fullness and thus created a new heaven and a new earth.

The creative act of God is not confined to the beginning but is present throughout history, creat-

ing the holy people Israel and the church, and at the end fulfilling all things at the end of history. A theology that narrows the creative act of God to the first two chapters of the Bible mistakes what is actually created.

Big bang cosmology has given an enormous boost to the idea that God is involved in the process, simply because it talks of a definite beginning which may be identified with the definite act of a creator God.

But this is a very thin understanding of what the Bible says about God's creative acts. It is entirely fortuitous that Big Bang cosmology fits in nicely with a particular creative act of God.

The second objection to the attempt to seek God in nature has been strongly formulated by Karl Barth. He makes the point that any attempt by humanity to find God will inevitably result in us looking in a mirror. Any god that is proven cannot be God because we make the terms for his discovery and we stipulate his properties. God becomes an object at our disposal and therefore cannot be God. When we read God from nature we are in a position to say what is important and what is being said. Does the marvellous complexity of life speak of the work of the creator? Does the malaria parasite or the HIV virus speak of God? It is not clear what nature has to say to us and we must conclude that if it has anything to say, its message to us is ambivalent.

The generality and ambivalence of nature may be contrasted to the particularity of the witness of scripture. In this we do not choose what to hear as the word of God but are commanded to look in a specific place that has specific content. We are therefore not in a position of selecting what we may hear, we are under discipline and thus protected from hubris.

When we look for God in nature we end up with an idol of our own making, and as we know, idols do not speak.

When we look for God in scripture we are confronted by a genuine "other" who may be over and against us as well as for us. Barth makes the point that only a God who reveals himself on his own terms can be God, and he uses the doctrine of the Trinity to explain this. Father Son and Holy Spirit become revealer, revelation and revealedness.

God is to be understood then as 'triune' in the sense that he is the subject, the act, and the goal of revelation." We may of course leave ourselves

open to revelation or be closed to it but it is the movement of God towards us that is central, not our move towards him. Without his prior move he would remain hidden. All natural theology is therefore an absurdity.

When we attempt to instill some religion into our children by teaching them Intelligent Design alongside the theory of evolution in biology class, we inoculate them against any real encounter with the God whose story is told in the Bible. Natural theology is a distraction. It tells us that God may be found in the texts of scripture "and" in nature.

It is this little copulatory "and" that causes all of the damage. For who would not prefer the marvels of biological process or the beauty of the universe as revealed by our telescopes to the troubled history of Israel and the gruesome image of Jesus bleeding his life away on the cross? As soon as this little "and" comes into operation the pressure is off and we can indulge in all of the awestruck emotions we desire.

The easy theism that comes from natural theology is a threat to the hard slog of finding God

This is not to say that the universe is not awesome (every time I look down the microscope at the cochlea I am struck with its beauty and complexity). But we should resist connecting the awe we feel with a religious feeling for God. We should resist because this is not where we are to encounter the God who speaks his creative word to us. Or, rather the beauty and awe of the creation can only be the place of our joy rather than our misery, after God has found us and our "being in the world" has been ordered aright.

The easy theism that comes from natural theology is a threat to the hard slog of finding God in our received scriptural traditions. This is the easy theism that makes many who believe in God, but few who tremble at the thought of judgment and cling to the cross as the centre of what it means to be in the world. It fills the census with believers while the church withers. This is an easy theism because it asks nothing of us, this God, this intelligent designer, proffers no judgment and offers no salvation. He is a God of the gaps, a being we posit to fill a lack in our understanding. When we look to the current malaise of the church we need look

no further than this. For when natural theology has taken hold, the edge and scandal of the gospel is dissipated and church becomes just an affirmation of the world. Who would get up early on a Sunday morning to hear that?

I think we should leave science to the scientists. If we want our children to learn about God let them be taught from the Bible not from a pseudo theology.

If for one would be sorry to see the theory of Intelligent Design taught in schools alongside the theory of evolution, for it is neither science nor theology but a move to rectify a perceived lack in our children's education. It distracts both from good science and good theology and does them both damage. How can we teach the scientific method, the paring down of theory to the absolutely necessary if we include a theory that is unnecessary and for which there is no evidence? How can we teach about God as if God is subject to nature, opening the way for pantheism and queering the pitch for science?

