

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Kids put footballers' drug-taking into perspective | |
| <i>Tom Cranitch</i> | 1 |
| Hiding weakness no way to answer sex abuse charges | |
| <i>Andrew Hamilton</i> | 3 |
| Fall from grace often no more than spin | |
| <i>Michael Mullins</i> | 5 |
| "Don't be evil" a struggle for Google | |
| <i>James Massola</i> | 7 |
| Bishop John Shelby Spong and consumer-friendly religion | |
| <i>Scott Stephens</i> | 10 |
| The fatality equation: death in Minnesota, death in Iraq | |
| <i>Kylie Baxter and Rebecca Barlow</i> | 12 |
| Laying out the Catholic response to Work Choices | |
| <i>Brian Lawrence</i> | 14 |
| Tasmania like Soviet Siberia | |
| <i>Mario Rimini</i> | 16 |
| Warmer seas will stress coral | |
| <i>Michele Gierck</i> | 18 |
| Cousin Betty, the asylum and the EJ Holden | |
| <i>Roger Trowbridge</i> | 21 |
| APEC good for business, not so good for humanity | |
| <i>Anne Lanyon</i> | 24 |
| Harry Potter star shines in <i>December Boys</i> | |
| <i>Tim Kroenert</i> | 26 |
| Three Jesus poems | |
| <i>Various</i> | 28 |

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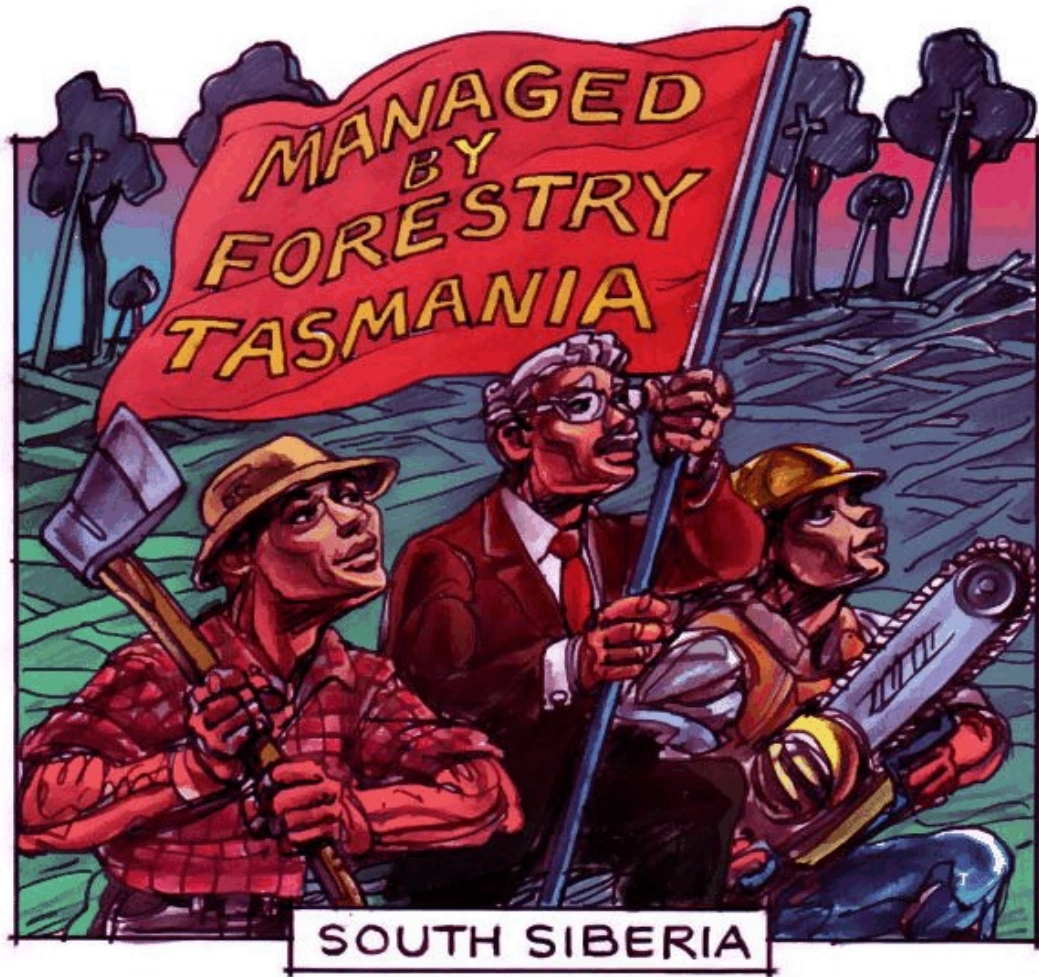
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Kids put footballers' drug-taking into perspective

SPORT

Rugby

Tom Cranitch



Rugby league in Australia celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2008. The dominant winter football code in Queensland and New South Wales has touched the lives and hearts of millions. The on-field protagonists rank among the pinnacle of our nation's most courageous and athletic sports people.

Only seven players in the history of the game have been so highly esteemed by supporters and officials to be declared "immortals". Despite only departing the playing field earlier this season after sustaining a serious neck injury, Andrew Johns was expected to be the next man to enter rugby league's pantheon of knights.

Such an exaltation now appears remote. It is now doubtful Johns will ascend to the level occupied by the greats. This is unfortunate, as his playing talents and his influence on the sport suggest he richly deserves it. The public revelation that he has been a regular user of illicit drugs over the length of his playing career coupled with his confessed mental fragility and borderline alcoholism, complete a descent from icon to the problem child.

Johns is not the first would-be "immortal" revealed to be all-too-human. Geelong's Gary Ablett, and the West Coast Eagles' Ben Cousins are AFL champions who have been similarly exposed by revelations of drug use. Drug use is clearly rife in sport, as in society as a whole. The question of how it should be addressed, and what it does to the game, is a difficult one to answer.

The player affectionately known as "Joey" by adoring players, fans and media is now variously being described as a "cheat" and "druggie". Others have appended the tag that accompanies many a lost soul — 'a tragic figure'. As he is a former captain of the national team, it would not surprise if the insipid and overused term "un-Australian" is also hauled out by his many detractors.

As a lover of rugby league for four decades, I do not wish to defend or prosecute Andrew Johns. I admire his football legacy and I will leave it to other analysts to savage or redeem this

fallen hero. But as a father of five, the eldest of whom plays junior rugby league, I do have some thoughts about sporting 'role models'.

