Learningguild Letter

1.2008

Dear members and friends of Learningguild,

In this fourteenth year of our philosophy seminar, we took as our theme what was called in the Middle Ages *trivium*, the set of three ways (*tres viae*) of learning, or "disciplines": grammar, logic, rhetoric. We found out some of what they involve by studying them; we also kept in mind the question whether, though widely neglected now, they are still indispensable parts of secondary education, as they were considered to be for the boys who sought admission to such universities as Oxford and Paris in their twelfth-century beginnings.

I am sure that they remain indispensable, and that their neglect in the past forty years in English-speaking nations has seriously weakened secondary, and therefore tertiary, education. What a difference it makes if, from the age of about eleven on, a boy or girl is enabled, at increasing levels of difficulty, to say whether and why a sentence is or is not correctly written, an argument sound, and a passage well worded and constructed. However, as two immediately following articles show, for adults who did not have such an earlier secondary education, or did not have it in English, it is certainly possible to be an eager participant in it in later life and so to increase one's mental range and powers of expression, and gain confidence. As I said in *L'g Letter* 1.2007 (p.2f), a large part of Learningguild's work is to offer opportunities for such participation.

Another activity for Learningguild this year, a new one, was a weekly class (Fridays at 8 am) that I took for twelve weeks between March and June at the Melbourne office of GMK Centric, the company providing accounting and business advice that I mentioned on p.3 of that issue of the *Letter*. In this class were five young accountants and, usually, one or two members of the Human Resources department. The five came each from a different country: Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Russia and Argentina. The primary aim was to help them to increase their ability to write emails and other documents well, and to speak so clearly that no one would normally have difficulty in understanding them. To write well consistently, one needs an awareness of errors often made, and an understanding of why they are errors, and therefore an understanding of grammar. Our base was my book *Making up Sentences*. Each of the five also read aloud a passage he or she had chosen, and their colleagues and I noted and later mentioned words that had not been uttered clearly enough.

Here I shall give some details of these two Learningguild activities, and mention some books and other materials of which copies are available from our Library.

In the seminar we took logic first, with particular reference to what used to be a compulsory part of the Victorian syllabus for the last two secondary years in the compulsory subject called English or English Expression. That part was known as **Clear Thinking**, and the Matriculation (later the Higher School Certificate) examination, from its origin in 1946, included it until 1983. Some teachers of English, unfamiliar with anything philosophical, were uncomfortable with this component, and did not, in either sense of the word, realize its immense potential for the devel-

opment of powers of honest and critical thinking. (I want to study what documents are available about the justifications offered for dropping it from the syllabus.) It gave Victorian students who took it seriously a dimension that those in other Australian States did not have, and it prepared us well to think for ourselves in subsequent tertiary education and generally. I have sought to epitomize and update its main content in the Learningguild booklet *Reasoning*, which has as an annexure a question from one of our exams and the related report. The Clear Thinking tradition is maintained in each exam at Section 4, "Factors and Argument".

The use of the name 'Clear Thinking' originated, I believe, with a book of that title, first published in 1936, by R.W. Jepson, Headmaster of The Mercers' School in London, one of the grammar schools set up by guilds in England. (I attended one of the Haberdashers' schools before my family migrated to Melbourne in 1949.) Although, in introducing a fourth edition ("Largely Rewritten") in 1948, Jepson wrote that

> It was designed primarily to prepare pupils for the intelligent and responsible exercise of their duties and rights as citizens,

the book's scope is far wider than that, in that much of it provides in turn remedies for

> [the three] chief reasons for failure to think clearly …: inadequate training in the use of words, the tendency to succumb to irrational influences, and the inability to grasp the essential structure of an argument
>
> (pp. v, vii)

It is plain what a difference it would make, in learning to think for oneself (and therefore, *inter alia*, in preparing for a genuinely tertiary education) if one had, by contrast, developed the powers to use words with precision, to recognize what was reasonable and what was not, and to appreciate and use patterns of sound argument.

When "Clear Thinking" became part of the senior secondary English syllabus in Victoria, its advocates and developers included at the University of Melbourne, in Philosophy and Education respectively, Professor A. Boyce Gibson and Associate Professor W.V. Aughterson. At Melbourne High School, before my Matriculation year, when the text was Jepson, I had the good fortune at the beginning of 1951 (at fifteen!) to be given as a fifth-form text the little book *Thinkers at Work*, including excellent chapters with the titles "The Art of Guessing" and "the Art of Testing". Its authors were Gibson and A.A.Phillips, the latter an English master at Wesley College and a literary critic. Later A.C. (Camo) Jackson of Melbourne's Philosophy Department, a man I am proud to have had as teacher, colleague and friend, did much to foster the Clear Thinking component. A valuable historical document is Norman Porter's introduction to his compilation for that component *Readings in Argument* (1966). On p.xi he takes up Jackson's phrase 'capacity for judgment' (in particular, one might say, the ability to recognize and therefore to understand where and in what respects an argument is sound or unsound), and quotes this sentence from him:

> And this capacity for judgment exercised upon everyday matter in an elementary way – I mean elementary only in comparison with technical arguing on remote and abstract matters – is a capacity that students cannot have too much of.

I am reminded by those words of the view of one of our seminar members, Norm Piper, formerly a Senior Sergeant in Victorian Police, that our discussions are of a kind that should be part of the education of the police.

