Learningguild Letter

2.2002*

Dear members and friends of Learningguild,

Much of this issue and all of its supplement belong to the conservation of criticism. The critics are Ferdinand Bauer, about whom John Williams writes, and Martin Buber, whose book *Two Types of Faith* has led me to provide a summary and analysis of it, and provided a good deal of the subject-matter of this letter. The object of the criticism is the dominant form of Christian theology, called Pauline because it was so largely shaped by the extraordinary man Paul of Tarsus.

Why be concerned with all this? Someone might murmur "Learningguild is not a religious organization, so why publish this kind of thing?" Each year we hold a day conference in philosophy of religion, to which a general invitation is given, to people of any religious allegiance or belief or of none. That tradition (matched at few other places or times) reflects both my concern with the subject over fifty years, before and after I ceased to think of myself as a Christian, and my conviction that John Stuart Mill was absolutely right in holding that the path to any approach to wisdom must include listening to, and actually seeking out, objections to the view that is or has been held by oneself or one's group.[1] In *Learningguild Letter* (as in this issue Jack Gregory's and Eva Jones's articles illustrate as well as that of John Williams and my own letter, summary and analysis) we are glad to publish a member's record of some part of his or her own experience or of the current outcome of some protracted attempt to go on learning. In the case of philosophy of religion, my own thinking has often in recent years been linked to our day conference as a stimulus for thought and writing. More generally, one might note the importance for good and for ill of religion in its many forms, and see that as in itself a sufficient defence of protracted attention to some of those forms. In 2004 our Thursday seminar will have as its title "Religion, Philosophy and Common Humanity", and I intend that a book will ensue.

How should one deal with religious traditions, one's own if one stands within any such tradition, or those of others? Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, who belongs to the tradition of Orthodox Judaism, has written a valuable book (which we are to study in the seminar just mentioned), *The Dignity of Difference*.[2] The disposition he recommends for an adherent of one religion

to have towards another is "like being secure in one's home, yet moved by the beauty of foreign places, knowing that they are someone else's home, not mine, but still part of the glory of the world that is ours" (p.65). Educated in philosophy at Cambridge though he was, he appears not to favour critical examination of a religion by those who are not its adherents, preferring respect for the dignity of difference. He treats Socrates and Plato in extraordinarily cavalier fashion. At the end of his first chapter, he says

> We must learn the art of conversation, from which truth emerges not, as in Socratic dialogues, by the refutation of falsehood but from the quite different process of letting our world be enlarged by the presence of others who think, act, and interpret reality in ways radically different from our own.

The Socratic dialogues provide critical scrutiny of opinions and statements with a view to getting nearer to the truth (or at least to a salutary recognition that one is as yet distant from it). In honest conversation with those whose outlook is very different from ours, "our world" is likely to be not only enlarged but uncomfortably challenged, just as the outlook of those who wish to impose American market values on the rest of the world is challenged by Sacks himself in this book.

His third chapter has in its title the phrase "Exorcising Plato's Ghost". With just one general reference to one section of a long out-of-date first Penguin edition of the *Republic* (one that I helped to revise!), he dismisses Plato as one who mistakenly wants universal truth. If a brief (and therefore inadequate) summary were required of what Plato is about at that stage of the *Republic*, this might be offered: he considers that the true philosopher must not be content with common opinions or unexamined assumptions, but seek ideal standards and axioms that are regarded as such because they have stood up to prolonged and stringent criticism (see Part Seven as a whole, and the dialectic section in Part Eight, in Penguin editions from 1974). Plato, in most of his work, is much more likely to be saying "This won't do" or "We haven't got clear enough about this yet" than proclaiming "This is the truth". The Seventh Letter, probably written by Plato, insists as Sacks does on the need for conversation, but conversation characterized by "friendly criticism by people who without any forms of ill-will are employing questions and answers" (344b). It would seem to me to offer a radically false dichotomy if one proposed, as Sacks appears to do, that we must embrace **either** conversation and enlargement of our outlook **or** criticism of Socrates' or Plato's kind. Sacks does not want us to think of him as a relativist (see p.55), but, as the practice of postmodernism has shown, the person who does not think it necessary to seek out and learn from criticism is a dogmatist or a parochialist or an entertainer. If you do not want to be thought a relativist, you must value critical discussion of your own beliefs and others'.

Sacks's book, then, might be taken to suggest that he would have little enthusiasm for Buber's work in so far as it was critical of Paul and the dominant, Pauline kind of Christianity. But if a thinker within a religion not one's own seems to one to have influentially misrepresented something in one's own, or gone fundamentally wrong, how can it not be beneficial to say so, in a polite way? One takes others seriously by seeking first to understand what they are saying and then to discern actual or possible objections and consider them.

Ronald Gregor Smith, who later became Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, reviewed and warmly welcomed Buber's book in the Christian journal *Theology* in January 1952. He both perceived that in it "Buber has delivered a series of shrewd and forceful blows against the Pauline version of Christianity" and commented that "the attack is so courteous and charitable that it is almost unfair to call it an attack". He was in no doubt about the book's importance and wanted his readers to take it up and learn from Buber's insights. What do we find fifty years later? The book has been largely ignored by Christian writers. Buber is mentioned among others by Günther Bornkamm, but in two widely read studies of Paul, *The Theology of St. Paul* by D.E.H.Whiteley (1964) and the recent vast book *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* by James D.G. Dunn (1998), he is not mentioned at all. I should not have heard of his *Two Types of Faith* had not Harry Wardlaw, who had been supervised by Gregor Smith, agreed to speak at our 2001 conference and chosen to discuss the first and last of Buber's chapters. (Some of his remarks to us are summarized in his article in *Lg L* 2.2001).

Convinced of the importance of the work and the need to conserve it not only by discussing it but by making its main themes more accessible and digestible to potential readers, I have written as a supplement to this *Letter* a one-page summary of the book and an analysis of each of the seventeen chapters. Readers might consider whether, on that basis, they share Gregor Smith's view of the importance of what Buber has to say.

There are two other, and more personal, reasons for my continued interest in Paul. His writings had a decisive influence on three prominent people in the history of Christianity, Augustine, Martin Luther and John Wesley, the Englishman from whose work (and from whose brother Charles's hymns) there grew the movement and then the church called Methodist. I was a Methodist from about 1945 to 1971 (though from 1954 much involved in the ecumenical Student Christian Movement), and well acquainted with such Pauline assertions about Jesus Christ as those in Charles Wesley's famous lines

> He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
> he sets the prisoner free.

In 1967 I happened to be the first person to give a regular series of lectures in philosophy of religion at the University of Melbourne, and for my part of the course produced a twelve-chapter typescript called "Open to Doubt and Faith" ─ a philosophical study of Paul's letter to the Romans. So Paul is certainly an old and respected acquaintance.

I remain an admirer of two parts of his writings in particular. One is the twelfth chapter of that letter to the Romans, with its exhortations "Practise hospitality" and "Rejoice with those that rejoice and weep with those that weep". The other is the famous hymn to love (in the first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 13), with its wise and eloquent insistence that wisdom and eloquence are of little worth in the absence of an enduring and patient love of one's neighbour, and that love is greater even than faith and hope, on both of which, as he conceived them, Paul set such store.