Without doubt young people look up to sports stars and attempt to mimic them. Upon hearing the news about Johns, my football playing 10-year-old was full of questions and expressed disappointment that such a leading light in the sport he loves would resort to such behaviour. His concern echoed my frequent chats with him about the evils of taking illicit drugs and the recent advertising campaign by the federal government extolling the need for parents to 'talk with your kids about drugs'.

Apart from wanting to know whether or not his drug-taking enhanced his sporting performance (a question I answered in the negative, though I understand there is still conjecture over impact of recreational drugs, in particular cocaine, on an athlete's performance), my son was not overly perturbed. When quizzed, he remarked that as long as Johns' on-field efforts were not seriously up for question then it was up to the player if he was 'silly' enough to take illicit drugs.

His conclusions underlined the ability of children to see matters clearly while those older can get lost in the fog. It is also an indication that our kids are far more resilient than we realise.

Over the past week everyone from radio shock jocks to the Prime Minister has beaten Johns up for being a poor role model. The basis of their argument is that Johns owed a special duty to children to do the right thing because he was highly paid and high profile. Even the serial apologist, Queensland Premier Peter Beattie, weighed into the orgy of comment on the revelations. He labelled Johns a 'dreadful role model' and while earnestly requesting people not think of him (Beattie) as being overly pious, said there was a real problem in Johns' actions 'because of what that does for young people who look up to him.'

Illicit drugs are a major problem not just because they are anti-social and destructive to our accepted notions of community, but also because they lessen the individuals who partake in them. Regrettably, Andrew Johns is less of a person because of his dalliances with drugs. He must now be responsible for his actions, and the effect it will have on his standing in the game. For young people, though, the role models that parents, family members and dare I say it, even politicians provide is just as significant.

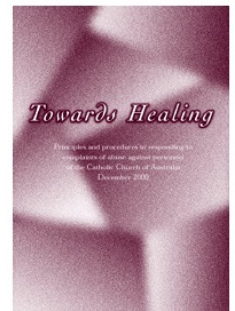
Hiding weakness no way to answer sex abuse charges

COLUMNS

Summa Theologiae

Andrew Hamilton

While Bishop [Geoffrey Robinson](#) was coordinating the response of the Australian Catholic church to sexual abuse by its ministers, he was angered by Vatican officials attempting to silence him. He had asked whether clerical celibacy and the way power was exercised in his church contributed to abuse. He wrote his cogently-argued book because his church seemed to give a higher priority to a good institutional reputation than to concern for truth.



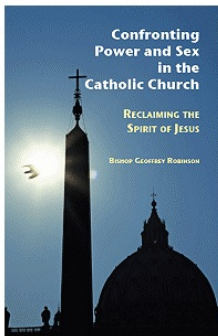
The desire to protect a good reputation is not confined to churches. Almost any organisation responds to criticism by rebutting it. But idealistic organisations, including churches, are particularly sensitive to claims that they have behaved badly. Their reason for existence is at stake. Churches believe that they are invited by Christ to live lives worthy of their calling. Many churches also believe that the Holy Spirit works through their institutions.

Because from the beginning the church had such a high sense of its calling, it found it difficult to deal with members who sinned seriously and publicly. It seemed inconceivable that people who were set apart by God would act in ways that betrayed their calling and the church they formed. Yet experience taught that Christians, like others, murdered, acted adulterously and, when persecuted, denied their faith.

Local churches then had to decide whether to receive them back or not. Some refused to do so; others did so readily; most would do so only after a regime of public penance that could last for many years. In most churches, two strikes and you were out.

Rigorous or lenient attitudes were often associated with the images people had of the church. When people saw the church predominantly as the stainless bride of Christ or as the ark, they were often severe to sinners. Infidelity and abandoning ship seemed to make return impossible. If they saw the church as a net full of fish, or a field where wheat and weeds grew together, then reconciliation would be conceivable.

Eventually churches found ways to hold together under some tension the conflicting demands to live faithfully and to reconcile their sinful members. But then they faced another, more difficult, challenge. Critics claimed that sinful attitudes and actions were woven into the patterns of authority, celebration and support that made possible the daily life of the church.



This claim was often heard in the late medieval church; it fed the demand for reform embodied in the Protestant Reformation. The Catholic response was largely defensive. It affirmed the structures and ways of working that the Reformers attacked, elaborated a high understanding of the church, and addressed the need for change by strengthening education in the faith and discipline. It focused on individual sins and not on the capacity of institutions to corrupt people.

As Bishop Robinson demonstrates in his book, the Catholic Church has responded in a similar way to the scandal of sexual abuse by its representatives. Practices like requiring celibacy of clergy, and institutional relationships between clergy and laity, were reaffirmed and removed from discussion. A high theology of the church was commended. Meanwhile, procedures were developed at a local level to deal with accusations of abuse.

This strategy, while not ineffectual, clearly has weaknesses. Members of local churches can become disillusioned, believing that their church has denied the reality of abuse and that its response has been half-hearted and ineffective. The failure to ask whether celibacy and institutional forms of exercising power nurture abusive behaviour lead people to believe that in fact they are influential.

These weaknesses are accentuated by the high imagery used to describe the church. When we see the church as sinless, as the bride of Christ, or as mother, and when we associate it with an idealised image of Mary the mother of humanity, it is hard to reconcile the lofty images with the often grotty reality of church life and of its institutional relationships.

The early church had a wide store of images to describe the church. Some of them expressed the tension between high calling and broken response. They described the church as a 'chaste prostitute', making use of the broad range of women of doubtful reputation in the Old Testament. Such images discourage the assertion that the church is sinless but that its individual members are sinful. They also discourage the assumption that the structures of authority are sinless, but individual officers are sinful.

A church that recognises its struggle to follow the way of Christ has no need to defend its reputation. It can learn from its mistakes.

Fall from grace often no more than spin

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

This week we mark the tenth anniversary of the death of Mother Teresa.

She has been lauded by Christians and non-Christians alike as one of the 20th century's pre-eminent servants of humanity. Recently, sections of the media have seized upon documentation prepared as part of her path to sainthood.

The quoted letters detail profound lapses in her belief in God. Some commentators have taken this to signify that she is a fraud, while others have said simply that she was an atheist who did saintly things. In fact, many saints have experienced a 'dark night of the soul'. This is largely what formed them in their saintliness.

What is most significant about these documents is that the Church chose to make them public. It resisted the temptation to hide them, in what would have been a misguided attempt to give the false impression that she was complete in her faithfulness to God.

