Learningguild Letter

2.2014

Dear members and friends of Learningguild,

What goods are we most to value and seek to realize in tertiary education? What hindrances are there now to their achievement? What in particular should be our proximate aims?

I use the wider adjective 'tertiary' rather than 'university' because we are concerned with a level of education and not just with large institutions or those that have the title 'university'. Nor are we concerned only with courses: education at any level does not have to depend on a course, but it usually depends to a large extent on one or more teachers or mentors as well as the student's own eagerness and diligence. (Let's not forget that the Latin word '*studium*' means eagerness and zeal.)

We should define the truly tertiary level in terms of what it requires of students. They need to be analytical, critical, and synthesist, beyond any requirement normally made at the senior secondary level. Hence the right question to ask of them (in many different modes) is often of such a form as "Present and discuss what A says about S in P", where A is an author, S a subject, and P a place (a book, article or other exposition). To be analytical is to distinguish and explain different elements. To be critical is to consider for oneself whether or not a view or conclusion has been supported by one or more good and sufficient reasons, and whether or not an exposition (perhaps that of a textbook, or a lecturer!) is good in that way and others, such as clarity and depth. To be synthesist is at least to attempt to begin to draw together questions, ideas, evidence etc. for oneself, so as carefully to form one's own (often tentative) view of something small or large. Students are unlikely to develop these qualities without also taking part in cooperative work and learning to value it as an end as well as a means.

These great goods have always been difficult to achieve with a wide range of students, and by contrast lecture-dependent courses have often led students to react in the mode expressed by "Get it down, get it up, give it back." Many students, whether from being told by an Australian schoolteacher what to write or from assumptions in their home country's education that one must repeat what the teacher or textbook has said, find it extremely difficult to think, plan and write for themselves.

In this letter I shall invite close attention in turn to several voices other than my own, because they have very good things to say about tertiary education. Such comments may be expressive of delight and gratitude on the one hand and/or of adverse criticism and warning on the other.

Professor David Penington vividly recalls, on p.53 of his excellent autobiography *Making Waves* (2010), that, returning in 1967 to Melbourne to teach medicine, he would walk up and down among classes of up to sixty students, inviting questions to himself as the hypothetical patient, and expecting them to join him in discussing "clinical findings we were searching for…, laboratory tests we would order and even how we would advise the patient or their relatives".

> It was like creating street theatre as each story evolved, but the students loved it. It was a great way to teach clinical medicine, rather than just reproducing what could be learnt from textbooks.

Less dramatically, in lecturing in Philosophy I at Melbourne at about the same time I would give out what I called "Some Questions for Investigation", so as to focus attention during and after my lectures on questions to pursue for oneself. In 1974 I asked students to spend the first half of one of two plenary sessions in small groups in the Public Lecture Theatre and work towards questions they wanted me to take up in the second half.

From the 1940s to 1983, however, one could assume in Victoria that most students had studied "Clear Thinking" in their senior secondary years, and so had some familiarity with the crucial ideas of

formulating and testing a hypothesis. For much of that period there had been secondary textbooks in English, at least in early years, expounding grammar, word-choice etc., and from 1960, for senior students, even such a demanding and wide-ranging book as *A Wealth of Words*, by H.G.Fowler and N.Russell. (See my recommendation of it on p.1 of the report on our exam named May 2014.) David Penington himself, as Melbourne's Vice-Chancellor from 1988 to 1995, did much to ensure that the Victorian Certificate of Education maintained some of the traditional values, especially in maths and English (p.276). We now have to face the fact that numerous students in all our universities are entering without much development of their powers of reasoning and expression, and that not a few actually graduate with extremely limited competence in one or both areas.

I illustrated that in *L'g L* 1.2010 (p.2) from the case (with a happy outcome through his diligent work over several years and my guidance) of a son of a migrant family who had had all his primary and secondary education at a Melbourne private school and had gained degrees in Arts as well as Engineering at Melbourne c.1990, but was unable to write proper sentences. Some of my one-with-one teaching in recent years has been of two people who have graduated in social work at La Trobe or in criminology at Melbourne without adequate English for their communication in subsequent employment. "English-language programs should be thoroughly embedded into the tertiary curriculum, not be – as they often are at present – peripheral and optional", wrote Martin Davies in *Quadrant* (1 March 2010). Has anything changed since then? Examinable courses that include annotation of written work are expensive, and the key question would remain of what standard if any was to be insisted upon.

