

ZADOK

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PERSPECTIVES 2013

Is Politics Passé?



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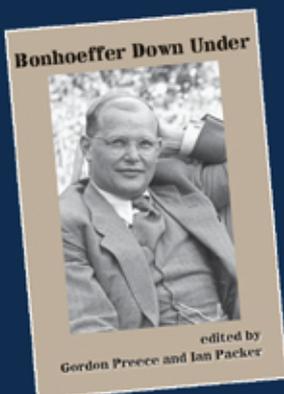


Rudd's Bonhoeffer

or, "Why Bringing Theology into Politics is an Occupational Hazard"

with ABC Religion and Ethics Editor **Scott Stephens**

including **BOOK LAUNCH**
of Gordon Preece &
Ian Packer, eds.
Bonhoeffer Down Under
(www.atfpress.com)



AN ETHOS ELECTION EVENT

Thursday 5 September

Dinner: 6:30pm

Spottiswoode Pub
next to Spotswood Train Station, Hudsons Rd.

Address: 7:45 - 9:30pm

St. Mark's Anglican Church Spotswood,
cnr Melbourne Rd & Hudsons Rd.
(2 blocks south of Westgate Bridge)

RSVP lisa@ethos.org.au or (03) 9890 0633

Preceded at 5:30 by Ethos Paid-Up Members AGM
prior to dinner also at Spottiswoode Pub



Scott Stephens is Editor for ABC Religion and Ethics. Before joining the ABC, Scott was a Uniting Church minister and also taught theology for many years. He has written extensively on philosophy, theology, ethics and politics.

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Creation Care in Australia

We believe God created the world good—and as his children, we have a responsibility to care for creation. **A Rocha** is a Christian creation care organisation, founded in Portugal, that focuses on environmental education, research and practical environmental action. Although many countries have established **A Rocha** chapters, one has not yet been launched in Australia.

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Please also consider setting aside the weekend of September 28-29 for a weekend of practical environmental action at 'Watchbox Valley' (picture at right) a 1160 acre conservation-focused farm 90km north of Melbourne in Central Victoria.



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The Choice: Rudd's Bonhoeffer Bonfire or Abbott's Amnesia About Catholic Social Thought?

Gordon Preece

When self-proclaimed 'God-botherer' politicians publicly nail their colours to the Christian mast, they're almost inevitably hoisted on their own petard. So it gives me no pleasure to examine PM Kevin Rudd's current policies in the light of his boldly Luther-esque 'Here I Stand' 2006 article on Bonhoeffer, now found in my and Ian Packer's edited *Bonhoeffer Downunder* (www.atfpress.com).

Rudd's title, 'Faith in Politics', is a revealingly unintended double-entendre. Is it the role of relatively independent faith in politics, or is it faith in politics itself, politics as pseudo-faith or religion? When planning the 2006 Bonhoeffer centenary conference in Melbourne, I'd seen a line from Rudd claiming Bonhoeffer as his hero, along with his photo in the Zadok office as part of our public servants network. The new Labor opposition leader, appointed at least partly to neutralise John Howard's stranglehold over much of the 10% or so Christian vote, was a shoo-in as after-dinner speaker. This speech became Rudd's influential *Monthly* article in October 2006 charting an alternative Bonhoefferian and Christian Socialist politics 'from below'.

For 'Bonhoeffer is the man I admire most in the 20th century. He was a man of faith ... a man of reason ... a man of letters. He was never a nationalist, always an internationalist'. The affinities are obvious, but I'll focus on measuring his policies by this original Bonhoeffer platform, not joining Rudd's pop-psychoanalysts. (Not only Labor faction leaders and cabinet character assassins, but more thoughtful commentators: first, journalist David Marr's 'Power Trip: The Political Journey of Kevin Rudd', which helped bring Rudd down. This 'thin-slicing' of one aspect of his interpersonal experience with Rudd to confirm a purported broader pattern' was well critiqued by Mark Bahnisch: <http://tinyurl.com/lo6lygf/>. (Cf. <http://tinyurl.com/kodpnwv/>).

Rudd then outlines Bonhoeffer's

critique of Lutheran Two Kingdoms theology with its split between the personal life of faith in the spiritual Kingdom and the political life of the worldly Kingdom. Rather than focusing on privatised issues, Bonhoeffer wanted a Church engaged 'in the middle of the village'. Implicit in this is the problem of how Christian politicians or citizens theologically engage the village marketplace or *agora*, à la Paul in Athens, when the market has mastered and muzzled the conversations of town hall, cathedral and philosophers' stoa.

Rudd next sets Bonhoeffer in Christian history, with the early persecuted church of oppressed outsiders before, under Emperor Constantine, they often became persecuting insiders. He sees the church returning to its minority status in the past 200+ years of rising secularism. This is the natural, default setting for Christians, with the prophets; the Jesus who challenged hypocritical religious leaders; with Bonhoeffer, 'the Thomas More of Protestantism'; and with Labor icon Ben Chifley and his biblical 'Light on the Hill' image.

The broad brush of Rudd paints Bonhoeffer alongside the Roman Catholic social tradition, (the one Tony Abbott has amnesia about), balancing the rights of labor and capital, rather than just being concerned with a narrow set of mainly sexual, moral issues and family values (the one Abbott remembers). For Bonhoeffer, the Gospel is both spiritual and political, inspiring a comprehensively inclusive socio-economic polity and vision.

For Rudd this leads to a values conflict between the progressive social democratic vision of Bonhoeffer plus the Christian Socialism of his other Christian hero, British Labor founder, Keir Hardie, versus the 'neo-liberal' individualist values of Margaret Thatcher and John Howard. The former, Rudd says, seeks to identify with those from below and redistributing from rich to poor; the latter doing the opposite.

Rudd speaks for the voiceless: the planet, workers, next generations, Indigenous people, asylum seekers. This moral vision propelled him into office but, upon his backtracking from

key parts (albeit coerced by Gillard and Swan), became his albatross. Here he makes the famous statement about climate change as 'the fundamental ethical challenge of our time', which has become a political football: the carbon tax was temporarily shelved; then Gillard promised not to have one; now Rudd has advanced carbon trading by one year. It is still the great moral issue of our time, demanding a courageous, long-term, sacrificial, prudential and bipartisan approach, the equivalent of the World War II emergency – but without the violence. (My friend Mark Nation's new book shows that Bonhoeffer, was not party to the assassination of Hitler – something Rudd's new rules re Labor keeping its elected leaders has ensured will not happen again to him).

Guy Rundle, like Robert Manne, once keen on Rudd's Bonhoeffer platform, rightly said that 'the degree to which Bonhoeffer has become someone to quote back at Rudd has been remarkable'. He did it himself, saying that Rudd on Afghanistan was more Billy Hughes than Bonhoeffer, the people smuggler (<http://tinyurl.com/luth3t7/>). Rundle's *Arena* colleague, Geoff Sharp, asked prophetically in 'Christian values and Kevin Rudd's wedge', (*Arena Magazine*, Feb. 2007), 'Can Rudd's ethics survive the day-to-day demands of politics?' i.e. the 24/7 news cycle, the 24/7 Kevin mythology and the dire electoral position he's inherited.

Even I couldn't resist using Bonhoeffer to measure Rudd's policies, but trying to apply both sides of Bonhoeffer, compared to some one-sided Christian reactions to gay marriage. 'Rudd might also ask regarding gay marriage, WWBD? i.e., "What would Bonhoeffer do?"', Rudd could take his bearings from Bonhoeffer's biblically based 'view from below' – the perspective of those who suffer; like the Jews, and gays, in Germany. Rudd is therefore right to seek to minimise gay suffering, and his government did so with my and most Christians' support (including ACL) by eliminating discriminatory legislation. But Bonhoeffer also clearly upheld Scripture's prohibition of homosexual practice. He saw our embodied

humanity, expressed as male and female, as something not simply subject to the social re/constructions of 'man come of age'. Instead it is an expression of God's trans-cultural creation mandate for all (<http://tinyurl.com/lfwprjt/>). (For an alternative view see <http://tinyurl.com/ma8wk4/>). However, I agree with Rudd that we need greater church-state separation on marriage. Secular town hall marriages and sacred church/mosque etc marriages after.)

Again applying his Bonhoeffer 'from below' mandate to refugees, Rudd said in 2006: 'Another great challenge of our age is asylum seekers. The biblical injunction to care for the stranger in our midst is clear [as in] the Good Samaritan. That is why the [Howard] government's proposal to excise the mainland from the entire Australian migration zone and to rely on the so-called Pacific Solution should cause great ethical concern to all Christian churches... The reason we have a UN convention on the protection of refugees is because of the Holocaust, when the West (including Australia) turned its back on the Jewish people of Europe who sought asylum'. But Nazi and Holocaust analogies can be turned against their users, especially terms like 'solution' with its ominous overtones.

But now Rudd's government has itself excised the mainland from the Australian migration zone and adopted its very own 'PNG Solution' ... a great ethical concern to all churches'. As Uniting Church moderator Andrew Dutney asked, 'What Would Bonhoeffer do about asylum seekers Mr Rudd?' (<http://tinyurl.com/mr3yf7t>).

Rudd's partial backflips from his 2006 Bonhoeffer platform have seemingly become a full somersault. His originally more humane refugee policy has been admitted to be a failure, in stopping the boats and the deaths of boat people. He has now ironically fulfilled his 2010 resignation speech about the danger of Labor 'going right on refugees', brilliantly out-righting his fellow-Christians Abbott and Morrison. No wonder 'Whatever it Takes' Richardson applauds this admittedly appallingly cruel policy of dumping refugees on a near-failed state in New Guinea. What's more, it's paid for by further raiding the Aid budget that Rudd had been instrumental in raising. Economic responsibility notwithstanding, the surplus mantra means some people, refugees or single

mums, shifted to or stuck on the paltry New Start (or Dead End) are treated as surplus or nothing.

Not only would the internationalist and 'people smuggler' Bonhoeffer condemn this but so also has Rudd confidante and Jesuit refugee advocate, Frank Brennan. Rudd could reply that he still takes Bonhoeffer's 'view from below', this time that of drowning refugees exploited by heartless people-smugglers. In announcing the Regional Settlement Arrangement with Papua New Guinea, Rudd said: 'Australians have had enough of seeing people drowning in the waters to our north'. But the emphasis is on us not seeing it, just go and die somewhere else, not on our doorstep (cf.: 'It's not about us: Asylum seekers and the right to belong', Erin Wilson ABC *Religion and Ethics* 30 Jul 2013). But this is not a broad enough vision for such an internationalist and global Christian. For the very fact of asylum seekers still risking ramshackle boat trips is a measure of their desperation and fear of death in their homelands, which, as Malcolm Fraser has sagely noted, no deterrent will stop – no more than it stopped our boat people convict ancestors from stealing food for their families. Such disproportionate deterrent policies absolutise one element of a holistic approach to justice including appropriateness to the alleged crime, and rehabilitation or restoration.

I will only note Indigenous issues in passing, for this is an area where Rudd has not backflipped from his prime ministerial high point, the apology. Nonetheless, the Howard intervention, which Labor has largely maintained while fine tuning, is, despite some success stories, a one-size fits all approach that disempowers many functioning communities. Only a full-scale review at its halfway point, particularly by a range of Indigenous communities, should guide how we are to improve or scrap the intervention. Constitutional change and bridging the gap in health and education need to remain on Rudd's and Abbott's agenda, for bipartisanship is crucial to advancing on such chronic issues over time.

Compared to Rudd, it is more difficult to evaluate Tony Abbott at this stage due to the replacement of Captain Catholic by Captain Negative and his relentless small target, policy-free strategy. Nonetheless, he can

be evaluated by the Catholic ethical tradition. This includes the broadly progressive Catholic Social tradition and the more conservative personal, sexual and bioethical tradition. Abbott's conservative endorsement of the latter and his continued opposition to gay marriage will comfort conservatives, whether orange or green. I respected the more principled Abbott when health minister. Yet there is great difficulty implementing Christian bioethics in a pluralist society. Abbott's opposition to abortion and the morning after pill have been linked to his 'misogyny', in ex-PM Gillard's strong terms, and ironically to DLP Senator John Madigan's bill to remove Medicare funding for sex-selection abortions, largely of females. As Ethos' Denise Cooper-Clarke says: 'equality begins in the womb' (<http://tinyurl.com/mj94378>.) Yet I cannot agree with Abbott's claim that abortion is an absolute issue and refugees merely relative. Biblically, much more is said about refugees than abortion (See my 'We are all boat people': <http://tinyurl.com/m8kpdjt>) though the latter is still very significant from a consistent pro-life perspective. And Abbott is here as selective in privileging his own bioethical tradition over the social tradition as many Protestants are about their Bible. This applies to Abbott's defence of work choices in the Howard government where, like fellow Catholic Kevin Andrews, he used increased quantity of employment (admittedly important) as a cover for poor quality of employment – in casualisation, and insecure, un-family-friendly work. Abbott says Work Choices is dead and buried, but neither the Business Council of Australia nor some in his cabinet who are more neo-liberal heard him. Abbott has won plaudits from feminists, though, for his generous maternity leave scheme.

I leave you with the choice. If you note no mention of the Greens, look to Jim Reiher's article. Our invites to other parties were not accepted. Our provocative columnists raise broader questions about politics, and Peter Corney asks how the loss of Christian public influence will affect western democracy. Enjoy and vote responsibly.

GORDON PREECE

Ethos Director and *Zadok* Editor.

Beyond the ballot box

Alison Sampson

At election time, I roll my eyes. At high school I was taught that civic engagement is a non-negotiable responsibility; and that schooling still influences me. Yet I am not a member of a political party and, living as I do in a safe seat, elections feel like a waste of time. Every few months I write to a politician about an issue, and after twenty years of letter writing I am yet to receive a response which suggests that anyone has read, let alone taken notice of, my letter. Even my local councillors have made it clear they don't give a fig for what I think; my letters to them have rarely been received. The major parties strike me as corrupt, bowing to the demands of big business and corporations, developing and riding on a politics of fear, and lacking any vision for a kind, generous, big-hearted society. I can't stand the political circus; and I don't know how anyone can get excited about elections.