The Rev Dr Peter Sellick is Senior Research Officer at The auditory Lab, Dept of Physiology, University of Western Australia. www.onlineopinion.com.au

Book reviews

Light Through Darkness by John Chryssavgis,
Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 2004, ISBN
0232524734

Rrp. \$29.95

Reviewed by Robert Braun

This charming and insightful study of the Orthodox tradition is another in this publisher's series: Traditions of Christian Spirituality.

The author, who has divided his time between Athens, Oxford and Sydney, seeks to provide an accurate and balanced historical and thematic treatment of the Orthodox tradition in the areas of spirituality, liturgy and sacrament, monasticism, theology and ecology, and spiritual direction. The one hundred and forty two pages, plus carefully arranged endnotes and suggested further reading, make this a valuable source of knowledge for all those who treasure the wisdom and insight of the Orthodox East.

The author's references and quotations span a vast treasury of wisdom, from the early Fathers to Dostoyevsky and Colleen McCullough!

He draws on writings from the Anglo-Orthodox bishop Kallistos Ware, to the saintly Romanian scholar, the late Fr Dumitru Staniloae. He also distils wisdom from many of the publications that have come from St Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York, which has been responsible for so many scholarly works on the Orthodox faith.

Touching on tradition, the author repudiates those modern Christians who give the impression that God stopped speaking to the world two thousand years ago. He reminds us that it is the flames and not the ashes of the Church Fathers that enliven the church today, through a living tradition that communicates itself down the ages. Close proximity in time to the early church is not seen as the hallmark of authentic tradition, but closeness to the faith.

In the life of the Orthodox Church there is no sense of any interruption between the 'primitive' Christian era and the contemporary world. The connectedness between twenty-first century Orthodoxy and the church of Chrysostom and Gregory Palamas is almost tangible — an unbroken living tradition. The author reminds us that in

Paget's Parable



Book Reviews

Orthodoxy there was nothing comparable to the Scholastic revolution in the west, the European Renaissance or the Protestant Reformation.

However little is said by the author about the various divergences that have taken place, even in the Orthodox ecclesia over the past two millennia, created by differing theological, ecclesial and nationalistic views.

Chryssavgis expounds a most interesting and moving theology of 'Tears and Brokenness', and contends that brokenness and darkness are the only ways to healing and light. He explores the interesting phenomenon of tears in three classics of spirituality: the desert fathers and mothers, John Climacus, and Symeon the New Theologian. He relates 'tears' to Baptism, and believes the sacrament is renewed by the tears of the penitent.

He says, "Tears are a way of knowing ourselves; we weep because we have lost our paradisaical identity ..." This leads us to affirm that what is far more important and insightful than learning to live, is learning to die. One is reminded of the paradoxical epitaph on the tomb of one of the Renaissance popes, "He lived as if to die, so that dying he might live".

As he develops his theology of tears, the author says, "Tears symbolise the fullness of life, with all its sorrows and joys. I weep; therefore, I am".

The concluding chapter of the book is like a fine Easter homily. The author reminds us that even the Orthodox sometimes forget that they are a church of the cross, not just a church of light and resurrection. The two mysteries of cross and resurrection are inextricably linked. The red of the Orthodox Easter eggs is the colour of the blood of the cross.

The Venerable Robert Braun OGS is Anglican Archdeacon of Brisbane.

The Lambeth Diary Church Book and Desk Diary 2006

ISBN 1853116327 Rrp \$49.95

A valuable resource for all things Anglican and liturgical, with interdenominational notes.

However, next year the editors could consider the eyesight of the aging Anglican population and raise the typeface a point or two.

Blair's Britain — A Christian Critique, by Mark D Chapman

Darton Longman and Todd, London 2005, pp 117.

ISBN 0-232-52603-6.

Rrp A\$34.95

Reviewed by Maggie Helass

In this slim volume Mark Chapman questions the basis of sovereignty and the role of government in Britain under New Labour. His thesis is relevant to neo-liberal and Third Way politics in any western country.

Inspiration for this book came from scholar-monk John Neville Figgis (1866-1919) who commuted between Mirfield (monastic) fasts and Cambridge feasts in a bid to reconcile the demands of individuality and group life. In Figgis' historical research he uncovered an unlikely political counter-current, a possible panacea to the current economic order. This was the medieval view of the state as a community of communities — a view which was destroyed in the Reformation and post-Reformation struggles in favour of the twin despots of the sovereign state and the sovereign church.