In the seminar, after the study of the booklet *Reasoning*, we turned to actual questions set for Matriculation exams. In 1948 there were two passages putting contrasting views about whether there should be serious research into how the common cold might be abolished. They were prefaced by three questions, asking candidates which argument they thought the sounder, what its strong points were, and what were the weaknesses of the other. In a following unrelated question, one had to decide what could be inferred, and what could not, if one accepted as true the statement "Only

educated people are fit to vote." Candidates were expected to know or realize that the statement was equivalent to "All who are fit to vote are educated", which has a quite different meaning from "All who are educated are fit to vote". Neither implies the truth of the other. Such exam questions enabled us, sixty years later, to benefit from the Clear Thinking section and recognize its potential.

Not all questions were so appropriate. It is important not to set questions which, especially in the anxiety of an exam, can be perplexing and frustrating and apparently of little value. In 1949 there was a dialogue in which the speakers were a king, a prisoner who admitted he had planned to kill him, and the queen. The king's argument began "An honest man always says what he thinks", and one was expected to distinguish that from the prisoner's opening premise "A man who says what he thinks … must be an honest man." However, at least in an exam, many a candidate might well take the king's first premise as definitional, equivalent to "An honest man **is** one who says what he thinks."

We read some parts of examiners' reports, which at numerous points were valuable but did not always show a readiness for self-criticism in relation to what questions to ask and how.

In April we turned to grammar, and in our last month, August, to rhetoric as well, using all six chapters of *Making up Sentences*. Members were asked, in preparation for each Tuesday-evening meeting, to do some or all of one or more sets of exercises. By August, when we considered the six passages which end the sixth chapter, members had become able to identify the part of speech for many a word in its context, so that, in relation to a passage from Alan Marshall that included the sentences

> The ground was white with frost and the horses shot twin jets of vapour from their nostrils

and

> We had long passed the fussy stage where we looked for drinking water as clear as that from a city tap,

they could cope with such an assignment as "List the adjectives in this passage, and comment on some of them. Look out for words which are often nouns but used here as adjectives …. Which adjectives do you think particularly effective, and why?"

I have no doubt that the ability to identify, necessarily in the context of a particular sentence, the part of speech which is the **role** played by a particular word in it (or, sometimes, pair or group of words, such as 'in front of' and 'have been running') is essential to the understanding of the structure of sentences and the range of uses of many words. For the learner of English as a further language, it is especially important to ask "What part of speech do I need here?" – just as, in doing a jigsaw puzzle, one has to be clear on the shape of the piece one needs.

I often refer to the quotation from Burchfield, and my following comment, on p.xiii of the Preface to *Making up Sentences*. (The late Robert Burchfield, a New Zealand Rhodes Scholar and for thirteen years Chief Editor of the Oxford English dictionaries, produced in 1996 a quite new work called in honour of the famous H.W.Fowler *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage*. I warmly recommend it.) The quotation is from his entry at ***grammar***.

> Ideally every English-speaking person should begin to distinguish the several parts of speech at an early age, and continue to study the various aspects of the subject in a graduated manner throughout his or her time at school.
>
> "Ideally"; in fact very few English-speaking children can at present expect that schools will give them such an education.

Our seminar showed that adults who had not had any, or much, or sufficient opportunity at school to gain a thorough understanding of the parts of speech and an ability to recognize them *in situ* could still do so much later, and enjoy it, and feel the benefit of understanding their own language better as a result.

We found that we needed to distinguish two ways of using the word 'rhetoric'. It is often used to mean something superficial and/or harmful: the use of devices for making a speech or a piece of writing **seem** attractive, effective, convincing or powerful when in reality it is devoid of value, perhaps ignorant or even corrupt. Plato used the word '*rhetorikē*' in that way in the *Gorgias*, with particular scorn for those who thought that persuasive oratory was unconditionally valuable. Later, however, himself a great artist in words, he came to see that rhetoric, more widely conceived, has an important place, particularly, as he says in the *Phaedrus*, in so choosing and arranging one's words that they are helpful to the individual or group one is addressing.

In *MS* at 6:5.9 I sum up a conditionally favourable view of rhetoric:

> … provided that rhetoric is always in the service of what is known or reasonably believed to be true or right, and does not obscure but assists the recognition of that truth or rightness, it has a valuable place. It includes all that saves speech and writing from being hazy, long-winded, tedious or pretentious and makes it clear, concise, lively and straightforward. It may arise or sustain interest; it seeks the kind of language and presentation which fits the particular person or persons addressed; it employs a wide range of apt words well ordered and, in speech, well spoken; it may make what is written or spoken not only clear but memorable.

To understand the importance of such rhetoric one needs good examples. In the last weeks of our seminar we studied the six passages, with related questions, that end Chapter Six. The fifth, from John Buchan, enabled us to notice two frequent features of good writing, continuity and parallelism. A sentence may take up something mentioned or suggested in its predecessor, and it may be divisible into parts which, or some of which, have the same structure, as in Abraham Lincoln's

> With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right ….

In the class at GMK Centric, I initially combined my book with four sheets headed "Questions and answers about reasoning and expression", and then wrote five letters to class members and gave out four sheets of sentences most of which needed correction. The first "Questions and answers …" sheet included the question why so much emphasis as in *MS* was being given to the parts of speech, and my answer epitomized the approach I took in this series of classes and the related: material:

> Consider … the words in a recent email 'People demand for a quality service'. There 'demand' is being used as a verb, but it is only as a noun that 'demand' is used with 'for', as in 'There's a demand for a quality service'.

I focused, often, on an actual error, sometimes (as here) made by a member of the class, and explained what had gone wrong, frequently with reference to the parts of speech involved. On that first sheet I recommended *OBED* (the excellent new *Oxford Basic English Dictionary*, reviewed in *L'g Letter* 1.2007), because it gives so many example-sentences as well as naming the part of speech concerned, and moved beyond grammar by asking whether it would not be better to replace 'People demand a quality service' by 'People expect a reliable wide-ranging service'.