In fact what is needed is a firm requirement that could now be applied, at first unpopularly, within courses, but would better be made, with due notice, a prerequisite for entry, which could be satisfied by diligent private study in any country. **All students should reach at least a lower B level (and then be encouraged in their courses to aim at a middle B, an upper B and an A) in a repeatable examination that requires familiarity with the range of sentence-construction contained in Raymond Murphy's famous intermediate text *English Grammar in Use*.** (Many, including a master's and a doctoral student at Melbourne whom I have recently assisted and for whom English is a further language, need his elementary text *Essential Grammar in Use* first, even at those levels.) Such an exam would not be a test of memory of Murphy's book but of the competence that the book enables one to build up. It should also require an ability to reason and to identify faults in reasoning. Yes, it should be an exam such as the one I have set for 27 years for the Learningguild Certificate in Reasoning and Expression! (See, at 'Certificate' on our website, the three testimonies to the value of that exam, and the reports that can be so valuable to the student who will engage with them.)

I seek to maintain the exam at close to the levels for results given in the Matriculation exam in what was called English Expression in Victoria 60 years ago. To reach a lower B, and preferably a higher result, would take many local students some or much of the gap year that is now so common, but be compatible with travel and/or employment. Crucially, the examination is, as any similar one should be, half-yearly, repeatable, inexpensive, and not tied to any course.

Another very valuable book on university education is a grateful but extremely disquieting one. How remarkable that **John Cain**, the Premier of Victoria from 1982 to 1990, should have co-written, after about ten subsequent years as a Professorial Associate in Political Science at Melbourne, a book called *Off Course* which argued that the University had changed for the worse. The book appeared in 2004, and the co-author is **John Hewitt**, who had been a colleague in Political Science. Reports on the web concerning him do not alter the debt we owe him as well as Cain for pertinent observation and criticism. The book continues to deserve far more attention than it has received. Some of it concerns the privatising policies (unsurprisingly unsuccessful) of David Penington's successor Alan Gilbert, but there is much else.

The first of three features that Cain stresses about the University of Melbourne as he had known it as a student c.1950 is its manifest "publicness" (p.33) – its being there with the legislated responsibility it still has to act for the welfare of the wider society, especially that of Victoria. Second is the readiness of some staff members to express their views on "education policy, academic freedom, and university administration" and current societal issues (p.17). Third is the campus life: staff, mostly in secure posts, were readily accessible to students, who normally attended five days a week, talked extensively with one another, and often belonged to societies and/or sporting and other clubs. Four years junior to Cain, I recognize this as an accurate description.

By contrast, in 2004 Cain and Hewitt, recognizing the distorting effect of decline in federal government support of universities, say that the University of Melbourne has come to resemble a corporation competing with others; report that staff do not speak out but "regard loyalty and team play as the way to go at this time in their careers" (p.17); and, concerning students and staff, write on p.2:

> Today's undergraduates attend classes for perhaps as little as twenty-two weeks a year, many holding down a part-time or casual job for fifteen to twenty-five hours a week just to get by. Inevitably, being a student becomes part-time and casual too.
>
> Many of the teachers closest to these students are on short-term or casual contracts. They, too, may have one or more other casual jobs, and are likely to be on campus only on a part-time basis.

Ten years later, my impression is that things are no better.

