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Russians voting against democracy

INTERNATIONAL

Ben Coleridge

Russia has voted. The results are well known — and also the discrepancies in the process. The streets of Russian cities are draped in Unified Russia flags, leaflets are strewn on pavements, and celebrations continue for the 'Nashi' youth. For four weeks, the election campaign has showered us with activism, rallies, arrests and advertising. At the State University in Novgorod I have been showering my students with questions.

My role as a conversational English assistant means all kinds of topics are open for discussion. In the lead-up to the election, teaching became ever more interesting. My students are future interpreters. Their intelligence is considerable. Most speak fluent English and German, some also Swedish and Portuguese. They are well travelled, the majority having visited the US and Europe. Many want to work for the United Nations or in government. They are likely to play a significant role in their nation's future.

With the campaign growing increasingly vigorous, I began to put questions to the packed classes. My first was 'Will you vote?' Some said they would, but did not yet know for whom. The only party they knew of was Putin's Unified Russia. No great surprise, given that the prospect of a 60-70 per cent majority for Unified Russia has been broadcast across TV and radio airwaves, and 60 per cent of prime time television goes to Unified Russia.

Others hesitated and told me they had not given it any thought. The last group simply shook their heads, regretful, almost apologetic.

My question to this group was 'why not?' The most common response was: 'Even if we vote, nothing will change. The same party will always win. Our vote means nothing.'

Apathetic regret seems characteristic of many of the young people I have come across in St Petersburg and Novgorod. In everyday classes it is difficult to trigger passionate response. I have to search for issues that might inflame students' interest.

For the first few weeks they were surprised at my questions. When I pressed them they often became distressed, bursting into the common refrain: 'This is Russia, democracy doesn't work here.'

On the Monday morning after scores of opposition activists were arrested in St Petersburg by Interior Ministry forces, the topic in class was free speech. Again, the knee-jerk reaction

came into play: 'It's not democracy, it's not freedom, but compare Russia today with what it was like during the Yeltsin years. Our economy and lifestyle have improved, so why worry about free speech?'

The feedback was more varied when I put to them the comments of international election monitors. Some echoed Vladimir Putin's sentiments, that foreign observers and other countries should keep their noses out of Russian affairs.

Herein lies the paradox. Many Russians will freely criticise their politicians and the electoral process. But any intimation of 'foreign interference' meets with defiance. It is curious that this is the point where apathy dissolves.

Breaking through the wall of nonchalance and apathy is a challenge which can seem insurmountable. The university environment doesn't help. Three days before the election a teacher walked into my class where we had been talking about how students could be activists. She began to hand out Unified Russia 'how to vote' cards.

Later, in the staff room, I asked another teacher what this meant. 'Unified Russia sponsors the university,' she said. 'They've just bought us new desks and chairs.'

I had been thinking about my students' lack of idealism. I understood now that the university itself, which should be a centre for critical thought and diversity of opinion, was drained of dynamism.

The election seemed anti-climactic in Novgorod, perhaps because we'd known the result for months. Still, the outcome produced interesting reactions. The facts coming to light post-election presented a bleak picture to any students even remotely interested. The imbalance in the new Duma was an unavoidable fact.

Yesterday, in class, as we discussed the election results, there was an outpouring of new feeling. Some students remained uninterested, but the majority agreed the result was negative and went so far as to say that something must be done.

This dissent took the form of words only. In other places I have seen an interest and involvement in social issues that gives cause for optimism about Russian democratic activism.

I spent the night before the election at a concert organised by a student group committed to fighting HIV/AIDS. They're a lively, interesting group who worked hard to see the concert become reality. Everyone from the group had input into the planning. Hundreds of students from the town, my own students included. The atmosphere was festive and lively.

When the leader of a student anti HIV/AIDS organisation got up to speak, the response was unanimous cheering. Badges were bought, money donated and phone numbers added to a long list.

So all is not lost; there exists amongst the students a feeling for the problems that surround

them. They have only to convince themselves they can play a role in solving them.

The election will cause widespread pessimism among those interested in Russian democracy. Certainly the situation seems dire. But progress is being made, the democratic spirit is in motion. Since election weekend I have felt more positive about the future. There is room for hope.

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Labor honeymoon could last

POLITICS

Tony Smith

The election of a new government is a cause for hope. A party in power for an extended period inevitably loses touch with people and their concerns. A new government enjoys public goodwill as it tackles a residue of issues, resentments and injustices. Whether this honeymoon period lasts months or dissipates quickly is a measure of the sincerity with which the new government operates. Hopes are high for Prime Minister Rudd and Labor.

In 1996, most Australians hoped the Howard Government would establish its credibility. Many were soon disillusioned. Governments breed cynicism when they denigrate the opposition in parliament. When instead of answering questions they attack the motivations of the questioner, they show disdain not just for their parliamentary opponents but for all Australians interested in the issue raised.

Oppositions attack governments, as they should, but their criticisms must be based on sincere concerns about government behaviour. When a party makes the transition to government, they must stand by their former statements. If they expect the opposition to honour the electoral mandate, they must keep their campaign promises and not rationalise their mendacity with talk of 'core' and 'non-core' commitments.

New governments must adopt higher standards than those they criticised in their predecessors. So, when attacked for silencing dissent, the new government cannot respond that this was exactly what their opponents did. No opposition promises to behave exactly like the government of the day, and it is hypocritical to justify poor behaviour by citing such precedents.

There is cause for optimism in Labor's determination to refresh the machinery of government. The Howard Government promised to lift ministerial standards, but quickly lost half-a-dozen through abuses of allowances. Labor has promised to reduce MPs' allowances, permissible levels of undeclared donations to parties and government advertising expenditure, and to improve access to government information. These measures should halt the slide in the respect in which voters hold the political class.

Labor backbenchers are, commendably, avoiding the temptation to gloat. They should heed the comments of Coalition MPs following the election defeat of 24 November. Some Liberals have revealed they wanted Prime Minister Howard to stand aside. Some have admitted Coalition leadership was out of touch on many issues, including industrial relations, climate change, and the hugely important ethical matter of reconciliation.

If these MPs voiced their concerns in closed sessions of the government parties, they did not make their positions public. Some dissenters, including Liberal Petrou Georgiou and Nationals Senator Barnaby Joyce did so, and their consciences should be clear. It is doubtful the same can be said for others. For example, those who supported the invasion of Iraq and are no longer in parliament will have time to reflect on their motivations.

Labor MPs will best serve the people by speaking clearly and strongly and not allowing considerations of partisan advantage to dull their consciences. Indeed, in the long run, governments benefit from internal dissent. The Howard Government's industrial relations legislation became unpopular because it was extreme and ideologically driven. Because the Government had majorities in both the House and the Senate, bills were passed. Genuine disagreement from government backbenchers could have moderated the bills and made them more acceptable.

Commentators also face new challenges. They must show that their criticisms have been fair and unbiased. They must give credit where it seems due but also indicate where the new government repeats the errors of the old.

Just prior to the election, for example, Julia Gillard, now Deputy Prime Minister, was asked about asylum seekers. She stated that Labor would continue the policy of turning away seaworthy ships. The unfortunate aspect of this policy is that it could have disastrous results.