Four of the badly-written sentences the class was invited to correct I set out here, to illustrate the range of types of error and how important it is to be aware of such a range and able to guard against or correct them. The third sentence was mine. Readers may wish to identify and correct the errors before continuing.

i. The gardens make a great picnic spot or alternatively visit the nearby restaurant.

ii. Thankyou for your very informative email after I have read through your email and deciphered what your needs were I have corrected the issues which you have addressed.

iii. I will say, as many teachers would, that one should be no

> less cautious in using the Internet (for anything) as one needs to be in choosing a book from a library.
>
> iv. (This concerns two Hawthorn footballers, Peter Hudson and Buddy Franklin.) Everyone – players and crowd – knew in Huddo's day like they know now that when Buddy goes for the ball that he is the game.

The first principle of sentence-construction is to know what kind of sentence one intends to construct, and to distinguish statements from questions and imperatives (which may be used in pieces of advice, suggestions and requests as well as orders). The first sentence, taken from a pamphlet about seeing and exploring Canberra, mixes up a statement and an imperative suggestion. One might say instead "You could picnic in the gardens or visit the nearby restaurant."

Our second sentence was written to me by a member of staff at a Melbourne travel agency. *Inter alia*, he did not realize (a) the need for two sentences; (b) the mistakes in combining 'After' with 'I have read', when the reading is past, and adding 'were'; (c) the insult suggested by 'deciphered'; (d) the laziness of using the word 'issue' in this case. One could simply say: "Thank you for your email. I now understand what your requirements are, and I have corrected the mistakes you noted."

As the reader may have guessed, I made the mistake at iii of changing a sentence I had written without checking to see whether some further change was therefore necessary. I had at first written 'as cautious', after which the rest of the sentence would be correct, but after 'no less cautious' one must use 'than'. Sentence-changing without due checking often produces what is called **anacoluthon**, the failure of parts of a sentence to cohere (*MS* 5:3.3).

The fourth sentence comes from Martin Flanagan, a perceptive and thoughtful writer. It was in *The Age* on April 12th. Good writing requires that one understands precisely what one wants to say. In this case Flanagan wished to compare the "aura" that Franklin now has with that which Hudson had. One might say (avoiding hyperbole, excluding the redundant 'that', and preferring as a conjunction 'as' to 'like') "Players and crowd know, when Buddy goes for the ball, that he is the dominant player, just as Huddo was known to be."

This set of errors and corrections is, I think, proof enough that learning to write well requires that one appreciates in relation to one another both principles and errors.

One matter raised in the course of our meetings was whether members needed a glossary of grammatical terms. The one that a staff member found on the net turned out, like DiYanni's in the 4th edition of Strunk and White (see *MS*, Appendix C, p.105f), to be defective. We were told, for example:

> Auxiliary verbs are used with other verbs to express moods or tenses. Common auxiliary verbs are: *will*, *would*, *may*, *might*, *shall*, *should*, *can*, *could*, *must*.

May, *might*, *can*, *could* and *must* are best called **modal** verbs (*MS* 3:6), – that adjective meaning not that they express "moods", but rather ability, possibility, obligation or necessity – and *shall* and *should* are in some uses modals. Auxiliaries, by contrast, into which class *am*, *have*, *do*, and their counterparts in other persons and tenses, often fall, are better seen not as verbs but as "helping" parts of verbs, where **the one verb** (for example *is coming*) consists of two or more parts, the one at the end being the main part (1:7.4).

I am sure that, as I put it on p.106 of *MS*, "there is no substitute for a **logically** (not alphabetically) ordered series of satisfactory explanations of the parts of speech and related categories". So, for example, one needs to master pronouns before turning to verbs, because to be able to get the basic verb-forms right one must understand the terms 'first person', 'second person' and 'third person' (1:6.2, 7.11). One needs to understand types of conjunction and types of clause in relation to one another (2:4), and to distinguish gerunds, when one learns that

valuable word, from present participles (3:5.4,6).

The reading aloud we did was enjoyed. (I read four passages from Dorothy L. Sayers's *The Nine Tailors* and *Gaudy Night*..) Persistent practice in reading aloud helps us to see how important it is both to utter particular words and phrases clearly and to do justice to the writer's choice of words and sentence-structure.

I end with a paragraph from my final letter, from which it is clear that the "in-service training" so widely needed is not in something called "business English" but rather in extending one's mental powers.

> Consider also the question "What relevance has all this to accountants at GMK Centric?" If it helps them to exercise their own minds in making themselves more sensitive to language, as they read, write and think, and more accustomed to asking themselves whether some account of a matter, or some criticism, is fair and precise, then it has great relevance and value to them as people who in their work must come up with questions, answers, comments, letters or reports – and as developing persons.

John Howes

From participants

Mei Mei Chiang

Mei Mei first came to Australia from Malaysia in 1959, to take a course in primary teaching. She went back in 1962 and migrated to Australia in 1972. In recent years she has been especially concerned with meeting the needs of young children who, often from refugee families, come to a primary school with little or no English. She now teaches at Good Samaritan Catholic Primary School in Roxburgh Park, an outer suburb of Melbourne near Broadmeadows. She is a member of our philosophy seminar, and concentrates here on what she learned in 2008 in the areas of grammar and punctuation.

For me the seminar was refreshing as well as interesting. I use the word 'refreshing' because I find that there are so many points of grammar that I have either forgotten or not properly mastered. Irish nuns taught me English grammar many years ago but in later life I have been insufficiently careful and too seldom corrected. It was not until I studied grammar in this year's seminar that I began to understand what I needed to know.