What is to be striven for? Cain and Hewitt rightly want calls upon the Federal Government to support tertiary education properly (as, say, Germany does) and better fulfilment in that and other ways by University Councils (Melbourne's in particular) of their statutory responsibility to see that their university is a public one in the fullest sense. What else? In August 2013 I heard a talk in Melbourne by the then Shadow Minister Malcolm Turnbull to some of his fellow Rhodes Scholars. As Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs: see the web) show, he said, information can readily be obtained other than through lectures on a particular campus (that has always been true: books!). What then is to be Australian universities' distinctive role and justification? As traditionally in Oxford, **teacher-student relationships,** one-with-one and in small groups. Turnbull is right, but it would require a huge change. The areas and types of work expected of students would have to be made plain **in writing**, and both past exam papers and related detailed exam reports should (as they are in Learningguild) be readily available. Lectures would be for special occasions, and the emphasis given rather to regular (for undergraduates fortnightly?) **appointments** for, say, half an hour with individual students, along with occasions of **availability**, to any students or groups of students who might come, on the part of each of most staff members each week, for at least five stated hours. (A custom should be encouraged in which both a staff member and any student would make known either privately or publicly what **questions** he or she would like to discuss.) Candidates for university appointments should be judged on the **quality** (and therefore, in part, the intelligibility to others) of their research, and not its quantity, and on their capacity and disposition to foster enquiry, understanding and creativity in students. They should also be expected to have wide interests, partly to justify considerable tenure (even if variable income) that did not depend on the number of students in a particular course.

It might truly be replied that, as Penington's example has shown, plenary sessions for, say, sixty students need not be lectures that leave the hearers passive. Questions from students can and should be encouraged before, after and even to some extent during a lecture. If, however, the **system** is (as at present in Australia, and in most places outside Oxford and Cambridge) dependent on either plenary sessions or uncritical use of textbooks or both, in that the exams are primarily related to these as the *de facto* syllabus, the tendency for most students will be to passivity rather than to eager and increasingly autonomous enquiry as the basic mode of **study**.

There are two other voices to which I invite attention. One is that of **Davis McCaughey** (1914-2005), about whom his second son Patrick writes in this issue. Davis was a Cambridge graduate who came to Melbourne in 1953 and was Master of Ormond College in the University of Melbourne 1959-79, later Deputy Chancellor of the University, and after that, on John Cain's wise nomination, Governor of Victoria. He was both a theorist and a practitioner of what universities and their colleges ought to be about. To learn from him, however, is also to learn from **Sir Walter Moberly** (1881-1974), by whose book *The Crisis in the University* (1949) he, and later I, was greatly influenced.

Early in his time in Melbourne, Davis completed a book that was published in 1958 with the title *Christian Obedience in the University*. It concerned the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland 1930-50. He had been active in that SCM for most of those years, eventually as Study Secretary and Editor of its magazine. In that period, like the Australian SCM, it attracted many dons (university teachers) as well as many able students, and proved to be a training-ground for numerous future leaders, in church organizations but not only there, including Davis himself. In that book he has an extremely valuable fourth chapter called "A new self-consciousness about the University". He describes the increasing readiness of Christian dons in Britain in the 1930s and the war years to engage in critical writing and discussion

about universities. A lengthy section (pp. 130-137) concerns Sir Walter's book, which drew extensively on that writing and discussion, and its impact. His vast experience of British universities is set out by Davis in a footnote that begins delightfully "For the sake of a generation that knew not Joseph" (cf. the beginning of Exodus).

The main message of the book is well summarized (p.131):

> Sir Walter pressed home the charge that the Universities as a whole, whatever may be said of exceptional individuals, are without convictions and shirk fundamental questions. … There is timidity in the treatment of contentious issues, especially in politics or religion …. Further, a proper academic detachment or fairmindedness has deteriorated into a false neutrality ….

The book deals also with deficiencies in what is expected of and made practicable for students and in corporate life, as is illustrated on its own p.164 by these three phrases and explanations, which have not lost their relevance to Australia:

> lack of time for genuine thought (overcrowded curricula are met with almost everywhere), geographical dispersion (shortage of residential accommodation makes this an acute problem for urban universities), want of opportunity for frequent contact between staff and students (all too few lecturers have 'a room of one's own' in or near the university).

There is a wide-ranging and insightful discussion of the matter that so concerned Cain and Hewitt, the responsibility of the university to the state and to its local community. Moberly includes there the preparation and help of teachers, and participation in adult education, as well as, for example, "special investigations of great importance to local industries" (p.245).

These two books may be read in or even borrowed from the Learninguild Library: they richly deserve to be more widely known and learnt from. In an appendix on p.16 I write a little more about each of the four I have drawn on.