When the Labour party at last returned to power in 1997 Chapman, a socialist in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, feared "a profound tragedy at the heart of modern politics: the martyrs' vision, the cost of radical discipleship, did not seem to figure in mainstream politics at all."

New Labour went on to realise Chapman's fears by replacing old socialist values with hazy ideals and efficient economic management — excising the Christian Socialist hope of ongoing social transformation from the political equation.

Manipulation of public discourse in the service of 'modernisation' morphed old Labour values of collectivism and common ownership into vaguer talk of 'community' and 'tolerance'. Equality gave way to 'choice' or 'freedom' as the dominant value of welfare socialism which had been popularised since 1942 by Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple in his book *Christianity and the Social Order*.

Chapman is concerned that devolution of economic management to 'experts' and the politics

of audit, have shrunk participation in the political process. The state becomes the manager and provider. Participatory groups — friendly societies, trade unions, churches — are given less and less to do as the state controls all decisions.

Chapman questions whether such government is legitimate — a question which under new sedition laws could land him in gaol.

‘Community’ under New Labour is an attempt to remedy the nineteenth and twentieth century move from community to society — which created sociological problems of nurturing community values where people no longer had face-to-face networks.

Tony Blair’s distinctive contribution in western politics is his effort to locate the values of community in a specific Christian tradition, influenced by his public school and Oxford education.

For Blair, Chapman says, values are a matter of faith and not reason — reason’s job lies solely in the application of the values of faith. This of course begs the question of whether people who have no faith also have no values.

Blair used the language of covenant — responsibility and duty — to distance himself from the traditional language of rights and equality in a speech at Hans Kung’s Global Ethics Foundation in 2000. However Blair did not say what would happen to those who refused their duties or responsibilities. There is no room in his rhetoric for love of those who contribute nothing.

Blair sees religion as an ally in the international search for harmony and co-operation. Commonalities rather than differences between religions become the source for the new global ethic. Churches replace trades unions to foster values of community and solidarity.

However, in Britain, church membership and practice have halved in forty years. Christianity has become a lifestyle choice. Where Christianity continues to exist it is part of the private discourse rather than public culture. If the maintenance of values requires faith then the future of European morality is a risky business, Chapman concludes.

Blair’s Third Way involves the re-casting of the relationship between citizen and state and the remoralisation of politics through ‘the power of community’. But it overlooks the fact that communities are morally ambiguous, and can be destructive as well as constructive.

Analysis of the meaning of community — who is to arbitrate between communities when they disagree, on what do they base their criteria, and what constitutes the ‘common good’ — involves discussion of political authority and sovereignty.

Chapman points out that in real life the common good is usually worked out through conflict. Communities are frequently made up of people who do not particularly like one another but who need ways of making decisions and living together. And sometimes when they do unite around a common good it might be bought at the expense of somebody else’s good.

‘Common good’ language can serve to suppress pluralism and dialogue, as has been apparent since the outbreak of the so-called war on terror. The ‘common good’ can be used to control public discourse and can become a euphemism for the particular values of powerful political or social elites.

...that harmony and order are not central to Jesus’ proclamation is as close as Chapman gets to a theology of conflict.

Efficient management, according to New Labour, lies beyond the scope of the politician and has to be left to the experts. This has led to the ‘quangoisation’ of the state which now has more than one thousand public bodies made up of some thirty thousand members, mostly appointed by the government and not answerable to voter, worker or consumer. “All that is left in terms of democratic accountability is the blunt instrument of voting out the ruling party in the occasional general election.”

Chapman describes a cult of management where values are excised from all government activity. Thus, efficient management, he argues, appears to be at odds with building community. “The contemporary cult of the expert and target-setter does not bode well for the long-term survival of public institutions and public morality.”

Managerial audit increasingly controls public life, even in universities and hospitals which have traditionally been upheld by quite different and unquantifiable sets of moral ideas and goals.

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In a radical critique on sovereignty Chapman proposes that the Tudor theory of kingship provides the foundation for the British constitution — which means that any alternative source of power (such as trades unions) is perceived either as a threat or a concession.

He includes a discussion of theologians' application of the doctrine of the Trinity to theories of community, from Conrad Noel (1869-1942) to Leonardo Boff — who elevates community as the perfect balance between individual and society. However, distortions of the doctrine of God have led to a whole host of ills, not least the Enlightenment notion of the autonomous individual.