Why do we say 'an elephant' but 'a university'? If you say that the letters whose long names are ***ee*** and ***yoo*** are vowels, then it will be of little help to say "Put 'an' before vowels." We need to understand that the words 'vowel' and 'consonant' should be used to refer to **sounds**, not to letters. When we say the word 'university' or 'union', we begin it with the same consonant as begins the word 'yes'. (This point is made in Dr Howes's *Making up Sentences*, 1:5.4. It was a great help to have this book to study and refer to.) I know where to use a capital letter and where to use a full stop, but I have been uncertain where I should put a colon and where a semi-colon. The book has an appendix with a section on punctuation that distinguishes (p.92) between "expository flow" and some degree of contrast or change: the colon belongs to the former (as is illustrated here) and the semi-colon to the latter.

Another useful distinction comes early in the book (1:3.1-3). I use my own examples here. We are used to putting inverted commas around reported speech, as in 'She said, "I saw the old man in the house".' It is a good practice to use double inverted commas (quotation marks) for quotation, and reserve single inverted commas, as far as possible, for writing about words or groups of words (we learned to use the word 'locution' for both individual words, numerals, etc., and unified groups: 1:3.5f). So we can write "'The old man' is a phrase, and so is 'in the house', and 'the old man in the house'."

We learnt to think about the position of adverbs. In general it is good, and often necessary, to put them close to the word with which they are most closely associated, so that 'I only saw one spectator' should rather be 'I saw only one spectator'. However, a verb and its object-locution are often not to be separated, so that we say 'Give your speech confidently' and not 'Give confidently your speech' (2:2.6).

"English grammar" may seem to some a tedious subject, but I have found it otherwise. As our sessions progressed, members became more willing to have a go themselves in relation to such questions or requests as 'Why?' and 'Give an example.' Often, as Dr Howes showed us, there is an instructive history of a word: so he tells us in the book of the Latin origins of the nouns 'article', 'verb', 'preposition' and 'conjunction'.

I am glad I overcame fear and attended this seminar. Doing so has given me a wider awareness of English grammar, and greater clarity about it. Hence I am more likely to speak and write correctly, and have grown in confidence.

Vladimir Shchelkunov

Vladimir came to Australia from Russia and completed the degrees, both from Monash, of Bachelor of Business (Banking and Finance) and Master of Practising Accounting.

My initial personal contact with Dr Howes and Learningguild was in a class he taught at GMK Centric. I was one of up to seven employees who took part. Later in 2008 I became a member of Learningguild and in third term participated in the seminar Dr Howes led on the *trivium* of grammar, logic and rhetoric. I had taken the Learningguild exam of September 2007, and I was pleased to go up a level, in my work on the March 2008 paper, to the middle of the B grade.

Every session I have attended, be it in the office class or in the seminar, has been extremely interesting and, most importantly, rewarding. To be honest, it was a little difficult at the start, but, as time went on, everything started to fall into place, to make sense. I attribute this mainly to the fact that often one is taught rules without being enabled to understand the basics, without which there can be no real comprehension. Dr Howes, by contrast, explores the underlying structures, and thus makes one think about the rule, rather than simply memorise it. For example, he does not say only "Don't use 'however' where you could use 'but'." He points out that 'However' at the beginning of a sentence, followed by a comma, or 'however' between two commas, is an adverb, and not a coordinating conjunction joining two clauses. These are two quite different roles for a word, and for the second we need 'but'.

Dr Howes stresses that to understand sentence-construction we must understand and appreciate the parts of speech (and clauses, mainly in relation to conjunctions). In photocopies of an enlarged double page from the *Oxford Basic English Dictionary* we encountered 'well' as successively an adverb, an adjective, an exclamation (interjection) and a noun, and he told us that it can

also be a verb, when it is usually supplemented by 'up'.

Dr Howes also explained to us the most efficient way to begin teaching the reading of English to young native speakers and people for whom English is not their first language. It is the "short-name" part of the approach called phonics, which has often been neglected. This is something I will always remember, and will definitely apply when the time comes to educate my own children. I shall use here the international phonetic symbols, and also give approximations to the sounds they symbolize. The letter ***c***, for example, should be taught with the short name **kə** ('kuh'), not the long name that is like the word 'see'; the letter ***a*** as **æ** (as in 'apple'); and the letter ***t*** as **tə** ('tuh'). Thus the learner can go readily from the sequence **kə** and **æ** and **tə** to the word 'cat'. Later he or she can be taught how to deal with such words as 'mate' and 'note', and to cope with special words such as 'one'.

The fact that in seminar meetings you are surrounded by people as eager as yourself to learn about English makes it even more interesting and lively. Everyone gets a chance to voice their opinion, which is then thoroughly considered and discussed, without any "putting down".

Overall, I think the office class and the seminar, together with twice taking the Learningguild exam, have benefited me in many ways, in the development of my English and personally.

Doug Fullerton

a tribute by Mei Mei Chiang and John Howes

We write especially here about Doug's extensive participation in Learningguild and how much he meant to us. However, we must refer also to his long and wide-ranging life in many places and many roles.

Leslie Douglas Fullerton was born on the 19th of April 1918, and went as a young Methodist minister to Fiji in 1943. Shortly afterwards he married Ethel, a nursing sister and pianist, and they did not leave Fiji until 1964. Doug's responsibilities were mainly within the Fijian Indian community, but he was well respected among the indigenous Fijians also, not least because of his evident prowess as a Rugby coach and a commentator on the game. He became a prison chaplain, and that made him aware of the wrongness of capital punishment. There was a remarkable meeting of Learningguild's Friday-evening group on June 15th 2007, to which Doug, because of another commitment, was unable to come; instead he was interviewed on the 11th so that a cassette could be played at the meeting. We listened and were deeply impressed. (Copies are available.*) Doug, at 89, speaks with utter clarity of his experience in befriending and assisting condemned persons, his campaign against capital punishment, and his continuing opposition to it.