The rest of what I want to say here continues from my letter in *L'g L* 1.2010, in which I wrote in turn of the criticisms by Sir Keith Thomas of Oxford of what has been going wrong in British universities in the study and teaching of the humanities, weaknesses in the same area at Melbourne and other Australian universities, the necessity of fostering reliability, adventurousness and criticism, and, with reference (as often!) to Oxford's T.H.Green, the question, as I put it, of "what our universities are doing to foster ongoing education for their many graduates who do not wish to undertake a postgraduate degree, and for the much wider society".

Whether or not study and teaching are revivified in Australian universities in the ways I have suggested on pp. 2 and 3, there is an immense need to foster experience, in and beyond them, of delighted engagement in reasoning, increasingly clear expression of one's thoughts in speech and writing, and participation in open and friendly discussion. That is a major role of Learningguild, and it must be engaged in both for those who are now senior secondary or undergraduate or postgraduate students **and** for others who are or could become capable of a genuinely tertiary education that can go on outside the universities and, unless the situation there improves, may be hard to find within them.

In that earlier letter I quoted Green's talk of

> helping forward the time when every Oxford citizen will have open to him at least the precious companionship of the best books in his own language, and the knowledge necessary to make him really independent.

That knowledge is not so much of facts or even, at first, relevant questions in particular areas, but of modes of reasoning, expression and discussion. The study of "the best books" can be enormously helped by DVDs of series such as, it seems, the BBC and the ABC are much less concerned with than they were, for example the visual and spoken representation of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (borrowable via Learningguild). A teenager, or an older person, who grows into such best books and their depictions, and is also enjoying the great goods of health, energy, vigorous physical and mental activity, and friendship, is virtually proof against the temptation to turn to drugs, or to think that the most sensible thing to do in life is to seek the maximum of money and "entertainment".

John Howes

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learningguild.org.au,

ranges very wide: explore the Home page, and then go to headings that include 'Certificate', 'Publications', 'Tuition', 'Meetings and Events' and 'Philosophy Seminar'.

Davis McCaughey

PATRICK McCAUGHEY, *the second son of Davis and Jean, has given us this portrayal of his father's life. The last part of it is substantially what appeared as a Foreword to Sarah Martin's* Davis McCaughey: A life *(UNSW Press, 2012), a wide-ranging account, especially valuable on Davis as Master of Ormond College and as Governor of Victoria. Patrick McCaughey, formerly Director of the National Gallery of Victoria, the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, and the Yale Center for British Art, lives in New Haven, Connecticut, reads and writes.*

John Davis McCaughey, my father, led an interesting and varied life both in the United Kingdom and Australia. Though ordained as a Presbyterian minister, he held important secular appointments and moved easily between church and university and the wider world. His Christian beliefs and his secular interests shaped his mind and view of the world in equal measure. Sarah Martin has captured that very well in her biography.

Born on the eve of World War I, he was brought up in a large and well-to-do Belfast family. His father, John, a corn merchant in the flourishing agricultural society of Northern Ireland, was a kindly and generous paterfamilias. He and his formidable wife, Lizzie, were staunch Unionists, pillars of the Presby-terian Church and strict teetotalers.

Unlike many of his generation, my father had a relatively happy experience at his public school, Campbell College, including the exceptional experience of being taught French for a term by Samuel Beckett. I can't say it did much for my father's French.

Davis McCaughey's major intellectual and social awakening came when he went up to Cambridge to read English at Pembroke College. The early 1930s were the heyday of the Cambridge English School. I.A.Richards, F.R.Leavis, George Rylands, Mansfield Forbes and others were transforming the study of English literature into a critical discipline in which close reading of the texts was a central tenet. My father was fortunate to have Basil Willey, later King Edward VII Professor of English, as his principal supervisor in Pembroke. Willey's interests lay in the relationship of literature and thought epitomized in his "Background" studies and his lecture course (and later book) on The English Moralists. Such a breadth of interest suited my father's mind. He remained a "close reader" and lover of literature and other texts all his life. His taste in modern literature was formed during his Cambridge years. His volumes of the later W.B.Yeats, T.S.Eliot, W.H.Auden, Louis MacNeice and others were nearly all first editions, bought when first published and inscribed with his name and the date.