When the SIEV-X (Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel) sank with the loss of hundreds of lives, the Coalition refused to accept responsibility. Yet it always maintained that its policies were designed to send strong messages to 'people smugglers'. If that is so, then said 'smugglers' must have known Australia would be less likely to turn away unseaworthy vessels. The policy must result in a temptation to load people onto unseaworthy boats.

Thus some repsonsibility for the loss of SIEV-X can be placed squarley upon the Coalition policy. The policy must have the same potentially disastrous faults under Labor.

Over the past decade, the political lexicon has been dominated by negative terms. It is to be hoped the election has put an end to tactics such as the wedge, dog whistle politics, weasel talk, the leaking of confidential personal information about government critics, application of the gag to end parliamentary debate, disproportionate allocation of grants to government marginal seats, attacks on the justice system and unprincipled populism.

Every government must make difficult decisions, but so long as it behaves with integrity, its

honeymoon should last many months.

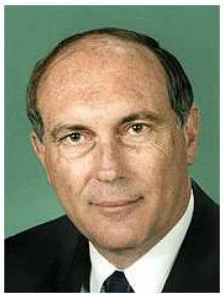
Most Australians recognise that a society can be judged by the way it treats its weakest members. Over the past decade, the government's priorities ensured the strongest were able to enjoy the fruits of their superiority. As long as the Rudd Government works ethically to change that agenda, it will attract widespread support.

Nationals need Warren Truss to live up to his name

COLUMNS

By the way

Brian Matthews



'New Leadership' indeed. Take Warren Truss, for instance. He is not a man of charisma and probably doesn't claim to be. He is a modest worker in the National Party vineyard. His website shows him addressing Parliament watched by a flinty-looking John Howard and a characteristically sour-faced Peter Costello. Truss himself looks intent, dedicated and oblivious as he leans into the microphone.

The website lists his achievements as welcoming numerous, hefty federal government grants to his electorate of Wide Bay. Inexplicably, there is no mention of the event with which he will be forever associated: the strange voyage of the *Cormo Express*, the shipload of Australian sheep that no Middle Eastern port would accept.

Revealing his poetic side when the ship was turned away from Kuwait, Truss explained the sheep were beginning 'their long, lonely journey down the gulf'. As the responsible minister, he later repressed his lyricism and reverted to the argot of Canberra: 'We are still examining the options of unloading the sheep at an offshore island,' he explained to persistent journalists. And, in case they missed it, 'We haven't ruled an offshore island out of the equation.'

His genuine concern was such that no-one had the heart to point out the difficulty of finding an onshore island.

The saga of the sheep was Truss's defining hour, and it's a pity he has chosen to bury it beneath a history of handouts that the desperate and moribund Coalition was throwing at various electorates in its last days.

Undoubtedly it was the memory of his conduct during the *Cormo Express* affair, his alert appreciation of its symbolic aspects, and his eye for its drama that swayed his National Party colleagues towards him in their search for a new leader.

'We will say which sheep can return to our country,' they remembered him saying, 'and the circumstances under which they do so.' 'Ah, those were the days,' they said to each other, and elected him, choosing to ignore the fact that, unlike his predecessor, he could not be credibly photographed astride a horse.

As for the satiric possibilities inherent in his name, Truss rises above them with the aplomb that allowed him to ignore the morose expressions of John Howard and Peter Costello as he traced, for a rapt Parliament, the ovine tragedy unfolding in the romantic Middle East.

A truss may well be a support for a hernia, but it is also a type of bridge capable of withstanding stress, tension and dynamic loads. Warren Truss will experience all these and more since, if the National Party were a hospital patient it would be very close to the palliative injection of morphine to ease pain and smooth the journey across the Styx.

Not to be outdone, the defeated Liberal Party has also embarked on New Leadership and, like their Coalition partners, they've gone for a name with cachet — Nelson, forsooth.

Though people immediately think of the famous sea Lord — 'Kiss me Hardy', 'Look after Lady Hamilton', and all that — the more pointed reference is obviously to the Lord Nelson Brewery Hotel, Sydney's oldest pub, where the list of boutique beers stands, like an obscure Da Vinci code, as both Liberal history and rallying call.

'Trafalgar Pale Ale', though a reminder of great triumphs in the past, has an 'emerging bitterness' in its maltiness. The 'extra special' 'Victory Bitter' combines euphoric memories of victory with the sudden shock of defeat, though hope lies in its being 'generously hopped with Fuggles', a gnomic promise allowing all under the New Leadership to look forward to 'a spicy bitter finish'.

'Old Admiral' recognises that John Howard was once at the helm, but sloughs off the past with its 'generous hop bitterness'. And 'Nelson's Blood' perfectly captures the new leader's style and temperament: 'rich and creamy' with 'a smooth finish' which, however, becomes 'roasted' on certain palates.

There is much here to encourage and sustain, especially for those who, like *The Australian*'s Dennis Shanahan, could until the very last see the pinprick glint of hope amid surrounding impenetrable gloom. (I wish Shanahan could now be transferred to the sports pages: his capacity to translate endless drubbings into imminent triumph would be perfect for encouraging a certain football team I have in mind.)

But for all their buoyancy and 'born-to-rule' assumptions, Truss and Nelson will need to be generously hopped and Fuggled to achieve their aim of being a 'one-term opposition'. There will be a good deal of Nelson's blood and extra special bitterness before they drop anchor at some offshore island of electoral nirvana.

Hope for deforestation breakthrough

ENVIRONMENT

Sean McDonagh

My interest in ecology stems from my experience of working with the T'boli people in the southern Philippines, from 1980 to 1991. Within a few months of arriving in Lake Sebu, where the T'bolis live, I was convinced that protecting what remained of the tropical forest in the area was vital for the wellbeing of the T'boli and the settlers who lived in the lowlands.

Tropical deforestation has taken a huge toll on the Philippines. When the Spaniards left at the end of the 19th century almost 75 per cent of the tropical forests were still intact. The onslaught began in earnest after World War II. Companies were given permission to clear-cut large tracts of forests. The local tribal peoples were never asked for permission to destroy their habitats, which they had managed for hundreds and, in some cases, thousands of years. A few people made enormous fortunes, while the majority of the Filipinos and the environment suffer.

Today, less than 10 per cent of the Philippines is covered with tropical forests. Sustainable agriculture in a tropical archipelago like the Philippines demands about 50 per cent forest cover. Without it soil erosion will increase dramatically and expensive irrigation systems will become useless, because the forests will not secrete water slowly into the rivers to sustain the flow during the dry season.

The legacy of that plunder is now evident every time a typhoon causes flooding, massive landslides and terrible loss of life, especially among the poor. Filipinos could have managed our forests in a sustainable way and, in doing so, secured long-term employment for hundreds of thousands of Filipino families.

What happened in the Philippines is mirrored world wide. Between 2000 and 2005 tropical forests disappeared at approximately 10.4 million hectares each year. These forests contain about 70 per cent of the world's biodiversity, and about 60 million people, many of whom are among the poorest on the planet.

A last minute reprieve for tropical forests may emerge in discussions around the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bali. IPCC scientists reckon 20 per cent of greenhouse emissions globally come from forest destruction. So stablising greenhouse gas emissions at safe levels requires significant reduction in the current rate of deforestation.

One initative which is being pursued is REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation). REDD has a number of priorities. It aims at preserving forests that contain significant levels of biodiversity, or are important for what are now called 'ecosystems services' — an objectionable term that puts a money value on natural systems including water regulation, flood control and the protection of local species.