What then, if anything, is wrong with Pauline Christianity? My argument has four themes, the first two closely linked to Buber's book, as may be seen from the summary and analysis.

1. Paul's ambivalent view of the body of law or direction (*Torah*) that belonged to the essence of Judaism was on balance so negative as to be insufficiently appreciative of something deeply needed by human beings, and to produce a conception of God that could only be unacceptable to most Jews and most reasonable persons, a conception of God as having given the law primarily as a means of making human beings aware of their sinfulness and their need of salvation.

This criticism is substantially that of Buber in Chs VII and VIII. I have called Paul's view ambivalent. Dunn (p.129f) writes both of "the regularly negative attitude Paul displays towards the law" and of the fact that "Paul also speaks of the law in positive terms". Let us take as a test case his treatment of the tenth commandment, which forbids the coveting of anything that is one's neighbour's. At Romans 13.9 he sets it within a set of commandments all of which, he well says, are summed up in "Love your neighbour as yourself." Yet at 7.7f he says "I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said 'You shall not covet.' But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness." The clue to his thought seems to lie in 5.20f, where we read "Law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" ─ but the grace is presented as only through "Jesus Christ our Lord." Whiteley writes (p.80)

> If God is to deal with wrong-doing (so St. Paul seems to believe) it must be crystallized into conscious sin, like a boil that is brought to a head by hot fomentations in order to be pricked. St Paul probably means that God gave the law with the immediate intention of transforming unconscious wrong-doing into conscious sin, and with the ultimate intention of overcoming that sin altogether.

This is an untenable view of the law. One word used for covetousness by Paul himself (e.g. in 1.29) has a long history: Plato too wrote of *pleonexia*, self-aggrandizement or the often relentless and restless desire to have more, to come off better than someone else, perhaps anyone else. It is very important that we are warned about it, as by the tenth commandment, by Plato, who sees it as a source of inner disintegration, by the myth of Midas, and in eastern traditions. People overcome a tendency to *pleonexia*, as many do, in various ways, often combined: they may see its folly, futility and harmfulness; they may be grateful for and largely content with the blessings they have; they may respect, even love, and want to cooperate with their neighbours. What little hope there would be for humanity if one had to believe that the only way ultimately to overcome covetousness was through faith in Jesus Christ. Not only do so many human beings have no real opportunity to have such faith, but it is only when religious faith of any kind is combined, as it by no means always is, with respect for and love of one's fellows and the self-restraint that those qualities entail that it is effective against such vices as covetousness.

2. The one whom Paul calls Christ or Christ Jesus or the Lord Jesus Christ is inconsistent with the Jesus of the synoptic gospels (Mark, Matthew and Luke).

The relevant chapters in Buber are X-XII and XV, though he does not give any general account of the Jesus of the synoptic gospels. The matter I raise here, which John

Williams also discusses, has been the subject of long dispute. It is considered by Bornkamm in his Conclusion to *Paulus* (the English edition, *Paul*, appeared in 1971). As well as recognizing how limited was Paul's probable acquaintance with the life Jesus had lived, he relates (p.237f) a main theme in the portrayal of Jesus in the synoptics to the gospel (*euanggelion*, "good news") preached by Paul:

> … Paul's gospel of justification by faith alone matches Jesus' turning to the godless and the lost. … in Jesus' message as well as Paul's, the people who are really in danger and lost are the "good" who need no repentance, the Pharisee in the temple (Luke 18.9ff.), the lost son's grumbling elder brother (Luke 15), the laborers in the vineyard who calculated with their master the greater amount of work done and, in consequence, their claim to bigger pay (Matt. 20.1 ff.).
>
> … Jesus, by his turning to sinners and tax collectors, and Paul, by his gospel and missionary work among the Gentiles, alike broke through the limits imposed by achievement and supposed privileges.

There is a similarity here. It can certainly be said also that Paul's gospel was inevitably different from that proclaimed by Jesus himself, since it was on the other side of the crucifixion and what was believed to be the resurrection of Jesus. Yet one can only contrast the dominant themes of their gospels. Jesus, according to the synoptics, was concerned with the imminent kingdom of God, the fatherly love of God, and the possibility open to all of repentance and faith; he was not preoccupied with sinfulness as such and he gave himself no exalted status. Paul, on the other hand, thinks of God as "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin" (Romans 8.3), and, after saying "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God", summarizes his gospel in the words "they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith" (3.23-25). The idea of God's "sending his own Son" is developed into that of Christ Jesus as a pre-existent one "in the form of God" who "emptied himself, being born in the likeness of men …humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross", and that of God as having "highly exalted him", so that (and here Paul is probably quoting an early Christian hymn of praise) "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow … and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2.6-11). As Buber sees (Chapter X), there is now within Paul's letters a dominant figure who will have to be deified.

How influential these themes have been in Christian history is indicated by lines from two well-known hymns, respectively by Charles Wesley and Caroline Noel:

> He left his Father's throne above
> (so free, so infinite his grace!),
> emptied himself of all but love,
> and bled for Adam's helpless race.
>
> At the name of Jesus
> every knee shall bow,

every tongue confess him
King of Glory now ….

What has come to be claimed to matter most for human beings is that they should in faith accept this view of Jesus as crucified, risen and exalted, and acknowledge him as their Lord. The life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, and in particular the ideas of the kingdom of a bountiful God who sends such gifts as his indispensable rain on just and unjust alike, and of the need in that context for a responsive generosity and love of neighbour and enemy, have almost vanished. How hard it is at such a point as this to be impartial! But one can aim to approximate to impartiality, partly by studying sympathetically writers from different traditions, and, doing so, I conclude that Pauline Christianity concerns a Lord Jesus Christ not consistent with the Jesus of the synoptic gospels.

3. Paul's insistence that liberation and salvation in this life and in a life beyond comes through faith, a faith that necessarily includes the acceptance of certain doctrines, tends to the overemphasis of the likelihood that such faith will itself transform human character, to the belief that those who do not accept the doctrines are "perishing", and therefore, eventually, to intolerance and even persecution of those who do not accept them.

Christians in the Pauline tradition are used to the presentation of the life based on Christian faith as involving an extraordinary transformation. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5.17). It is clear from 1 Corinthians 1 that Christians and their message were sometimes dismissed as fools and folly: but Paul replies "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise" (v.27) and "the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (v.18). One cannot doubt the sense of power, the resilience, strength of conviction and willingness to face agony and a violent death which religious believers (not only Christians, or Jews as depicted in Hebrews 11, as we in the West are now more vividly aware) can have and show. How much attention needs to be given, however, to the tendency of so many who insist upon the importance of having the right beliefs to be narrow in their sympathies, to regard those who lack those beliefs as misguided and liable to God's condemnation, and so to be intolerant and even, when they have the power, ready to persecute. Paragraphs 17-19, and their notes, of the second chapter of Mill's *Liberty* provide apt illustration. The fact that to this day, within as well as between the various churches, there are such sharp divisions shows how great is the potency of doctrine, **when considered as necessary for salvation**, to set human beings at enmity with one another. The search for what Sacks calls universal truth might lead us to the salutary recognition that such a view of salvation is itself indefensible.