Chapman asks whether the normal condition of society (including the churches) is one of dispute and conflict — or to put it in more neutral terms, one of a plurality of views and opinions?

The observation that harmony and order are not central to Jesus' proclamation is as close as Chapman himself gets to a theology of conflict. As God did in Christ, all we can achieve in doctrine (giving voice to God) are compromises, temporary solutions and provisional statements, but never consensus or harmony.

But a provocative quote from David Nicolls, "... mercy and justice are in principle opposed to each other and in conflict," provides an alluring starting point for reinvigorating political debate amongst Christians — Chapman's aim for this small book.

The institutions of civil society — the voluntary, intermediate or 'third' sector which, with the churches, includes the primary agencies for the formation of 'community' — are so emasculated compared with the state they have been effectively de-politicised. Voluntary communities have little chance of influencing government policy. Instead they can easily become little more than secondary agencies in dispensing government initiatives and largesse.

Chapman suggests a redirection of sovereignty, making the intermediate voluntary communities of civil society the starting point for all politics.

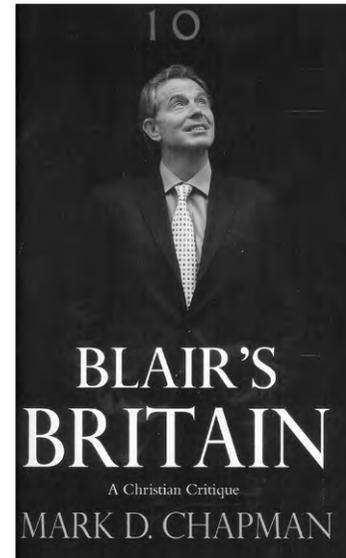
His central argument is that disagreement is at the heart of a functioning democracy. A plurality of views worked out in the on-going, rough and

ready world of participatory politics must reverse the disastrous trend to a political monoculture.

For people who have a conviction that something is terribly wrong with western politics but feel powerless to do anything about it, this book is a must-read.

I did not appreciate a snide note in some of Chapman's observations on Blair (e.g. "His only claim to street credibility was having played electric guitar as a student") which undermines the moral clarity of this important book.

Mark D Chapman is the Vice-Principal of Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford.



Emerging Mission by John Finney, DLT, London, 2004 (ISBN 0-232-52496-3) Rrp \$34.95.

Reviewed by Gerald Davis

John Finney's *Emerging Evangelism* commends itself quickly. It is helpfully structured, the theological grounding is secure, and he has taken commendable account of the appropriate experts and reference points. John Finney, Anglican Bishop of Pontefract, was the "Archbishops' Officer for the Decade of Evangelism".

Evangelism is almost a dodgy word, though, isn't it? An analytical review of this book will be of little use to Australians, so instead some observations which one hopes will be encouraging.

The name Finney evokes Charles G Finney, among the founders of the Keswick Convention movement, who was sometimes cited as the yardstick of open evangelicalism in Australia thirty to forty years ago. John Finney does not disclose

any family connection, but he does offer a helpful, and not ungenerous, critique of the earlier Finney (pp 60 extended, & 70).

He has assumed that evangelism and mission are close. Beyond safely citing the Booths and Shaftesbury, he thrice quotes the more contemporary David Bosch of South Africa who saw evangelism as an integral element of mission, and it is clear he has understood Professor Bosch's extensive writings. John Finney's concluding passage is memorable:

"A Church which is stripped is uncomfortable. The old easy chairs are being disposed of and we are being asked to move out into the world, and finding the atmosphere bracing. David Bosch said "Christians find their true identity when they are involved in mission", and we are discovering that to be true. In this book I have tried to underline width. The broader gospel flows from the width of the being of God, and the less restrictively defined Church is shaped by the whole people of God in the world."

"I should try to talk as much with
those who disagree with me as
those who support me"

David Bosch died in a motor accident in Holy Week, 1995, so cannot be consulted, but I expect he would have said a loud "hear, hear", to that (in Afrikaans).

Finney has looked at the pattern of mass evangelism, which was the only model most of us knew up to about 1980, and gently dinged a few myths. For instance, did you know D L Moody distrusted altar calls?

"We fear that in those [post-altar-call] enquiry rooms men are warmed into a fictitious confidence. Very few of the supposed converts of enquiry-rooms turn out well. Cast yourself on Christ ere you stir an inch!"