He and Ethel travelled to the United States so that he could do doctoral work, in which he wrote valuably about Fiji. Their young family was with them. Busy as he was, he made it a rule that he would sit down with the family for the evening meal. He would then wash the dishes with one of the children, who took turns, so that the child and he could exchange news, ideas and concerns.

Back in Australia he soon became Principal of the Methodist Theological Hall at Queen's College, Melbourne, and then, from 1977, a member of the Uniting Church's Theological Hall. He was especially concerned with practical training and with Christian ethics. The latter he pondered for the rest of his life. His experience and judgment were recognized in his appointment to medical ethics committees and, at Monash. as a member of selection committees for medical students. In *Learningguild Letter* 2.1992 we republished a report of a committee of which he was chairman on organ donation and autopsies. He did not lose his enthusiasm for rugby, and was still coaching Queen's teams in the early 1980s.

His years after retirement were full of activity in the areas already mentioned, and in untiring support for the Queen's Library and leadership of its Friends, but he was also notable for maintaining with Ethel a fellowship for retired ministers and their wives, participation in Probus, and his extensive involvement with Learningguild. As well as attending our annual conference in philosophy of religion, he took part when he could in our Friday-evening meetings and he and Ethel would be our hosts twice a year at 66 Garton Street, North Carlton. He would be at the door to welcome members and later to thank them for coming. He would enquire about the suitability of a chair or the temperature of the room. He still had time to listen and join in the discussion. During supper he would often take plates of food to those who were too busy talking. There was a special sense of warmth and welcome at those meetings, and we are fortunate indeed that Ethel remains happy to have us in the same familiar and elegant room.

He kept attending meetings until his illness prevented him. He died just one day short of his ninetieth birthday, and no one who attended the funeral at the Church of All Nations could fail to be moved by the continuing gratitude of Fijians, indigenous and Indian, towards him. One woman, herself a minister, spoke of his influence upon her and her choice of vocation. She also told a remarkable story of how he had told her he would have a word with a headmaster who had puzzled her by prudishly changing the second line of "It's a long way to Tipperary" ("to the sweetest girl I know") to the utterly unjustifiable "where the sweet bananas grow"!

Doug did not find it easy to write, and we are the losers for his reluctance. He was not impressed by people who wrote a lot but lacked the power and/or commitment to make a practical difference. His genuine respect for persons affected almost everyone he met. He lived a life of faith in God, and enabled those he met to feel special. When he gave advice it was welcome because of his friendliness and sincerity and his appreciation of the person who had sought it.

* Copies will gladly be posted on request. To cover expenses, readers may like to send five 55-cent stamps.

Bishop Robinson's critique

DON BARRETT, *whose own background is Catholic, reviews a very remarkable book. Don taught in the Classics Department of the University of Queensland for four decades, and became Dean of the Faculty of Arts. In recent years he has been teaching Latin at Brisbane Grammar school. There was a letter from him in* L'g Letter *1.2007.*

Geoffrey Robinson was an Auxiliary Bishop in the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney from 1984 until he resigned in 2004 to write this book: ***Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus***.*

The introduction is compelling reading. In 1994 his fellow-bishops elected him to the National Committee for Professional Standards, which coordinates the church's response to revelations of sexual abuse, and he was co-chairman from 1997 to 2003. He says he was sickened and stressed by the incidents of abuse he encountered. The inconsistency of response from church officials is due, he believes, to a lack of leadership, which must ultimately come from the Pope himself. There is a need to confront the problem, not merely to manage it, let alone conceal it.

Robinson reveals that he himself was sexually abused when young, although he was not severely traumatized. "Listening to victims of sexual abuse", he writes, "is the most profound spiritual gift I have received in the last twelve years" (p.225).

The causes of abuse are complex. Blaming celibacy or homosexuality is simplistic. Abuse is commonest when three factors converge: an unhealthy psychological state, unhealthy ideas about power and sex, and an unhealthy environment.

In contrast, Robinson calls for healthiness, and so for "ideas and attitudes that give people the freedom to grow to become all they are capable of being" (p.26). He lists seven forms of growth, none of which can be neglected: physical, intellectual, emotional, social, artistic, moral and spiritual.

At the beginning of Chapter 2 he says that there are two books of God, neither of which can be ignored: the bible and the world around us. His knowledge of the bible is profound. It leads him to declare that "the bible is … a dangerous book on which to base claims of divine authority for human words" (p.51). His insistence on the need for good arguments leads him to ask

> Whenever the statements of authority go beyond the arguments that can be adduced to prove them, is that authority going too close to setting itself up as a third *source*?" (p.248).

That sentence illustrates a prominent characteristic of the writer's style: a love of asking questions, many of which are rhetorical. This, as well as his gift for drawing analogies, often from music or the parent-child relationship, shows the teacher.

One of the thorniest questions Robinson tackles is whether Jesus at all times possessed the complete and perfect knowledge that God has. He concludes that the biblical evidence is conflicting, and that

> we cannot say that it is proven fact that Jesus possessed perfect knowledge and, therefore, it is not proven fact that Jesus determined all details of his future church with perfect knowledge and divine authority. (p.93)

His wit, as well as his sense of perspective, appears in this remark:

> Homosexuality is called an abomination, but the word 'abomination' is used 138 times in the bible, and if homosexuality is an abomination, so is eating lobster or

> prawns, so we should not put more weight on the word than it deserves.
>
> (p.182: Leviticus 11.10-12 for that restriction on eating)

He is ready to look critically at appeals to tradition:

> … much that is called "tradition" has contained so pervasive and sustained a bias against women that it is the weakest of foundations on which to base our conclusions concerning the dignity and role of women today.
>
> (p.72)

The first five chapters provide a background to a study, beginning in the sixth, of "how power has been used and misused within the church" (p.99). Robinson traces the fluctuating temporal and moral authority of popes to the present day. He observes sadly that modern methods of communication seem to have led to greater *control* over the church rather than an enhanced readiness to *listen* to its people.