My education tells me I should do something about this: get involved! Make change! Rock the vote! But I'm not by nature an organiser or motivator and I can't stand groups; I can't think of anything worse. Politics per se is not for me.

But I have learned something not taught in my high school civics class: every action is political. Where we live, where we shop, how we educate our children, what sort of healthcare we demand, which institutions we access and support, how we care for our aged, how we treat refugees – just like faith, politics permeates every aspect of life; and, just like faith, we often forget this. We think we can live neutrally, but even disengagement speaks of a certain type of politics.

And so, disaffected as I am by the political system, I am not actually disengaged. I might not think much of elections; but I try to live out a politics based on Jesus' injunction that 'whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me', and influenced by our Hebrew roots.

How this is expressed varies, but the questions are always the same: how do we care for the earth? How do we look

after the poor? What does it mean if we are all God's children? How do we seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God?

For example, if we believed that God created the earth and found it good, then we'd think about the ways we sully

buy goods made by workers who are treated well. Without any changes to the law, conditions for workers, both here and overseas, would radically change.

If we believe that all children belong to God, we might question an education system where the children of the rich



“ WE THINK WE CAN LIVE NEUTRALLY, BUT EVEN DISENGAGEMENT SPEAKS OF A CERTAIN TYPE OF POLITICS. ”

this precious gift. We'd get out of our cars, structure our lives around local hubs, and walk, ride and catch the bus; roads would no longer be at the heart of every transport agenda; access to oil would no longer dominate international relations; and our health would improve. We'd switch to 100% green power, and polluting coal plants would be phased out. We'd think about where our food comes from: how it is grown, what effect it has on the land, the rivers and the air, and how it is transported and packaged; grocery shopping would be revolutionised with no intervention from the ACCC. Australians have the biggest houses in the world, with devastating consequences for the size of our cities, the ways we get around, and the hunger for energy to heat, cool and light these houses; a thoughtful accommodation could lead to a different type of city, smaller, quietly bustling, and abounding in public transport and bike lanes.

If we care for the poor, we might challenge economic systems which keep people in grinding poverty, sewing designer clothes in murderously collapsing sweatshops. We would only

and middle class attend privileged private schools while other children attend spottily resourced public schools. We might question the justice of purchasing better health care for our children and ourselves while others moulder on waiting lists. And we might even decide to access services not with the rich but humbly, alongside Jesus's poor.

Some expressions of faith require government policy shifts – caring for asylum seekers (closing detention centres and eliminating migration excision zones) or doing good to those who hate you (reducing military spending) – and for these policy changes we can and should campaign. But in most areas of life, we can't wait for fearful, small-minded politicians to catch up. Jesus didn't spend his time lobbying Pilate; he just lived the Way. As his followers, we too are called to live out our faith-informed politics in every aspect of our lives – and not just at election time.

ALISON SAMPSON

writes about small things at www.theideaofhome.blogspot.com/.

Politics: the bad news and the good news

Paul Tyson

The bad news first. Things are much worse than we thought. In his very important book, *Propaganda*, Jacques Ellul points out that democracy and the increasingly powerful PR techniques used by our governments are mutually exclusive. The more effective our politicians get at controlling their public image via the mass media – which is to say, the better they get at shaping, limiting and controlling public opinion – the less the very ideas of citizen participation and representation actually mean.

But it is worse than that. Because we are now – as Nick Greiner famously put it – doing politics in a ‘post-ideological age’, politicians have become the economic management class of Aust. Inc. rather than people with clearly identifiable political ideals and exemplary humanity who serve the moral and political will of the people. Nowadays political ideals are little more than marketing tools which can be used and discarded by our politicians as ‘fiscal reality’ dictates. Likewise, moral commitments – such as lifting our amazingly meagre foreign aid budget – are things we can’t afford if there is a budget deficit, even if we had previously made a ‘non-core’ commitment to do so (though no commitment is advertised as non-core when it is announced).

On these matters there is no distinction between parties. Both post-ideological ‘sides’ simply claim to be more competent economic managers of Aust. Inc. than the other side. On ‘value’ issues – such as ‘protecting’ our borders – both sides play the electorally safe line of priming and then addressing the fears and self-interests of the herd mentality of public opinion in, frankly, an inexcusably immoral manner.

But it is worse than that. Kierkegaard describes the present age as one which is increasingly unable to understand anything other than the external nuts and bolts of mere animal comfort because it has no regard for the responsibility of the individual to stand before God. This means our

very cultural life-form is a spiritually meaningless frenzy of earning and spending and of indulgence and despair: consumerism. High ideas, genuine values, and an ultimate frame of accountability – things wise and humane politics require – are unknown to our age and this is reflected in our politics.

But it is worse than that. Ellul points out that in our mass media age we find ourselves saturated in carefully constructed messages which have three overarching purposes: (1) to sedate our moral and spiritual sensibilities; (2) to deceive us into thinking that we are actually happy with our massified and relationally atomised, existentially vacuous and entirely powerless life situation, and; (3) to assure us that the powers that govern our lives are basically doing as good a job as possible. Thus it is the relentlessly messaged nature of consumer mass-society that Ellul names as propaganda.

The means of propaganda are not only the unending desire/satisfaction

forms of legitimated force (often in the form of quality control regulation) can be brought against it due to the close sense of commonality that exists between the makers, interpreters and administrators of law and financially powerful corporations.

To sum up the bad news: we are by and large willing partners in the spiritual bondage of consumer culture. The idea that we as citizens have any real ability to seriously affect the entrenched structures of power under which we live is, alas, laughable. Civic politics is dead.

To the good news. Firstly, apart from the invention of some amazing new technological means, there is nothing distinctly new about our political situation as Citizens of the City of God who live in the City of Man. The powers have always stood over the ordinary people and the real means of political reform have always been outside of the overt and established powers. As C.S Lewis explains, Christians who have their own accountability to Heaven in

“ POLITICIANS HAVE BECOME THE ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT CLASS OF AUST. INC...”

priming of advertising and the escapist fantasies and distractions of our enormous sports and entertainment industries, but equally the carefully scripted agendas of the news, the conformist agendas of mass education, and the range of expert opinions that find their voice in our public forums. Further, so pervasive and effective is this propaganda that we are functionally entirely unaware of it. We are unaware of the real powers that govern our lives and we are unaware of the power alliances between the vested financial interests of what Adorno calls the culture industry and the very structures of political possibility within consumer society.

What this means for politics is that any serious moral, spiritual or political threat to the status quo can be easily compromised by incorporating it into the mainstream of power, or it can be de-politicised by excluding it from the mainstream of power; or various

mind are most effective in changing Earth. To be in the world but not of the world – and thus a catalyst for change in the world – requires inward reformation in the Christian first, and reform in the way in which Christians live together (the church) rather than socio-political reforms, new parties or better campaigns etc. So, if we can repent, because we are salt without savour and have our light under our discretely religious bucket, then the most staggering disruptive power for change can be released into the world – the active Christian community guided by the fear of God and enlivened by the very Breath of God. This is what our politics really needs in Australia.

PAUL TYSON

Australian Catholic University, Brisbane School of Theology and Philosophy.

THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN A POST CHRISTIAN WEST



Peter Corney

More people attend an AFL round on a weekend in Melbourne than the combined membership of all Australian political parties. In the 90's ALP membership was around 50,000. It is now about 30,000 and still falling, and in the last national party elections only 12,000 voted. A similar pattern affects the Liberal party. The late Don Chipp's Democrats, that began as a high member participation party, is now a tiny shadow of its former self.

Some people say that the greatest threat to democracy today is voter indifference and cynicism with politics and politicians.

This year a Lowy Institute survey on Australian attitudes to democracy found that 60% preferred democracy to any other form of government. But most disturbing was that out of 18-35 year olds only 39% answered yes to that question and 15% said 'It doesn't matter what kind of government we have'. Currently it is estimated that about 1.4 million young Australians eligible to vote have not registered.

Our English word 'democracy' comes from a Greek word meaning 'the rule of the people', from *demos* = people and *kratos* = power – 'the power of the people'. Well, if that is how we are to define it then we might be in trouble because the people are switched off, or in the case of party members, 'ticked off' by being shut out of the political process by an increasingly professionalised and remote party machine.

Commentators point to other issues like:

- The over-influence of the media and the relentless reporting cycle that politicians seem to allow to control them, and the media focus on the internal political personality conflict rather than policy – politics as entertainment rather than real debate over ideas and vision.
- The obsession with minority issues and special interest groups that affect only a tiny proportion of the electorate.
- The tendency of governments to attempt to intrude further and further into areas like freedom of speech.

- The creeping surveillance and data collection culture that threatens our privacy and freedom.

These are all important issues but I have chosen to focus in this lecture on three critical threats to modern liberal democracy today:

1. The diminishing influence of Christianity in the West and the rise of an aggressive secularism.
2. The growth of hyper individualism and the new understanding of freedom.
3. The threat to democracy from religious extremism.

The first threat comes from the diminishing influence of Christianity in the West and the growth of an aggressive secularism that believes that it alone has the right to occupy the public square.

Almost everyone knows Lincoln's description of democracy that was part of his famous Gettysburg speech on November 19th 1863: 'Government of the people, by the people, for the people'.

But where did that phrase come from? Did it originate in Lincoln's mind? Well, No! Thirteen years before Gettysburg it was used in a speech by the Rev. Theodore Parker at an anti-slavery convention in Boston. In his speech 'The Idea of Democracy' urging Americans to abolish slavery, Parker described democracy and freedom in these words:

'A democracy, that is a government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people... a government after the principles of eternal justice, the unchanging law of God.... I will call it the idea of freedom.'

But where did Parker get it from? Surprisingly the first occurrence of this phrase is found in the preface by John Purvey to the first English translation of the Bible by John Wycliffe in 1384. It says: 'The Bible is for the government of the people, by the people, and for the people.'

Now I mention this obscure bit of history to illustrate how powerful the influence of Christianity and the Bible has been on the development of Western liberal democracy.

The quote from the preface to Wycliffe's Bible also illustrates the inextricable link between democracy and freedom and the part that the Reformation and Protestant ideas played. Wycliffe is known as 'the morning star of the reformation' and, like Martin Luther who translated the Bible into common German, they were concerned to make the Bible accessible to ordinary people so that they would be free to make their own judgements that were neither filtered by authoritarian Popes nor controlled by priestly mystification. This thread of influence weaves its way through the development of democracy.

In the long struggle for democracy and its evolution in England from Magna Carta on, Christians and biblical ideas played a key role. For example; the key idea that God has established the state as a delegated authority, not as an autonomous power above God's law. Laws made by the State should not contradict God's law. English jurists from Bracton (1210–1268), to Edward Coke (1552–1634) and William Blackstone (1723–1870) repeated and upheld this idea. This concept lies behind the trial of King Charles I for 'crimes against the people of England' by

the English Parliament in 1649. He was the first European monarch to be tried and sentenced in such a way. Even the King is not above the law. This is the principle on which the International court of Justice in The Hague now operates in judging crimes like genocide by leaders of states, as Geoffrey Robertson's *Tyrannicide Briefs* shows.

During the 16th and 17th centuries and the formation of the English Parliament and the Commonwealth, the Puritans were a driving force. They sought to model their ideas about community and government on the Bible. Puritan scholar, James Harrington, developed a concept of republican government with popular ownership of land based on Israel's God-given agrarian land laws (*Commonwealth of Oceana*, 1656). They were greatly influenced by NT ideas that all Christians are one in Christ and all people equal before the Cross and God's grace. Radical elements like the 'Levellers' challenged the whole aristocratic arrangement of inherited land and privilege. They were heavily persecuted for their ideas. All the Protestant Dissenter's Confessions of faith in the 17th C. contain strong statements about freedom of conscience and the moral limits of the State to compel people in matters of faith and belief.

These ideas were then transported to America with the Pilgrim Fathers and the first English settlers who were seeking religious and political freedom and were foundational in the new political experiment in the new world.

Tom Paine (1737–1809), who wrote *The Rights of Man* and greatly influenced American democracy and human rights thinking, began his public life as a Methodist lay preacher in England in the 1760s. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the beginnings of organised labour, the early union movement and workers' rights were dominated by Methodism and people affected by the Evangelical Revival in England, as E. M. Howse, *Saints in Politics* (1976) shows.

Human rights are intimately connected with democratic values and Christians have been closely involved in their development and codification from the very beginning. Key figures in this process like the anti-slavery campaigners – Thomas Clarkson, William Wilberforce and the French Huguenot and Quaker Anthony Benezet – were all motivated by their Christian faith (A. C. Grayling, *Towards the Light*, Ch. 5).

The first country to give women the vote was New Zealand, closely followed by the state of South Australia. In both cases Christian women's organisations like 'The Woman's Christian Temperance Union' were a driving force.

So from these few brief highlights we can see the profound influence of Christian and biblical ideas on freedom and democracy. The key point here is that **democracy in the modern sense has a cultural foundation** and that foundation is constructed from Christian ideas and values, particularly the value and freedom of every person because they are made in the image of God.