(I can almost hear the late William Auchterlonie Hardie, a strident critic of Billy Graham in '59, echoing that!)

The Alpha program (and its equivalents) get Finney's accolade for the last decades of the 20th Century, at least. "... a further step forward was taken during the Billy Graham campaigns [in England] in the 1980s. It was felt that many British people were so far away from the faith that, after

making a decision in the stadium, they needed to be steered towards a small group for learning and integration into the church. They proved their worth: research after the campaigns showed that 72% of people who went to a nurture group went on to full membership of their local church while only 23% of those who did not join made that transition".

You've tried an Alpha or other enquiry group, and been discouraged after two or three courses saw failing outcomes? Well, Finney reports (page 80) the first course in a community attracts the faithful, and by the third it has run out of steam — at that point half of all English parishes gave up. But by the fourth and fifth course, "the numbers of newcomers increase and the course begins to impact the whole life of the church. Numerical growth is stimulated or decline slowed". Finney encourages the idea that nurture courses be shared between co-operating churches of the area, ecumenically.

Listen to local evangelism's opponents:

"There is one area which is all too often missed in books about leadership. Long ago I came across this dictum: '*Operate in the negative force field.*' ... The largest airliner can rev its engines until everyone around is deafened but it will not move an inch unless someone takes away the chocks... In pastoral situations it means that I should try to talk as much with those who disagree with me as those who support me. It means we should face objections before proposing some course of action rather than being bewildered when they are fired at us later."

Stuart Piggin, historian and long-time warden of Robert Menzies College, Macquarie, has argued that there is considerable evidence that the growth of the churches in Australia has been triggered by spontaneous "revivals" (a difficult term which needs a 21st Century update) when the Spirit of God has taken hold of a community and transformed it into an agency of mission. He can cite a couple of hundred instances.

I believe Stuart is right, and that, instead of feeling guilty about failure in evangelism, we look searchingly for the signs of God's intervention in our communities and enjoy the surfing of the waves when we may.

Gerald Charles Davis was founding editor of *Church Scene* and is a Life Member of the Australasian Religious Press Association.

Book Reviews

Living Love — Restoring Hope in the Church
by Jack Dominian, 2004, Darton Longman and
Todd Ltd, London. ISBN 023252153. Rrp \$31.95

Reviewed by Katy Gerner

Jack Dominian is a psychiatrist and author of several books including *One Like Us: A Psychological Interpretation of Jesus* and *Let's Make Love: The Meaning of Sexual Intercourse*. His latest book describes a new vision for the Catholic church, and covers the church today, the concept of love, marriage and the family and the wider family.

Living Love is full of riveting and sometimes controversial ideas delivered with style. If I quoted every sentence of his I admired, I would be writing another book. But I will limit myself to a couple of gems.

On authority — “The Church must listen and take heed of the laity, for it needs to reflect the truth that belongs to the whole Church and not just to a minority.” (20)

“(H)idden within these vocations were often a number of unconscious issues that are now recognised. The first was immaturity. From an early age, boys were incarcerated in an environment that fostered infantility, immaturity, dependence and an ignorance of how to be human” (166)

On Marriage — “It is my view that Christianity fails seriously in its advocacy of marriage by not proclaiming loudly the reality of healing, within it, and that there is more healing in the totality of marriage than in all the healing achievements of the psychiatric couches of the world.” (95)

Dominian's thoughts on authority in the church often refer to babying of church members encouraged by church leaders, to the church's detriment. Not only, he argues, did it take on young leaders who would give up their priestly role when they gained confidence and matured. It also does not meet the needs of an educated congregation, who like to think over their spiritual decisions rather than obey without question.

Dominian feels that the appointment of conservative religious leaders who obey their leaders and expect obedience from their congregation will only exacerbate the numbers of people leaving the church.

He also believes that limiting the role of the laity disadvantages the church. For example, Dominian believes that the married laity has much to offer in preparing a theology of marriage, love and sexuality.

“The truth that it proclaims must indeed be the truth. For this to be so, the experience of the Pope, bishops and priests is not enough, particularly in sexual matters. The laity are not seeking executive powers but to be consulted seriously, especially in matters that are their domain and where they have special experience.” (20)

Dominian praises marriage throughout his book, and believes that it is underrated by the church, often limited to being viewed as a means

Dialogue itself is God's presence in the encounter

of procreation and an acceptable form of sex. His writings proclaim it to be a truly beautiful relationship and he gives sound advice on how to find and maintain a happy marriage.