4. There is in Paul a tendency to ignore or underplay those good and fundamental aspects of human life that are not dependent on religious faith, and so to offer a constricted view of that life.

Mill urges in his third chapter (paragraph 8) that one who "believe[s] that man was made by a good Being" should also, to be consistent, believe that "this Being gave

all human faculties that they might be cultivated and unfolded". How striking is Dietrich Bonhoeffer's expression of distaste, in a letter from Tegel Prison in April 1944, for the religiosity that concentrates on human sin and weakness:

> I often ask myself why a 'Christian instinct' often draws me more to the religionless people than to the religious, by which I don't in the least mean with any evangelizing intention, but, I might almost say, 'in brotherhood'. … Religious people speak of God when human knowledge (perhaps simply because they are too lazy to think) has come to an end, or when human resources fail, … always … exploiting human weakness or human boundaries. … I should like to speak of God not on the boundaries but at the centre, not in weaknesses but in strength, and therefore not in death and guilt but in man's life and goodness.[3]

In December 2002, at our day conference in philosophy of religion, included in the reading we studied was a chapter on belief and faith by John Burnaby, in *The Belief of Christendom* (1960), who says (p.17) something of the kind there rejected by Bonhoeffer:

> … the very essence of Christian faith is reliance not upon our own intentions [in this case, to love our neighbours] but upon the grace of God which alone can give us the power to carry intention into action.

Alone? Should we not recognize the carrying into action of many a good intention by men and women who have different religious beliefs, or none? We ought to note too the importance of a sense of gratitude for the goodness of other people and for "all the blessings of this life" in sustaining people's efforts for good both in times of calm and in times of stress or storm. With the exception of the welcome note struck at Philippians 4.8, there is not in Paul or in Pauline Christianity sufficient appreciation of human beings as searchers for truth, as creative beings, as sexual beings with families and friends.

I write as one on a spectrum between agnosticism and a Kantian theism that does not appeal to any supposed special revelation. I believe that Buber has given a careful, valuable and cogent critique of Paul's kind of Christianity. I should have welcomed it if in the same book he had pointed to the undue restrictiveness to which Judaism has been inclined, its tendency to be preoccupied with lineage and with circumcision and other traditional practices. Then, like Kant, he might have asked what kind of faith in God, if any, can reasonably be adopted and affirmed by anyone, in the closest connection with respect for human beings of any religious beliefs and of none. I should welcome comments from any reader who would like to contribute to further discussion.

Yours,

John Howes

NOTES

1. See *Liberty* Ch.2 as a whole, and especially the seventh and eighth paragraphs.
2. Continuum, London and New York 2002.
3. *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 3rd ed. (revised and enlarged), SCM Press, London 1971, p.281f.

The Religion of Jesus and Paul's Religion about Jesus

JOHN WILLIAMS *studied philosophy at the University of Melbourne and theology at Ormond College. He took his doctorate at Columbia. Though he was ordained to the Presbyterian ministry and then joined that of the Uniting Church, he has mostly been a teacher at secondary and tertiary levels. Now retired, he visits the US annually, serving as a scholar in residence at several universities and "think-tanks". He describes himself as a "religious liberal" who cherishes stories and symbols from the Jewish and Christian traditions. Here he presents a distinction, beginning from one of its notable exponents.*

Most contemporary scholars attempting to isolate the teachings of Jesus or to explore the development of Christianity during the first two centuries CE refer almost condescendingly to Ferdinand Christian Bauer (1802-1860).[1] Admittedly, his indirect influence upon scholars seeking to recover the "religion" embraced and promulgated by the historical Jesus or striving to describe the early evolution of Christianity is widely acknowledged. Few contemporary scholars would disagree with a judgement passed forty years after Bauer's death that "New Testament study, since [Bauer's] time, has had a different colour".[2] Yet the crucial thesis he defended is typically dismissed as little more than an historical curiosity. His lasting contribution is usually identified merely with his recognition that diverse and indeed conflicting theologies inform the New Testament writings and that even Christians of the first generation were wracked by divisions. "Jesus people" were many and varied. If his central and highly controversial thesis is mentioned, it is presented more often than not as an unacceptable theory requiring drastic modification or outright rejection.

Essentially, Bauer argued that intense conflict obtained between the teachings of Paul about Jesus (as found in his epistles) and the teachings of Jesus, cherished and disseminated by the mother-church in Jerusalem, the church made up of Jesus' most immediate followers ─ those called disciples ─ and Jews who had listened to, recounted and been influenced by the sayings and stories of the historical Jesus. An admirer of the philosopher Hegel, Bauer characterised the faith embraced by the mother-church in Jerusalem as the "thesis", Paul's version of the faith the "antithesis", and what in time became Christian "orthodoxy" the far-fetched "synthesis".

Bauer's most important works admittedly contain demonstrable errors.[3] He argued that the gospel called Matthew was the first "canonical" one to be written and represented the teachings of the mother-church in Jerusalem. He was incorrect: Mark, penned after, and in response to, the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE was the earliest canonical gospel to be penned and was subsequently drawn upon by the authors of both Matthew and (to a lesser extent) Luke. Bauer regarded the disciple Peter as the head of the

mother-church in Jerusalem, whereas in truth James, a brother of Jesus, filled that role.[4] Bauer was given to forcing raw data to fit his Hegelian paradigm.

Bauer's central thesis, however, is not to be cavalierly dismissed. It gave birth to a distinction drawn by many liberal Christian thinkers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, namely that Paul's supernaturalist religion **about** Jesus was and is totally other than and in conflict with the religion **of** the historical Jesus, the religion by which Jesus lived and which he preached, primarily through whimsical stories and gnomic sayings, sometimes of the kind Zen Buddhists call koans.

Bauer was almost certainly correct in maintaining that 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans and Galatians were the only epistles actually written by Paul. Interestingly, some relatively recent controversial work, analysing with the aid of a computer all the writings traditionally ascribed to Paul, confirmed Bauer's judgement, albeit adding Philemon to those four epistles.[5] (Bauer regarded Philemon as possibly, but improbably, an authentic work of Paul.)

What did Paul teach about Jesus?

Paul bluntly states that he preaches "Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 1.23). But too little attention has been given to what he says about that crucifixion. He writes in the next chapter of "God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that has been hidden, which God foreordained before the **aeons** [my emphasis] unto our glory; which none of the ***archontes*** of this **aeon** knew: for if they had known it, **they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory**".