Cambridge expanded his mind and personality in other ways. The Great Depression lingered on into the 1930s, particularly in Northern Ireland. When the marches of the unemployed from the north came through Cambridge on their way to London, my father and many other undergraduates in the Student Christian Movement used their own rooms in giving them tea and something to eat. It all had a salutary effect on my father's political views. He became a firm supporter of the Labour Party in Britain and later in Australia. His views about Ireland shifted in favour of a united Ireland governed from Dublin, putting him sharply at odds with his family.

"The gathering storm" in Europe led him to extend his time at Cambridge to read Part II of the Economics tripos. Like the English School, the Economics Faculty bristled with the leading figures of the day, from the liberals J.M.Keynes and Roy Harrod to the Marxists Maurice Dobb and Joan Robinson. Quite how serious my father was about his year reading Economics is an open question. He felt he "should understand better how the world worked". But how well he fared in the tripos meant little to him, as may be gauged by the engaging story of the Essay Paper, i.e. a three-hour exam in which the candidate writes a single essay on a broad topic. My father owned a small sports car in those days and he got a friend to bring it close to the Examination Room. After an hour he rose and handed in his paper, just as his friend drew up at the door. Off they sped to the Derby! It was so unlike him: it was marvellous. Years later he airily justified himself by saying: "Well, if I couldn't satisfy the examiners of the Economics Faculty after an hour, having completed both parts of the English Tripos, things would have come to a pretty pass."

The next stage of his intellectual journey came early in World War II when he went to New College, Edinburgh for his theological studies. He had married my mother, Jean Henderson, in 1940. They settled

happily into the year in Edinburgh, even if she must have regretted not finishing her studies as a medical student at the Queen's University, Belfast. First in Edinburgh and then steadily in the immediate post-war years in London, Davis McCaughey became deeply immersed in the rigours of modern German theology. Karl Barth at New College came first and then Dietrich Bonhoeffer, particularly his *Letters and Papers from Prison*, which became a theological and spiritual touchstone. Through Jean and Davis's close friendship with the Scottish theologian Ronald Gregor Smith and his wife Käthe, they would get to know Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr amongst others. Rudolf Bultmann began to loom large in his mind. His "form criticism" echoed, in a way, the close reading of texts that Davis McCaughey had absorbed in the Cambridge English School. Then and later when he went to Heidelberg to work under Gunther Bornkamm, one of Bultmann's most eminent followers, the classic distinction between "the historical Jesus" of Nazareth and "the Christ of Faith" became a source of scholarly and theological stimulus to him and tilted him permanently towards Continent-al theology rather than the Anglo-Scottish mode.

The London period 1946-52, when he was first Secretary to the British Council of Churches' investigation of the consequences of nuclear power and later Study Secretary of the British Student Christian Movement, was a theological education in action as he wrote the report for the British Council of Churches and copious outlines for biblical studies for the SCM, and edited the latter's magazine.

Both my parents took the decision for Davis to apply for the Chair of New Testament Studies at the Theological Hall at Ormond College in Melbourne surprisingly lightly. They knew little or nothing about Australia and they had five children, four of whom were under ten. James, my elder brother, and I were born in Ireland but my younger brother, John, and two sisters, Mary and Brigid, were all born in quick succession in London. When the news of his appointment came, my mother asked quite casually where exactly was Melbourne, to which my father nonchalantly replied "Oh, I think it's the one half-way along the bottom."

Once we arrived in the hot summer of 1953, we all put roots down quickly. The large Victorian sandstone house we lived in was spacious and airy. My parents loved Ormond, its community and grounds, and its proximity alike to the University, the Victoria Market, the city, and the football ground in Princes Park. Although they enjoyed their subsequent return visits to Europe and Ireland, London and Cambridge, they never pined for the old world or regretted their decision to become Australian. Compared with the UK in the immediate post-war years, Australia offered so many intellectual and institutional opportunities, to say nothing of the climate and the plenty of the land.

The academic standards of the Theological Hall and neighbouring colleges were reassuringly high. My father, always ecumenically minded, made close contacts and friends across the theological community from the Anglican colleges of Trinity and Ridley to the Methodists in Queen's and the Jesuit Fathers in Newman. Discussions began between the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches, which would lead eventually to the formation of the Uniting Church in Australia. Davis McCaughey played a leading role in these discussions and became the first President of the Uniting Church.