If verifiable and credible emission reductions can be generated, the carbon markets could provide some revenue for REDD initiatives. According to Urip Hudiono writing for *The Jakarta Post*on 30 November, Indonesia could net US$2 billion in potential annual revenues from preserving the country's forests and offering them as a carbon dioxide sink on the global carbon market.

If REDD is to succeed, the financial benefits must be, at least, on a par with the current economic incentives that are driving deforestation at unprecedented rates. During my time in the T'boli hills, I often came across reforestation proposals, from government and other agencies, that completely overlooked the fact that tribal people both lived in the forests and lived off their resources. Any REDD initiative must address the needs of rural forest dwellers and indigenous people.

In my own experience ownership is a crucial issue. When a community owns the land there is a huge incentive to protect it. It is unrealistic to expect people to protect a forest for the benefit of other people, unless they have some level of ownership of the forest.

On a national level, if countries such as the Philippines are expected to promote policies that do not harm climate through deforestation, they will require additional financial support to achieve such goals.

Many of the NGOs here at Bali argue that REDD should have a stand-alone fund, outside bodies such as the World Bank. They are also worried the new money might be diverting from existing aid flows such as a country's Official Development Assistance (ODA) program.

There are complex issues involved in developing REDD, from designing monitoring mechanisms, to choosing the best financial instruments. But this complexity should not stand in the way of an agreement, because it will benefit rich and poor countries alike.

REDD could deliver multiple benefits in the area of climate change, protecting biodiversity and securing a sustainable agricultural base for countries where food security is becoming a major issue.

Live Earth goes with the consumer flow

MUSIC

Tim Kroenert

Mainstream media trained a cynical eye on the post Live Earth clean-up. Evening news programs broadcast images of hundreds of thousands of discarded plastic drinking cups.

Live Earth had united popular musicians around the world for a series of concerts highlighting climate change. The implication of this post-concert footage was obvious: in an oblivious act of irony, these damn greenies had contributed in most reckless fashion to the very problem they were trying to confront.

Idealists read things differently. Live Earth — an otherwise carbon neutral occasion — was an extreme weather event of the global conscience. Within a few short hours it thundered around the world and rained its message upon millions of people. That message: wake up to the reality of climate change. It made such an almighty noise there could hardly be a snoozer left in the house. A bit of extra waste was no big deal.

I was one of those idealists. Now I'm not so sure.

During the past week the organisers of Live Earth have weighed into the marketplace with a commemorative CD/DVD set, compiling performances from each of the Live Earth concerts. Profits will assist the Alliance for Climate Protection — a worthy cause, given the impending climate crisis.

But consider the quantities of plastics and other non-biodegradable products used to produce the disks and their packaging, and it is fair to wonder whether the costs might outweigh the benefits.

The 2005 Australia Institute report *Wasteful Consumption in Australia*found that during the preceding year, Australians wasted $412 million on books and CDs that were never used. That amount may seem dwarfish compared with the $1.56 billion spent on unused clothes, but is still a substantial bill in anyone's bankbook.

However apart from the potential for physical waste, the release of a Live Earth CD/DVD is also ironic from a societal perspective.

One of the causes of global warming is Western society's addiction to consumption. From food to fashion, fitness to fun, we live to spend. We produce an intemperate amount of waste

because we consume intemperately. In that regard, the release of a CD/DVD to promote an environmental cause is inherently ironic.

I'm not meaning to point fingers — I'm guilty too. I love CDs. Browsing a good music store is my idea of a good time. I'll readily swipe my credit card in order to take home one of those small plastic or paper packages of tunes, leaf through the cover art, and marvel at the appearance of the CD itself — they're just so shiny!

My CD collection is substantial. I've resisted the rise of digital music not only because of reduced sound quality or out of an egalitarian concern for artists' rights. The truth is, I love the CD as an artifact.

Clive Hamilton — one of the prime movers behind the Australia Institute report — would no doubt have something to say about this. In a 2002 interview with Radio National's environment program *Earthbeat*, he discussed the role of branding as a way of stimulating and maintaining consumer dependence upon products.

'It's trying to find our vulnerabilities and inadequacies ... and trying to position the goods that they're trying to sell so that they appeal to our vulnerabilities, to our inadequacies. In a sense we've become addicted to consumption as a way of trying to resolve, solve our personal inadequacies, to consume our way to happiness, even though we all know at a deeper level, it won't work.'

Live Earth is a different sort of brand. It appeals less to people's vulnerabilities than to their conscience. Music lovers who are feeling an ethical twinge regarding their contribution to global warming may feel they can purchase such a CD without guilt. In this way, the Live Earth CD, consciously or not, uses misdirection to contribute to the very problem it professes to oppose.

At best, the release of a CD/DVD — of 'music as product' — would seem to give tacit approval to the systems of greed and material possession that have allowed the Western world to advance and flourish at the expense of poorer nations and the environment.

I am an admirer of the valuable work represented by Live Earth and the Alliance for Climate Protection. In the bulk of instances this good work outweighs mere good intentions (which in isolation, as we all know, pave the way to a hotter and less humane world).

There is also something to be said for using existing infrastructure and mediums of communication to proliferate a humane message. But there's a fine line between being within a corrupt system, and being part of that system.

With the mess left by Live Earth concertgoers a persistent image in naysayers' minds, the folk behind Live Earth would do well to be wary of that line, so that their valuable message should not trip over it.

Time for due process in East Timor assistance

COLUMNS

The Meddling Priest

Frank Brennan

There have been changes of government in Australia and East Timor in recent months. These changes present fresh challenges and new possibilities in the relationship across the Timor trough.

East Timor has had a dreadful couple of years with civil unrest, an emergency resulting in tens of thousands of internally displaced citizens, and an election which did not result in a smooth transfer of legitimate political power. The new Australian government would do well to ensure that appropriate processes are followed in providing ongoing assistance to the new Timorese government and Timorese society.

Australian and New Zealand troops are still patrolling the streets of Dili. They are known as the ISF — the international security force. They are on the streets at the invitation of President Horta and Prime Minister Gusmao who joined the President of the National Parliament with a signed request for assistance in May 2007.

Eighteen months on, there has been no imperative for Australian forces to exchange berets and operate under UN auspices as occurred with the original INTERFET engagement after the 1999 popular consultation leading to independence. Post Iraq, John Howard and Alexander Downer were happy to proceed in a more unilateral fashion, responding to requests from their friends in Dili. Maintenance of this status quo is risky.

The FRETILIN party and many of its supporters still feel cheated by President Horta's decision to invite Gusmao to form a government, even though FRETILIN outpolled Gusmao's party.

Most Australians argue that Gusmao was entitled to form government because he was able to marshal a coalition of parties with a majority of votes in the parliament. But Mari Alkatiri, the head of FRETILIN, which got the most votes of any party, remains adamant that under the Timorese constitution he should have been given the first option to form a government. He thinks he would have been ultimately able to form a coalition.

Having missed out, he and his supporters continue to question the legitimacy of the Gusmao government. They also question the legitimacy of Horta and Gusmao's request to

have Australian troops continuing to patrol Dili. In July Horta asked the Howard Government to allow Australian troops to remain at least until the end of 2008.