Paul is asserting something quite extraordinary. Responsibility for the execution of Jesus was, according to him, to be ascribed neither to the Romans nor to the Jewish authorities, but to the "***archontes***", elsewhere designated by Paul "the **principalities** and **powers"**: supernatural, daemonic, astral entities that somehow ruled the world and determined human destiny. By effecting the crucifixion of Jesus these supernatural beings were somehow "tricked" by "the [hidden] wisdom which none of the *archontes* of this aeon" knew. As to what mortals were, historically speaking, responsible for Jesus' execution, Paul is not concerned. At the most, these people were but puppets manipulated by the principalities and powers, by the *archontes*.

Why were the principalities and powers ill-advised to engineer the crucifixion of Jesus? Because by so doing they sealed their own fate. They "self-destructed", so to speak. Their daemonic rule was brought to an end. The title 'the Lord of Glory' is itself highly revealing. It is profoundly non-Jewish. Yet it is congruent with numerous other Pauline references to and statements about Jesus. The "Lord of Glory" is said by Paul to have existed before the birth of the historical Jesus, who thus bore "the image of God". By crucifying the unrecognised "Lord of Glory" the rulers of the present aeon unintentionally unleashed a new aeon in which everything was "made new" and in which their rule and their determining of human beings' destiny was no more.

An eminent Professor of New Testament and Historical Theology at St Andrew's College in the University of Sydney, the late Professor Samuel Angus, deserves far more attention than the little he now receives. He wrote in the nineteen-twenties *The Mystery Religions and Christianity*: *A Study In The Religious Background of Early Christianity* and *The Religious Quests of the Graeco-Roman World: A Study in the Historical Background of Early Christianity*.[6] Paul's supernatural "Lord of Glory" is, to any reader of these volumes, reminiscent of saviour gods worshipped by many of Paul's non-Jewish contemporaries. He ascribed to the historical Jesus a nature and role that was and is profoundly "non-Jewish".

In his epistles, Paul again and again compares "his Gospel" with "another Gospel", his Jesus with a different Jesus. He insists that this other Gospel is a perversion of the Gospel of Christ. In 2 Corinthians (11.4) he expresses his fear that his converts have been beguiled from their original faith in Christ by someone who preached "another Jesus, whom [he] did not preach".

Repeatedly, when referring to the original disciples of Jesus, Paul defends his own "apostolic" credentials, even though he had never encountered the historical Jesus. He insists passionately that his Gospel had no human source, having been miraculously made known to him. No human intermediary was involved. It was God-given (Galatians 1:1f). In the same epistle he repudiates any suggestion that his Gospel had been derived from the disciples and other men and women who had encountered and listened to the historical Jesus ─ that is, from the mother-church in Jerusalem.

Extraordinarily, Paul refers to Jesus "according to the flesh" (*kata sarka*). He concedes that he "once" so knew Jesus but is determined to know him as such no more. **When and from whom** did Saul, later known by his Roman name as Paul, first hear about Jesus *kata sarka*? Only one answer convinces this writer. He had heard about "this Jesus" when he encountered and was instructed by members of the mother-church in Jerusalem and learned from them about "their" Jesus, Jesus *kata sarka*, the historical Jesus.

Bauer was right in his central contention. Paul's religion about a supernatural "Lord of Glory" who died by means engineered by daemonic entities, who rose from the dead, and ritual identification with whom by means of baptism conferred "salvation" on the initiated believer, was a religion quite other than and in tension with the essentially Jewish religion of the historical Jesus. That was the Jesus whose open-ended and often shocking stories and memorable sayings were remembered and recalled by the men and women who had actually encountered him, some of whom had been his intimates.

What did the Mother-church in Jerusalem preach?

Limitations of space dictate a largely unargued answer to this question. The simplest and most obvious answer is "something quite other than the religion about Jesus promulgated by Paul". The focus of the mother-church **was** "Jesus *kata sarka*", the historical Jesus,

encounter with whom had liberated many men and women who had heard his stories and sayings.

Many of the sayings of Jesus were recorded in written form by the Mother-church in Jerusalem. Whilst some scholars still debate whether the authors of Matthew and of Luke drew upon this written source, usually designated *Q,* the scholarly tide is turning. Many articles have been published in recent years defending the existence of Q and its relatively early dating. One argument widely proffered against its reality was that a "gospel" that made no mention of Jesus' crucifixion and triumphant resurrection would be of interest to none and would never have been penned. The discovery in 1946 of the gospel of Thomas, a gospel that is little more than a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus (but asserting that Mary Magdalene was a more reliable source than Peter for details about the life and teachings of Jesus) quashed that argument.[7]

What other sources are available? One obviously is Mark (which was written at a later date than Q and possibly Thomas). But Mark presents problems. It was written in response to the catastrophic fall of Jerusalem, and thus the dispersal or destruction of the Mother-church in Jerusalem, after 70 CE. The author attempts to reconcile ─ in a sense synthesise ─ Paul's "Gospel" and much of that of the Mother-church. Many of the stories and sayings of Jesus recorded in Mark are almost certainly authentic stories and sayings of the historical Jesus. Mark is, however, anxious to facilitate the coexistence of Christians and Rome, and so commences the diabolical process of transferring guilt for the execution of Jesus from the Romans to the Jews. Again and again the Jewish disciples of Jesus are depicted as failing to understand what Jesus is teaching, although a tacit excuse for the failure to see who Jesus really was is provided by Mark in terms of the perplexing so-called "messianic secret". It is a Roman, the Roman centurion at the cross of Jesus (Mark 15:30), who is presented as first to perceive the real identity of Jesus, revealed to his readers by Mark at the beginning of his gospel, "the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God": "Truly, this man was the Son of God".

Like Jesus, members of the mother-church in Jerusalem regarded themselves as Jews. They worshipped at the Temple or in synagogues. They supplemented that worship by relatively informal "house-meetings" at which they recalled and pondered the life, stories and teachings of Jesus and almost certainly had a meal in memory of him.

At the very most, the Mother-church in Jerusalem regarded Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah or the Messiah *designatus* (the one who would come ─ again ─ as the Messiah). Any notion that Jesus was the Pauline "Lord of Glory" would have been regarded with astonishment ─ perhaps dismay ─ by the Mother-church and its members. The crucifixion of Jesus was perceived not as an "atoning sacrifice" but simply as the death at the hands of the Roman occupiers of Israel of yet another Jewish martyr.

The Mother-church cherished what had been experienced in and through its members' interactions with the historical Jesus. They had experienced a creativity somehow unleashed by Jesus' charismatic presence, words and actions that had transformed them, liberated them, made them more vibrantly, adventurously and fearlessly

alive. Something had happened to them rather than been achieved by them. This transforming creativity was not halted by the death of Jesus. As his words and life and interactions were recalled and pondered, he was somehow present.

Conclusion

Jesus told a story widely known as the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15.11-32). A "sinner" came to his senses and returned to his home, his abject apology composed and rehearsed. But whilst that returning prodigal was still "a great way off" a waiting and yearning father raced from his home to greet and hug him. A commenced confession of guilt and words of apology were cut short. A "welcome home" party was thrown, but the father left the festivities in order to plead with his other son to come in and eat and sing and dance and rejoice. Jesus left that part of the story open. Did or did not the elder brother yield to his father's pleadings?