I found Dominian's thoughts on prayer interesting and thought they reflected his experience as a psychiatrist.

He speaks sympathetically of the person who has already prayed over a problem and is dismissed by a priest, who “has not got a clue how to handle the problem” with the words, “Pray and I will pray for you.” (43) Dominian feels that talking over the problem *is* an important part of prayer.

“Without doubting the spiritual validity of prayer, these situations require more. They need time to be spent, if necessary a long time, to listen to the story, not so much because an answer will be found, although it may be, because dialogue itself is God's presence in the encounter. The exchange is with the visible, listening God, the mystery and complexity of the situation is being unravelled without necessarily being solved, and the person is being heard, recognised and empathised with. These encounters are prayerful human answers. They come before any invisible answers arrive. These encounters are the prayer.” (43)

***Doom for the man who founds his palace on anything but integrity,
his upstairs rooms on anything but honesty,
who makes his fellow man work for nothing,
without paying him his wages...***

Jeremiah 22:13 The Jerusalem Bible.

By Christine Howes

From 1900 until as late as the 1980s, governments around Australia controlled wages, savings and benefits belonging to Aboriginal people who were under their care and protection.

In almost every state and territory, money belonging to individual Aboriginal people was improperly withheld by governments.

This money included wages, social security payments such as child endowment and pensions, soldiers' pay, workers compensation and inheritances.

Records show some funds from Trust accounts were transferred to public revenue and used for development and infrastructure. Some "disappeared" through fraud, negligence and maintenance of faulty banking systems.

In 2002 the Queensland Government made a capped reparations offer of \$55.6 million to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to whom money was owed.

The Indigenous Wages and Savings Reparations process is a "take it or leave it" scheme which closed at the end of January. It offered fixed payments, according to age, of \$2,000 or \$4,000 to claimants alive after 9 May 2002.

The government knows many now-elderly claimants, forced to work for up to twenty or more years with limited access to their own accounts, are actually owed much larger amounts. Even if they have records to prove it they cannot claim all their money without taking the government to court.

Families of deceased workers cannot apply and claimants had to sign an indemnity waiving their right to take any further action to recover their full entitlements. Few claimants have any idea of what they are actually owed.

Final results of a Stolen Wages Survey distributed throughout Queensland last year indicated a high level of dissatisfaction with that government's handling of this issue. The survey was distributed in response to the Queensland Government's refusal to carry out its own State Labor Party policy

HOME TRUTHS

which calls for re-negotiation with indigenous communities.

Results of the survey were uniformly strong with more than 94 per cent of indigenous and non-indigenous respondents agreeing that the offer was not fair, that the families of deceased workers should be entitled to make a claim, and that there should be an independent inquiry to audit what might be owed.

A result showing only 75 per cent of both groups knew about the government's offer prompted calls for the offer to be extended. Less than ten per cent of those who knew about the offer found out from government; the rest from either the stolen wages campaign or the media — nearly all of which over the past three years has been generated by the campaign.

In June last year NSW claimants and campaigners attended a Stolen Wages Working Group meeting in Brisbane, determined to promote unity between states and territories and a stronger showing for stolen wages as a national issue.

It seemed the Queensland Government was hoping this issue would go away, but a series of meetings held with elders from Brisbane to Normanton in January has resulted in a commitment by campaigners to keep going.

The government needs to be aware that the effects of inter-generational poverty caused by these practices, and perpetuated by this offer, will not go away for indigenous individuals, their families and communities.

The issue of missing, unpaid and underpaid wages belonging to Aboriginal workers over the past century is destined to stay until governments — both state and federal — face up to their moral and legal responsibilities for these matters.

A National Report is currently being researched by volunteers across the nation under the guidance of historian Dr Ros Kidd and international human rights lawyer Helen Burrows.

Christine Howes is a freelance journalist and media coordinator based in far north Queensland and has coordinated the Stolen Wages Campaign since June 2002. Information for this article was gathered from Dr Ros Kidd (Fact Sheets and National Report www.linksdisk.com/roskidd), Stolen Wages Survey Results and Stolen Wages Updates 1-8 (all available from ANTaR Qld at www.antarqld.org.au).

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