Surprisingly, the original agreement relating to the Australian troop presence was never approved by the Timorese Council of Ministers. Neither has it been approved by the National Parliament. Key FRETILIN members are adamant that such an agreement is not constitutionally valid unless it has the approval either of the Council of Ministers or of the National Parliament, preferably both.

It is troubling that these constitutional procedures may have been bypassed so that the Australia-Timor agreement did not have to be presented to the Australian parliament in accordance with our own procedures for international agreements and treaties.

The change of government in Canberra provides clear air for revisiting the terms of the agreement. If Australian troops are to serve on the streets of Dili but not as part of a UN peacekeeping force, they should serve only if their presence is approved by the Timorese Council of Ministers and its National Parliament.

The farcical stand-off between the rebel leader Alfredo Reinado and the authorities in East Timor highlights the problem. President Horta has abused the judiciary for wanting to pursue criminal charges against Reinado. Senior FRETILIN figures have criticised Brigadier John Hutcheson, the Australian military commander, who decided to withdraw his troops from the Reinado manhunt in response to a request from President Horta.

There is a growing perception among local critics of the Timor government that the Australian troops are the personal troops of the President given their presence without full constitutional mandate and their ready response to Horta's arbitrary command, which showed little respect for the traditional separation of powers between the Executive and the judiciary.

Now is the time for Australia to clarify the terms of its military presence. Eighteen months since the original crisis, there are still thousands of displaced persons living under plastic tents in Dili. The situation is not stable. Politically orchestrated East-West divisions have been played out on the streets, in political parties, and in the Timor military. It is not fair to Australian troops to have them patrolling in constitutionally suspect circumstances.

The recent oil and gas dispute over the Timor Sea provides a salutary lesson. There are many Australians as well as Timorese who wonder about the fairness of the final deal thrashed out by the Howard and Alkatiri governments. Despite the complexity of the issue, a majority of citizens in both countries were reassured by the overwhelming vote of the Timor parliament across party lines to support the final outcome.

Critics of the new government and president are suspicious that Gusmao and Horta are too close to Australia. Thus they have reason to be suspicious of arrangements with Australia

when those arrangements have not been approved by the parliament or the Council of Ministers. Transparent arrangements following the letter and spirit of the Timor constitution could save everyone grief in both countries.

Climate change obscures the real moral crisis

POLITICS

Scott Stephens

The 2007 election saw the Howard Government caught in a perfect electoral storm. Boredom disconnected the Coalition from the electorate, effectively muting any further policy initiatives or repackaging of their message, while WorkChoices and the refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol left the Government stranded in a kind of moral no-man's land without recourse to some higher agenda or greater moral cause.

But what we witnessed this election year was not simply the demise of a government that had fallen out of step with the values of the electorate. The Howard Government was a casualty of one of the more pronounced trends in global politics today: the simultaneous banalisation of domestic politics and globalisation of public morality.

As the role of national governments is dwarfed by the enormity of trans-national economic flows and the environmental crisis, and as people's habits are more and more enmeshed in the matrix of consumerism, any immediate sense of morality becomes de-localised and cast onto the global stage.

The core imperatives of this global morality are obvious: to mitigate the ravages of free market capitalism on the disadvantaged, and to arrest the effects of greenhouse gases on our environment. Needless to say, WorkChoices and the Howard Government's failure to ratify the Kyoto Protocol were unforgivable in view of these imperatives.

By contrast, Kevin Rudd shrewdly aligned himself with the prevailing moral sentiment by revamping his social democratic faÃ§ade, all the while pledging his allegiance to strong economic growth.

'Neo-liberals speak of the self-regarding values of security, liberty and prosperity,' he said. 'To these, social democrats would add other-regarding values of equity, solidarity and sustainability ... these additional values are seen as mutually reinforcing, because the allocation of resources in pursuit of equity ... solidarity and sustainability assist in creating the human, social and environmental capital necessary to make a market economy function effectively.'

This statement points to the substance of our moral crisis. The values Rudd espouses merely grease the skids of the capitalist machine.

Similarly, for Rudd, Al Gore and most other climate change centrists, the solution to our current environmental woes lies not in radically curtailing our industrial or consumerist habits, but in some supplemental technology that will neutralise the global economy's addiction to high emissions.

The belief in both instances is that the answer to our global problems lies further down the road on which we are already travelling; that capitalism is the cure for the disease capitalism unleashed.

This is not just impotent. It is positively harmful because it gives the appearance of activity and conveys a sense of morality, even while we neglect our most fundamental moral obligations.

Leading environmentalist James Lovelock has condemned the half measures paraded by Kyoto signatories as little more than 'each nation trying to gain brownie points for its diligence'. Our situation demands more serious measures. As Lovelock maintained in his response to the 2007 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, contiguous yet sustainable development is no longer an option:

'I see our predicament as like that faced by any nation that is about to be invaded by a powerful enemy; now we are at war with the earth and as in a blitzkrieg events proceed faster than we can respond. We are ... living on a planet where climate and compositional change is now so rapid that it happens too fast for us to react to it. For this reason alone, it is probably too late for sustainable development. Enlightened living of this kind might have worked 200 years ago in Malthus's time but not now.'

While Lovelock's 'Earth-at-war' stands for the absolute limit of global capitalism, it is imperative that we also recognise the internal or local limitations of capitalism.

Noel Pearson has been rightly critical of Rudd's reduction of the plight of indigenous Australians to the disparity between the 'privileged' and the 'disadvantaged'. Both terms presume some degree of integration in the economic-cultural dynamic of capitalism, but indigenous Australians are systemically excluded from the benefits of the free market economy, a state which no mere application of social democratic values can rectify.

'Aboriginal disadvantage', Pearson says, 'has become entrenched during the decades when social democrats, small-l liberals and conservatives influenced policy; many policies for indigenous Australians have been liberal and progressive.' Here too, we are forced to recognise capitalism's structural incapacity to embrace everyone within its sphere of beneficence; its inherent moral deficiency.

If the vacuous brand of global morality I've been describing has been spontaneously generated by capitalism as a palliative for assuaging our own guilt, then the fervour with which people declare themselves climate change 'true-believers' is simply a way of numbing

our culpability and divesting us of our domestic responsibilities. Against this temptation to 'globalise' our sense of morality, it has never been more important to insist on the concreteness of local ethical commitments.

Australia has a great moral crisis on its hands — the ongoing tragedy of indigenous Australia. The irony is that for all Kevin Rudd's posturing on Australia's Kyoto obligations, it was John Howard who proved his moral worth by committing to a constitutional referendum on reconciliation.

Emissions targets must help those affected

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

St Vincent de Paul Society founder Frederic Ozanam lived and participated in a very political society, much like our own. But as Andrew Hamilton points out in his review of the new Ozanam biography, he 'kept in sharp focus the faces of the poor', and let that determine his political manoeuvrings.

In deciding whether to urge the Australian Government to support an interim emissions reduction target at the current Bali UN climate change meeting, our moral compass must be the faces of the poor. Many Australians would be well able to live with the financial consequences of such a target, such as increased electricity bills. But it's a different story for the low-income families.

Vinnies expressed concern earlier this year at the suggestion of a $10 a tonne carbon levy as a way of tackling the important issue of climate change. It argued that the levy would have a disproportionate impact on pensioners.

Obviously this relates to only part of the climate change scenario, as decisions about emissions control are being made not primarily for our wellbeing, but for that of future populations. Therefore we need to read the faces of the poor who live around us today, but also imagine those of the future.