The Church does not always choose to reveal cracks in its façade. Bishop Geoffrey Robinson recently made this plain when he asserted in his book that the Church has been more interested in managing rather than confronting church sexual abuse. Andrew Hamilton points out in this issue of *Eureka Street* that Bishop Robinson was 'stimulated to write his cogently argued book because his Church seemed to give a higher priority to a good institutional reputation than to concern for truth'.

Andrew goes on to point out that the desire to protect a good reputation is not confined to churches. He says almost any organisation 'responds to criticism by rebutting it', but that the rebuttal is unnecessary if the institution is not afraid of the truth.

Sporting bodies in particular are loath to have the public know about the weaknesses of their players and participants. The case of Andrew Johns was obviously a nightmare scenario for the NRL. The administrators did not have much opportunity to minimise the significance of Johns' minor London infringement after Johns himself told a TV interviewer that he had used drugs extensively for a decade.

Johns' decision to be honest about his drug-taking will be rewarded. This was certainly the experience of Kevin Rudd when he resisted the temptation to cover up or minimise his visit to a New York sex club. His approval rating increased, much to the chagrin of his tormentors on the other side of politics.



In his article for this issue of *Eureka Street*, Tom Cranitch points to the wisdom of his ten year old son, who is willing to forgive Johns' for his 'silly' illicit drug use. His son's perception 'underlined the ability of children to see the essence of matters clearly while older generations often get lost in the fog [of spin] around the edge'.

“Don’t be evil” a struggle for Google

MEDIA

The Net

James Massola

‘Men are only as good as their technical development allows them to be.’

- *George Orwell*



Most internet users depend on — and love — Google, the search engine with a sense of humour. Who else but Google would have cartoon athletes jumping through their ‘hoops’ on the product banner during the Commonwealth Games. However, dependency and trust are different things and the implications for privacy in an online world are grave, and some are starting to feel uncomfortable about the power Google has over their lives. As a result Google is at the centre of a debate about the power of technology and the responsibility this brings with it.

It might help to look back at the development of search engines. When people first started using the internet, the choice of search engines available was broad and people’s choices were largely idiosyncratic. In 2007, the equation is somewhat different. Other search engines are available but Google is pre-eminent.

Since [its incorporation](#) in September 1998 Google has grown at a staggering rate.

Hitwise [statistics](#) show that Google had 64 per cent of the search market in March 2007. Month-on-month, and year-on-year, the company is increasing its market share at the expense of every other search engine.

The growth of Google has mirrored the growth of Microsoft in the 1980s and 1990s to some extent. Microsoft has for years been seen as the “evil empire” because of its size and reach. While a consensus on whether Google is handling its burgeoning power has not been reached yet — but dark grumblings are beginning to emerge from civil liberties groups.

Google’s corporate motto is ‘Don’t be evil’.

At first glance, the company seems impossibly benign. It has introduced a range of products and services that have quickly been taken up by users. Google desktop, Documents and Spreadsheets, Videos, and now YouTube, Earth, Maps, Gmail, News, Scholar, Translate, Book Search, Blogger, Picasa and GTalk are just some of the products free for anyone to use.

This munificence seems decidedly “un-evil”, and stands in stark contrast to Microsoft’s

“user pays” model. Free products might mask the fact that as Google has grown, but it is a fact that choice for users has shrunk.

Google derives its primary income from text advertising, a field that it dominates. These ads populate millions of websites. In April 2007, [Google purchased Double Click](#), one of the leading display (pictures, as opposed to text) advertisers on the internet. The deal ensures Google’s continued pre-eminence in the advertising market place.

There is nothing inherently evil about advertising. The problem is that online advertising can lead to information being revealed about users. Each time someone clicks on an ad, Google, like most internet advertisers, tracks that click, and learns something more about individual users’ surfing habits.

It works like this: when a user uses Gmail, for example, a series of ads is displayed to the right of the email. Google’s servers (anonymously, we are told) scan the email, analyse the agglomeration of words in the text, and decide on the most relevant ads to display. This information, cumulatively, is invaluable.

When Gmail first began in 2004, there were howls of protest over the scanning of email to provide text ads. The company’s blithe response was that ‘computers’ would not read the emails, nor monitor them.

The “Trust me” approach that the company seems to adopt at times has not endeared it to critics. As the *Economist* [recently noted](#), ‘Google’s business model assumes that people will entrust it with ever more information about their lives, to be stored in the company’s “cloud” of remote computers.’ It’s quite an assumption to make.

All of the information that one enters into Google is kept on Google servers. This can include search history, email, ads clicked on, and now documents and photos. The rumoured “Gphone” could extend this to an individual’s location, most-called numbers, and favourite pizzeria.

Possession of all this information gives power. As the company expands, and its power, so should its policies to safeguard users’ privacy.

However, Google’s policies do not always keep pace with its growing clout. Google has, for example, reached a deal with China’s censors to block certain content. China is notorious for monitoring and regulating its citizens’ web usage. If it were to obtain information about individuals searching for ‘banned’ subjects, the implications for the individual could be grave. While the Chinese government is doubtless pleased with the deal, what protections are in place for the individual?

The official [Google Blog](#) recently announced that it will make server logs anonymous after 18-24 months. These logs can tie search histories to individual users and allow them to be identified. While previously the information had been held indefinitely, it is still worth

remembering that much of what we do on the internet is not as anonymous as we think.

Google's record of protecting users' anonymity is actually quite good compared to other organisations. But in an age in which governments are increasingly interested in (and able to monitor) what we read, who we chat to, and what we purchase, privacy safeguards will become increasingly important. One cannot help but feel that more transparency is needed from Google. 'Don't be evil' does not suffice, as guiding policy, for a \$23 billion company.

Bishop John Shelby Spong and consumer-friendly religion

INTERVIEW

Scott Stephens

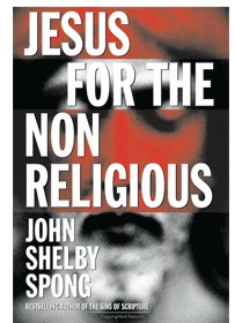
STEPHENS: *In your latest book, Jesus for the Non-Religious, you reiterate: 'Christianity is dying ... The experience of Jesus is newly dawning and will in time create new forms.' Are you heartened, or concerned by, the prominence of militant atheists such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens?*

SPONG: It gives me great heart. But so does the rise of fundamentalist Christianity. I keep trying to build a community between radical (or rabid) fundamentalism, and this disillusioned secularity. My marching orders are in John's description of Jesus' purpose: 'I've come that they might have life.'