I said earlier that freedom and democracy are intimately connected but as the framers of the American Constitution stressed 'freedom requires virtue and virtue requires faith'. It is striking in their writings and speeches to see how clearly they understood this. While many were Christians, others were Deists and free thinkers, but they all understood the essential connection between freedom, virtue and faith. Let me give you just three quotations from the many I could have quoted:

'Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom.'
(Benjamin Franklin)

'To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people is a fantasy.' (James Madison)

'It is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand. The only foundation of a free constitution is pure virtue.'
(John Adams)

The social and cultural critic Os Guinness has recently published a new book provocatively titled *A Free People's Suicide – Sustainable Freedom and the American Future*. He makes the point that while freedom can be a long and tough struggle to achieve, sustaining freedom is an even greater challenge because freedom is its own worst enemy. When freedom becomes unmoored from virtue and faith it tends towards license and undermines liberty. We begin to believe that whatever lifestyle we desire we can choose without any cost. Inevitably we begin to impinge on the freedom of others as we lose our sense of obligation to the common good. He writes:

'only those who can govern themselves as individuals can govern themselves as a people. As for an athlete or dancer, freedom for a citizen is the gift of self-control; training and discipline not self-indulgence. The laws of the land may provide external restraints on behaviour, but the secret of freedom is what Lord Moulton called 'obedience to the unenforceable', which is a matter of virtue, which in turn is a matter of faith. Faith and virtue are therefore indispensable to freedom' (106).

This is a most perceptive insight.

The Classical virtues are: Temperance, Prudence (Wisdom), Courage and Justice; the Christian virtues are: Faith, Hope and Love.

But these virtues can only be sustained by belief in and a commitment to a source of transcendent values. Hence the formula 'Freedom requires virtue and virtue requires faith'.

It is no accident therefore that the two outstanding English-speaking examples of modern liberal democracy are Great Britain and the United States, both profoundly influenced by the Christian faith and world view incorporating the classical virtues. In the case of the British example it has now been successfully adopted by Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and a large number of countries in the Commonwealth, including the largest democracy in the world, India. (Japanese and Korean democracies were the gifts of America.)

To dismiss this influence on world democracy on the grounds of personal or ideological prejudice towards the Christian faith, as many aggressive secularists do, is to say the least, curious. But to ignore it as a result of historical amnesia is just irresponsible. To fail to ensure that this history is taught in our educational institutions is to fail to nurture and sustain the foundations of our culture and identity and to sustain our democracy.

The second threat is from the growth of hyper individualism and the redefining of freedom.

Democracy, like community, requires the commitment of its individual members to the common good if it is to

flourish. Indeed democracy is a form of community. It can only remain healthy if its members have a sense of obligation and duty to the good of others. Rights must be accompanied by responsibilities.

In Pre-Modern traditional societies the good, and the authority of, the community are placed above those of the individual and their rights; conformity is required, often in ways that are oppressive of individual freedom.

In Modern societies the rights of the individual are more strongly asserted and a balance or accommodation is sought with the authority and good of the community. This is Thomas Hobbes' 'social contract' struck between the state and the individual. Many of our current public debates arise from this tension, like the issue of freedom of speech.

In contemporary Post-Modern society the emphasis on the individual's freedom and rights has now overbalanced so far towards personal autonomy that obligation, duty, commitment to the family, the community and the greater common good is falling away. This is 'hyper individualism.'

In the recent *Quarterly Essay*, 'Not Dead Yet – Labor's post-left future', apart from the occasional undisciplined comment, Mark Latham has produced a very insightful essay into not only the future of the ALP, but Australian politics in general. He argues that liberal democracy with its emphasis on individual rights worked much better in the early 20th century when citizens were tied together morally much more strongly by tradition, common culture, religion, family and locality. But such a society has now passed. He writes:

'This is the price of modernity: instead of being heavily inculcated in traditional social norms, our obligations have become optional. The challenge for progressive government is to maintain the benefits of pluralism and personal freedom while encouraging solidarity among its citizens... Rights alone are not sufficient to create a good society. Having the right to do something does not always make it the right thing to do. More is needed: a collective recognition of right and wrong.' (61-62)

This is not an entirely surprising view from the Left for those who know its history, as in Alan Wilkinson's *Christian Socialism – Scott Holland to Tony Blair* (SCM, 1998). The 'ethical left' in English and Australian politics was heavily influenced by the early English Christian Socialists.

In this process of social change another critical shift has taken place: the idea of freedom has been unconsciously redefined.

The new Post-Modern view of freedom is located in the idea of the right of the individual to unhindered power of spontaneous choice. On this view an act is free when it is in defiance of any restrictions, even of any objective values or duties. The only absolute, Nietzsche said in *Beyond Good and Evil*, is 'the triumph of the will'. Once freedom in this sense becomes an absolute we arrive at the tyranny of the individual – this is 'hyper individualism'.

This expresses itself trivially in the social media by unpleasant people who feel it is their right to say whatever they like and express however they feel without concern for others' feelings.

At the most destructive end of the spectrum it reveals itself in the desertion of family and community. As Larissa

MacFarquhar puts it (*The Age Good Weekend*, 11/8/12):

'This kind of freedom is really just abandonment. You might start by throwing off religion, then your parents, your town, your people and way of life, and when later on, you leave your partner and your child too, it seems like a natural progression.'

I argued earlier that freedom requires virtue or it descends into selfish individualism or moral license. But virtue cannot stand alone in its task of guiding freedom. Virtue requires faith if it is to be strong enough to resist our selfishness. It requires a foundation in a transcendent moral source beyond ourselves.

Until recent times the Western idea of freedom was greatly influenced by Christianity. In Christian thought freedom is about becoming free from the negative and selfish aspects of my nature so I might become what I was created for – to love and serve God and others. The model was the self-giving of Jesus in the sacrificial act of servanthood; 'I have not come to be served but to serve and to give myself as a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45).

This idea also drove Christians to work for the social and political freedom of oppressed people so that they also could become what God had made them to be. This is why Christians have so often been at the fore-front of human rights movements. But once this core idea is lost, freedom's end becomes fixed on the self, the individual, my rights, my choice and my freedom from any restrictions on those choices, including any transcendent or objective values; there are now no limits to my freedom.

So duty to others, to the community, to family, to service, to kindness and respect for others falls away. People are then trapped in a destructive narcissism, imprisoned in the service of the self. The positive side of Enlightenment liberal thinking about human rights and freedoms is corrupted into a culture of entitlement, ugly selfishness and hyper individualism. 'They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for people are slaves to whatever masters them' (2 Peter 2:19).

These attitudes fundamentally weaken democracy. The positive 'power of the people' rests on a virtuous vision and that rests on faith. This can only be renewed in Western culture by a return to its Christian roots.

The third threat comes from religious extremism. National and cultural identity and forms of government have historically been inextricably bound up with religion.

Europe, North America and Australia have been shaped by Protestant and Catholic Christianity. After the collapse of the Christian Byzantine Empire the lands of the Middle East were reshaped by Islam. India has been shaped by Hinduism and Buddhism and so on.

For centuries these cultures were separated by distance, geography and limited communications but they now live in a very different world. Our world has shrunk through globalisation, large people movements and modern communications. As a result, the old cultural boundaries have become porous or weakened and in some cases broken down altogether. Very different cultures, religions and world views now find themselves living together. Almost all the great cities of the world are now multicultural. One of the results of this is a growing sense

of confusion and anxiety about our identity. Assumptions about values, beliefs, rights and forms of governance are challenged.

Xenophobia (the fear of difference), and racism (the sense of racial superiority) have been with us ever since the Fall and the Tower of Babel. But these human weaknesses are exaggerated by the current changes we are experiencing.

One of the most dangerous developments of our current situation is the growth of religious extremism and ultra-Nationalism. Some examples:

1. Old Europeans feel threatened by large numbers of Islamic immigrants to their countries. Right wing nationalism marries religious extremism and feeds anxiety and fear. Add economic difficulties and high unemployment and you have a volatile cocktail.
2. In the same way traditional and conservative Islamic countries feel threatened by modernity, by what they perceive to be the West's permissive and corrupt lifestyle, and its economic and military power. Fundamentalist and Radical Islam grows rapidly in this soil.
3. The rapid growth of Hindu nationalism in India represented by the BJP party threatens to distort democratic politics and religious tolerance. There are regular attacks on religious minorities in India.

There is a long and depressing history of Nationalism in its extreme form seducing religion to its cause. This is a great danger to modern liberal democracy. In the tragic story of ethnic cleansing in the recent conflict in the Balkans in the 1990s, the ambitions of Serbian nationalism were supported by elements of the Serbian Orthodox Church. This conflict is built on historical tensions between Islam and Christianity going back to the Islamic invasions of the 17th century. The emergence of fascism in Europe in the 1930s that led to the rise of the extreme nationalism of Hitler and the Nazis, Franco's Spain and Mussolini's Italy, was supported by parts of the Christian Church. In Hitler's case he managed to recruit the German Lutheran Church to bless what was really his Pagan cause. Only the courageous minority Confessing Church formed by Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer stood against Hitler.

Many wars have been fought under the false flag of religion. A tragic example is the Thirty Years War that devastated Europe from 1618–48. It is often explained as a Protestant versus Catholic conflict, but in fact the underlying force was the emergence in Europe of the ambitions for independence and power of the sovereign Nation state. Catholic France, with its messianic pretensions, actually made alliances with Protestant armies to defeat and ruin Austria and defeat Spain, both Catholic countries. The Treaty of Westphalia that ended the conflict in 1648 created the idea of independent national sovereignty as the basis of modern Europe. Some historians believe that it also paved the way for the national ambitions and power conflicts of the 19th and 20th centuries – it certainly didn't solve them (David Goldman, *How Civilizations Die*, 2011, Ch. 11). Whatever the weaknesses of the current EU, it is at least an attempt to create a unity against old temptations to national pride and megalomania.

Underlying extreme nationalism is the ancient pagan

and tribal marriage of 'blood and soil' – the linking of race and land in a kind of exclusive covenant of difference and superiority. Christianity challenged this with its doctrine of all nations and tribes being one in Christ. The great prophetic visions of the Bible speak of a day when every tribe and nation will be united and living in peace, where, in the words of Isaiah 'they will beat their swords into ploughshares' (Isaiah 2:4). The UN headquarters in New York has a courtyard garden with a powerful bronze sculpture of a man beating a sword into a ploughshare. The Biblical dream is of the Tower of Babel's confusion being transformed into unity and peace on the Mountain of the Lord (Micah 4:1-4).

The Thirty Years War broke the influence of that unfulfilled Christian dream in Europe, although it did not entirely snuff it out. In a sense the EU and the UN, for all their weaknesses, are reflections of that dream.

We cannot turn the clock back on globalisation and multiculturalism. To support liberal democracy and to make it work in this context we need to do the following five things:

1. We need the commitment and cooperation of faith communities who support liberal democratic values and who understand that it is not necessary to have a state sponsored religion or church to preserve these values. And of course we need religious freedom.
2. We need a consensus and acknowledgement from the general community about the importance of religious faith in the sustaining of democratic values and the virtues that make them work. Aggressive secularists need to understand and accept that the overwhelming majority of people in the world have strong religious attachments and commitments and have a rightful place in the public square. Globally secularists are in fact the minority.
3. In my personal experience of working with refugees it has become very clear that democratic governments need to take far more seriously and intentionally the process of integration and the education of new settlers. People from very different cultures and value systems who have almost no experience of democratic values and governance need special assistance. As I mentioned earlier, education in democratic values and the history of their development should also be a compulsory part of the general school curriculum.
4. We also need to begin an open public conversation about our current problems in this area. When new settlers fail to adapt to or embrace democratic values and become isolated cultural islands, or their young people are marginalised by poor education, discrimination and unemployment, serious social problems emerge. For example: If the new settlers come from a Pre-Modern culture, as they engage with modernity in the new culture, the gap between young people and their parents' traditional values grows to a chasm and the parents lose control. The young person's identity becomes confused; they then become vulnerable to extreme religious voices as well as petty crime, drugs and street violence. The internet provides all the radical resources they need to forge a new identity that seems empowering. This can also be exacerbated by the xenophobia, fear and right-wing

extremism they may find in the host culture.

In March this year the UK scholar and member of the UN's special committee on intercultural engagement, Dr Aftab Malik, spent a month in Sydney's Lakemba community which has the highest concentration of Islamic people in Australia. He reported that the identity crisis for young Muslims in Australia is a 'growing disease'. He urged us to begin a public discussion of these issues. He said: 'Unfortunately for British Muslims it took a terrorist attack for us to have that discussion... You need to pre-empt this. Don't wait till something tragic happens' (*Weekend Australian*, 13-14/4/13).

5. Multiculturalism is an important part of modern democracy, but its definition and limits have sometimes been subject to naïve views and overly influenced by the philosophy of 'cultural relativism', a view that ignores the reality that *every culture* has some features that are destructive and morally wrong. Our naiveté in Australia is partly due to the success we have had with our post WW2 immigration and the cultural enrichment it has brought. But we forget that almost all of those immigrants were from Europe with a similar world view, religion and culture to Australia. The second wave after the Vietnam War was also a success as the Vietnamese immigrants were fleeing communism and enthusiastically embraced our democratic values.

As Christianity continues to make the sometimes painful journey from the Pre-Modern to the modern world, it continues to negotiate and adapt its relationship with the State. From its beginning as a persecuted minority, to controlling Europe's Holy Roman Empire, to a separation of Church and State in some Western nations, to conflict with totalitarian states like the former Soviet Union, to embracing representative democracy today, the relationship continues to change. Christianity has at times, in disobedience to the clear teaching of Jesus and the New Testament, descended into the use of force to forward its mission and discipline its members. It has at times persecuted minorities. It has at times confused the Kingdom of God with the Church or the kingdoms of this world. It has had to adapt to scientific and biblical criticism, to secularism, philosophical materialism and now to consumerism and aggressive atheism. Therefore Christians, as a result of their sins, mistakes and successes, have much to bring to the conversation that other religions and cultures need to have with the Enlightenment, modernity and liberal democratic values. Indeed there are some sections of the Christian community who are still to make that journey! Extreme Christian fundamentalism is alive and well in many places and sadly does not cope well with the challenges we are facing. They are unfortunately well represented in many far right causes. Some sections of the Christian community are still hoping for a return to Christendom.