He acknowledges that, since papal infallibility was proclaimed in 1870, there has been only one truly infallible statement, that concerning the assumption of the Virgin Mary body and soul into heaven (1950). He regards that dogma as not essential to the identity of the church. He points to the danger of what has been called "creeping infallibility", noting "an increase in the level of authority and certainty of every statement of a pope" (p.121). He cites as examples the 1992 Catechism of the Catholic Church and the sheer repetition of opinions without adequate argument, such as those on artificial contraception and the ordination of women.

While he acknowledges that the Roman Curia can provide restriction on papal pronouncements, he worries about its control of all church affairs, its high-handedness, a pervasive atmosphere of secrecy and its commitment to supporting papal power.

In Chapter Eight, after listing six levels of morality, rising from superiority and vengeance to loving as God loves us, Robinson declares that a healthy use of conscience involves exercising freedom with responsibility before God alone.

> The task of the church is … to assist people to form their conscience in such a way that the true good of all people concerned will be promoted
>
> (p.212)

In particular, what is regarded as sexual misbehaviour should not be condemned as in itself a direct offence against God without taking into account its effect on other persons, oneself or the community. He asks (p.210) "Is there a need for a profound revision of the Catholic Church's social ethic?" and obviously thinks that the answer is "Yes".

Robinson describes in Chapter Eleven the depth of spiritual harm suffered through sexual abuse, and declares his unequivocal opposition to any attempt to reassign offenders to other posts.

Concerning power and authority, he believes that "the Catholic church is in a prison … the prison of not being able to be wrong" (p.235). This leads him to a number of proposals for reform. Synods of bishops could be more participatory and less subject to curial control. Synods should concentrate on practical and pastoral matters, councils on matters of faith and morals. He proposes a national legislative body for each country under the control of a patriarch or president as in the Eastern churches.

For greater participation, Robinson advocates the inclusion of laypersons in councils, synods of laypersons, a legislative council, and diocesan and parish councils. To ensure accountability, he suggests regular performance appraisals for priests, bishops, members of the Curia, and even the pope (pp.290-2). There should be in-service training for priests and bishops – and the height-enhancing mitre should be abolished!

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference has summarily criticized the book on the ground that the church is endowed by Christ with a teaching office

that endures through time. There are no detailed arguments rebutting Robinson's views. Bishop Pat Power, Auxiliary Bishop of Canberra-Goulburn, has supported Robinson unequivocally in a lengthy statement in the online publication *Catholica Australia*.

I find little to criticize in the book. The author's "profound disappointment" that no pope has apologized or met with victims of abuse has to some extent been overtaken by Benedict XVI's actions during his recent visits to the United States and Australia.

A meditation at the end of each chapter provides a convenient summary and material for reflection. An elaborate series of footnotes suggests many enticing avenues for exploration. The typography, varied and attractive, enhances the orderly arrangement of the argument. There is one major and puzzling disappointment: the lack of an index. Something for the next edition?

* John Garratt Publishing, Mulgrave, Victoria, 2007. RRP $34.95.

Travels

JANET *and* **ELIZABETH HOWES**, *their sister Hilary and their parents Michael and Dorothy are all members of Learningguild. On May 16th 2008 Janet and Elizabeth talked about their travels in the previous year. These articles are based on those talks.* **JANET**, *who works as a cleaner in the aged-care section of Ardmillan Place in Moonee Ponds, does not let mild autism stand in her way, and is able not only to look after herself in another country but also to take on adventures that many of us might decline.*

I had a long holiday in New Zealand in November 2007. It began in Auckland, where I stayed at a Youth Hostel for three nights. At the Auckland Museum various things related to Charles Darwin were on display. Nearby was a big glasshouse, with lots of large water lilies and flowers of various colours. At Kelly Tarton's Antarctic World, where it was extremely cold, I saw penguins, stingrays and a range of fish and other sea creatures, and rode in a special car through scenery like the Antarctic. I went right around Auckland on the City Explorer bus. Joining The Connections Group Tour, I went up the Sky City Viewing Tower, from which we had a wonderful view.

Next we went to Rotorua for a few days, staying at a hotel. It was scary but exciting to do whitewater rafting, going over some small waterfalls. At the Whakatewatawa Maori Village and Thermal Reserve lots of steam rose from geysers, and bubbles came from hot water and mud. We saw a Maori dance and had a delicious Maori lunch.

The next stop was Taupo. There I did tandem skydiving, jumping from a plane 12000 feet off the ground. It was scary at first, but I got a wonderful view, and later a certificate for my skydiving. At Wellington I went to "Te Papa", the National Museum, and the Botanical Gardens. A ride on a cable car gave me a good view of the city.

A ferry took me to South Island. I did horse-riding at Nelson, including some trotting and cantering. After a night in Christchurch I went on to Fox Glacier, where I climbed and walked, and saw blue ice. In Queenstown the weather prevented the hang-gliding I had hoped for. I walked around the city and saw a statue of a kiwi.

At Milford Sound I spent a night on a boat, with a buffet dinner and breakfast. There was also some kayaking, and while sitting in my kayak I heard a man give an interesting talk on trees and shrubs, and saw some waterfalls. At Lake Ohau I stayed a night in a hotel, and had a good view of Mt Cook and of glaciers.