STEPHENS: *I often wonder about the ethical consequences of your version of Christianity. There are expressions of religion which are diabolically compatible with our modern self-centredness. Western Buddhism and even Pentecostalism seem to me to be disgustingly bourgeois forms of religion. Isn't your vision of a "new Christianity" pandering to the same bourgeois temperament?*

SPONG: That's probably a legitimate criticism. Religion is always going to be changing its face in response to an ever-expanding worldview. Darwin challenges the way in which the Christian story has been told. Before Darwin we told the story of the Christian faith in terms of human beings created perfect in God's image, but who disobeyed God and fell into sin. Finally God enters the world as a saviour-rescuer. But it doesn't work. We never were created perfect in God's image. We were created as single-cell units of life. We are radically self-centred, survival-orientated creatures, and we had to be to win the battle of evolution. I think we've got to turn our whole Christology toward seeing Jesus as the kind of humanity that enables us to get over [survival] and begin to give our lives away.

STEPHENS: *I'm going to have to pull you up here, because what you've just proposed is very different from one of your previous positions. If I may be perfectly blunt, your chapter on "Original Sin" in A New Christianity for a New World gave me a lot of trouble. In it you present a disturbingly New Age, quasi-Jungian image of the human being in which 'God and Satan, light and darkness, good and evil, Jesus and Judas' etc. must be embraced as part of some greater "wholeness. Now, I'm with you in your rejection of the traditional notion of original sin, and I am deep agreement with you in placing the Christian story against a Darwinian backdrop. But I don't see how you can reconcile your compelling picture of human-animals caught in the survival-instinct, from which we must break away in Christ, with this amoral description of human wholeness.*





SPONG: That was the most difficult chapter. You don't become whole by simply suppressing your dark-side, but rather by accepting it as part of your being and redeeming it and living through it. Retrospectively, I'm not sure that I knew what I was writing, to be perfectly blunt back at you. Except that I still believe that Jung was right when he said that it was a great day for Christianity when the Roman Catholics promulgated the doctrine of the bodily assumption of Mary, because for the first time Mary was lifted into the sense of the divine. And then he said that God will finally be complete when the devil is lifted back into God and so God's dark-side is also embraced in what is ultimately holy. That's what I was trying to say about human life.

STEPHENS: I want to press you a little further on this. You most often refer to God, following Paul Tillich, as "the Ground of Being" and insist that we participate in God by becoming fully ourselves. But even Tillich was keenly aware that there are ways of "being" which are in fact delusional, inauthentic, even idolatrous. In your previous work you don't seem to have factored in this aspect of Tillich's thought. Haven't you left the door open for all kinds of self-seeking idolatry in the name of one's search for God?

SPONG: I don't know quite how to respond to that. I'm currently working on the question of whether someone with my theological understanding can have a belief in life-after-death. And my answer is yes. Now I think that will be my next book. But along the way I've examined what life-after-death means to most people, and it is a fiercely self-centred kind of idolatry.

If the only motivation in my life is that I'll get the reward of heaven or escape the punishment of hell, then it's still nothing except a self-centred act. That is a form of idolatry that must be overcome. If we can get to the place where life-after-death is not just about reward or punishment, then I think we can start understanding what such a life-after-death really is. Not only is that the next step in my writing, it's the next step in my personal pilgrimage, which I think is increasingly beyond any theological system into a kind of wordless mysticism.

The fatality equation: death in Minnesota, death in Iraq

INTERNATIONAL

Kylie Baxter and Rebecca Barlow

The bridge collapse over the Mississippi River in early August was without question a tragedy. US President George W Bush responded to this 'terrible situation' by sending his top transport officials in an attempt to find answers.



The disaster in Minnesota, especially as the recovery effort continued, dominated the American media. It is human nature to respond to tragedies closest to home. As concerns were raised about the structural integrity of bridges throughout the United States, the issue remained in the news for weeks after.

Despite the distance between Australia and Minnesota, our local and national media was also saturated with stories from survivors, live reports and footage of the collapse. News broadcasts ran numerous segments devoted to developments at the scene. This demonstrates the Australian capacity for empathy. The tragedy of the victims of the bridge collapse, as well as the pain of their families, is not under question. It is the intensity of the Australian public and media interest in this particular tragedy, as other disasters and crises that require our urgent attention and reflection continue unabated, which is interesting.

In Iraq, also on that Thursday, the news was also grim. In a town outside Baghdad, a suicide bomber drove an explosive laden car into a line of new recruits queuing to join the state's police force, an act which has become inherently risky in the new Iraq. A reported 13 people, police and civilians, died. Scores more were injured. But the bloodshed didn't end there. In Baghdad, also on Thursday, a series of bomb attacks left at least 70 people dead, the overwhelming majority of which were civilians. Lives were torn apart, families destroyed and sectarian divisions deepened.

This kind of violence, and the death in Iraq, is so commonplace that it no longer captures our attention. The reports on the civilian death toll since the US-led invasion in 2003 vary so widely that it becomes easier to not engage. Indeed, the sheer number of deaths somehow dehumanises the victims. The online resource, Iraq Body Count, places the reported number of civilian deaths in Iraq at between 68,470 and 74,900. Comprehending or contextualising death on this scale is hard, particularly in a country as peaceful and secure as Australia. Put in a way that makes sense in sports mad Melbourne, the number of dead Iraqis would nearly fill the MCG.

The war in Iraq, and its horrific associated death toll, has become old news. The relegating

of Iraqi suffering to the back pages of the daily papers appears to feed into a long-held tendency to accept war and death as somehow inevitable or worse yet, 'natural', in the Middle East. Iraq's messy sectarian politics, the constant emergence of new factions, the unending killings have all served to distance us from the humanity of those involved.



The Australian media, indeed all media, merely reflects the interests and concerns of the community of which it is a part. In terms of representation, what Thursday, August 2 2007 demonstrated is that the value which we ascribe to human suffering, and indeed human life, in the global community is not equitable.

In this case, death in Minnesota and death in Iraq have been judged by disparate standards. The Americans affected by the bridge collapse were able to put their stories forward in English and draw on the specter of the unforeseen, unimaginable accident — literally the wrong place, wrong time scenario- which terrifies us all. By contrast, the Iraqi civilians caught up in a complex political crisis are increasingly dismissed as participants in their own disaster. In the words of Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, Iraqis should 'take responsibility for Iraq.' In a society where police recruits are targeted by suicide bombers and death, poverty and political alienation are features of daily life, this has proven difficult.