My mother was active in the YWCA and on the Council for planning and building the new women's College, St. Hilda's. She would serve a term as General Secretary of the Australian Student Christian Movement and eventually join the staff of the Institute of Applied Economic Research at the University of Melbourne under the direction of Ronald Henderson. They were engaged up to their necks in their immediate community and the wider world. They rarely considered returning to the UK.

When Davis McCaughey was appointed Master of Ormond – one of the great titles of Melbourne, as Roy Grounds, the architect, once sardonically observed – their commitment to Australia became absolute. No other appointment gave either of them as much satisfaction. Their friend Frederick Romberg successfully remodelled the new Master's Lodge into a commodious house for the family. My father set about expanding and changing the College and, in so doing, made it one of the most distinguished academic institutions in Melbourne. He more than doubled its size, and admitted women to all levels of the College from undergraduate to High Table. He built extensions and created both a library and a chapel. But these he would have regarded as the outward trappings of his mastership. Throughout his twenty years as Master, his over-riding commitment was an intense interest in and concern for the life of every student in the College. He would follow their subsequent careers with the utmost interest and maintain an astonishingly close relationship with them. In this he was warmly and ably assisted and abetted by my mother. Every fresher would be entertained at the

Lodge within days of arriving. The Ormond years were amongst the happiest for both my parents.

When they retired to a terrace house in Parkville, they both greatly missed the life of the College. Even a stint of teaching and research at Princeton Theological Seminary, his continuing service to the University of Melbourne as Deputy Chancellor and his new-found interest and engagement with bio-ethical issues did not quite fill the void after they left the Master's Lodge.

When John Cain, the Labor Premier of Victoria, visited them in 1985 and proposed that Davis become the next Governor of Victoria, both of them were flabbergasted and flattered. Before this, retired admirals and generals were the recruiting-ground for Victorian Governors. Their old friend Evan Walker, sometime partner with Daryl Jackson in a flourishing architectural practice and then a senior member of the Cain Government, played a key role in putting Davis McCaughey's name forward. John Cain had formed the first Labor Government in Victoria in thirty years and had inherited Sir Brian Murray, a retired admiral, as Governor, sympathetic neither to the Premier nor to his party. John Cain's intelligence, directness and personal warmth persuaded my parents to accept the appointment despite their misgivings. Davis was 71 but in good health and, frankly, without a proper vocation.

In the event they enjoyed the office immensely and did much to humanize and liberate it. They invited all members of Cabinet plus their spouses to Government House for dinner for the first time. The gubernatorial Rolls-Royce was sold to meet a government cutback in expenditure. Government House was opened to the public. On the first open day, the crowds were immense and snaked all the way to the gates. Davis and Jean walked slowly down the long line talking with people, apologizing for the delay and reassuring them that they would eventually get inside. They changed and expanded the range of people invited to Government House events. They undertook tours to Japan and China on behalf of the Victorian Government. They enjoyed the multiplicity of their tasks, the variety of people they met, and the organizations and institutions they visited throughout the State. It was a marvellous coda to their public lives.

All of this Sarah Martin has recalled with telling details, many of which were unknown even to members of the family. We salute her assiduous research and intellectual stamina in completing such a comprehensive biography.

My father was an affectionate, loving but not effusive father. Always generous and encouraging, he could be remarkably supportive and sympathetic when things went wrong. His marriage to Jean was the deepest and most profound relationship of his entire life. It gave them a lasting sense of security in their own lives, which extended to all their children. Davis McCaughey was a man of unfailing courtesy and not a little charm. Behind that lay determination, firmness of purpose and considerable courage when required. His deep and abiding faith was the wellspring of his humility and purged him of personal vanity and egotism. It gave him insights into the lives of others and the way of the world. All manner of persons – his contemporaries, his colleagues and students, people in public life and those he knew casually – were drawn to him. An old friend once remarked that people felt distinguished simply by being in his company. A man steadfast and adventurous, he is unforgettable.

The Macs

TRISH PIPER, *a member of Learningguild now living in Wandiligong, near Bright, gives us these memories.*

I worked as a casual at Government House for about fifteen years. The Macs, as we called them, showed great humility, always recognized staff, were understanding, and maintained such dignity, but without any stuffiness. They were in fact a breath of fresh air.