For Jesus, God is like that father. God requires no intermediary, no atoning sacrifice, to make forgiveness possible or available. It is reason for great regret that Paul's religion about Jesus all but supplanted the religion of the historical Jesus.

NOTES

1. Many of the more interesting of these scholars are members of the so-called "Jesus Seminar", particularly John Dominic Crossan. See, for example, his *Four Other Gospels* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985); *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranian Jewish Peasant* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991); *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994) and *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998).
2. Nash, H. S., *The History of the Higher Criticism of the New Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1901).
3. The main works are *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Work, His Epistles and Doctrine: A Contribution to the History of Primitive Christianity*, tr. Eduard Zeller and Allan Menzies (London: Williams and Norgate, 1876); *The Church History of the First Three Centuries,* tr. Allan Menzies (London: Williams and Norgate, 1878-79).
4. James is in many ways a shadowy figure. Some scholars have argued that he is the author of the epistle bearing his name, and that it contains various sayings of the historical Jesus. An interesting albeit somewhat speculative study of James is Easenman, R., *James the Brother of Jesus: Recovering the True History of Early Christianity* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997). Also worth reading is Schmithals, W., *Paul and James* (Chatham: SCM Press, 1965)
5. An account of the methodology utilised and the conclusions reached by the computer-armed scholars in question is found in Morton, A. Q., *Literary Detection: How to prove authorship and fraud in literature and documents* (New York: Scribners, 1978); Morton, A. Q. and McLenan, J., *Paul: The Man and the Myth: A study in the authorship of Greek Prose* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) and Morton, A. Q. and McLenan, J., *Christianity and the Computer* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964). Many scholarly books and articles challenging or defending the methodology utilised and conclusions reached followed the publication of the volumes cited.
6. These books were published in London by, respectively, Hassel, Watson and Vinery (1925) and John Murray (1929).
7. Any reader interested in contemporary studies of *Q* is referred to Mack, Burton L., The *Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993). The gospel of Thomas and its significance are discussed in Patterson, W. J., Robinson, J. M., and Bethge, Hans-Gebhard, *The Fifth Gospel: The Gospel of Thomas Comes of Age* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press, 1998).

Clashing Civilizations? The West and China

JACK GREGORY, *Emeritus Professor of History at La Trobe University in Melbourne, is a member of Learningguild who last wrote for us on ideas of Utopia (*LgL *2.1998). Much of his work has been devoted to China and the West's relations with it. He spoke on that subject to our Friday-evening group on October 18th 2002, and here gives us a summary, drawing upon his book* The West and China since 1500*, published in 2003 by Palgrave Macmillan.*

The idea of a clash between civilizations is currently very prominent in discussions of world politics. Whereas until fairly recent times such discussions ─ whether by politicians, academics, journalists, or just "the man-in-the-street" who concerned himself with such issues ─ were related to the tensions between nation states (e.g. between Germany and its neighbours over the Treaty of Versailles after World War I) or between competing political ideologies (Communism v Capitalism during the Cold War years after World War II), now the focus has shifted more to the differences between "civilizations" and their possible clashes.

A major stimulus for this change of emphasis has been the writings of the American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington, whose book *The Clash of Civilizations: Re-making of World Order* was published in 1993, expanding an earlier article in the journal *Foreign Affairs*. While he did not suggest that nation states would cease to be important, he argued (p.29) that

> the most important countries in the world come overwhelmingly from different civilizations. The local conflicts most likely to escalate into broader wars are those between groups and states from different civilizations. The predominant patterns of political and economic development differ from civilization to civilization. The key issues on the international agenda involve differences among civilizations.

He added on the same page that "Power is shifting from the long predominant West to non-Western civilizations. Global politics has become multi-polar and multi-civilizational".

This view of the political world to come has provoked a great deal of interest and controversy. For many the 11 September attack on the World Trade Centre, and the subsequent "war on terrorism" launched by President Bush, along with conflicts in the Balkans (a chronic "fault line" between civilizations in Huntington's view) and in the Middle East, seem to confirm the validity of his main argument, if not his prediction about the relative decline of the West.

As a historian I have had as my main interest the history of China, especially its relations with the West. In the book recently published I survey the shifting relationship between these two major but very different civilizations once permanent contact between them was established after the arrival by sea of Western traders, missionaries and diplomats early in the 16th century. I suggest that "the West", though it had many internal rivalries and differences among its component nation states, was united in three objectives, represented by those three groups. Thus I wrote:

> it is an underlying assumption of this book that there was an entity one can call "the West" which, whatever its internal variation and rivalries, has displayed a recognizably distinct and consistent set of values and assumptions in its relations with other traditions. These have included, first, that extensive trade between the peoples of our world is a universal good, and should be promoted by governments; second, that the Christian faith and, in its modern secularized form, individual human rights, is also such a good, and should be at least tolerated, ideally promoted, by governments; and third, that relations between governments, especially of major societies, should be on the basis of theoretical diplomatic equality and be regulated in detail through negotiated treaties enforceable under a system of international law. Trade, religion and diplomacy were the three main prongs of the Western thrust into the world beyond Europe that by the 16th century was under way so energetically, and so ominously for the rest of the world.

China, like many other parts of the world, did not share these Western assumptions about trade, religion and diplomacy, but, again like the rest of the world, could not escape facing up to them, especially by the 19th century, when Western power and principles were asserted vigorously.

For three centuries, down to the early 19th century, China, which had not sought the relationship and whose rulers did not regard it as vital to their society, set the terms on which it was conducted. Traders were confined to just one port (Canton), missionaries limited in numbers and activities, and such diplomats who came treated as tribute-bringers rather than equals with whom one might negotiate. This changed radically in the mid-19th-century when, after the so-called "Opium Wars" (which were really about the three principles I have outlined and the resistance to them), China was forced to open itself up much more widely to the West ─ and also to Russia and Japan, countries which in some ways were much more threatening to China's independence. But there was a real "clash of civilizations" between China and the West, reaching its peak with the Boxer uprising of 1900, which was very savagely suppressed by Western (and Russian and Japanese) forces. It seemed for a time that China might be carved up among the dominant powers, as Africa had been a few years earlier.

That did not happen, and China was never ruled directly by Westerners as, for example, India and Indonesia were. During the 20th century China struggled to re-organise itself as a modern nation, capable of holding its own in the modern Western-dominated world, to "stand up" as Mao put it in 1949. Mao tried, with the policies of his Cultural Revolution, to turn China into a distinctively communist civilization, very

different from that of the West and that of Russia; but his successors have abandoned that objective and basically have come to accept the economic and the diplomatic prongs of the Western thrust into other civilizations. The third prong, involving individual human rights, is still to a considerable degree resisted by China's present rulers, but even in that area there are signs of China's moving slowly towards something like a Western system of the rule of law and what is called "civil society".

The history of the West's relations with China certainly demonstrates a clash of civilizations, but also a gradual if painful process of coming together, and the possibility of a sharing of values. Whether such a process will be maintained, and whether it will take place with other civilizations, are major questions for the future of our world. Huntington's theory, disputable though it is in some respects, deserves serious thought.