Of course for us all it is a continuing journey as our society changes. Maintaining an intelligent and relevant orthodoxy and holding on to the core beliefs and values of the Christian faith in a rapidly changing culture is a challenge but we must not shrink from it otherwise we concede the ground to secularism, extremism or authoritarianism.

CONCLUSION

Christianity has many unique and rich things to bring to the process of sustaining democracy:

- (a) Our past and present experience in responding to the challenges of the Enlightenment and modernity. This should equip us in our conversations with some other faiths which are yet to constructively respond to these challenges.
- (b) A long history of involvement in the struggle for freedom and human rights.
- (c) Our theological commitment to the following core ideas that are a great underpinning for democracy:
 - The primacy of love. 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart ... and your neighbour as yourself'; 'Love your enemies'; 'Whoever loves God has fulfilled the law.' 'God is love. Those who live in love live in God and God in them' (Mathew 5: 44; Romans 13:8-10; I John 4:7-12).
 - The key doctrines of grace and forgiveness commit us to reconciliation with all.
 - The infinite value of every person made in God's image, and because God in Christ took on human flesh. This value propels us to champion human rights and protect the sacredness of every individual.
 - The community of equality. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28).
 - An international community that embraces all races – we are saved by grace not race. We have no sacred language; everyone prays in their own heart language, and we are committed to the provision of the Bible in every person's language.
 - Servanthood, following the example of Jesus, is our goal.
 - The three great Christian virtues of 'faith hope and love' (1 Cor 13).

These ideas and commitments fit us most aptly to be in the vanguard of actions to forward and sustain democracy's cause.

Yet all of us need to ask ourselves the following questions: (i) Is my current engagement with the democratic process sufficient to claim my rights as a citizen? (ii) How can I be more engaged at a level appropriate to my abilities and stage of life? (iii) As a Christian how can I apply the core Christian values listed above to the various activities and involvements of my daily life, especially where I might be involved in decisions that affect professional or business standards, public policy and social structures? (iv) Given that the foundation of my life is my relationship with God in Christ how can I bring prayer to bear on this task?

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WHY DO SOME CHRISTIANS VOTE GREEN?

JIM REIHER

If you ask different Christians that question, you will get all sorts of different answers. They will range from: 'Because they are of the devil!' or 'Because they don't know their Bible!' to: 'Because they realise that Christ stood with the poor and the marginalised and the Greens party does that best of any of them' or 'because that is the party Jesus would vote for!'

The reality is that there are a large number of Christians who *do* vote for that party, and the number seems to be increasing.

For those who can't, or won't, even entertain the possibility, such voting behaviour is insane. After all the Greens support gay marriage! They supported the decriminalisation of abortion.¹ What's more, the Greens even support a very limited form of euthanasia! They ... they ... even want to give drugs to children!

Well, other than the drugs to children statement above, (it is scandalous to suggest that²) they do support those positions on those moral issues.

And yet some Christians still vote Green. This article

will explain why.

There are actually a few different kinds of Christians who vote Green. They don't all think the same way and they don't all have the same motivation for voting Green. Let me describe to you three different kinds of Christ-followers who vote Green.

THE FIRST KIND:

those whose priorities are social justice and environmental care.
Not personal moral issues.

This group will tell you that for them issues of social justice and creation care are much more important than issues like gay marriage, euthanasia, and other personal moral issues.

These Christians appreciate that other more traditional Christians don't necessarily have the same

priorities as they themselves have, and they accept that. They don't agree, but they realise that happens between different Christians. Sadly, they are often not extended the same grace back.

These Greens voters cannot agree that: unjust wars, abuse towards refugees; materialism; environmental destruction; species being made extinct; greed; political deceit; indifference to climate change; indifference towards the world's poor; and more... are all tolerated by fellow Christians, so long as gays are not allowed to marry! For *this* group of Christians who vote Green, it is the other way around. Different views on some personal moral issues are tolerated and those other issues are deemed to be the more important ones. Those more important issues determine their vote.

This kind of person will also argue that every party has problem areas for the Christian to have to tolerate. No party fully reflects all that we believe in personally. (Not even the Christian parties). Once you are in a group of more than one, you have to bend and you don't always get your way. If that is so, you have to choose which things are the most important and which come in second place.

It will be pointed out that the Liberal party pampers the wealthy with ridiculous tax lurks and breaks, so that the very rich pay less tax than the average middle class worker. Mr Abbott has said that he will cut the superannuation tax benefits offered to the three million

vote for the coalition. How can they be so blinkered? Jesus had so much to say about helping the poor and not accumulating wealth for oneself. But instead, the conservative Christian will get all upset about the sex lives of individuals that are not hurting anyone else and is a decision made between consenting adults (I am thinking of the gay marriage issue here) but they don't get upset at the unjust distribution of the common-wealth of the nation.

The Christians who vote Green will go on and add that the Coalition is quite ruthless and cruel towards asylum seekers and our Indigenous people. 'Turn the boats back!' Really? Those frail shipping boats that are already leaking and look like a heavy storm will overturn them? Or keep them locked up off-shore, for years on end, women and children included, creating future mental illness and psychiatric problems for already traumatised people fleeing wars, persecution, or natural disasters? And yet some Christians shrug their shoulders and mouth off platitudes about border protection and think 'at least gays can't marry!' as if *that* trade-off somehow justifies it, or excuses it.

Labor does not get off the hook when it comes to asylum seekers, either. They have proven to be just as bad. The race to the bottom has well and truly happened and the bottom of the barrel now has a hole in it and they are digging into the earth beneath it: *both* major parties.

JESUS HAD SO MUCH TO SAY ABOUT HELPING THE POOR AND NOT ACCUMULATING WEALTH FOR ONESELF. BUT INSTEAD, THE CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN WILL GET ALL UPSET ABOUT THE SEX LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS...

lowest paid workers in Australia, but he does not agree with cutting the tax benefits that the most wealthy Australians get when they put money into super. Trust funds, superannuation perks and tax incentives, and more, all help the wealthy to keep accumulating more and more of the common 'pie', and the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen. Furthermore, the rich send their children to elite private schools that get a disproportionately large slice of the education budget.

For some Christians, perpetuating these social injustices is seen as deeply wrong – certainly more wrong than two individuals of the same gender who want to marry.

And the great irony is that how money is shared in a community is of course a moral issue too. It is one that affects the whole community. If the government forgoes \$40 billion a year because of the tax lurks built into the superannuation structures of the nation, that is \$40 billion that is not going into hospitals, schools, prisons, work with the Indigenous, and more. If \$2 billion is given away each year to people with private health insurance, as incentive for them to be privately insured so as to prop up the private health industry, that is \$2 billion less that can be spent on public hospitals that care for the poor and less well-off in the community.

And despite all the above, none of what has just been outlined is seen as important by the Christians who

Are these not moral issues that should upset Christian voters?

It is pretty clear that some Christians who think on these things will decide to vote Green. It is all about priorities. And so these people are simply asking us: What issues are the most important that drive you to vote the way you do?

THE SECOND KIND:

those who believe that the Green's position on those controversial moral issues is actually consistent with Jesus and the Christian faith.

This group don't vote Green *despite* their stand on (say) gay marriage, but actually *because* of their stand. They agree with it.

This group of Christians have come to a conclusion that they are meant to demonstrate the love of Christ to the marginalised and oppressed. For them, that means giving people equal rights even if they are different to themselves.

Bad democracies are places where the majority rules and minorities feel unsafe or discriminated against. Good democracies are places where the majority rules and

minorities are treated equally and feel a welcome part of the community.

This group of Green-voting Christians don't have to say 'well my priorities are such that the issues that drive my vote are social justice issues and environment issues, war as a last resort, and refugee and asylum seeker issues specifically – and I put up with some things I know are wrong.' No. This group genuinely does not see those 'some things' as wrong.

This group of Greens voters have put in some time and effort into exploring the theological and Biblical debate behind the gay issue, for example, and they have concluded differently to others. They have been persuaded by the arguments that say the half a dozen texts in the Bible that list homosexuality as sin, are talking about perverted sexual behaviour: that is, gay sex that is lustful or promiscuous. The scripture condemns heterosexual sex that is lustful or promiscuous, and yet faithful expressions of heterosexual sex are acceptable. Likewise this group of Christians are convinced that the texts concerned are about deviant sexual activity, not loving faithful relationships of mutual commitment for life.

You may or may not agree with their conclusions. You may or may not be willing to read the Christian theologians who write the articles that unpack each of the texts and offer that different position. Or you may have read the material and still disagree. But what we have here are some Christian heterosexuals (usually) agreeing that not all forms of homosexuality are wrong.

Such Christians are then able more easily and with a clear conscience (Romans 14:22) to support policies like gay marriage. And vote Green.

THE THIRD KIND:

Those who don't believe in telling non-Christians how to live.

A third group of Greens voting Christians might fall into either one or two above, but they don't start from that base. People in either of the above two groups might have as their starting point the following:

It is important to remember that we are living in a multifaith multicultural, pluralist society. We have to make decisions about how we will live. We choose to follow our understanding and interpretation of scripture, and that might mean we don't believe in euthanasia or gay marriage. It might. (It might not). But whether we fall into pro- or anti- on those issues, it is all about *how I live in my relationship with God*. This group of Christians say that it is quite a different thing and a wrong assumption to think we can use power and domination to make non-Christians live the way we try to. Rather, we are called to be holy and live exemplary lives, but we are not told to *make unbelievers* live the same way by force or threat of punishment.

I Cor 5:12 (see all of 9-13) is used to support such a distinction: 'For what have I to do with judging outsiders?' Paul in the passage is calling on Christians to live holy lives before God, and Paul exhorts and instructs and teaches Christians how to do that – but he makes it very

clear that it is not his mandate to try to judge those outside the church or make them just like us *before they chose to convert*.

So you and I will make decisions about how we think God wants us to live. We apply those beliefs to our own lives. *But* we do not pursue power and domination to force others to live that way. It goes completely contrary to Jesus when he said 'You know that those who are recognised as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be the slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Mark: 10:42-45). Indeed, if anyone enters politics, this group of Christians argues that it is for the key purpose of serving others, not dominating over them. Service is the primary objective.

On the basis of such scriptures and principles and concepts, this group of Christians will vote Green because they see that party as the one that seeks to treat all people equally and with respect and dignity, the party that looks after minority groups and all individuals no matter who they are or what their worldview is. There will still be some things that the whole community deems to be punishable by jail or fines, (crimes against children, for example) but they won't interfere in areas that the community no longer feels are the domain of government to interfere in or punish. Instead they will support policies and practices that treat all people equally and with dignity.

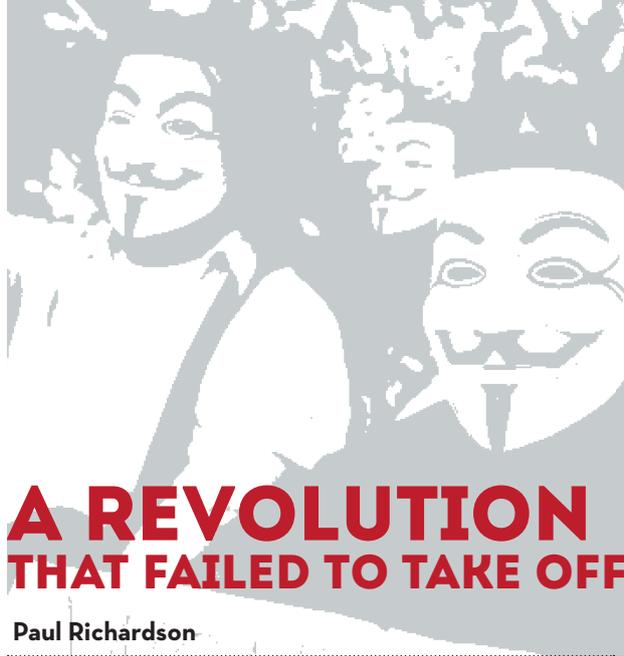
In conclusion, whatever you think personally, it is certainly time we stopped treating Greens voters as if they are evil. They are often caring and thoughtful people. You may or may not like their stand on certain issues. You may or may not like their rationale. But it is time to stop judging them and condemning them, and instead, extend to them the same grace you expect to be shown to yourself.

JIM REIHER

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ENDNOTES:

1. Have you noticed that even with control of both houses of State Parliament, the Coalition has not recriminalised abortion? They could. There is no other party able to block it. But they don't. Liberal-supporting Christians need to be honest about this. The Liberals in coalition won't recriminalise abortion. They have not done so in the three years they have had with full control of both houses in Victoria. You know why they don't do that? They actually support the decriminalised position, as does Labor. They *all* know that criminalisation never stopped abortions.
2. The Greens drug policy wants to help people stay alive, not overdose, and eventually get off drugs and have a healthy life. It absolutely does not want to give drugs to children. Some Christians might disagree with the harm minimisation approach of the Greens party for helping keep people alive and helping them get off drug dependency over the long term, but to suggest that the Greens party wants people using drugs is utterly misrepresenting their policy.



A REVOLUTION THAT FAILED TO TAKE OFF

Paul Richardson

A JP Taylor described the revolutions of 1848 as a turning point when history failed to turn. Starting with the Tunisian revolution of 2010, the world has been living through a new period of revolutions, but few feel optimistic about the results. The Muslim Brotherhood has proved incompetent at running Egypt and the economy is in ruins. In Tunisia, where hopes of a democratic future were once high, Islamist extremists are gaining influence. Libya's interim government continues to battle with militia. Elections are due this year and a constitution is to be put to the voters but the future is uncertain. Syria's rebel forces are split and the longer Assad clings on to power, the greater the danger of extremists eventually taking control.