In addition there are many who live away from the political process that affects their wellbeing. These include the tribal peoples of the world whose habitats are rapidly being deforested.

In this issue of *Eureka Street*, Irish Columban ecologist Fr Sean McDonagh writes from the Bali meeting, articulating his position on deforestation. His authority is derived largely from his experience working with the T'boli tribe in a remote area of the southern Philippines, people without a voice in global politics. He spent 11 years reading their faces.

McDonagh points out that even solutions to ecological malpractice are often directed to needs other than those of the people who have been directly affected.

'During my time in the T'boli hills, I often came across reforestation proposals, from government and other agencies, that completely overlooked the fact that tribal people both lived in the forests and lived off their resources.'

He argues that any initiative — such as REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) — must address the needs of rural forest dwellers and indigenous people. Similarly a frenzied adoption of emissions targets at Bali that leads to large-scale job losses would be regrettable in the short-term. Their adoption for the sake of long-term human wellbeing needs to be carefully justified.

An unlikely pilgrim

FEATURE ESSAY

Michelle Coram

This is the second of two essays submitted by Michelle Coram, runner up of *Eureka Street*'s Margaret Dooley Award for young writers.

The person is a whole, but it is not a closed whole, it is an open whole … | it demands by its very nature to social life and to communion — Jacques Maritain.

My pilgrimage was never meant to be meaningful.

The Camino de Santiago, in Spain, is over a thousand years old and trodden by tens of thousands of pilgrims each year. For me, though, it was simply a cheap holiday. A safe walk to do as a solo traveller. And, I'd been told, a sure way to get fit. I didn't believe that the remains of Saint James had somehow managed to end up in Santiago de Compostela. And I wasn't expecting any miracles.

So I feel like a fraud collecting my pilgrim passport in Pamplona — a document that gets you into the less-than-salubrious pilgrim accommodation along the way. I hand over the equivalent of about $12 for my bunk and dutifully accept my first stamp.

My first impression is of a basic backpackers hostel. But there are some differences too.

I listen to three nuns, in habits, sing grace before their meal in the common room.

I inhale a pungent mix of stale sweat and tiger balm.

And I watch a German woman tend an English woman's blisters.

'I'm doing this for my son, you know,' the English woman says. 'He died last year.'

'I'll be praying for you and your son,' says the German woman, lotion and bandage in hand.

I'm perplexed by the exchange. They can't have known each other more than 48 hours. I slip away to my bed. It's clear no-one else regards the Camino as a budget boot-camp, and I don't want to be found out as a fake.

The next morning, I set off, just me, a backpack, and a walking stick I call Jimmy, my one nod to the saint this walk is supposed to be all about. The path is simple enough — a dirt

track, marked by yellow arrows. A cheery *hola* and *buen camino* greets me as the first (of many) pilgrims pass me on the trail.

I'm not sure why everyone is being so friendly. I'm not feeling particularly chipper as I tackle my first big hill. My feet are starting to hurt already. Saying *hola* or *buen camino* to every pilgrim that passes me is going to make me insane.

It only takes an hour or so to develop my first blister, and I pull over to sit down and assess. Every single pilgrim stops to check on me. I am asked, in about five different languages, if I am okay. I answer in English that I am. The lack of a common language in no way hinders the conversations.

Still, I am determined to do it on my own. I load myself up with food and water from supermarkets — bars are scattered along the path, but I'm embarrassed to go in. I smell bad, I dropped out of my Spanish classes, and I don't know any other pilgrims. Public toilets don't seem to exist in rural Spain, and I find myself diving into blackberry bushes when the need arises. It's a prickly experience, to say the least.

After the first day's walk I email my friends back home and try to explain the Camino. I decide it is like a roving time-out room for adults. I cannot help but reflect on what I have done (that would be the impulsive use of frequent flyer points that got me here) and what I haven't done (that would be learning Spanish and getting fit).

The second day is less like a time-out room, and more like a good, old fashioned thrashing. I start the day hurting and then I go and make myself hurt some more. Somehow I push through the pain and make it to the hostel. After dinner I hear bells and instinctively follow the sound to enter a church. I'm glad to sit down and rest my throbbing feet.

The language barrier during Mass is quite useful. Unlike at home, there is no chance of me being offended at the priest's theological position. I feel welcome here even though I do not understand. I watch the older Spanish women go to communion, faces lined, bodies hunched over and hands clutching their rosary beads. I wish that faith was contagious, perhaps like a divine form of measles. I fear that modern life has vaccinated me against believing in anything that can't be explained.

My church attendance must be having some kind of effect, because I find myself making deals with God as the days roll on. I don't really believe in God as an Old Man in the Sky, but the image works for me as I bargain like a naughty child might with Santa.

God, it has been a long day. Lots of hills. I've said *hola*to everyone and smiled and waved. I went to Mass last night. Is it possible that tonight's hostel might actually have a shower with hot water?

Of course it didn't. Still, removing the *peregrina* (pilgrim) scent has its own pleasure, even if it's done with cold water. 'There is no pleasure without the pain,' a *hospitalero* (warden) smiles

at me as I limp into the hostel. I am beginning to think he might be right.

God, I like potato. I like eggs. But I have had tortilla *bocadillos* every day for two weeks now. I never thought I'd say this, but I'm craving broccoli.

As I sit with a fellow pilgrim in a small restaurant that night I explain to the cook that I am *vegetariana*.

The cook frowns, and asks, *Huevo*? *Papas*?

Eggs and potato. Again. She doesn't look like someone I should argue with and I don't know the word for broccoli. There is only one answer.

Si, I say. I won't be rushing in for a cholesterol check the minute I get home. And I sincerely hope I'm not developing scurvy. But guilt-free eating is one of the few benefits of walking 20 kilometres a day.

Gracias, I say, and mean it, as the plate piled high with fried eggs and chips is placed in front of me.

God, I really need a good night's sleep. That Spanish guy in the bunk below me …| well, he's big. Really big. I saw him quaffing red wine in unpilgrimlike quantities at dinner. The risk of him snoring is as huge as he is. Please don't let him …|

Snore? The word doesn't begin to do justice to the sounds he makes. It's a herd of pigs below me, surely, not one man. It's definitely a herd of pigs. But what were they doing? Eating, drinking, emptying their bowels, mating, or being slaughtered? It was hard to tell. Mercifully, physical exhaustion is its own anaesthetic, and the herd of pigs disappear into the dark, distant night.

The days merge into one another. Get up. Change from sleeping clothes to walking clothes. Ease reluctant feet into boots. Have yoghurt or bread for breakfast. Put on backpack. Walk. No big decisions. Follow the yellow arrows. Rest when you need to rest. Eat when you need to eat. Walk. Surrender to the rhythm. It's simple, but hard. Life at home is cushy, but complicated. I decide it's a fair exchange.

The faces become familiar, and I am the one calling out *Hola*! I stop in all the bars and discover the joy of a mid-morning hot chocolate and a toilet with toilet paper. With a dose of humility, a smile, and a phrase book, I can make myself understood by the bartender. I'm not sure why I was so determined to avoid the hospitality of the locals and the friendship of the pilgrims.

One evening, I lend my jacket to John, an Australian fellow who decides everything in his backpack needs a wash. John, in turn, has the ingredients for potato and leek soup. John sits in my clothes as I eat his food. Alone, it's a struggle. Together we have more than enough. The loaves and the fishes story suddenly makes sense.