If media coverage does indeed reflect the interests of the community, then this suggests that there are serious and problematic differences in how, as Australians, we respond to the loss of human life in different parts of the world.

Laying out the Catholic response to Work Choices

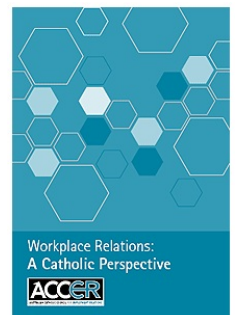
FEATURES

Workplace Relations

Brian Lawrence

The Federal Government's Work Choices legislation has had a profound impact on Australian employment law and workplace relation. It will be a central issue in this year's Federal election. Work plays an immensely important role in our personal, family and community relations and the way in which work is remunerated and regulated has a broader economic impact.

[*Workplace Relations: A Catholic Perspective*](#) has been published by the Australian Catholic Council for Employment Relations (ACCER), an agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, for two principal purposes: to explain Catholic social teaching on work and employment-related issues and, on the basis of that teaching, to make a contribution to the national debate about employment law and workplace relations.



In November 2005, the Bishops published a statement on aspects of Work Choices debate. In the statement, they noted that the debate had caused 'many of us to reflect on the fundamental values that should underpin our workplaces and society as a whole' and the need for economic growth to 'provide prosperity and economic security for all and to provide equity and social cohesion'.

The Bishops were concerned that the legislation, which was then before the Parliament, did not provide a proper balance between the rights of workers and employers in several respects. They said that changes were 'necessary to alleviate some of the undesirable consequences of the legislation, especially in regard to its potential impact on the poor, on the vulnerable and on families'. No such changes were made. The four particular matters raised by the Bishops were minimum wages, minimum conditions of employment and bargaining, unfair dismissals and the role of unions.

Chapter Two of the book is a 'stand alone' review of Catholic social teaching on work and related issues, independent of the Work Choices debate. This review is made under five broad headings: Catholic social teaching on work and the dignity of the worker; the rights of the worker; the principles of Catholic social teaching; Catholic social teaching on economic markets and the role of governments, especially as they relate to workplace relations; and the obligation of Catholics to participate in the making of a more just society.



The review of Catholic social teaching on work and workers' rights identifies four rights which broadly coincide with the four matters identified in the Bishops' Statement: the right to a just wage, the right to protection against unfair agreements, the right to participate in unions and the right to job security. Each of these rights, and the relevant Work Choices provisions, are the subject of separate chapters. In each ACCER finds a continuing basis for the kinds of concerns identified by the Bishops in November 2005.

Workplace Relations: A Catholic Perspective is based on the assessment and belief that a modern market economy, appropriately regulated and supplemented by government, is able to deliver both economic growth and social justice.

The fair and just treatment of workers is an essential requirement of a just society. The obligation of Catholics to work towards the 'just ordering of society', to work for social justice, was explained and emphasised again in Pope Benedict's encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*. The Pope reminded us during his visit to Brazil last May that the Church 'is the advocate of justice and the poor, precisely because it does not identify with politicians nor with partisan interests' and it is the function of the Church to 'form consciences, to be the advocate for justice and truth, to educate in individual and political virtues'.

Workplace Relations: A Catholic Perspective examines the major features of Work Choices in the context of Catholic social teaching and calls for further changes to the legislation in order to protect the poor and vulnerable and to achieve a proper balance between the rights of employers and the rights of workers.

Another of the objectives in publishing the book was to promote the discussion of Catholic social teaching in parishes, schools and Catholic workplaces. The publication contains a series of meeting plans to guide Church groups in discussing Catholic social teaching on work, social and economic issues and social justice. The development of discussion groups in these places is an important means of promoting Catholic social teaching.

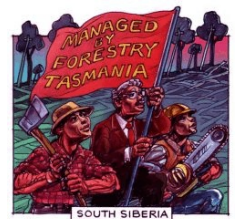
Tasmania like Soviet Siberia

FEATURES

Environment

Mario Rimini

A drive around Tasmania is breathtaking. And heartbreaking. Surrounded by cathedral-like forests, the visitor feels inspired and humbled. Then suddenly the sight sharpens. 'Managed by Forestry Tasmania'. It's easy to miss those signs. Managed. A tricky word. Particularly in Tasmania, where the stunning trees that peer down on the visitor are often just a façade, forestry rarely means looking after forests. The façade cheers and appeases the tourist. But behind lies a battlefield.



'Look carefully behind the tree line', the bus driver advised me. A field of ruins just a few metres from the glorious canopy on the side of the road. Logging roads pierced the forest, and it was then that I also noticed the logging trucks. One, two, three of them. 'Sixty, seventy of them, every day!', the driver was outraged. Yes, they were taking the forest away.

'They normally don't touch the trees close to the highways', an officer explained at a visitors' centre, with a smile that was half embarrassment and half revelation. 'Yes', confirmed a parks officer, 'In the Styx Valley you see 400 year-old trees, up to 80 metres high, being felled. It's heartbreaking'.

'And what about the Northern forests, those that are threatened by the pulp mill in the Tamar Valley?' I ask him. 'The Northern forests are stunning ...! so much beauty,' he sighed. Tasmania's forests are being eaten away.

A thought started to haunt me. Tasmania is like Soviet Siberia. The comparison might prompt a smile. And yet there is a deep and utterly disturbing truth about it. For Tasmania today is a land without politics. No real left or right, no Liberal or Labor parties. What one finds in Tasmania is a powerful economic bureaucracy that lives off the destruction of unique and priceless natural treasures. Apparatchiks are called politicians. A careless administration with no vision and no mission is engaged in politics. Short-sighted greed can be called public interest.



And so we are told Tasmania needs a huge pulp mill. A timber giant has been pushing for it. The Government has hastily approved it. The apparatchiks know best. And those who disagree are enemies of the people. 'A bunch of millionaires' — that's how the Premier of Tasmania dismissed the organisers of a campaign in Sydney to pressure the Federal Minister for

the Environment, Malcolm Turnbull, to seriously assess the pulp mill, before bowing to economic pressures. How disgraceful to speak the language of Stalinism, in 2007, in Australia. Welcome to the past.

Tasmania is like Siberia. The latter was an ancient land too, where the wilderness ruled. It had a natural wealth so humbling it seemed sacred. But the sacred was erased from the land of the Soviets, and was replaced by Stalinism, and the battle to subjugate nature. Siberia quickly became a target. Its forests were plundered, its natural resources given away in the name of “development”. Siberia was the remote province of a rapacious empire. Sustainability was not in the vocabulary back then.