But revolutions were not confined to the Middle East. The example of Tahrir Square provoked the Occupy Movement and other protests against capitalism, Europe and the US. A slogan of the American protesters caught on elsewhere: it was the 99 per cent against the one per cent. It is still too early to draw final conclusions about the revolutions that opened the second decade of the 21st century but some tentative points can be made.

There can be little doubt that all of the revolutions were aided by the power of the social media. Manuel Castells, the man who first emphasised the importance of the network society, has made this argument in his book *Networks of Outrage and Hope*. He sees significance in the fact that the Arab protests began in Tunisia, a country that has the highest rates of Internet and mobile phone penetration in the Middle East. He is surely right to argue the combination of high rates of unemployment among college graduates and a strong cyber culture is fertile soil for revolution.

Although some predicted discontent would spread to China, it never really did, partly because the Chinese government keeps a tight control of social networks. But local protests are growing in number in China and maintaining total surveillance of the Internet is not easy. What will be decisive is whether Beijing can continue to achieve high levels of economic growth.

Egypt's government attempted a total cyber blackout but it had to backtrack because of the economic cost. The Internet facilitates protest but it is also essential for business and trade. The OECD estimated that a five-day Internet shutdown cost Egypt about \$90m in revenue, around three or four per cent of GDP.

While digital communications aid revolution, religious and ethnic divisions impede their progress. The first revolution in Tunisia occurred in a homogeneous society. Egypt and Syria are more divided and the progress of revolution has therefore been more difficult. Although commentators are talking of an Arab Spring turning to winter, there are still some grounds for hope. Under military rule the mosque was the only centre for opposition so it is not surprising that Islamists have come to the fore in many Arab countries, but power is revealing their limitations. The choice in Egypt and elsewhere is going to be whether to return to military rule or to give the liberals a chance. If the liberals can organise, they may yet get their opportunity.

If the revolutionary outcome remains uncertain in the Arab world, the prospects are bleaker in the West. The ground once held by Occupy was taken over by the establishment for Baroness Thatcher's funeral. St Paul's lost its Dean and Giles Fraser shot to media celebrity but it is difficult to see any long-term political results of Occupy.

This teaches an important lesson. Social media may be good at generating protest but it will not produce long-term results unless there is a program for change. Digital revolutions have trouble generating a common policy because they unite too many diverse elements. The social media foster individualism, not genuine community; they can bring people together in a shared space, but they do not necessarily forge a common program. Political parties remain the best instruments for change because they have the mechanism to produce a consensus on policy.

Eric Hobsbawm described the revolutions of 1968 as cultural rather than political. They gave a strong impetus, among other things, to the women's movement and the

“ THE INTERNET FACILITATES PROTEST BUT IT IS ALSO ESSENTIAL FOR BUSINESS AND TRADE. ”

general view is that the left won the cultural wars that followed 1968 but the right won the economic argument. Could the long-term result of the revolutions of 2011 in the West also be cultural?

Most people want to see capitalism reformed, not abolished. Ordinary people suffer far more under the alternative economic systems on offer. But the digital revolution means that people want to have their voices heard. Deference is gone; trust in institutions is at a low ebb. People know they can challenge the establishment by connecting with each other and sharing outrage. Internet use increases a sense of empowerment and autonomy. Surveys show this is particularly true for people on low incomes. Political parties need to reckon with this. The road to political reform still goes through parties but parties need to be connected to a wider network. At the moment the parties are too unrepresentative, made up of members of the same elite. Occupy wasn't just protesting against capitalism. It was also voicing disquiet with the way politics is practised today.

PAUL RICHARDSON

was previously Anglican bishop of Wangaratta Diocese in Victoria. This article was first published in the *Church of England Newspaper* 5/5/13.

ZADOK REVIEWS

Politics with Purpose:

Occasional Observations on Public and Private Life

Lindsay Tanner, Scribe, 2012

Reviewed by Bruce Wearne

In this volume, Lindsay Tanner, former Labor parliamentarian and minister in the Rudd-Gillard governments, has brought together a collection of his speeches and writings. It is an easy-to-read volume providing a witty and reflective account of his views on a wide range of subjects, all with some political significance. They tell us why he got involved in politics and by following his accounts we also discern why he decided not to stand as a Labor candidate for the seat of Melbourne at the 2010 federal election.

The book takes its title in positive contrast with one concluding chapter 'Politics without Purpose', written especially for this volume. It describes Tanner's view of Labor's malaise. The final section, 'Part VII – Labor', contains ten essays that are a timely contribution to the party's reflection on its 'malaise'. The final essay, a five page account of the Rudd Government's successful containment of the Global Financial Crisis in 2007-8, also tells us Tanner's view of why the Labor caucus made a mistake by dumping Rudd to replace him with Australia's first female Prime Minister.

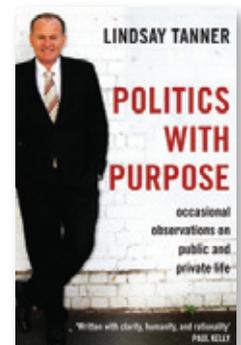
Before we consider Tanner's view of Labor's current predicament – which I suspect will be what occupies the minds of most of the book's readers – we should first note the way he values and relativises what we call politics. His 'relativisation of politics' is present in his more political essays but it is confirmed by his willingness to reflect on all kinds of social things that are important to his readers whether football, the problems of young males, the monarchy or bigotry. These too have a political side to them.

For Tanner there is always more to the governance of public life than what one person can achieve by concerted political effort. In his terms, his post-parliamentary public career will be just as purposeful as the 18 years he sat in parliament concerning himself with the business of the Commonwealth. He will be lending his expertise to higher education at Victoria University, to public finance and to making his friendly contribution to the lives of African refugees. For him it takes all kinds

of political contributions to build an open, fair and friendly society. One shouldn't get too obsessed with government decisions and what finally gets funnelled through politicians, parties, and parliamentary debate into legislation. His view seems to be that an advocate of 'politics with purpose' should avoid getting too obsessed about their own public contribution. This could be called the other side, the 'personal' dimension of his political contribution: 'politics without obsessiveness'. At least that is what comes across as a recurrent 'style' or 'theme' in all of these 73 essays, the first of which, 'Labourism's Last Days', was published in June 1990 by *Australian Left Review* (277-282).

First, however, what are we to make of this term 'purpose'? In Tanner's view it seems to have everything to do with a person's motivation but it should not be equated with that in some purely subjective way. 'Politics with purpose' means being and remaining conscious about a movement that is wider than one's own immediate horizons. It is to be part of a critical, progressive, historical movement. And in that respect, to join the Labor Party as one who is committed to a social democratic political vision, means accepting one's own place in that same movement in both historical and global terms. For Tanner, the social democratic movement has to be kept alive, and that was why, years ago, he joined the Party to make his contribution and do what he could to ensure that this be so.

Now at this point we can suggest that for Tanner 'politics with purpose' is not just a nice personal formula that can conveniently adorn one's electoral advertising when soliciting votes from electors. Yes, 'politics with purpose' is what a political party, particularly a social democratic party, should be promoting. But it should also be a matter of living it, not just mouthing it as a cliché. And just as an individual party member should look beyond the personal horizon and get involved in the wider movement, so also the party, through its membership, organisation and educational program, should always be looking beyond itself to the wider movement to which it claims to belong. In these terms, as we shall see, Tanner's vision for Labor's style of party politics is very much about being part of a movement for social justice that is world-wide. The Labor Party should be looking at itself in global terms as part of a world-wide movement and reconfiguring its local contribution with that very much in mind. Hence he concedes that winning elections is important but not all-



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Occasional Observations
on Public and Private Life*

important. If the election result is the purpose of politics then politics has been drastically reduced. He reminds us that the party was built by many who were deeply suspicious about winning elections. For them it was more important to retain their purpose as a party and maintain the vision for a just social democracy.

I guess, however, there will be those reading this book who will find it difficult to see any logical connection between Tanner's affirmation of 'politics with purpose' and his 'early retirement' from the Parliamentary arena. Isn't anyone's career these days a matter of being kept perpetually on their toes ducking 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune'? Well actually, says Tanner, if politics has simply become a venue to work out one's own career then perhaps one has already embraced 'politics without purpose'. Consider his frank assessment.

So what has happened to the Labor Party I knew and loved? Why have things changed so fundamentally?

After escaping the barren world of permanent opposition, we have slowly drifted to the opposite extreme. In the old days, winning elections didn't matter. Now, nothing else matters. Noble idealists tilting at windmills have been replaced by cynical manipulators massaging polls and focus groups. Historically, Labor has been a fluid amalgam of ideals and interests, sometimes narrow and particular, other times broad and general. Both have long since been swamped by careerism. Too many leading figures in the party are now so unfamiliar with the idea of the public interest that they don't even bother to ask themselves where it lies ('Politics without Purpose', 2012, 334).

Tanner as a government minister may have had to support some policies that left him and his party susceptible to the criticism that their 'third way' was simply a matter of adapting socialist rhetoric to neo-liberal economics. But he has a very clear idea of why he called it a day. The careerism which says 'you can do anything you want with your life' (my phrase not Tanner's), the neo-liberal misunderstanding of public service, has now rooted itself too deeply within the Labor Party's *raison d'être*. The Labor Party's self-image, as a party, has been transformed into what is in fact a denial of its true purpose.

The ultimate factor that shapes and sustains the features of a major political movement is

the self-image of those who actively support it. The Labor Party was founded by and is still notionally based on ordinary people who see themselves as workers and whose lives are dominated by their participation as employees in the production process and the various consequences of that involvement ('Labourism's Last Days', 1990, 279).

It's not wrong for a party or a person to have a self-image. Tanner is in favour of developing a positive self-image both in personal and organisational terms. But he is completely opposed to the idea that a party's self-image should be about choosing between alternative narcissisms that will project its own form of arrogance to the electorate. But it is Labor's arrogance, its tendency to talk down to the electorate and its political opponents, that is actually part of its undoing in his terms. He has been active in the Labor Party as one who believes its 'culture and approach is in need of radical overhaul'. And thus his writings document his attempts to apply his own medicine in his own contributions as a parliamentarian.

'Politics with purpose' is therefore joined by themes of 'politics without obsessiveness' on the personal side, and 'politics without arrogance' when dealing with politicians and citizens with whom he politically disagrees. But this does not mean he avoids making sharp criticism of his opponents, or even of those on his own side, when he judges that such criticism is warranted. Of Southampton Solent University's decision to grant an honorary doctorate in business administration to Shane Warne

... the message was clear: higher-learning is all a bit of a laugh, just funny people in funny hats. ... I'm a serious cricket fan, like many other Australians, but I'm even more passionate about learning. When sporting celebrities proudly announce they've never read a book, they're telling young Australians that learning is for nerds ('Labor is for Learning', 307).

Justice is not just a word to be used in courts or in parliament when framing new laws. For Tanner, justice requires him to speak out like this when actions like these mean that something he values is not given its due respect.

In that earlier 1990 piece, Tanner identifies the struggle between 'rationalists' and 'traditionalists' over issues that were already being transformed by 'international forces beyond our control' (278). In itself, that analysis

is interesting and suggests that the new term 'economic rationalism', applied by Paul Keating to the national economic reform, may have arisen from within the Labor Party itself, out of the way in which the contending sides formed their respective understandings of their membership, their respective 'self-images'.

But in that pertinent essay, Tanner's critical view is that what was *then* occupying the party organisation was somewhat 'out-of-synch' with what was happening in the wider world. The 'culture of Labor politics' was losing the common touch, and the union base of the movement was eroding. There was also the danger-sign that party membership was in steep decline. Tanner was then concerned that the major struggle that was preoccupying the party was between options that were not truly relevant.

Inevitably, much of the debate will focus on an apparently immutable status quo or a mythical and glorious past. The real value to be obtained from such a debate, however, is a serious consideration of the future that faces us (282).

The reforms brought in by the Hawke-Keating Governments certainly saw the trade union movement transformed across the country with significant amalgamations. Whatever 'organisational impact assessment' was commissioned by the party machine at the time in the face of these changes to unionism, it does not seem to have led to the kind of rethink that Tanner said was needed.

Does Tanner intend to get involved in local politics and might we see him elected at the third-level of government? The relevance of such a question derives from what he says in 'The Values of Humanity', his maiden speech to the federal parliament, May 6th 1993 (5-14).

[I] desire to see the abolition of state governments... it is critical that we examine these issues while attention is focused on our structure of government.

The States are as much an anachronistic relic of colonial times as are our links with the British Crown... The boundaries of the states have about as much relevance and logic as the boundaries imposed on Africa by the colonial invaders in the 19th century. It is not necessary to be a genius to work out that the Murray River was adopted as a boundary in the days when no one had heard of pollution and it was thought that natural

resources were limited (13).

I guess that in looking back Tanner will be disappointed. There is no evident interest in such a reform to our system of government. We might have occasional 'vision statements' distributed by the Business Council of Australia (14), but what party is going to put its electoral appeal to the test by suggesting the electorate rethink its approach to politics? To Tanner's credit he put such ideas forward in our Federal Parliament. But there was that anti-discussion that took place when we endured the 'republic debate'. There has been a chronic lack of momentum with respect to 'reconciliation'. And the political organisation Tanner believed was best suited to give national leadership on such important topics has found itself hamstrung by its own internal uncertainty about its mission. Hamstrung at its own hand.

But can we push Tanner's analysis a little further to ask a rather critical question: What is the purpose of a political party? Should that question be left to political parties to sort out? Don't we need to develop some clarity about this matter?

From the beginning of his parliamentary career, Tanner showed he was not worried about any electoral fall-out from using the Parliament as a forum for advocating structural reform of our political life. Calling for the abolition of the States from the *Federal* parliament is itself a very provocative political act. After all he had taken his seat via an electoral system that presupposed the federation of states.