The end is looming for all of us, and hot topic in the hostels is the *compostela*, the certificate that proves you have completed the pilgrimage.

The catch is that you need to convince the authorities that you are an authentic pilgrim. 'Stamps aren't enough —you need to prove that you are properly religious, not just a tourist,'a fellow pilgrim warns. Properly religious? My wavering faith doesn't make sense, even to me. I don't think I can explain what I believe, in Spanish, to a stranger. Despite the many miles, and many stamps, I worry that the *compostela* is going to elude me.

I arrive in the pilgrim office in Santiago and line up waiting to be spoken to by an official. It feels a bit like Judgement Day.

The lady behind the desk calls me forward. I am prepared for the interrogation. I have a phrase book. I brace myself. But there is no judgement from the official, just a welcoming smile.

'And how was the Camino for you?' she asks.

I can handle anything except kindness. Her gentle words break through my final resistance to the word pilgrim. I start to shake, the room starts to spin. I can barely breathe, let alone speak. Tears stream down my face. The official nods. She gives me the certificate.

Later, I take the bus to Finisterre, a little fishing village at the western tip of Europe. As its name suggests, Finisterre was once quite literally regarded as the end of the earth.

I take part in one last Camino ritual, watching the sunset from the lighthouse. As the last streaks of light disappear into the ocean, I have an overwhelming sense of sadness. My fellow pilgrims are already dispersing to the distant corners of the world.

The Camino community might have been ever-changing, strange and more than a little smelly. But it was a community nonetheless. Every pilgrim who said *hola* and *buen camino*. The Spanish snorer. The locals who fed me and bore my mutilation of their language with such patience and good humour. The *hospitaleros*, often volunteers, who made pancakes and tended blisters, day after day after day.

I turn on my phone as I sit in the dusk, and see a little envelope appear. It's a text from my brother.

'Congratulations! Now you can sin all you like for a whole year!'

I'm not sure he has got the concept of indulgences exactly right, but I smile. There has been another community with me on this journey. The community waiting for me at home.

My friends sent long emails to cheer me on when they really should have been working. My uncle, a retired farmer, sent text messages to me every single day. And my parents made

horribly expensive calls to my mobile phone to make sure I was okay.

I realise that my family and friends have been part of my pilgrimage despite their physical absence. It gives me hope that my fellow pilgrims will still be part of my life, somehow, whether it's through the wonders of the world wide web, or the simple memories that are now part of me.

The fusion of ancient ritual and modern technology makes for an appropriate ending. The thousand-year-old Camino is the best antidote to the lonely stresses of modern life I've ever encountered.

As I get on the bus to leave Finisterre, I watch two pilgrims embrace. '*Buen camino* for the rest of your life,' says one, as she slowly lets go.

And so a new journey begins. The journey home. *Buen camino*.

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Rudd Pacific Solution must include Nauru healing

AUSTRALIA

Susan Metcalfe

One of the challenges for the first term of a new Labor Government will be to bring back a bipartisan and humanitarian approach to Australia's dealings with some of the most vulnerable people in the world — refugees and asylum seekers. The task will extend to negotiating new relationships with the Pacific countries contracted to house Australia's asylum seekers and refugees in recent years, in particular the impoverished nation of Nauru.

As a positive first step, the new Rudd Government has announced it will end the controversial and expensive Pacific Solution policy and close the processing centres in Nauru and PNG. After initially supporting the policy's introduction in the heat of an intense election campaign in 2001, the ALP changed its position in early 2002 and has since opposed the processing of Australia's asylum seekers in Pacific countries.

Under the so called Pacific Solution Australia's asylum seekers were warehoused indefinitely in declared Pacific countries, at great expense to Australian taxpayers. Even those assessed to be refugees were not, we were told, Australia's responsibility and other countries were sought for their resettlement.

The Pacific Solution was a game of smoke and mirrors and a solution only for setting up an election win for a government behind in the polls and for distracting from the Howard Government's inability to manage the increasing numbers of asylum seekers arriving under its watch. For the Howard Government, the messy problem of boat arrivals was more easily managed in other countries, out of the Australian public's view.

But while abolishing the Pacific Solution is undoubtedly a good policy decision for Australia, the citizens of Nauru are now facing an uncertain future with the likely associated loss of aid and income.

Over recent years I have made many visits to Nauru to spend time with asylum seekers and refugees. I have also become acutely aware of the different context in which this policy is viewed in a country whose most pressing need, unlike Australia's, is to feed its own people. With that in mind it might be easier for Australians to empathise with the desperate choice Nauru made when agreeing to host the camps.

When members of the current Nauruan Government came to power in 2004 they made an uncomfortable decision to continue the policy they had inherited from the previous Rene Harris led Government. A dependency had been created and the benefits to a poor country were numerous. The Nauru Government must also have feared a potential backlash from the Australian Government if they had withdrawn support for the policy — a daunting prospect for a bankrupt and aid-dependant country.

To its credit the new Nauruan Government did open up the conditions for asylum seekers and allow freedom of movement around the island during daylight hours. Government ministers also made it clear they did not want people left in their country indefinitely, and continued to pressure for people to be resettled once they were found to be refugees.

The Rudd Government's intended focus on strengthening our ties in the Pacific region should now include working closely with Nauru on how they will adjust to their future economic circumstances. Nauru's transition from hosting asylum seekers for Australia needs to be handled sensitively and the country should be seen as the victim of a more powerful Australian Government exploiting a poor nation's dire circumstances.

Australia must continue to provide aid to Nauru but our involvement should extend to more than charity. An increase in work and educational opportunities in Australia and assistance in setting up private sector partnerships could assist Nauruans to maintain their independence and pride. The ongoing reform processes of the current Nauruan Government should also be supported. But never again should Australia ask Nauru or any other country to assist us in avoiding our responsibilities towards vulnerable people.

Under the new Rudd Government preparations are already underway for the resettlement of seven Burmese men who were taken to Nauru more than one year ago. The new Immigration Minister, Chris Evans, has remarked that the men's cases 'should have been processed some time ago', indicating a move towards a more balanced and sensible approach to refugees and an understanding of their protection needs. Processing of the remaining group of Sri Lankans in Nauru has also begun.

The Pacific Solution will be remembered most of all for the damage it has caused to so many refugees who came to us seeking safety and understanding. Australia turned its back on men, women and children who wanted only a safe haven and recognition of the atrocities and traumatic experiences they had endured. The Pacific Solution will not, and should not, be remembered favourably in our history and we should all be relieved that the policy is about to end.

US must finish peace process it started

INTERNATIONAL

Ashlea Scicluna

The first scheduled meeting between the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, and the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, as part of the recent round of negotiations, took place this week (12 December). The United States' initiative, launched last month in Annapolis, brought Israeli and Arab leaders together with the intention to broker talks on 'a new era of peace'. The US administration is not least among those who hope the process will bear fruit. President George Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have been working for six months to bring all the parties together.

The process bears striking similarity to the Clinton Administration's efforts exactly seven years ago. Then President Bill Clinton, also nearing the end of his days in the top job, brought the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to Camp David in what some saw as a last-ditch effort to leave his mark on the conflict. Whether it was an exercise in self-promotion or sincerity that sparked the talks, all hopes were dashed when the meeting collapsed and the Palestinians launched the second *intifada*.