The land was ...æmanaged... by two all-powerful Leviathans — Minvodkhoz and Lespromkhoz. For these, read Hydro and Forestry. The same disregard for beauty pertains. The same lack of a strategic vision.

Siberia is vast, and Tasmania is tiny. Russia’s old growth forests, the largest portion of which is to be found in Siberia, comprise 289 million hectares — and this is still just 25 per cent of the country’s forested area. Tasmania’s native forests stretch for approximately 3.3 million hectares. The whole of Tasmania is but an invisible dot on the map of Siberia. And yet, Tasmania is called to produce more pulp than Siberia.

Siberia awoke and rebelled. It dared to do so while in the grip of a totalitarian regime, in which people had no power, no vote, no voice. Siberians spoke out. Against the plight of their land. Against the theft of their future. They managed to save Lake Bajkal, the jewel of Siberia. The threat was, interestingly enough, a pulp mill on the shores of the lake.



The people of Siberia mobilized. They did what they could do — wrote letters and protested. After saving Lake Bajkal they saved their rivers. The Soviet Hydro wanted to reverse their flow. It proudly called its scheme ‘the Project of the Century’. But the people, again, said no. Lake Bajkal today is a World Heritage site. Like much of Tasmania. Siberia has been scarred, but it is alive because people saved it. This makes the fate of Tasmania even more shameful.

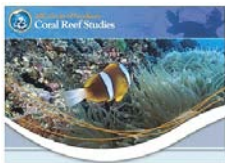
So is Tasmania worse than Siberia? I hope not. There is no excuse for pillaging Tasmania. One can only hope that Tasmanians too will awaken and reject the pulp mill. But time is running out. They might well awaken one day, only to discover that someone robbed Tasmania of its future.

Warmer seas will stress coral

FEATURES

Environment

Michele Gierck



While the need to protect vulnerable people around the globe is widely recognised, people are less aware of the need to protect the vulnerable areas of the earth itself, including its rivers and oceans.

Climate change is perhaps the greatest challenge confronting the international community. The study of oceans and reefs offers us insight into the consequences of not taking immediate action to combat this challenge.

On a recent trip to Heron Island, I visited the Heron Island Research Station (HIRS) and met with Dr Selina Ward, a scientist at the Centre for Marine Studies (CMS) at the University of Queensland, which operates the station.

Research from the CMS and the Australian Research Council Centre for Excellence for Coral Reef Studies (CoECRS) reveals that there are two main threats facing reefs around the globe: rising sea temperatures, which leads to coral bleaching, and increasing ocean acidification.

The Great Barrier Reef is estimated to contribute \$5.4 billion and over 60,000 jobs to the Australian economy. Worldwide, reefs support up to 200 million people.

Dr Ward explained that the level of symbiosis between different inhabitants of the Great Barrier Reef is incredible. There is a high level of mutualism between the fish and the coral, and the HIRS has undertaken substantial research on symbiosis and climate change. Dr Ward explained:

‘The most important symbiosis that we work on as a laboratory is the symbiosis between corals and single celled organism called zooxanthellae’. The zooxanthellae, which lives inside the coral is vital to the coral because the zooxanthellae photosynthesise, that is, they convert the sun’s light into energy, and then give the corals 95 percent of that energy.

Dr Ward adds: ‘They also provide glycerol to make fats and corals can’t get by without fats, and they assist with calcification that lays down the coral skeleton. And for the zooxanthellae, they get somewhere safe to live, they are protected within the cells of the coral, and they also get the nitrogen and phosphorus from the coral excretion. It’s wonderful tight mutualism that goes on.’



However, warming sea levels, which cause coral bleaching, are threatening this relationship.

Dr Ward explains: 'When the corals bleach [it] is due to zooxanthellae loss. If a coral undergoes some kind of stress, the photosynthetic apparatus of the zooxanthellae breaks down and the zooxanthellae disappear from the coral tissue... Even when a coral is bleached completely white it will generally have at least 10 percent of the zooxanthellae population still there. If the stress is for a short time they can recover.'

But if the stress lasts a long time, the coral dies.

Coral bleaching has become increasingly common since the 1980s. The worst mass bleaching event was in 1998 when 16 per cent of the world's corals died-off.

Professor Hoegh-Guldberg, director of the CMS wrote recently: 'Warming waters temperatures are now climbing so high in warmer than normal years that corals exceed their tolerance for temperature and the symbiosis breaks down. This relationship between temperature and mass coral bleaching is so strong that satellites can predict bleaching...by simply using measurements of anomalously high sea temperatures.'

This monitoring in times of fine weather is very accurate, less so if cloud cover and storms occur, blocking UV light reaching the reef.

Professor Hoegh-Guldberg continued: 'Coral reefs are acting for the Earth like the canaries that coalminers used to take with them down mines. When the bird fell off its perch, the miners knew that the air quality was deteriorating and they needed to leave the mine. Coral reefs are telling us that climate change is beginning to have large consequences for natural ecosystems, including rainforests.'

Oceans have absorbed over one-third of all the CO₂ emitted by human activity into the atmosphere. As a result, oceans have become more acidic, and there has been a reduction in the concentration of carbonate ions which corals use to build the calcium carbonate skeletons of coral reefs.

Professor Hoegh-Guldberg, who recently provided advice to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), says that ocean acidification is a great concern.

At the recent Australian Marine Science Association Conference held in Melbourne, Dr Ken Anthony from the CMS and CoECSR made a presentation entitled 'Future Reefs: How Will They Survive the Climate Change Challenge'. The research he presented, which was based on the effects of thermal stress and increased atmospheric concentrations of CO₂ on coral reefs, predicted that the Great Barrier Reef will undergo dramatic change in the next fifty to one hundred years, with corals, many of them now prolific, no longer able to grow, reproduce or survive.

So the key question is this; can corals be resilient enough, or evolve quickly enough to cope with such rapid change? Research at the CMS focuses on this question.

If substantial coral is lost, even in pockets of a reef, then many other reef organisms will also be threatened. The consequences for those who live in the vicinity of reefs around the world could be dire.

There is a lot at stake, and it's not going to be confined to the Great Barrier Reef.

Cousin Betty, the asylum and the EJ Holden

FEATURES

Essay

Roger Trowbridge



I must say I was sad to see the old EJ finally depart. It was a last link to family — to Betty in particular — so I did regret its passing.