The complexities of the distribution of powers between the states and the Commonwealth cause many anomalies and many problems that lead to an inadequate approach by government at large to issues in the community (14).

Yes, and one of the anomalies in our political life is precisely the fact that we can have energetic and visionary political representatives like Lindsay Tanner, putting forward vigorous suggestions like this, and yet, there is no concerted effort either by his own party, or even by his political opponents, or any other prominent party for that matter, to develop the discussion about the long-term political reform that is needed to our system of government. Tanner is right. Political parties are so concerned with their own electoral successes or failures *as parties* that the very political purpose that brought them into

existence has receded from view. Politics is implicitly defined as what politicians do via governments in response to economic and financial demands. In this minimalist view, political parties are simply a means of getting a crop of 'good guys' elected. And to do so they produce sound-biting material that focuses upon the 'others' – 'don't vote for them they're useless'. And hence...

We are slowly transforming from a party of political initiative to a default party, which seeks power on the basis of managerial competence and arbitrating the competing claims of economic and social interest-groups (335).

In the face of Labor's struggle to hold onto 30% of the primary vote, Tanner is plain:

There is only one way to deal with this challenge: a complete root-and-branch rethink about why we exist. What is our purpose? What is it we are seeking to achieve? When our answer to these questions no longer contain the empty shibboleths of a bygone world and vacuous appeals to defeat the conservatives, we'll know we are on the way back. We cannot blame particular individuals for modern Labor's malaise, because it is part of a systemic global phenomenon. We are all under the sway of politics without purpose. And politics without purpose is pointless (338).

I certainly would not chastise Tanner for his open frankness. But his bitter comments directed at The Australian Greens, ('The Greens: ignore at one's peril', 323-325) need to be kept in context by remembering Labor's complete failure during the Howard years to join with the Greens and fight elections on an electoral reform basis. Do not our Parliaments need to more justly represent the wishes of electors? The principle is a simple one but it would mean that our absurd and unbalanced political preference is for a system of public governance in which electoral choices are perpetually reduced to which of two political *machines* will do a better job of financial management. That is simply politics without purpose.

If a party receives 40% of the primary vote shouldn't it get 40% of the seats? Why does a party commanding 30% of the vote get 50% or even 60% of the seats while a party getting 20% gets none? It's quite surprising, when I think about it, how little Tanner discusses the anomalies of our system of parliamentary representation. He may advocate a 'hairychested' overhaul of the federal system

by abolishing the states, but is there no improvement we can make to our electoral system of representative government? Do we have to continue playing what seems to be a silly, childish game in which our parliaments become the servants of political machines that have lost their purpose? Is this not the way in which the purpose of public governance is eventually lost as well?

Tanner's call for 'root-and-branch rethinking' from within the Labor Party is well taken. And I guess that if Labor can get its act together, overcome its comatose state under the régime of managerial careerism, it will surely attract a trickle of new voters. But the real value of this call for 'root-and-branch rethinking' is to be found in its address to fellow citizens who have lost interest in politics, not least because of Labor's entrenched inability to promote serious political reform. The Labor Party should heed Tanner's appeal. Admittedly, the reform of one party commanding 35% of the primary vote might not on its own bring reform to our system of public governance. But the question for those who, with Tanner, hold to a social-democratic vision is this: can they envision serious reform of our system of public governance, the just overhaul of our electoral system of representative government, without their vital contribution?

After reading *Politics with Purpose* we find that Lindsay Tanner has left us with some pertinent political questions, questions without notice.

What is the purpose of the political party? How should we understand the purpose of parliament and of parliamentary representation? And then of course we confront: what is the purpose of public governance? How is the Government and its arms to do its work and what is its purpose?

This book does not answer those questions, at least not directly. Its many chapters give us instances of how this parliamentarian answered those questions in the push-and-pull of everyday political life. It is not a book that develops a systematic political theory although at one point a theory can be discerned in the background of Tanner's reflections. I think that the purpose of the book comes down to encouraging further reflection on basic questions like these. The answers that are developed in response to these questions will then become part of a comprehensive framework for political reflection, action and analysis. I suspect that Lindsay Tanner will be

keen to keep on rethinking his approach and it will be rather interesting to see how his thinking develops. I hope it does.

Bruce Wearne resides in Point Lonsdale from where he forms his contribution to the world-wide renewal of the Christian way of life by means of writing about sociological theory, contributing to political debate, advising students and conversing with the many friendly people he meets along the coast. He is married to Valerie and has two adult sons.

The End of Evangelicalism?

Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission: Towards an Evangelical Political Theology

David E. Fitch: Cascade Books, 2011

Reviewed by Christopher Davey

When Condoleezza Rice became Secretary of State I remember some of my non-Christian colleagues groaning because she was an evangelical, 'another war-monger' they said. While attempts to discuss the negative image of evangelicalism in Australia have been fruitless, this has not been so in the United States. In this book David Fitch takes seriously the assessment of David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons in *unChristian* (Baker Books, 2007) that evangelicals are thought to be 'arrogant, judgmental, duplicitous and dispassionate'. Fitch notes that in the wake of the 'failed Bush presidency', many Christians do not now want to be recognised as evangelical (3).

Fitch rejects the approach of scholars like Wells and Carson who seek to regain a Protestant (reformed) orthodoxy and sets out to examine the way evangelical doctrine and practice have functioned. In an unusual approach he applies the formative political theory of Slavoj Žižek, a Slovenian philosopher and critical theorist working in the traditions of Hegelianism, Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, to analyse evangelicalism and to show that it is an 'empty' politic. The general view seems to be that he actually pulls it off and although his style is inclined to be repetitive, I found myself reading it avidly.

Following the characterisations of evangelicalism by Bebbington and Noll, Fitch discusses 'the inerrant Bible', 'the decision for Christ', and 'the Christian nation', showing that

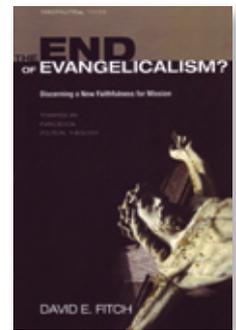
these ideas are 'Master-Signifiers' in Žižek's terminology; that is, slogans of allegiance which are ultimately empty of real meaning. Fitch relies on George Marsden's assessment of the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the 1920s, when 'liberals' came to represent everything that evangelicals opposed, to show these rallying points were adopted at that time. In this antagonistic process evangelicals abandoned the core of their belief and in Fitch's view ceased to stand for anything.

Fitch is basically saying that evangelicals ceased to journey and have become bunkered down defending their meaningless slogans. While I think that he is not right to claim that everyone using an historical-critical biblical exegesis to explore the original intensions of the biblical writers is reflecting a belief in 'the inerrant Bible', most of his assessments do hit their mark. Word studies, after all, were severely constrained by James Barr's *Semantics of Biblical Language* (OUP, 1961).

Having defined the problem, Fitch explores the recovery of 'the core of our politics for mission'. His analysis of the evangelical attitude to scripture draws on Barth, Balthasar, Vanhoozer and Christopher Wright and the salvation discussion examines N.T. Wright, Gorman, Milbank and Willard. His treatment of the national aspects of evangelicalism seems less successful, beginning with the Eucharist-centred theologies of de Lubac and Cavanaugh, but when turning to John Yoder's *Body Politics* (Herald, 1992) he gets back on message. The point being, if God is sovereign, why do Christians need to take control? Fitch is a pastor and sees politics through a 'church meeting' focus; however, it is this custom that has generated many of the evangelical political attitudes that are now so unpopular. He does not explain the practicalities of his idea that the church will have a better idea of justice than anyone else and be able 'to set all things right' (170).

A concluding chapter critically reviews allied writers including Peter Rollins, *How (not) to speak to God* (Paraclete, 2006); Brian McLaren, *Everything Must Change* (Nelson, 2007); and Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *ReJesus* (Hendrickson, 2009). It is probably 'horses for courses'. Fitch, Rollins and McLaren write for the church goer, while Frost and Hirsch will be more relevant to those developing missional churches outside traditional structures.

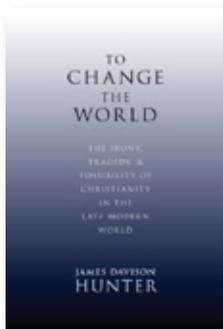
Fitch's approach is founded on the incarnate Christ and it aims to promote 'an inclusive, hospitable, authentic, faithful, compassionate,



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and vulnerable incarnational engagement in the world' (175). The book is complete with a useful glossary and an up-to-date bibliography. An increasing number of books document the recent history of evangelicalism, but this book will be valuable to evangelicals wanting to understand why things went wrong and who want to identify a way forward.

Christopher J. Davey, Director, Australian Institute of Archaeology



To Change the World

To Change the World *The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility* *of Christianity in the Late* *Modern World*

James Davison Hunter, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010

Reviewed by Gordon Preece

Ever found yourself saying to God, yourself or others, 'I want to make a difference'. It's a fairly standard Christian, and also, suspiciously, non-Christian line. It lines up with other common Christian statements like 'redeeming the culture', 'advancing the kingdom,' 'building the kingdom,' 'transforming the world'. All of them, according to James Davison Hunter, are wrong. Hunter is a sociologist based at the University of Virginia who has spent much of his academic career analysing Evangelicalism and the 'culture wars' to which it has been wed in the US. The preface reveals that he is influenced by people like the doyen of American sociologists, Peter Berger, and the doyen of American pastors, Tim Keller. It also reveals that the title is ironic. Hunter does not believe we can or should 'change the world', despite giving that impression for the first hundred or more pages.

In the first of the book's three essays, Hunter shows how we cannot change the world if we keep on doing what we're doing. The strategies adopted by so many Christians who want to make a difference make little difference where it really counts, in the key institutions of our culture. Hunter's focus is more on conservative Christians, given they are the bulk of Christians in the US, but he doesn't ignore mainline and progressive Christians. Fundamentalists focus more on personal and national revival, while the more theologically Reformed and intellectual groups seek to

inculcate a 'Christian worldview' in young people's minds through Christian education from pre-school to graduate school. The shared premise is that once the battle for ordinary people's hearts and minds is won, the culture will change. They are mistaken.

The common view is mistaken, as Andy Crouch summarises, 'because of its individualism: it ignores the central role of institutions in transmitting culture. It is mistaken because it is not just institutions that matter, but institutions at the cultural "centre" rather than the "periphery" – so that an op-ed in the *New York Times* is of vastly greater importance than one in the *Sacramento Bee*. It is mistaken, perhaps most of all, in its egalitarian assumption that the hearts and minds of ordinary people matter – in fact, cultural change is almost always driven by change among a small élite who occupy powerful positions in those culturally central institutions'.

The failure of the common individualistic view, changing the culture one person at a time, is demonstrated in the massively disproportionate influence and visibility in public culture of miniscule minorities like Jews and gays (pp. 20-21). Despite the green longing with which Australian Christians may look at the gold of American Christian resources, Hunter shows through a vast variety of statistics of key granting bodies and institutional influence etc, that it is very marginal, not mainstream, despite the numbers. Christians run a parallel popular culture of schools, music, sport etc. But the parallels are in 'lower and peripheral areas' of culture. In a wonderful 'culture matrix' diagram on page 90, using Plato's classic typology of the True, the Good and the Beautiful, Hunter shows the largely low-brow nature of Christian influence. Our strengths are in primary and secondary schools instead of Ivy League (think the Big Eight in Australia) graduate research; pop culture not high culture; bandaid ministries rather than preventative policies.

At worst they produce Christian kitsch. As John U'Ren has said, 'You used to get trinkets at the Catholic bookstalls and theology books at the Protestant ones; now it's reversed.' (Further, in launching Acorn Press's John W. Wilson Publication Fund, Tom Frame lamented the current parlous state of theological publishing in Australia and the inability of theological works to penetrate mainstream publishers and bookshops.)

In Chapter Four Hunter presents seven

suggestive propositions on what culture is:

1. a system of truth claims and moral obligations
2. a product of history
3. intrinsically dialectical
4. a resource, and as such, a form of power
5. cultural production and symbolic capital ... stratified in a fairly rigid structure of 'centre' and 'periphery'
6. generated within networks
7. neither autonomous nor fully coherent.

Hunter is fortunately not an idealist and does not lapse into mere 'history of ideas'. Nor is he a Marxist materialist. His cautious maxim is that *under specific conditions and circumstances ideas can have consequences* not because of their inherent truth but 'because of the way they are embedded in very powerful institutions, networks, interests, and symbols' (44). He provides four provisional observations of this:

1. Cultures change from the top down, rarely if ever from the bottom up.
2. Change is typically initiated by elites who are outside of the centre-most positions of prestige.
3. World-changing is most concentrated when the networks of elites and the[ir] institutions ... overlap.
4. Cultures change, but rarely if ever without a fight.

Hunter sums up ch. 4:

[E]vangelism, politics, social reform, and the creation of artifacts – if effective – all bring about good ends: changed hearts and minds, changed laws, changed social behaviors. But they don't directly influence the moral fabric that makes the changes sustainable over the long term, ... implicit[ly] ... Form[ing] the presuppositional basis of social life. Only indirectly do evangelism, politics, and social reform effect language, symbol, narrative, myth, and the institutions of formation that change the DNA of a civilization (p.45).

Key examples of culture change on the Christian side include the Clapham Sect or elite network, not just Wilberforce as in the individualistic Evangelical great man view of history; and the Enlightenment on the non-Christian side, again, not just a case of pure ideas, but of networks and resources shifting remarkably over a century.

Hunter's second essay shifts from the irony of unintended consequences to the tragic hubris of adopting a primarily political model of change. He critically analyses three key Christian social movements of today, and uncovers a common obsession with politics, and a form of tunnel vision focused on narrowly political power.