Finally I was back in Christchurch, staying as an independent person in a Youth Hostel. As well as attending two services at Christchurch Cathedral, I climbed to the top of the tower, from which there was a wonderful view of the city. I went to the Aquarium and Kiwi House, and at the International Antarctic Centre I saw not only some stuffed penguins and skuas but also some live penguins, and went inside an igloo and down an ice slide. At Science Alive I played with hands-on exhibits, went down a freefall slide, and climbed some walls. I rode on the Gondola Cable Car, and from its terminal had another good view of Christchurch. Then there was the Canterbury Museum, with moa skeletons and a stuffed moa with an egg, the Botanical Gardens, the Explorer Tram and an art gallery.

So for three weeks in November I enjoyed a very good holiday in New Zealand, full of activities and sights I shall remember.

ELIZABETH *had a gap year between Princes Hill Secondary College and the first year of a course at the University of Melbourne in primary education.*

There are many kinds of work you can do in a gap year. You can teach English, assist in a boarding school, care for elderly or disabled people, or work in the outdoors with groups of children, teaching them about nature and their place in it. The last was my choice. A very appealing feature of the environmental placements is that they offer the best of all worlds. At Castle Head, the environmental outdoor centre in the English Lake District, at which I spent eight months, I was able to teach, work with people from many backgrounds and carry out routine duties, all in the fresh air.

Castle Head Field Studies Council is situated in the northwest of England: it was first described to me as “between the fells of the Lake District and Morecambe Bay”. The Lake District must be one of the most beautiful parts of England, with its shining green grass, rugged mountains inhabited by grazing sheep and, of course, the clear cold water of the lakes. National Parks in England differ from those in Australia in that there more people live on the edge of the park, or, indeed, in it. Part of the Castle Head grounds lies in the Lake District National Park.

The centre itself was originally a Georgian mansion built by John Wilkinson, a wealthy ironmonger. The main part of the mansion, and the cellars, are still standing. The secret passageways and servants’ staircases between rooms add to the fascination of the building. It is quite a strange experience to live in a house that is older than any of the Australian States.

Castle Head is part of a Britain-wide group of seventeen outdoor education centres that host groups for short periods of time. These groups range from London schoolchildren, who have the chance to learn about the world outside their home city, and other children on holiday programs, to students from the Canary Islands and adult ornithologists and moth experts. Working with the school and holiday program groups was often very challenging – some children had various family, social or behavioural difficulties – and thus I learned valuable lessons in patience and tolerance. It was good practice to have to encourage a child to climb a mountain by telling him jokes the whole way!

Not only were the guests at Castle Head from very diverse backgrounds, but my fellow staff-members came from many countries. I worked with people from England (several parts from Devon to Yorkshire), France, Hungary, Slovakia, South Africa and Spain, as well as Australia. Castle Head was a wonderful place to make friends from different countries (I think in particular of my boyfriend Ariel).

The activities offered included rafting, canoeing, scrambling through a mountain stream called a ghyll, horizontal and conventional rock-climbing, mountain walking, orienteering, various problem-solving activities, and the "high all-aboard", a ten-foot pole with a small square platform on top that had to accommodate four people at once. It was not just the groups who had the fun of participating in these activities: the staff held a high all-aboard and rafting session, complete with a jump into the river afterwards, as a team-building exercise.

It is hard to think of a more worth-while way to spend two-thirds of a year. I learnt about myself and other people and developed valuable lasting relationships. Certainly the work was difficult at times, but I see this as useful experience for my future teaching. There is nothing quite like challenging a child's preconceptions about insects, or helping one overcome a fear of water, or pointing out all the edible plants in the woods, and doing so in a context unlikely to be forgotten.

In appreciation of an illustrator

We are further indebted to **ELIZABETH HOWES** *for a report on an earlier Friday-evening meeting (April 18th), at which Craig Smith, the well-known illustrator of children's books, spoke of his work and showed examples.*

We all have favourite books from our childhood. What made a particular book significant varies: maybe it absorbed us in a thrilling adventure on a tropical island or its familiar, calming words encouraged us, unprotesting, into bed. But important as the storyline is, a children's book needs something else to support the writing and to engage the readers. And this is where the illustrations come in.

As a child, I became familiar with Craig Smith's drawings, because he has worked with many authors that my generation were brought up on. The library at my primary school was packed with literature he had contributed to. I think of the pairs of names on title-pages: "Paul Jennings and Craig Smith", "Christobel Mattingley and Craig Smith", "Libby Gleeson and Craig Smith", and so on. I have many fond memories of sitting in the "snake pit" (reading section) in the library listening to teachers reading these books, pointing out the vivid pictures on page after page.

I was amazed when I heard that **the** Craig Smith was going to speak at Learning-guild: that one of the most prolific children's illustrators of my primary school days (and some earlier years) not only lived in Melbourne, but not far from Fallon St where his talk was to be given, and was going to share the world of children's illustrating with us. I looked forward to his talk with keen anticipation and some hopes of a drawing demonstration, and I wasn't dis-appointed. The highlight of the evening was watching Craig draw, with the skill of a seasoned illustrator, a young boy sawing a log to build a boat. We took in the concentration on the boy's face, his floppy work-singlet, shorts, thick socks and boots, all

sketched in charcoal, as well as the angle of his expression and his stance.

I have three particular favourites from the 450-odd books illustrated by Craig. The first (and also one of the first that he illustrated) is *Whistle Up The Chimney*, by Nan Hunt. This was a well-thumbed classic in our home. It was quite an experience to read it and see a train emerging from the fireplace, whistling shrilly, packed with passengers, and hurtling through an elderly lady's living room. The use of imagination is, of course, at the very centre of children's literature. Craig's early drawing style is quite different from that of the later books. He now tends to use "cross-hatching" more, which creates a very detailed effect and is useful for shadows and variations in colour.