That car was Betty's pride and joy. She'd wash and polish it with the care most people reserved for their children. Betty had none. She was a "spinster", so some used to say, and shake their heads. But to us she was just "Bet"; and jolly good fun she was too.

In my memory Betty was always a grown-up cousin, the daughter of my father's older brother. A big and cheerful woman with dark, shining eyes, she occasionally wore her hair in two bunches. This did make her look a bit daggy, but daggy suited an aspect of her personality; and she knew it made us laugh.

When we had a family day they'd all come rolling in: Betty drove the EJ, freshly polished, Auntie Em in front with fox fur round her shoulders, and Uncle Phil behind in suit and tie. Philly, as the grown-ups called him, referred to himself as 'Uncle Poo'. He would press two bob into our hands, saying 'Give your Uncle Poo a hug', and laugh out of the corner of his mouth.

Despite these times of happiness, there always was an undercurrent of melancholy across our extended family; a sadness; a weight of things that never could be said. This was a burden carried by women. Even Betty had her give-away brow. For all the laughter she had a way of wrinkling her forehead. She'd look across at Em, and sometimes say 'Are you OK Mumma?' Mumma would give a tired sigh, but that was all ...

We thought at one stage the EJ may have been Bet's liberation from all this. But she stayed at home, as Em and Philly grew older and more dependent. The hair stayed in bunches. Betty never grew up.

We moved away. When next I heard it was probably too late.

Auntie Em had died while I was away in Canberra, and I knew that Betty would not cope well. 'How is she?' I asked. Following her mother's death poor old Bet had a complete breakdown. Sobbed for days. Became suicidal. The doctor was called. She was sedated, medicated with anti-depressants, and when nothing seemed to work, committed to the Larundel Psychiatric Hospital. My ageing parents had been visiting weekly and were quite wrung out. They could go no further.



I took up visiting duty. It's all new housing now, but then that ancient institution had a foreboding presence: monstrous brick facade, vaulted ceilings, shining linoleum down endless corridors of steel doors, each with its glazed inspection slit. It made me shiver. I was just a relative, innocent of anything to do with mental health, and with only family prejudices to go on. So nothing that was happening to Betty made much sense. I called as often as I could, and always it was the same: sitting, staring, in dressing gown and fluffy slippers. As I approached she tried to smile, but all that came was silent pleading through tired eyes. I asked how she felt, was she feeling better, what had she been doing ... I gave her news from home, but it just seemed so futile ...

We fell to silence.

Then we heard she'd been released. Apparently her medication had pushed Bet passed some psychiatric threshold and she was discharged, as abruptly as she had entered. Nobody believed it would last, but there she was, back in the family home — alone. We wondered how they could do this. Home alone; with no support apart from a little jar of pills. Philly had been taken off to a nursing home. He just couldn't cope by himself, living on jam sandwiches and tea in a kitchen stained yellow from 60 years of tobacco smoke.

We spoke on the phone, and said she should come over for a meal. She said she was doing fine, as women in our family always said.

There is no easy way to tell of the end to Betty's life. It was a tragedy too familiar: a failure of family, of professions, of community, of institutions. The end of life for cousin Bet was as violent, sad, and desperate as it could possibly have been. Her next door neighbour rang late one night and said I should come now. He'd called the police. He found her in the garage, with Philly's old step ladder on its side where it had fallen, and knew there was nothing he could do. I can write no more...!

It fell to me to make the mournful journey to the mortuary. Betty looked more at peace than I had ever seen. Involuntarily, I looked to her brow to see how she was faring. Her brow was smooth. The wrinkles of anxiety around her eyes now were gone.

We joined with Bet for a little funeral — a few family, a few neighbours, a few friends. No-one came from the hospital — the institution had left her where she lay. Was it just me; or was it in the nature of those old asylums, that they should so disable, so disempower, so

desecrate all who entered: doctors, patients, nurses, family? Was there something in the nature of Betty's illness that could not be fixed? Or was there something in the nature of those institutions that they could not do the fixing? I have no answers. But I'm glad that today there is a row of houses where Larundel once stood.

We played some music and said some words of comfort and reassurance to one another. I am now reminded of that funeral gathering on recently reading of an entry in Samuel Lazarus's diary in which he records the burial of a woman killed at Eureka 150 years ago. The article described 'her coffin trimmed with white and followed by a respectable and sorrowing group'. That was us: respectable and sorrowing.

I called the man next door a few weeks later, to see how he was managing. It had not been easy for him. We talked a little, to try and dredge some meaning for each other from those tragic days. At the end of the conversation I thanked him for at least trying to look out for Betty; and asked what had first alerted him? It was the EJ, he said. It had been standing in the driveway for a couple of days. Betty would never have done that. She would never have left it out of the garage.

She loved that car ... I

APEC good for business, not so good for humanity

FEATURES

The Pacific

Anne Lanyon



The theme for the 2007 Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum is 'Strengthening our community: Building a sustainable future', an honourable one. The questions should be asked who's involved in the co-operation and why, and sustainable for whom? Visit the APEC website and it'll tell you that this is the most significant event of an economic kind that Australia has hosted.

Look further and you'll get a glimpse of the priority the Australian Government has for things economic, acknowledging the role the business community has in driving and shaping the APEC agenda. As well as the meeting of 21 national leaders from the Asia Pacific rim, there will be a Business Summit for the region's most prominent business leaders: an invitation only event initiated by Australia. APEC is good for business.

APEC's agenda is trade liberalisation and economic growth. The preparations have indicated what kind — BIG! Big security, big business, big voices, big spending! According to AFTINET, the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network, 'The cost to taxpayers of hosting APEC is now reaching \$330 million, \$170 million of which will be spent on security arrangements. There are even greater costs to democratic rights and civil liberties.' Though APEC makes recommendations about issues affecting the whole society it does not engage with civil society groups. Is this the way to strengthen our community and build a sustainable future?

The social and economic differences between the 21 countries are huge and the challenges many and complex. In 2003, Dr Mahatir from Malaysia voiced the concerns of the poorer countries, telling the rich nations they were not giving due consideration to the poor nations. On the table are the issues of climate change, energy, security and non-proliferation. When the interests of the profitability of large corporations are at stake, human rights and the needs of all are further down the pecking order.

Climate change is the most urgent issue. Clive Hamilton in his book [*Scorcher: The Dirty Politics of Climate Change*](#) details the influence of a 'greenhouse mafia' of executives from the mining, coal, aluminium and energy sectors on government decision making. He points out how the alternatives to the fossil fuel industry, insert and the renewable energy sector were marginalised in Australia and denied research funding. He describes the Australian

Government's strategy on climate change as 'do nothing at home and work hard to prevent others taking action.'