The Christian Right is a too obvious though necessary illustration in its various rises and falls, the latest being the (Mad Hatter's) Tea Party which threatens to bring the US economy and much of the world's crashing down with its debt default brinkmanship. Its nostalgia for Christendom and a mythological 'Christian America' and distortion of the dominion mandate into one of theocratic domination shows the perils of 'Christian politics'.

Second is the Christian Left, exemplified by Jim Wallis and *Sojourners*. This is driven by an identification with the poor, longing for economic justice, and despair at the dominance of the Christian Right. For all Wallis' attempts at maintaining political neutrality, it is subject to co-opting into the Democratic Party at Prayer to break the Republic monopoly on the Evangelical vote.

Thirdly, though there is some overlap with the Left concerning pacifism, there are the "neo-Anabaptists", whose creative patriarch is John Howard Yoder, and their *enfant terrible* is Stanley Hauerwas. However, they are less sanguine about liberalism and its institutions than the Left and abhor the coerciveness or 'democratic policing' (Hauerwas) of market and state structures. Hunter is much more nuanced in his treatment of the neo-Anabaptists than H. Richard Niebuhr who depicted Anabaptists as exemplifying a 'Christ against Culture' model. He realises that they believe in indirect social change through the church's acting out an alternative politics. However, he astutely argues that the neo-Anabaptists end up collapsing the public into the political, defining themselves in political terms (hence Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus*) like the Right and Left they in many ways oppose. 'In a context in which traditional pragmatic definitions of politics prevail, it is a bit naive to imagine one can use the word so promiscuously and be free of those traditional and pragmatic meanings. The use of the language of politics is a bid to translate social marginality into social relevance. The problem is that this language comes with all sorts of baggage and cannot rid itself of this baggage' (163). Hunter critiques its relentless negativity, a kind of 'passive-

aggressive ecclesiology' (Charles Matthews, 164).

The tragedy which all three perspectives are prey to is their over-politicised view of culture and its distinctive cultural power; their resentful negativity, where grievance dominates grace (whether the enemy is secular and theological liberals, fundamentalists, or the American empire); and their loss of vision of a genuine common good.

The third and most possibility-laden of Hunter's essays calls for a positive Christian posture of 'faithful presence' – salting every social structure with the flavour of covenantal Christian community. This community would particularly display the virtues of justice and peace, for Jew and Gentile alike, even in exile, praying for and seeking 'the shalom of the city' (Jer 29:7).

These words are a mantra of the Christian community tradition but Hunter takes them beyond nostalgic, Christendom-based privileges and divisions of Left and Right. In our new situation where 'the ground has shifted in ways that most Christians have not recognised', Hunter uses Jeremiah 29:7 as the paradigm of 'a new city commons' where God's scattered, exiled people, in post-Constantinian modernity's neighbourhoods and workplaces, settle down for the long haul, seeking to share God's *shalom* (peaceable prosperity) with their neighbours and workmates through 'faithful presence', (175-6) so that the community they have in common – pluralistic and secular as it is – may not merely survive, but thrive.

Contrary to rumour, there are many examples of people providing a sense of 'faithful presence' in various places and positions of relative social and cultural power, in all spheres of society. For Hunter, 'Only by narrowing an understanding of power to political or economic power can one imagine giving up power and becoming "powerless" as many admirable advocates of voluntary poverty do. When voluntary poverty is voluntary it is not powerless, nor is it really poverty. We all have various forms of softer or social, symbolic, culture forming power whether in workplaces, families or neighbourhoods as opposed to strong or coercive and violent power'. Further, Hunter again notes:

the very theologians and pastors who champion powerlessness have disproportionate life-chances (through salary, status, health care, and opportunities) and symbolic capital that

provides them disproportionate material and discursive power. By virtue of their vocation and station, they themselves perpetuate asymmetries in power.

Much better to put our cards on the table and be honest about the relative power we have. This is where those who underplay the creation commission distort the balance of the Bible. As Hunter shows:

To be made in the image of God and to be charged with the task of working in and cultivating, preserving, and protecting the creation, is to possess power. The creation mandate, then, is a mandate to use that power in the world in ways that reflect God's intentions... The question for the church, then, is not about choosing between power and powerlessness but rather, to the extent that it has space to do so, how will the church and its people use the power that they have. (181-4).

Hunter reflects well 'the core teachings of Jesus as they bear on 'social power or 'relational power', the power one finds in ordinary life. It is exercised every day in primary social relationships, within the relationships of the family, neighbourhood, and work in all of the institutions that surround us in daily life and therefore it is far more common to people than political power [which] tends to be experienced as an abstraction (187). Hunter has nailed the problem on the head: 'an abandonment of the call to faithful presence – *irrespective of influence*. ... the cultural matrix is a visual demonstration of where the church is not healthy. A healthy body exercises itself in all realms of life, not just a few. The failure to encourage excellence in our time has fostered a culture of mediocrity in so many areas of vocation' (95). Hunter's humble image of 'faithful presence' provides us with a way forward beyond the hubris of messianic change and the totalism of H.R. Niebuhr's *Christ Transforming Culture*. We would all do well to listen. It might change us.

Gordon Preece is Director of Ethos: EA Centre for Christianity and Society

The Challenges of Cultural Discipleship: Essays in the Line of Abraham Kuyper

Richard J Mouw, Eerdmans, 2012

Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction

Richard J Mouw, Eerdmans, 2011

Kuyper in America: 'This is Where I was Meant to be'

George Harinck (ed),
Dordt College Press, 2012

Three books reviewed by Bruce C Wearne

Richard Mouw (1940–) has been speaking and writing about 'the challenges of cultural discipleship' for at least forty years. From 1968 until 1985 he was professor of Christian philosophy at Calvin College. Since 1985 he has served as president of Fuller Theological Seminary. Wikipedia tells us he intends to retire in 2013. By his own account, he was a confused evangelical student who overcame a 'faith crisis' after reading Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism*. His two recent publications, *The Challenges of Cultural Discipleship* and *Abraham Kuyper* when read together can help us understand the 'line' Mouw takes with respect to 'Abraham the Mighty' (Abraham de Geweldige), the Dutch Christian 'multi-tasker'.

[Kuyper] founded a newspaper, a university, a political party, and a denomination.... During his career ...he regularly wrote articles for his newspaper; he taught theology at the Free University; he led his party both as a member of the Dutch parliament and, for a few years, as Prime Minister. And ... [he contributed] by writing major theological books and essays (Abraham Kuyper page x).

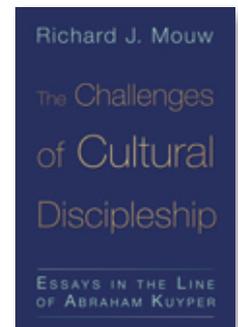
Mouw views Kuyper and the Kuyperian perspective in terms of his own calling to promote 'cultural discipleship'. This is also why these two volumes are best read

together, particularly by readers who have not read Mouw before. The larger volume helps us understand Mouw's view of the denominational, philosophical and higher educational context in which he has tried to promote what he calls Kuyper's 'theology of culture', while clearly trying to avoid the unhelpful constraints of the American-Dutch-reformed sub-culture. He calls the collection the 'back story' of his many 'cultural discipleship' publications. The shorter volume is another example of 'his efforts to make the thought of ... Abraham Kuyper accessible to average Christians', a series of reflections that takes its starting point from 'Kuyper's robust Calvinism'. He tells us that Kuyper's *Lectures* provided:

... a vision of active involvement in public life that would allow me to steer my way between a privatised evangelicalism on the one hand and the liberal Protestant or Catholic approaches to public discipleship on the other hand (page ix).

Kuyper's famous L. P. Stone Lectures were delivered at Princeton University in 1898. They have since been reprinted innumerable times, along with many of his other works. Some questions immediately arise for the reviewer of these two books, which should also arise for the culturally sensitive reader: why should it be necessary to make Kuyper 'accessible to average Christians'? Kuyper in his own country was the renowned leader of the Calvinistic working class, the 'little people'. So why is he so inaccessible to American Christians? There is not any direct attempt to explain this situation and its cultural dimensions in these two volumes. But could it be that Kuyper has been made inaccessible by the very same attempts to commend his 'world view' to North Americans? And if that be so, why should Mouw think his latest efforts 'in the line of Abraham Kuyper' should fare any better? Could it be that all the disputes and arguments that have preoccupied American Kuyperians, which Mouw extensively covers in his larger work, are part of the problem of Kuyper's inaccessibility?

Clearly Mouw wants to avoid disputes but he has also been called upon to make a contribution in that complex sub-cultural context. And so that is why I tend to interpret his two works as evidence of his *arrière pensée* about the Kuyperian perspective. His books *presuppose* that Kuyper continues to be inaccessible. And that, I guess, is this reviewer's attempt to identify the 'back story' to Mouw's



The Challenges of Cultural Discipleship: Essays in the Line of Abraham Kuyper

larger volume 'back story'. *Challenges* reads as Mouw's notes from his long-term 'ethnographic field work' within the sub-culture of North American Dutch reformed churches and educational ventures. In that sense his 'back story' writings function as explanations to fellow North American evangelicals, and particularly those disposed to a 'reformed perspective', why Kuyper's 'world view', for all its liberating potential, is embroiled in complex controversies that mean that his valuable insights, and even Mouw's own 'take' on them, don't always 'grip the rails'.

Mouw wants to help readers understand the challenges facing cultural discipleship. I would have thought that the next step 'in the line of Abraham Kuyper' would have been to examine this inaccessibility in terms of Kuyper's own 'world view'. Could it be that Kuyper's world view has been captured by the very cultural context in which it is now being made available? This matter needs to be investigated with utmost urgency. To take Kuyper's 'world view' seriously means reckoning with the fact that the appropriation of any Christian thinker's contribution must always take place in the context of an ongoing spiritual struggle, between 'two world views ... wrestling with one another, in mortal combat'. Kuyper's understanding of the 'antithesis' is, after all, his version of Augustine's view of the battle between two cities.

Cultural discipleship means a willingness to ask difficult questions even if that challenges American confidence in its own civil-religious piety and its assumption that the US seed-bed of inclusive democratic civility is where any Kuyperian seeds are destined to germinate. It means broaching the question of whether Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism* has been received within the US because they imply a neo-Calvinistic commendation of *America's* Calvinistic character? And this is not simply to refer to Woodrow Wilson, Princeton's professor of jurisprudence at the time Kuyper was granted an honorary doctor of laws in 1898. It is also to refer to President George W Bush's 2005 Calvin College commencement address in which he presented his own vision of society's autonomous self-creating power 'in the line of Abraham Kuyper'. I jest not. That made the front pages of *The New York Times*. And the Grand Rapids gathering applauded warmly. Nor am I descending to cynicism. Indeed Mouw's efforts to subvert the widespread cultural cynicism within his own country and polity by promoting Christian discipleship needs to be

strongly affirmed.

But, questions remain, and the question that Mouw doesn't really address is this: was it Kuyper's theology, even his 'theology of culture' that he (Mouw) received when he first read Kuyper's *Lectures*? As a *theological* student Mouw may very quickly have come to the conclusion that what he had to do by way of response as an erstwhile theologian, was to develop his own 'theology of culture'. And that he has sought to do 'in the line of Kuyper'. But Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism* are about Calvinism as a 'worldview'. The equation which Mouw seems to be making between 'world view' and 'theology of culture' is not self-evident and it is not sufficiently explained by Mouw in his book. (Maybe it is just an oversight, but his picture of this 'world view', at *Abraham Kuyper* (41), inexplicably leaves out any indication of God's rule over His church.)

Christians around the English-speaking world will attest to the fact that the 'Kuyper-publishing industry' is alive and well. Moreover, it should also be noted that following a Princeton Seminary celebratory conference marking the 100th anniversary of Kuyper's Stone lectures, the Seminary has established 'The Abraham Kuyper Center for Public Theology'. This too should also be kept in mind as we read these two books by Fuller Seminary's President. Fuller and Princeton seem set to maintain their respective association with the name of Kuyper.

The other volume in this review, *Kuyper in America*, is a collection of letters written to his wife and children during Kuyper's two-month trip to the United States in 1898. It is a pertinent addition to the literature. The 84-page volume tells us that for all his 'cultural discipleship', for all his 'multi-tasking', for all his stature, prominence and reputation, Kuyper was both an 'average Christian' husband and father. His weaknesses, fears about gossip, enthusiasm, self-understanding, Dutch arrogance, worries and loneliness, are all on display. Our appreciation for what the letters tell us about Kuyper might have been deepened by the inclusion of letters and post-cards Kuyper received from 'back home' but they may not now exist. What we do have, in its own way, gives us a glimpse of Kuyper's confession that his domestic life also belonged to His Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is not to 'take' these letters as mini-theological treatises; we leave them as they are – *everyday letters of everyday discipleship*. They confirm his earnest longings as husband and father,

and tell us of his not inconsiderable irritations when so far away (*When are you going to write to me? Surely it's not that difficult to pick up a pen and write me a few lines!*).

He was in the US to receive an honorary doctorate and to deliver the prestigious Stone Lectures at Princeton University. The letters tell us how he interpreted everyday life in the US and confirm his positive view of America's 'Calvinistic' character, an attitude we can also find clearly affirmed in his *Lectures*. These were the days before the US took on its 'exceptional' global mission as formulated by President Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921). But at that time near the turn of the century, Wilson was, as I have said, professor of jurisprudence at Princeton and Kuyper was awarded the honorary doctorate of laws. This is significant for our understanding of Kuyper and his place in the American scheme of things.

In *Kuyper in America* there is a photograph of a news report from the *Holland Daily Sentinel* of 29 October 1898 reporting on Kuyper's lecture to Third Reformed Church in Holland Michigan. 'Be Americanized: Was Kuyper's Advice to Hollanders Here – A Masterly Address'. Perhaps Mouw's 'Abraham Kuyper' could have given more attention to Kuyper's view of the American way of life as an expression of the Calvinistic world view. He might have drawn attention to the fact that Kuyper had called upon American-Hollanders to 'yank the hyphen' a decade or so before Wilson had made that call. Mouw might also have given more attention to the fact that the Kuyperian perspective these days, for all its 'robust Calvinism', has to deal with the ongoing, relentless spiritual secularisation of the American way of life *including its own understanding of its Calvinistic past*.