The failure of 2000 is one in a long line of unsuccessful endeavours to address the conflict that has consumed the Middle East for 60 years. So while the scepticism that has led many commentators to doubt the potential of the Annapolis process is understandable, the latest peace talks are not without hope.

The meeting of the Israeli and Palestinian leaders for the first time in seven years has been a substantial achievement. Also at the table were the Syrian and Saudi Arabian foreign ministers. Syrian participation was only secured in the week of the conference upon assurance that the Israeli occupied Golan Heights would be on the agenda. Something of a quiet bear in the region, Saudi Arabia was also a vital attendee and only declared its participation in the lead-up week.

Beyond its logistical successes, the Annapolis agenda made an explicit commitment to achieving a peace treaty and referred to the 'core issues' of the conflict, considered to be that of Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements and Jerusalem. It is widely accepted that for any lasting resolution to be reached, these three issues must be decisively addressed.

This will involve concessions on both sides of the conflict and the deliverance of bad news to home populations. Olmert needs to tell the Jewish settlers on occupied land that they no longer have a home, while Abbas will be tasked with informing those Palestinians who lost their home in 1948 that they can never return. Such realities, if stated to the leaders' respective

publics, may spell domestic chaos. Peace will only come at a price and everyone involved knows this.

The speeches delivered by the two leaders in Annapolis acknowledged the difficulties that need conquering. Omert declared his country to be prepared for the bumpy road ahead, while Abbas challenged those who see peace between the two as impossible. The statements seemed candid, personal and sincere, and in this atmosphere of renewed negotiations deserve the benefit of lingering doubts to the contrary.

Reports last week that Israel is planning to build several hundred new homes in East Jerusalem — occupied territory — are a perplexing contradiction to the latest pledges. In the Annapolis agreement, which bears Olmert's signature, all parties commit to the immediate implementation of 'obligations under the performance-based road map'. The road map in question, espoused as a plan for peace by the Quartet — the US, Russia, European Union and United Nations — explicitly forbids the creation of new settlements.

Met by US condemnation, the announcement of new settlements will only hinder Israel's credibility and question its willingness for peace with the Palestinians. If any of the Quartet members genuinely seek peace, firm action needs to be taken. This responsibility falls largely with the US, given their impetus for the latest round of negotiations and close relationship with Israel. They must oversee the fulfilment of agreements they have brokered and move beyond simple disapproval. Without anyone to enforce the promises reached between Israel and Palestine, the project may well be futile.

The prospect of failed negotiations and further disappointment risks throwing the region into desperate turmoil. If it is a legacy that Bush is after, then he will have to earn it. Likewise, the Israeli and Palestinian leaders will have to deliver more than just rhetoric. A fourth party has a role to play too. The international media, who possess powerful influence, must stop predicting doom and downfall and instead acknowledge that peace is attainable.

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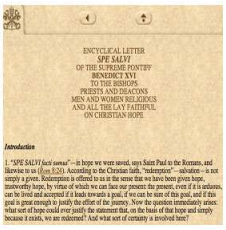
How to find God in ordinary human hope

THEOLOGY

Andrew Hamilton


ENCYCLICAL LETTER
SPE SALVI
OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF
BENEDICT XVI
TO THE BISHOPS
PRIESTS AND DEACONS
MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS
AND ALL THE LAY FAITHFUL
ON CHRISTIAN HOPE

Introduction

1. "*SPE SALVI facti sumus*" — in hope we were saved, says Saint Paul to the Romans, and likewise to us (Rom 8:24). According to the Christian faith, "redemption" — salvation — is not simply a given. Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey. Now the question immediately arises: what sort of hope could ever justify the statement that, on the basis of that hope and simply because it exists, we are redeemed? And what sort of certainty is involved here?

The recent Encyclical letter of Pope Benedict is a deeply thoughtful reflection on the importance of Christian hope and on how to sustain it. Throughout he returns to the scriptural phrase, 'Without God there is no hope'. This has implications for the way in which Christians judge the hopes that sustain their fellow human beings.

Pope Benedict's account of hope within the contemporary world characteristically includes an intellectual history. He sees Francis Bacon as the seminal figure. Bacon initiated a process by which Christian hope was confined to the private faith and the inner world of the individual. Hope for a better world was placed in reason. Later reason was defined as scientific reason, which in Marxism could be identified with politics.

Benedict argues that, like the hope we place in our own flourishing, in family and friendship, in work and in personal relationships, so the hope we can place in science and politics is important but limited. They will inevitably disappoint us. We look for something more, which Benedict describes as the known unknown. He identifies it with the love of God.

This approach grounds a deep and subtle exploration of Christian experience. But it is less successful in helping to explore the way in which many of our contemporaries and our societies are sustained and enlivened by hopes that they do not identify with God. These hopes are inevitably seen to lack something crucial and therefore as bound to fail.

Another Christian approach can be helpful in affirming the ordinary hopes that sustain people. It argues that such hopes are deepened, not supplemented, by reference to God. It also argues that the path taken by Francis Bacon has its roots in the weaknesses of the earlier Western theological imagination.

Early Christian hopes implied a distinctive way of imagining the world. The image central to this hope was the resurrection of the body that has a prominent place in early Christian creeds. They did not imagine the resurrection of the body simply as something to do with the future or with the individual. They linked it to other connotations of the body: to Christ's bodily life, to his bodily resurrection, to the Eucharist and to the Christian community as Christ's body, and to the ways in which they committed their bodies — particularly in

martyrdom and later in monastic practices. Their distinctive faith in God affirmed, integrated and deepened the various hopes by which they lived their daily lives.

This view of the world was later challenged by a more analytic imagination that emphasised the boundaries between past, present and future, between God and the world, between body and spirit, between practices and their meaning. It is reflected in a conflict in Eastern monasticism. The great spiritual teacher Evagrius saw practices, rituals and images as gateways to contemplate an incomprehensible God. His opponents thought that this minimised the importance of the body for Christian belief in the Eucharist and the resurrection of the body. But in the debate both sides emphasised the gap between body and spirit, visible and invisible, God and the world.

This conflict was reflected also in early Western debates about the Eucharist, in which all parties saw a gap between what is seen and touched and what is real. Even though this view was corrected in the work of the best theologians, in the Christian imagination the divine reality was seen to lie behind what was seen. It was the 'more' that made the bodily appearances seem unimportant. In defining Christian hope, too, attention turned to the destiny of the individual's invisible soul and not to the resurrection of the body.

The deficiencies of the theological imagination led Bacon and others to leave to theologians the invisible 'more' of the world and its hopes, and to focus on the world that was seen. In Pope Benedict's succinct account, meeting our hopes for the tangible world were the business of science and political activism, while religious faith touched only the invisible, individual world.

But the fragmentation of hope involved in this settlement will not be addressed simply by the secular world adding God to its limited hopes. It will require the nurturing of a Christian imagination that overcomes the breach between divine and human, between past, present and future, between body and spirit, and between visible and invisible.

This will entail taking our ordinary human hopes seriously and finding God in their depths, not in adding God to them. There is no human hope that does not have God within it.