Thirteen inspiring years in community mental health

This article is based on a talk given to the Friday-evening group on August 2nd 2002 by **EVA JONES**. *Eva wrote memorably of her earlier life in* LgL *1.1991. She continues an active involvement in Learningguild, in language classes in the University of the Third Age, and in other groups and causes.*

Before describing the founding and work of the Melville Community Mental Health Clinic in the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick, I give a little personal background and some comments on the social climate that helped to foster the development of this agency.

I undertook the study that gave me the essential tertiary qualifications after gaining invaluable experience working at the Aborigines Advancement League with Pastor Doug Nicholls, and as Accommodation Officer at Kew Mental Hospital, the Repatriation Department and (for 3½ years) the University of Melbourne. It wasn't until I turned thirty-six that a small Mental Health scholarship allowed me to begin my studies at that university.

Four years of full-time study, and then four part-time, gave me a B.A. and Dip.Soc.Studs, with majors in Psychology, Social Work, and German (my first academic look at the language of my birth). Psychology was not mandatory for social workers, but proved invaluable; social work insights were dominated by Freud. I worked full-time at Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital, and somehow fitted in my final four subjects (of which Philosophy IA was the last).

During five years at Royal Park I got a good grounding in conventional psychiatric social work, most commonly by referral from psychiatrists and doctors, and, to a lesser degree, by family members and patients themselves. Our position in the hierarchy, and limits of intervention, were clearly established.

Then the social climate changed. Excitement was generated by a large number of books, proposing ─ or demanding ─ changes in forms of social organisation, in the way people viewed the world and each other, and themselves, and revision of the way psychiatry had long operated. E.F. Schumacher's *A Guide for the Perplexed* (1977) earned praise from Arthur Koestler as "a condensation of a vast and refreshingly unorthodox system of ideas". Thomas Szasz, in his *The Myth of Mental Illness* (1962), submitted that "the traditional definition of psychiatry, which is still in vogue, places it alongside such things as alchemy and astrology, and commits it to the category of pseudo-science".

In the middle 70s, Jim Cairns organised a Counter-Culture Festival in the A.C.T., attended by twelve to fifteen thousand people. In 1977-8, I attended a meeting in Coburg, with 120 others interested in "alternatives", and then joined Jim Cairns's Down to Earth Co-operative, and had 16-17 wonderful years as part of a community helping to organise ConFests in mainly Victorian bush settings. The main aims were concern for people and the environment and also creation of a more meaningful, balanced, peaceful and happy lifestyle, in harmony with nature, ourselves, and fellow human beings. The miracle was that for the most part it all worked beautifully for a number of years, with limits and rules invoked where necessary, while largely avoiding coercion. We were imbued with hope for a better world.

Now to the Melville Clinic. My sources are my own memories, aided by Lenora Lippmann's *Melville Evaluated* (1982), described by Dr George Lipton, Director of the Mental Health Division, as "the most comprehensive examination of a community mental health service ever undertaken in Australia". Dr Jerzy Krupinski, Director of Mental Health Research, wrote:

> In Australia in the 1906s it became obvious that the high prevalence of psychiatric disorders in the community could not be dealt with by psychiatrists alone, for manpower and financial reasons. There was an urgent need to develop new forms of delivery of psychiatric care so that more people in distress could be reached more effectively. This required a bolder utilization of other medical health professionals easier to train and less costly to the community. A community mental health clinic could provide more accessible and comprehensive care than hospital outpatient clinics and private psychiatrists.
>
> With funds made available by the Whitlam Government, the Mental Health Research Institute proposed that a community mental health centre be established, to serve as a model for future psychiatric facilities in the community.

I'm not too good on statistics, and will concentrate more on qualitative material. Working at Melville Clinic proved one of the great formative experiences of my life.

The proposed centre was not to follow American or UK models of community psychiatry, but rather those of community health centres providing services directly to a geographical catchment area from a centre within its boundaries. Whilst the Mental Health Research Institute designed the original programme, organisation and staffing, the staff were given considerable freedom in redefining objectives, selecting priorities etc. according to perceived needs.

The aims, as submitted to the then Whitlam Government, were as follows:

1. To assess the psychiatric needs of the community.
2. To experiment with the nature and form of community work undertaken by a team of various mental health professionals.
3. To determine the community's response of acceptance or rejection to activities carried out from the Centre.
4. To evaluate the work of the community mental health centre in quantitative and qualitative terms, including cost-effectiveness analysis.

The 1973 Sax Commission demanded rigorous evaluation of strengths and weaknesses so that "correction could be made before the faults became ingrained". To meet this requirement, the position of Research Officer was created, and Lenora Lippmann, a recently graduated sociologist, appointed. During the three-year demonstration period she was an active member of the team, engaged in the formulation of philosophy, policies, goals and methods, and then a comprehensive monitoring and research process. She covered everything: changes in organisation and work, staff attitudes, and relations with the outside world. Several factors determined the choice of Brunswick:

1. A 1974 Needs Survey of a hundred families known to have used psychiatric facilities or those for alcohol and drug dependency or mental retardation. A majority indicated a preference for an accessible locally-based treatment resource.
2. Proximity to Parkville Psychiatric Unit, and the Research Institute.
3. The dearth of health and welfare facilities in Brunswick at that time. Royal Park Hospital was geographically close, but not easily accessed by public transport.
4. A 1974 paper by Tom Roper "A Fair Deal for the North-West Suburbs" suggesting that Brunswick was disadvantaged in a number of respects:
    i. Out of a population of 51,000 43% were overseas-born migrants who had non-English-speaking backgrounds — 19% Italians and 10% Greeks.
    ii. Around 2% had never attended school, and 20% had only the equivalent of primary schooling;
    iii. 91% were wage-earners, and 68% of working males and 44% of working females were blue-collar workers.
    iv. There was a high elderly population of 11-12%.

v. 41% of households had no car.
vi. Though a high 61% owned their own homes, there were two large Housing Commission estates. Numerous blocks of flats have sprung up since then.

In a compact rectangle of 4.1 square miles, Brunswick had 22 pubs and 23 churches. It was to this disparate and largely unfamiliar population that we had to address our efforts to gain trust and acceptance.

The Consultant Psychiatrist was appointed in mid-1974, I was appointed in September, and by May 1975 we had a total of 28-30 people including an interpreter for each of Turkish, Greek and Italian. None of us knew what was in store for us. Most had some ill-defined existential beliefs, were Labour supporters, and had a hunch that there might be a more flexible way of delivering psychiatric services involving more of a partnership with recipients.

We "squatted" in Parkville for nine months, and only our protest on the TV programme *This Day Tonight* persuaded the Board of Works to make our building habitable. We moved into 35 Melville Road in August '75, the premises described as a cross between a doctor's surgery and a supermarket. Years later we still didn't have sound-proofing for our interview rooms.