I remember having *Sister Madge's Book of Nuns*, by Doug Macleod, read to me some years ago at a camp. One picture in this collection is a perfect example of Craig's frequent communication of movement in his drawings. There is a vivid, full-page illustration of a nun (in search of birdseed for her pet vulture!) speeding through the aisles of a supermarket on her motorbike, knocking groceries off shelves and causing other customers to scatter. It is not easy in a still drawing to represent a movement accurately, and especially this one, but the picture does just that.

Finally, and most importantly, the *I Hate Fridays* series by Rachel Flynn. The humorous stories by and about fictitious primary school children are well accompanied by the illustrations. There are so many that it is almost impossible to choose the best. However, the black-and-white drawing of Basil, the child who is "allergic to the modern world", with his over-long T-shirt hanging out of the bottom of his flapping bike shorts, must be in the top five.

Craig's talk was enriching and engaging, and it was fascinating to hear about the "behind-the-scenes" of illustration: the drawing styles on which his are modelled, the number of sketches he tries out before deciding on the right one, and the stages from sketch to publication. There will always be a demand for new children's books, and Craig deserves to be honoured and thanked not only for the delight his illustrations give but also for helping thereby to interest children in reading.

The address of Craig Smith's website is www.craigsmithillustration.com

WHAT'S A GOOD INTRODUCTION TO *THE SYSTEMATIC AVOIDANCE OF MISTAKES IN ENGLISH?*

JUAN FLORES, *who has come from Colombia, with a degree in sanitary engineering, has had considerable experience in preparing for and taking the IELTS test (the letters stand for 'International English Language Testing System').* **JOHN HOWES**, *his teacher, has assisted numerous students to prepare for IELTS. Here they combine to review a recent book of an unusual kind.*

In preparing for IELTS it is very important to choose one's material well in order not to waste time. Cambridge University Press published in 2007 a very short book (only 64 pages) by Pauline Cullen called ***Common Mistakes at IELTS Intermediate … and how to avoid them***. Carefully used, it would probably help many people towards a higher IELTS score. The copy available in the Learningguild Library was purchased for $15.95.

In 30 units it covers a wide range, including auxiliaries, modal verbs, infinitives and gerunds, prepositions, adjectives and adverbs, and kinds of confusion that occur between verbs, or between nouns, of not entirely dissimilar meaning. Unit 25 covers a number of verbs that students need to be clear about when they are asked to say what a graph or diagram shows or a report contains. Examples are taken from common situations such as those arising in travel, advertising, meeting and work, and so are likely to be useful for IELTS. There are also ten tests, one after each set of three units.

To work through the wide range of areas in the book would widen the knowledge of many students and increase their confidence. Unit 11 valuably reminds or informs the reader of many useful verbs linked to the infinitive (as in 'I managed to avoid …') and many linked to the gerund (as in 'I enjoy watching ….'). There is also the use of the *–ing* word as a participle, as in 'We spent a lot of money buying CDs'. The word 'participle' is not, however, introduced there, and the word 'gerund' not until Unit 13, and then it is not explained.

In various ways the book could be improved. It would help if there were more space in which one could add notes and reminders, as one certainly needs to do in revising. There are some slips that ought to have been picked up. In Unit 1, the classification 'cardinal numbers' is used instead of 'ordinal numbers' for 'the first', 'the second' and 'the third'. In 'John suggested we go to a movie' (Unit 13), it is certainly not the infinitive without 'to' that is used at 'go': it is the subjunctive (as in 'he go'), and 'we go to a movie' here is a noun clause in which 'that' has been omitted. In Test 2, at 1.7, the answer given on p.56, 'gets up', must be wrong since the subject-locution is 'I'.

That word 'subject-locution' (see *Making up Sentences* 1:3 and then 1:7.1) enables us to distinguish between the subject (i.e. in this case the speaker or writer) of the sentence that begins 'I get up' and the word in it (in some other cases words) referring to that subject. The lack of such a firm distinction between words and what they refer to causes trouble at a familiar place for it: the writer says at Unit 3 "Some nouns in English are 'uncountable'. This means that they do not have a plural form." It is not that the **noun** (e.g., 'garbage') is uncountable (every **word** is countable), but that what it refers to cannot be counted with that noun. Thus we should talk about an **NU**, a noun for something uncountable with that noun, and an **NC**, a noun for something countable with it (*MS* 1:5.6).

The practical value and the expository weakness of the book both appear clearly if we consider the combination of Unit 20 ("When do I use the passive?") and the related Test 7. In the latter there is an excellent exercise in which the appropriate passive verb must be supplied at ten places. It is unhelpful, however, to be told at Unit 20 that, whereas in 'The teacher told the students to close their books', we have "subject + verb + object", in 'The students were told to close their books', we have "object + verb". Talking about the **people** called here the students, we could say that those who were previously presented as the object of the telling are now presented as the subject of being told; or, talking about the **words** 'the students', we could say that what was previously the object-locution has become the subject-locution. (See *MS* 3:3.2 and 5.) It is quite confused and confusing to say that "the verb (*were*) agrees with the object (*the books*)" in 'The books were sold for a small profit by the school.'

This book cannot, then, be recommended for accuracy of exposition. However, its range, its juxtaposition of correct and incorrect sentences, and the many opportunities it provides for the identification, explanation and correction of errors, would certainly help students to build up in area after area their capacity to correct and to avoid such errors in their own speech and writing.