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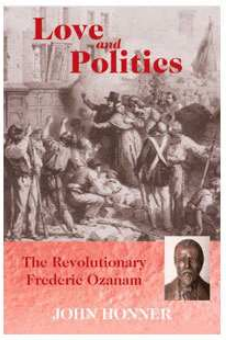
Love and politics in that order

BOOK REVIEW

Andrew Hamilton

John Honner, *Love and Politics: The Revolutionary Frederic Ozanam*. David Lovell Publishing 2007, ISBN 9781863551212, RRP $18.95



After the Liberal Party has done its initial patching and bandaging, we may expect it to ruminate a good deal on the spirit of Sir Robert Menzies. That is what organisations properly do when they have to adjust to a new and unfamiliar world. They return to the insights that guided their founders in the different conditions of their times.

John Honner's short but stimulating book about Frederic Ozanam is an exercise of this kind. Ozanam founded the St Vincent de Paul Society — the Vinnies in their Australian incarnation. The Vinnies now work for those marginalised in Australian society. This new environment, because of the central place played by government legislation and funding, is immensely complex both in the organisational and ethical dilemmas it raises.

Frederic Ozanam was a man of many parts. As a student he gathered a group of fellow-students to alleviate the suffering of the Parisian poor at the start of the industrial revolution. He went on to teach law in the university, founded a magazine that engaged in the political and religious debates that followed the French Revolution, and stood unsuccessfully for Parliament.

Before the restored monarchy was replaced in 1848, he appalled many of his readers by the slogan, 'Defect to the Barbarians'. It seemed to them a call to overthrow the monarchy, encourage civil disorder, break the natural relationships between a hierarchical church and hierarchical state, and embrace a soft-headed brand of economic idiocy.

Ozanam, though, had thought deeply on the matter. Against the intellectual tide that saw the fall of the Roman Empire in the West as a catastrophe for civilisation, he saw in the Barbarian invasion the makings of a more just and compassionate society. He saw Christianity as central in this remaking.

John Honner sees significant parallels between the large issues Ozanam faced and those the Vinnies and other faith-based charities meet today. The relationships between the state,

business, churches and poverty were as conflicted then as they are now. The role churches and church organisations should play in political life remains controversial.

Ozanam's gift was to maintain a single-minded focus without allowing the context within which he worked to be blurred. As the title of this book, *Love and Politics*, indicates he kept in sharp focus the faces of the poor. Faces make a claim on compassion and on practical love. He saw this practical love, and the Christian faith that motivated it, as central to the group he founded.

But he also saw that any society that was committed to the good of all its citizens could not bypass love. Business had to have an interest in its workers beyond the contribution they made to profits. Governments needed to go beyond safety nets, and organisations beyond efficiency, in meeting the needs of the marginalised. The organisation of society needed to respect and nurture the dignity of its members. Ozanam's Society focused on the faces of people, without distinguishing between the deserving and undeserving. But he expected its members to ask why these faces bore the marks of suffering.

John Honner, who has worked for Catholic charitable organisations for many years, brings out clearly the relevance of Ozanam to contemporary Australia. He sees especially the contrast between the communal vision of Ozanam and the individualism of Australian society. The emphasis on the individual to the neglect of community has shaped laws on industrial relations and attitudes to welfare. It erodes respect for human dignity.

This makes it important for voluntary organisations to maintain their focus on the faces of those whom they serve. But it also makes such a focus difficult to maintain. Organisations that receive government funding are always under pressure to make care a measurable commodity rather than a movement of the heart, and to accept as the price of funding silence about the ethical dimensions of the policies they help administer. They are expected to be the face of whatever ideology shapes welfare.

In the face of these expectations Honner suggests rightly that organisations need to be seduced by Ozanam's siren call to 'defect to the Barbarians'.

Dylan writ vain but vulnerable

FILM REVIEW

Rochelle Siemienowicz

I'm Not There*: 135 minutes. Rated: M. Director: Todd Haynes. Starring: Christian Bale, Cate Blanchett, Marcus Carl Franklin, Richard Gere, Heath Ledger, Ben Whishaw, Michelle Williams*

A confession: I care nothing for Bob Dylan, for his music or his legend; or for the miles of print and celluloid previously devoted to decoding his lyrics and his life. But this is one strange engrossing biopic. It's a film of such daring originality that it will manage to sustain the interest of fans and non-fans alike — though of course the fans will be rewarded most richly.

Much has been made of Dylan's chameleon quality, his ability to evade categorisation as he's morphed from Jewish Minnesota lad to Greenwich Village folk singer, to the voice of the '60s protest movement, rebellious rocker, and finally, emerging as the eternally-touring musical icon. Along the way Dylan's also acted in films, spent time as a recluse, married and divorced twice, and become a born-again Christian.

Perhaps it's only logical then, that writer-director Todd Haynes (*Far From Heaven*) has chosen to use six different actors, including one woman and a pre-pubescent African American boy, to portray this kaleidoscopic and inconsistent life. The gifted black boy (Franklin), who claims to be Woody Guthrie, hitches rides on freight trains and carries his banjo on his back.

Then there's charismatic folk singer Jack (Bale) who is later reincarnated as a singing preacher with '70s sideburns. In a seemingly parallel universe there's superstar actor Robbie (Ledger) living out a suburban tragedy with his wife (Charlotte Gainsbourg) and their two daughters. And, in the film's worst misstep, there's an ageing 'Billy the Kid' (Richard Gere) hiding out from Pat Garrett in sepia-toned Hicksville.

The most recognisable Dylan however, is the drug-nervy waifish superstar Jude, played with breathtaking skill by Cate Blanchett. This Dylan mumbles a mix of profundity and mundanity, and flirts with an Edie Sedgwick lookalike (Michelle Williams). He's caught rolling around in the grass with the Beatles, and waving at Allen Ginsberg, but he's run from a

BBC journalist who's constantly attempting to interview him.

This Dylan is infuriating. Hollow, vain and abusive. But also vulnerable and pitiable; an angry animal pacing his cage.

Filmed with Dylan's blessing — and full access to his music — *I'm Not There*is a playful patchwork of styles and stories that almost always hangs together. As a comment on art, fame and celebrity in the 20th century it's sly and illuminating.

As a comment on Dylan himself, well, the title says it all. He's not there. But what does it say about us that we keep so desperately looking for him? All we can ever grab hold of is his music, and, whether you like it or not, that endures.

The dialect of dream

POETRY

Shane McCauley

Recollection

'As when a man goes so deep into his dream
he will never remember that he was there.'
Tomas Transtromer, translated by Robert Bly

Enough will be there
if you can learn the language
of fragments
fathom and translate
the dialect of dream
be untroubled
that such meanings
can never be exactly
what they seem:
familiar faces that change
to strangers
irrational duties
fleeting bliss
hint of cruelty
precious messages
that taste like kisses.
In gaping hindsight

snatch them back
or let them dwindle
with the night.

Viva Vita

Lizard on a pyramid
newt in its stream
spider hurrying in its web
wolf howling at the moon
whale wallowing in ocean
rainforest swallowing storm
rose distilling its potion
worm in the deep loam
albatross and its shadow
rabbit in a burrow
polar bear on the floe
beetle scuttling in the furrow
sunfish floating out at sea
calculus of all it means to be.

Offering

Inside the shell the sea
has painted itself
such an accurate portrait
nacreous lustrous
swirl of currents frozen

as if knowing salt air

might one day pry you open

and offer you votively

from the swept sea floor

show off ocean's

surreal artistry

as it inhabits these

milky vortices.