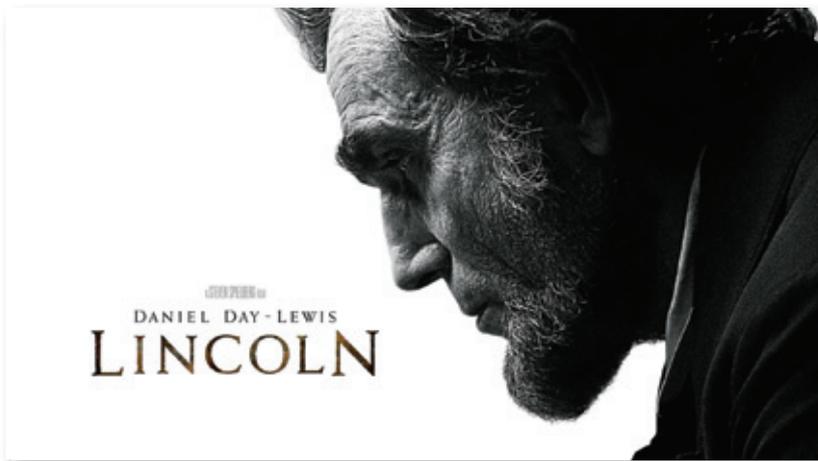
And though American Kuyperians like Mouw and Nicholas Wolterstorff have been very adept at critically distancing themselves from alleged Eurocentric tendencies in the neo-Calvinistic world view and philosophical contribution, they have not seemed so eager to identify and distance themselves from America-centric tendencies found in 'Abraham the Mighty'. This is a curious lack of self-criticism and it raises some urgent questions. Because of their 'antithetical' spiritual character, such questions may well sound to many Americans as lacking in true 'civic virtue'. But they have to be asked. Is not the honour of the Person confessed to be Lord and Master at stake here?

Could reformed and evangelical Americans like Richard Mouw have embraced Kuyper's

Lectures on Calvinism because of Kuyper's evident tendency to interpret their 'land of the free and home of the brave' as a Christian nation? Could that be part of the reason why the North American Kuyper publishing industry has been promoting Kuyper? And could such a 'take' on Kuyper, reading his contribution in terms of a 'theology of culture' or a 'public theology', have the unanticipated consequence of facilitating a secularised Kuyper for the masses, as with President Bush's Calvin College 'line'? The jury may still be out on that, but at the very least we would have to say that the results of North American Kuyper publishing efforts have not always subjected the emergent American way of life to the kind of search and self-critical examination that one would expect from those adhering to the 'world view' set forth in *Lectures on Calvinism*.

This is not the place for an historical account of the trials and tribulations of 20th century Presbyterian and reformed efforts to commend Kuyper's 'world view' to a North American readership. Some of that is covered, indirectly, in Mouw's larger volume. But we can say that these three works indicate there has been no let up. Kuyper still evokes interest. The Kuyper publishing industry seems alive and well. These works, read in context, suggest that despite all the commendation Kuyper's work is receiving, despite Fuller and Princeton joining Calvin and other Christian Colleges in promoting Kuyperian virtues, US evangelicals still find it difficult to take hold of Kuyper's world view without Americanising it. These books lead us to ask: Has the failure of Kuyper's world view to 'take hold' among North American evangelical and reformed Christians anything to do with the traditional tendency, endorsed ambiguously by Richard Mouw, that a 'Christian world view' is primarily a matter of theology? Does Kuyper's exposition of a Calvinistic world view actually provide guidance to those wanting to understand why his views have not really caught on?

Bruce Wearne resides in Point Lonsdale from where he forms his contribution to the world-wide renewal of the Christian way of life by means of writing about sociological theory, contributing to political debate, advising students and conversing with the many friendly people he meets along the coast. He is married to Valerie and has two adult sons.



Lincoln

Directed by Steven Spielberg

Reviewed by Darren Mitchell

It eluded us then, but that's no matter – tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther ... And then one fine morning – So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.
(The Great Gatsby by F Scott Fitzgerald)

In the 150th year since Gettysburg, the defining battle of the American Civil War, one could expect a grand response, especially from any filmmakers aiming for release this year. Steven Spielberg is renowned for his epic scale, and the knowledge that the man behind *Saving Private Ryan* and *Amistad* was developing his Lincoln biopic for 2013 suggested he would once again present a seminal war story.

However, the sesqui-centenary *Lincoln* brings us not the epic sweep of the four year battle for the heart and soul of America, but a small picture, an intimate portrait of America's iconic President and, for many, its saviour.

Spielberg's film centres not on battlefield re-enactments but backroom dealings, not on an abstract white versus black analysis of the Civil War period, but on the personal greys of political realism. In fact the war itself is a distant drumbeat at a time when its end could paradoxically prevent the full freedom of the southern slaves, and its prolongation would with certitude continue the slaughter. For it is a story of the political struggle in the early months of 1865 when the war was lurching to its end, and Lincoln was ascendant, having won re-election, to finally pass the Thirteenth Constitutional amendment outlawing slavery.

As one reviewer puts it, the 'title suggests a monolith, as if going to this movie were tantamount to visiting Mt Rushmore', but what we get 'befits a chamber piece'.

Gettysburg and the Lincoln address

that was to forever cement the town in our consciousness, made later in 1863, are already the stuff of history as is made clear in the opening of the film – a scene so uncomfortably earnest that it almost diminishes the whole film, as two soldiers recite Lincoln's words back to him, during a break in battle.

To do justice to the standing of Abraham Lincoln and these critical moments in history, Spielberg brings us actor Daniel Day-Lewis. Like Lincoln among his contemporaries on the political stage, Day-Lewis bestrides today's thespian world. His approach is in the contemporary vein of inhabiting rather than mimicking a character, although a remarkable physical likeness is achieved. Early criticism emerged during production over the voice with which Day-Lewis chose to render Lincoln, a mix of homely drawl eliciting a comforting authority when addressing family and small meetings of political comrades, and a reedy strain that struggles to be full voiced when confronting opponents. These criticisms did not survive the opening of the film as Day-Lewis' performance won over audience and critics alike, and he received every award available.

Inevitably, the towering central performance overshadows other actors, even those who carry significant credentials. Sally Field as Lincoln's wife has rarely given a worse performance (and I can remember her in *The Flying Nun!*), showcasing a histrionic, but unconvincing shrew. Tommy Lee Jones presents awkwardly as a man of bearing who unfortunately comes across stilted, struggling with the accent, as he lumbers through a number of wordy set piece speeches in Congress that leave little room to craft an actual performance.

The man who set new standards for battlefield realism and authenticity in his 1998 recreation of the landing at Normandy in *Saving Private Ryan*, trips up surprisingly in the few battlefield scenes – there is little fighting but the stage-like renderings of Lincoln's surveying of the dead, and of the opening sequence referred to earlier, confirm that Spielberg wants us to focus not on the battles but on the hard work and passion of those whose activities are best re-enacted in the medium of film.

Ultimately, Spielberg's small story delivers an overly earnest film, prone to the sentimentalism that has worked perfectly for him in films like *Saving Private Ryan*, but in this instance veers closer to the mawkishness of *Warhorse*.

However ponderous, the film is a faithful and at times engaging illustration of the

compromises and small victories conceded in the quest for a greater prize that typify the reality of lawmaking. In this respect, it is timeless like its eponymous hero.

But what of the incidents themselves 150 years on? How should we remember the past?

We have a century and a half of continuous claim and counter claim about the causes of the war and the outcomes of the war. We also have endless battlefield re-enactments in that peculiarly American way of honouring the sacrifices of the past.

Spielberg prefers on this occasion to avoid a spectacle in the nature of Australia's own sentimental filmmaker Baz Luhrmann, who has with the worldwide hit of the mid-year, *The Great Gatsby*, also ironically told a story about the past.

When Lincoln rides slowly among the dead, the enormity of the slaughter that pained him to oversee and to prolong, is vividly evident to viewers. And it is this story of anguish, delivered superbly by Day-Lewis, that transcends the need for battlefield re-enactments.

Day-Lewis' portrayal will be how this generation recalls Lincoln, and we should be grateful to him and to Spielberg that we will remember a driven, but compassionate man, a thoughtful but decisive, leader of leaders.

The importance of film in helping us remember the past cannot be overstated. Without such powerful renderings of our history for a visual age, we, like *Gatsby*, will be borne back ceaselessly into a romanticised past, even as we strive to run faster, to build our modern world.

Darren Mitchell is a senior public servant, member of St. Barnabas Broadway and Zadok film reviewer.

Hear the Ancient Wisdom: A Meditational Reader for the Whole Year from the Early Church Fathers up to the Pre-Reformation

Charles Ringma, Cascade Books, 2013

Reviewed by Paul Tyson

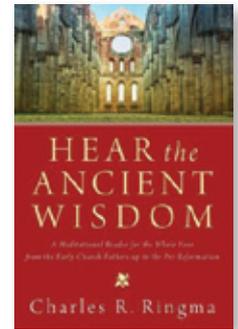
Given that Zadok largely has an Evangelical readership, it may seem a little odd to here review a meditational reader drawing on the pre-reformation wisdom traditions of the Church. But this is not odd for at least two reasons. Firstly, Charles

Ringma – Emeritus Professor of Missiology at Regent College – is one of Australia's premier Evangelical theologians. Secondly, there is a growing movement afoot where English speaking Evangelicals are recovering their knowledge of the rich ancient heritage of the Church. In the US, one face of this interest is connected with Robert Webber's work and is called the Ancient-Future movement. I say 'recovering' here, for Evangelicals have not always lacked knowledge or interest in the pre-reformation heritage of the Church. John Wesley, for example, was a fine Patristic scholar.

Professor Ringma has written this reader for some very interesting reasons. Western Modernity has brought many valuable things to the world – one of which is the form of religious freedom which we Evangelicals were so intimately involved in producing – but it is now clear that there are also many dangers and inadequacies in what can be broadly called Modernity. We are ransacking the earth, we have a global economy embedded in the exploitation of the world's poor, we have a rapacious consumer culture that knows the price of everything but the value of nothing, our relationships are in disarray, our wondrous technological capacities are increasingly guided by a frighteningly amoral instrumental logic, our workplace environments are often governed by highly impersonal and callously pragmatic structures of power.

And then there is the frenetic pace of our lives, the complexity of constructing and integrating our multiple functional identities; and there is always noise. Noise that incapacitates us from the patient and quiet disciplines of the soul: contemplation, inner accounting, wonder, meditation, silent prayer. Theology and church programs grounded in the Modern World do not offer much in the way of helping us overcome the noise, the relentless technical activity, and the absence of wisdom that our Modern life-form has embedded us in. Professor Ringma discerns that in this context the ancient wisdom of the Church, is a storehouse of exactly the treasures we now need.

This book is beautifully written, and richly and quietly accessible. For those with no knowledge of the pre-reformation saints and thinkers, this is the most delightful and useful introduction one could hope for. Each reading is one page long, starting with a brief Bible text, a short paragraph outlining the theme, and then the main text which includes a quote from a past great exponent of Christian life and



*Hear the Ancient Wisdom:
A Meditational Reader for
the Whole Year from the
Early Church Fathers up to
the Pre-Reformation*

thought embedded in the text. It concludes with a short prayer-like thought. The prose is as clear and refreshing as a mountain stream. Indeed, it is so good to read that we are reading it for our family devotions at present. Whilst my children need some ideas explained, the directness of the prose and the clarity in which the meditative motif is expressed makes it accessible even for young children. As a place of introduction to the treasures of our past, this work is outstanding. As a catalyst to building our contemplative disciplines so that

we are better equipped to live as Christians within the Modern world, but in some ways, not of the Modern world, this is very helpful. As an opportunity to find avenues of further pursuit, this text opens the world of the pre-reformation wisdom traditions of the Church to an Evangelical reader most helpfully. This is a very fine, and very timely text.

Paul Tyson Australian Catholic University, Brisbane
School of Theology and Philosophy.

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Xiaoli Yang

Rain Reflection

Rain drop

A zero

in between

circles

not a word

or sound

within

the sphere

In an inverted world

A mute is gesturing

anxiously

to pedestrians

the charm

of another world

Xiaoli Yang

Chimes

bell chimes peel out

traversing the treed valley

intermingling with

peppermint fragrance

chimes, forged not in foundry brass

rather in the passion cries of assemblies

unseen

plighting their voices

to the very trees

Carolyn Vimpani

Death of Cold

On the footpath

a dying plane leaf.

Anything but plain

it is a hand that begs

I pick it up

turn over this dark walnut

to see tan inside

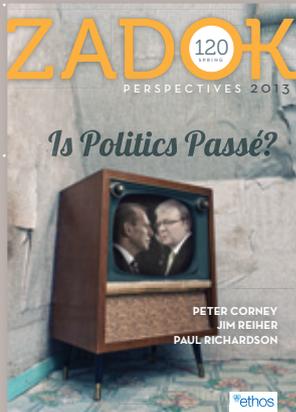
the intricate design of veins

Was it loneliness or the cold of winter

that shrivelled this abandoned leaf?

Jean Sietzema-Dickson

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“ Freedom and democracy are intimately connected but, as the framers of the American constitution stressed, ‘freedom requires virtue and virtue requires faith’. It is striking in their writings and speeches to see how clearly they understood this. While many were Christians, others were deists and free thinkers, but they all understood the essential connection... ”

Peter Corney, ‘The Future of Democracy in a Post-Christian West’