Once, during a royal visit, the Governor told us he had a sore throat, and wanted to go to bed early. Since we had plenty of lemons, we encouraged the footman James to make him a hot toddy. The next morning he personally thanked us all, saying he felt much better.

Whenever we were free, we were welcome to the 10.30 morning tea with the Governor and Mrs Mac. When the chef had left for the day, Mrs Mac would sometimes go into the kitchen and make chutney and jam.

I was in the service of numerous Governors and I must say that the Macs were two of the most delightful and considerate people I have ever met.

Jean McCaughey

This tribute by **JOHN CAIN**, *who was Premier of Victoria from 1981 to 1990, is based on notes he prepared for his address at the memorial service at Wesley Church, Melbourne, on the 25th of September 2012. It owes much to Sarah Martin's biography.*

Davis and Jean McCaughey and their three sons and two daughters arrived in Melbourne in February 1953. He was to be Professor of New Testament Studies at Ormond College, in what was then the Theological Hall of the Presbyterian Church. The family was from Northern Ireland, but since 1946 had lived in London, where Davis wrote, edited and corresponded to foster study in the Student Christian Movement.[1] He and Jean, in their later thirties, and those young children were just the kind of migrant family that Australian governments had been seeking since 1944. What a photo opportunity they provided![2]

Patrick has described his mother as in her childhood precocious and an eager reader. She won a scholarship to study medicine at Queen's University, Belfast, and did well, not deterred by the fact that only sixteen of 180 students were women.

Jean was greatly influenced by her father George Henderson, a strong advocate of Home Rule for Ireland and a supporter of dispossessed tenant families. He was elected to the Northern Ireland Parliament in 1925. She developed early a trait that never left her, and will stay in our memory: her advocacy of good causes, feisty, fervent, combative and fierce.

Davis and Jean were both very familiar with the life of a serious but wide-ranging university student: he took English and economics at Cambridge and had a year of theology at Edinburgh, and she completed all but the final year of the medical course, which she relinquished to marry him when he was bound for Edinburgh. Especially through the SCM, they were both acquainted with a wide range of ecumenically-minded students, university teachers and leading Christian thinkers concerned with post-war reconstruction of education and of British society.[3]

After Davis became Master of Ormond in 1959, Jean's life widened into one in which she not only supported him – some say she was a "mother figure" in the College – but became known as a very lively person. She had already, as Sarah Martin says, "made a name for herself as a source of advice and sympathetic support for the Ormond community".[4]

To all her activities she brought the same willing commitment, values and concern for the underdog that she had acquired as a young woman in Ireland. Some of her qualities were expressed in words used soon after she died: people spoke of her "warmth, friendship and social conscience", "encouragement, tenacity and strength of spirit", and "unstinting efforts", and she was described as "extraordinarily fearless". She showed these qualities at Ormond, in the University, at Government House, and for many years after.

Her hospitality at Ormond was unfailing, encouraging and fruitful of good conversation. Without impairment of it, her life took on a new dimension when she turned to social research. Her decision when in Cambridge in 1966 (with Davis, who was on sabbatical leave) to learn about the new field of computers and their programming led to her becoming a research assistant and then a research fellow in the Institute of Applied Economic Research at the University of Melbourne. She loved to tell that, towards the end of her initial interview, Ronald Henderson, the Director, said to her: "We have one **rule** here … : we go to morning tea." She made many contributions to the Institute's enquiries and resultant publications, especially in relation to the uncovering and describing of household poverty.

When, late in 1985, my colleagues and I were considering who should be asked to accept nomination as Governor of Victoria, Evan Walker suggested Davis. As usual, his advice was good. He even suggested that the Queen be advised that Davis and Jean could be "joint office-holders", William-and-Mary style, two for the price of one. I visited their home in Story St, Parkville, to talk with them. They were humble and self-effacing in every way in considering the job. I could see that it was to be a joint decision. They knew that I felt strongly in favour of their accepting, and that the Government wanted Government House to lose its colonial feel, and become, like the role itself of the Governor, closer to the people. The largely ceremonial work should be done with quiet authority, simplicity and dignity. The word 'duty' was never used: Davis and Jean seemed

right for the job. They weighed up carefully and in consultation with their family whether they should accept it. They did, and, though they always maintained the political neutrality fundamental to the position, it helped in their decision that they could say, in a letter to family and friends overseas, that the Government was "trying to make work the kind of social democracy in which we believe".[5]

The swearing-in ceremony was held, not in a grand house behind an iron fence, nor inside Parliament House, but on its steps and visible to anyone who wished to attend.