After 11 years of obfuscation and denial, Prime Minister Howard has finally been forced to acknowledge that climate change must be acted upon and has made it a focus of APEC. Under the banner of economic cooperation, the 21 countries will come up with a Declaration on Climate Change, Energy Security and Clean Development. A copy of the draft statement was leaked last week. On the surface it sounds hopeful for those who are looking for leadership in a new sustainable direction. Cutting through the persuasive language however, it is business as usual.

It does recognise the need for reduction in energy intensity and for research into renewable energy which, though late, is positive. But there are no firm specific targets to cut greenhouse gases, just aspirational targets with focuses on improving energy efficiency, using nuclear energy and so-called clean coal technology, and increasing forests to use as carbon sinks.

SHAPE OUTLINE OF APEC LEADERS' DECLARATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY SECURITY AND CLEAN DEVELOPMENT

The Challenge Poses the APEC Action

- Economic growth, energy security and clean development are fundamental and interrelated issues for APEC countries
- Continued rate of increasing greenhouse gas emissions will have significant adverse impacts on the environment and human health
- High potential for energy efficiency improvements and low-carbon technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Nuclear energy, clean coal technology and other low-carbon technologies are key to reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Clean development mechanisms are essential to support developing countries in their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

The document is the result of the Energy Working Group which received significant input from Rio Tinto, BHP Billiton and Chevron Oil Company but no corresponding input from environment or community groups. It is clear that the APEC agenda on climate change is dominated by the interests of the USA, Australia and those who want to sidestep the Kyoto agreement. Using the term sustainability in this context is about maintaining destructive consumerism.

The scientists tell us we have till 2015 to reverse the most damaging effects of climate change. The need is to act fast. We need a paradigm shift now. Sustainability must include a consistent ethic of life, not the economic bottom line for the big end of town. Archbishop Migliore in a statement to the United Nations put it well, 'In a word, the world needs an ecological conversion so as to examine critically current models of thought, as well as those of production and consumption.'

Harry Potter star shines in *December Boys*

FILM REVIEW

Drama

Tim Kroenert

December Boys: 102 minutes. Rated: PG. Director: Rod Hardy. Starring: Daniel Radcliffe, Jack Thompson, Victoria Hill, [website](#) .



If location alone were enough to make a brilliant film, then *December Boys* would be destined for greatness. The picturesque South Australian coastal areas where this drama unfolds provide an almost magical backdrop for a classic coming-of-age tale.

In fact, while treading familiar narrative territory, taking its characters from a state of innocence to one of knowledge and experience, *December Boys* finds transcendence in moments of near fantasy.

One late 1960s summer, four young orphans — shy, freckled Misty (Lee Cormie), rambunctious Spark (Christian Byers), Spit (James Fraser), and their brooding, older friend, Maps (Radcliffe) — are given leave from their outback orphanage to spend their holidays in a tiny seaside community. The boys are entrusted to the care of eccentric seaman Bandy (Thompson) and his stern wife Skipper (Kris McQuade).

Amid the cliffs and caves of the charming cove, the boys encounter a diverse cast of characters, including stunt rider Fearless (Sullivan Stapleton) and his exotic wife Teresa (Hill); and a grumpy fisherman called Shellback, who's on a Captain Ahab-esque quest to land an ancient fish of mythical proportions.

Misty's inner journey is at the heart of the film; he's hoping the childless Fearless and Teresa might adopt him, although he's initially naïve to the personal difficulties that prevent them from immediately wanting to do so.

But strangely, given that the role has obviously been bulked up due to the casting of Harry Potter himself, a subplot regarding Maps' sexual awakening at the (ahem) hands of lithe young local, Lucy (Teresa Palmer), proves to be the most engaging.



Having been raised in a Catholic orphanage, the institution's spiritual teachings colour the boys' experiences. Misty's quirky visions of the Mother of God, or of nuns doing cartwheels down the beach, are a highlight of the film.

And Misty and Maps' separate storylines converge around a mystical, shared vision during the climactic moments of the film, which offers a kind of emotional and spiritual catharsis and affects their futures in surprising ways.

December Boys contains many powerful and humorous scenes, enlivened by strong performances (the Harry Potter films notwithstanding, Radcliffe is a serious talent) and the aforementioned instances of magical realism.

However, despite these occasional moments of near greatness, the film suffers due to a lack of focus and an underdeveloped and ultimately unsatisfying plot.

This is one of those movies that are virtually ruined by the last three minutes or so. The surprise resolution of the subplot regarding Misty's desire to be adopted all but lays waste to the emotional journey his character has taken the audience on.

Meanwhile, a cheesy epilogue featuring the boys returning to the cove as old men could have been excised completely, to the film's betterment.

Three Jesus poems

POETRY

Knocking

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock...

Revelation 3: 20

If I could ignore this Man
Who stands at my door and knocks,
I could parcel the rest of it up
And put it away in a box,
Like the clothes that are now outworn,
The shoes that no longer fit,
The books in childhood loved
When I was content to sit
And hear of Aladdin and Jack,
Hansel, Gretel, and Faithful John,
Before falling asleep with magic
Pillow to dream them on...
Though I busy myself for a while
With the daily ebb and flow
Of things that have 'got ot be done'
Nevertheless, I know
That if I imagine that time
Will end this whole affair,
When I open the door, behold,
He'll still be standing there!

Then, what must I do (although
The lights in the house may be dim)
But invite Him to enter and at last
Be honoured to sup with Him?

— *Bruce Dawe*

seeing all fish

if Jesus was
a swimmer he'd
be you, blue flip-
pers for sandals,
sinewed torso
arrowing the
surf, bearded lips
sucking at now,
at one in the
sea's wilderness,
smoothing the thrill
and ripple, you,
seeing all fish,
dreaming of loaves

— *Kevin Gillam*

The Thirteenth

Matthew 4: 17-22

He kept the shell
afterwards
showing the fluted puzzle
of its coil

in an ancient but complicated
journey
a spiral of intent
to a convoluted heart
the legacy of sea-flown days
the perplexity of tides
torn nets
and the caprice of fish
four in the afternoon
still a dilemma of deep water
with all of them resigned
to the silence between the words
from him with lures for eyes
sure footedness for ships and sand
bent on collecting
but more than beachcombing
leaving him with a dock of boats
worrying at a broken shell
in his palm after the dejection
of not being called.

— *Jeff Guess*