Weekly staff meetings produced heated arguments amid mutual appraisal; there was the excitement of discovering like minds in other disciplines (and your own!), with a practical commitment to a cause, and forging firm bonds in the process. Heady stuff! We started liaison with Councils, G.P.s and all relevant agencies, and of course seeing clients. All visits were made in twos for mutual learning. Our own countries of origin included England, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Greece, Poland, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Hong Kong. To sensitize ourselves, we each took a month's course in an unfamiliar language. I had an unsuccessful encounter with Greek.

Our Senior Psychologist wrote a fairy tale, about a young princess who journeyed to the faraway land of Brunswick, and settled in a castle called Melville.

> The Knights of the Round Table were noted for their ambivalence about attending their own meetings. Then there were the castle matriarchs who knew all the myths and legends, and had charge of handing these down to the newer arrivals, by way of initiation rites. The innocent princess was mystified by a particular rite every week, which everyone agreed was most important yet tried to avoid as much as possible. This meeting was charged with making all the decisions affecting all the people in the castle. Strangely, decisions were rarely arrived at although there were many lively discussions. Some saw it as their duty to disagree with everything on principle, although it was not clear what that principle was.

Hammering out specific goals required hours of coming to terms with our values and philosophy. Those goals were formally defined as:

1. To relate closely to other agencies for cross-referral, avoiding duplication and acting as consultants and educators to the community.
2. To maintain people effectively in the community and out of institutions, and so, where possible, avoid their "embarking on a psychiatric patient career".
3. To attract clients from all sectors of the population.
4. To attract at least 30% as self-referred, or referred informally through friends, neighbours etc. (By 1983, approximately 50% walked in without prior contact.)
5. To gain knowledge of the facilities and needs of the community.
6. To act with other agencies to suggest ─ and perhaps assist in establishing ─ remedies to larger social problems.
7. To reduce the stigma associated with mental illness.

Goals in relation to individual clients were giving satisfaction to them, and helping as many as possible to achieve agreed goals; keeping waiting time and drugs to a minimum; being accessible in terms of time, place and language; and being ready to meet clients in their own social context of home, family and community. We were initially open seven days a week, later six days and two evenings. Clients welcomed the fact that staff were available to handle crises.

The generalist role meant that on your duty days you dealt with whoever arrived on the doorstep, with or without referral. Though you could call on all other staff including a psychiatrist or doctor, you became the mentor, responsible for the case management, whether the client came once or remained for years. For non-medical staff this involved vastly greater autonomy and responsibility, and therefore stress, than in the more traditional hierarchical settings. (The Senior Psychologist and I did a course in Transcendental Meditation, and practised this for 20 minutes in our tea break before going on evening duty.)

For at least the first nine years we managed to maintain a largely democratic non-hierarchical structure; most policy and lesser decisions were made at our weekly staff meetings. One answer to the slow and cumbersome ways of democracy and consensus was to appoint a Joint Co-ordinator (a position rotated among staff regardless of level or experience) who would join the Consultant in analysing more complex issues, bringing recommendations back to the staff. There was the "Table Tennis" issue ─ whether adolescents should be allowed use of the facilities at any time.

Categories and Treatment

Apart from one's own skills, and areas of liaison or consultancy or participation in the community, we were all expected to be generalists in the clinical field. We handled every kind of psychiatric, social, developmental or behavioural problem. Common among diagnoses were depression (which I guess most of us have experienced at some stage), schizophrenia, and mania-depression; 15-20% were chronic patients, some with a degree of retardation. The remainder would present with personality difficulties involving lack of confidence, anger, drug abuse, crises involving employment (or lack of

it), or experiences of loss or separation or bereavement; a steadily increasing number presented with marital and family problems.

We tried to be flexible in the treatments used. Most common was individual or family therapy. In either case, a Greek, Italian or Turkish interpreter could be called upon, both to help with language difficulties and to clarify cultural aspects. Karen Horney in her 1937 book *The Neurotic Personality of our Time* "perceived the critical importance of cultural factors in the causation of psychic disturbances" and said that "the conflicts found in neurotic persons in a given culture correspond to the customs characteristic of that culture".

Thus I was excited to find "Evil Eye" phenomena given different accounts according to five different cultures; in one case an overripe orange found on her stairway was seen by an Italian client as a curse placed on her by a neighbour. A Greek priest performed a ceremony to release a Greek client from the Evil Eye perpetrated against him by an ill-disposed compatriot. Though these manifestations were often symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia, or at least paranoid thought-processes, it would have been inappropriate to ignore the cultural interpretation, and could in fact have led to a deterioration in the client's condition. A further risk was that a paranoid client feeling misunderstood or perceiving adverse criticism might turn against the therapist.

At times, aggressive behaviour occurred within families and needed to be worked on. One psychiatrist-in-charge, Dr Stagoll, taught us all a lot about family therapy. We might conduct a session at the family home, or the Clinic, often involving an astonishing number of family members including a godparent and/or a priest. The contributions of children were of course sought where possible.

An older Middle Eastern man diagnosed as schizophrenic had used physical aggression against his wife, complaining of being poisoned. She had, in fact, "secretly" put his medication into his coffee, because he had refused to take it routinely. Dr Stagoll, an interpreter and I left our shoes on the mat outside, and had a rewarding session with a reasonable outcome.

One aspect of medication is of course possible side-effects. With schizophrenia, this can be a tremor among other effects uncomfortable for the sufferer, who may or may not have insight into his or her condition. Sometimes, psychotic people display an appealing energy when off medication, which may reduce to a very low level once medication takes over.

Though psychotic patients may at times constitute a risk to family or the public, danger can often be averted through knowing the client as well as possible, including understanding his or her irrational fears. A point about persecution: at one stage I had several East European clients who felt persecuted at work. Investigation showed that their "paranoid" feelings were based at least partly on fact. A talk with a manager could sometimes improve an adverse work climate.

Activities

Numerous groups operated at the Clinic, and from mid-1981 at our Shop-Front Annexe at 696 Sydney Road, some for a limited time, others throughout the year. They included groups for Italian women, Greek men, work-injured men and post-discharge people; groups offering art, assertiveness training, social and communication skills, and English; the Wednesday afternoon Social Club; and Parent Effectiveness Training. Outings also were organised. An Independent Living Skills Group ran for six weeks, teaching people to use or resume using banks, post offices and libraries, and to prepare menus and meals. At the end we'd often sit down to a meal communally prepared.

In 1981, a nurse, an occupational therapist and I started the Learning Exchange at our Annexe. It was intended as a kind of club where people could feel comfortable, share interests, learn skills at their own pace, and develop a sense of belonging. Everyone would have a contribution to make, and all would be equally important. Eventually we were able to employ a co-ordinator, a wonderful steering committee worked towards an independent constitution, between 60 and 180 people used the place as did other Moreland facilities, and in September 1984 the renamed "Brunswick-Coburg Learning Exchange" split off from Melville, and settled at Bell Street under Council patronage. It's still going, and 16 years after my retirement I'm still privileged to meet with the volunteer team, two or three times a year. An admirable retired waterside worker used sometimes to get impatient with our committee's "bullshit", but basically we all respected each other's point of view, and were happy with outcomes. Sadly that man died, but, as my client, he had expressed appreciation and relief that I had told him that it was OK to function at a mediocre level. He'd been highly self-critical of his limited skill in, for example, ballroom dancing.

My other much-loved offspring was a Pub Night, held monthly in Albert Street over 7 years. Anyone in Brunswick ─ client or not ─ was welcome; the meal was inexpensive, held from 6pm to 8 and welcomed by some women living alone who didn't normally go out in the evenings. I got the idea from a Protestant minister who lived among Housing Commission tenants. People on medication had to limit their alcohol intake, of course; the only problem arose when a schizophrenic man, living in special accommodation, became cataleptic (in this condition body and limbs are held rigid for a period); he had to be carried out under the arm of a fortunately strong male nurse.

Outcomes

A survey of caregivers conducted by Lenora Lippmann showed a high degree of satisfaction with our work, though some, including some GPs, complained of insufficient knowledge of what the Clinic was doing, or a lack of feedback on referrals made.

A client survey indicated that the majority had been helped, though a few had complaints ("Why don't they **help** you instead of talking?") and a small number said they felt worse. Eventual recommendations suggested that Melville Clinic had largely achieved its aims, was no longer trying quite so hard to be all things to all people, and needed to focus more on at-risk groups, including unemployed people of all ages.

Politicians and their party's policies

GLENYYS ROMANES, *a Labor Member of the Victorian Legislative Council, took up the hard questions she begins with here when she spoke at our Friday-evening group on November 15th 2002. Glenyys was formerly very active in local government, becoming Mayor of Brunswick. She and her husband Graham, who had been secondary teachers, worked for many years for Community Aid Abroad.*

Why do politicians sometimes strongly disagree with their leaders over policy positions and actions but remain loyal to their party position? How do they retain their integrity when they fall into line with decisions they may personally think are morally wrong or an error of judgment? How useful is it to take a stand and put yourself outside certain party processes, as Carmen Lawrence did over refugee policy issues in the ALP? Why does the latest local residents' campaign, no matter how hard-fought, not automatically take precedence over party or government policy for the local Member of Parliament (MP)?

The answers go to the heart of our "representative"-style political system and the realities of delivering stable government, which cannot be derailed by the whims of individuals and single-issue groups (unless of course they are able to produce a groundswell of public opinion which no government could ignore).

The Victorian Government has to make decisions over a wide range of areas. The Bracks Labor Government has appointed twenty Ministers covering the main departments of Premier and Cabinet; Human Services; Justice; Education and Training; Sustainability and Environment; Treasury and Finance; Victorian Communities; Industry, Innovation and Regional Development; and Primary Industries. Each of these departments involves hundreds of programs and projects. Processes are even more complex when a whole-of-government approach, across departments, is required to resolve a particular issue.

Individual Ministers and the Cabinet take collective responsibility for the key directions and the decisions of their government. However, it is important that there are opportunities built into the political process so that local Members of Parliament can influence that decision-making.

On the one hand Opposition MPs are able to go in hot pursuit of the Government, or a particular Minister, over an unpopular decision or a flawed program. They may use the media, public meetings and forums in the Parliament to stir up disquiet in the community and to advocate against a policy or program. or on behalf of a constituent. For Government MPs it is a little trickier. How to try to represent the concerns of your constituents and issues groups without exposing your Minister or appearing disloyal? However, the important advantage Government MPs have is ready access to Ministers

and their advisors, to whom we can make representations on behalf of our community or seek to put our own views on an issue.

Other fundamental ways to influence government decision-making involve utilizing party and parliamentary processes. This is time-consuming and long-term work but necessary to help build ideas and trust. After my initial disappointment over two freeway decisions made by the Labor Government early in our first term, I worked hard alongside other party members in the ALP Transport Policy Committee to help deliver a strong public transport policy. This policy underpinned the platform for the November 2002 election. Other opportunities to have a say, and sometimes suggest changes or a different approach, happen at Caucus meetings while Parliament is sitting. MPs attend a heavy schedule of Caucus meetings for briefings on legislation and new initiatives of government. My responsibilities include the Economic and Infrastructure, Treasury and Finance, Education, and Women's Committees. There is always the need to strike a balance between critical internal debate and external party unity.

WHAT'S A GOOD INTRODUCTION TO …

THE BASIC VOCABULARY OF ENGLISH?

EMAD MOUSSA *migrated from his native country, Egypt, in 1971 in his early thirties. He was a member of my Greek Philosophy class at Melbourne and soon became a friend. He took the Diploma of Education at the same university, and from 1974 to 1982 taught English as a Second Language at Princes Hill High School. He also taught Arabic, both at the Saturday School of Modern Languages and later as a tutor in the Middle Eastern Studies Department at Melbourne. He went back to Egypt in the mid-eighties, remarried, and settled there. He has recently returned to Australia (April 2003), seeking employment and intending that his wife and their child will soon join him. We welcome him as a member of Learningguild, within which he will be one of our teachers. Here he writes about a valuable simple dictionary, of which Learningguild has sent a copy to Holy Mother Public School, Bharatpur (in Rajasthan, India), where a number of teachers have become members. JH*

The use of a dictionary is an essential part of learning a language and using it correctly. This is especially apparent in respect of children and young people, and also of beginners in a language regardless of their age. Dictionaries differ in the way they are designed in order to be appropriate to the needs of certain ages or groups of learners. ***The Oxford Illustrated Junior Dictionary*** is an example, and a good one, of a dictionary that provides not only juniors but also older beginners in English with a wide variety of common words.

Valuable features of the book include not only the choice of common words pertaining to everyday life and the immediate needs of learners of English, but also the simple and clear language of explanation. This combination makes the book very useful for beginners, young and older alike. The coloured illustrations add to the richness of the dictionary and the pleasure of using it. Most pages have one or more illustrations which match in simplicity the language of information used in the book.

The user will notice that the dictionary does not give pronunciation. While it has no preface or introduction, its title indicates that it is meant for juniors. One can assume that these juniors will generally be native speakers of English. As such, they would probably have heard many of the words included in the book. They would not have much difficulty in reading and pronouncing them on seeing them, but they might not have learnt or remembered their spelling, and there this dictionary can be a great help. As for non-native beginners, it would require them to be able to make an informed guess on pronunciation; and that can itself be educative, though they will sometimes need someone with whom a check can be made. Personally, I should prefer and feel safer with a dictionary with pronunciation. However, this lack ought not to deter non-native beginners in English from using and benefiting from this dictionary, provided they have passed the early stages of learning the language.

Finally, users should find it interesting to refer to the last few pages, where they will find Word Origins and the Picture Section. The words whose fascinating origins are given are listed in groups, e.g. words to do with plants, animals, and buildings, and words that come from people's names. This section shows the flexible nature of English, a language that can readily borrow, shorten or combine words from various origins, thus enriching itself all the time. Some of the pictures are accompanied by the names of different parts: those of the human body, the human face, a car, a ship, a bicycle and so on. As with the rest of this dictionary, the valuable information given in these additional pages is communicated simply and clearly.