The six years in Government House exposed Jean to decisions, trends and even policies that she would have wished to question and perhaps even oppose. But she knew that she and Davis were shaping the job in the ways we had discussed at Story Street, and that they could go further – and did. They opened up Government House to the people on a regular basis. They made the office a "working" office and took on visits, including overseas ones, in the interest of the State of Victoria, setting an example since followed by others. Jean found that quiet reflection and restraint could be rewarding, though Sarah Martin quotes from Charles Curwen, the Chief Administrator of the Office, the memory that Jean, who had introduced the practice of making jam from the prolific orchard's fruit, would "stomp off to the kitchen to make jam whenever she disagreed" with the decisions her husband and he had made.[6]

Davis broke from the custom of having only male and military aides, and appointed a woman and then a man who were both Arts graduates from the University of Melbourne. The latter, Angus Trumble, has written thus of "Mrs Mac" as a croquet player at Government House:

> To say that she was a committed player is a dangerous understatement. She was not content with mere victory, but rather set herself the task of totally annihilating her opponents, who were often decades younger. No one was safe when confronted by a cheerful and impeccably courteous assault from Jean on the croquet lawn.

Hyperbole, but, as they like to say today, on message. Nancye and I were among the vanquished opponents.

Jean knew that the big causes for which she had fought all through her life were continuing to advance: social justice, gender equality, public housing. A fairer, more compassionate and egalitarian society was evolving, despite occasional setbacks from which all progressive causes suffer.

After leaving Government House, she was free to be an activist again, on behalf of homeless people and better education for the disadvantaged. Sarah Martin well describes what she did, for example in co-chairing the organisation called "People Together".[7]

Jean's life lasted for almost sixty years after that arrival on a migrant ship in 1953. At the memorial service were the five children, accompanied by eleven grandchildren and seventeen great-grandchildren. The family could look back with pride and grateful admiration on what Jean had achieved: she had both nurtured them and whole-heartedly contributed to so many groups and causes.

NOTES

(All references, with one exception, are to pages or chapters of Sarah Martin's biography of Davis McCaughey.)

1. pp. 115-124.
2. Opposite p.256.
3. See Chs 3, 4 and 10, and Davis McCaughey's *Christian Obedience in the University*, Ch.IV.
4. p.178.
5. p.299.
6. p.307.
7. p.332.

We are prepared to provide economic support when a family breaks down, but not the support services which might have prevented the breakdown. We expect the family to take the lion's share of caring for its dependent members without providing the support necessary for it to do so. On the positive side, it was reassuring to find that so much help, often costly help, was given and received informally, through networks of family, friends, neighbours and community groups. There are some hopeful signs for the future, not least the growing recognition that services and families need to work together in partnership, each recognising the value of the other.

Jean McCaughey's conclusion to A Bit of a Struggle *(McPhee Gribble/Penguin 1987)*

Jean McCaughey and the Melbourne Institute

ROSS WILLIAMS AM *is Emeritus Professor and Professorial Fellow at the Melbourne Institute (of Applied Economic and Social Research) at the University of Melbourne.*

It was a pleasure to interview Jean McCaughey in June 2010 for my history of the Institute. (The book was published in 2012 as *The Policy Providers* by Melbourne University Press.) Although she was not in good health, her memory jumped into gear and her face lit up when we began to talk about her time there. To my surprise, I found that Jean's initial appointment, by Ronald Henderson, the Director, was for her computer programming skills. Henderson had known her husband, Davis, from their student days at Cambridge. While in England, accompanying Davis on study leave, Jean took some classes in computing. She had planned a Renaissance study tour, but a mentor at Cambridge suggested that she take an intensive three-week course in computing at the London School of Economics (LSE), because he felt these skills were badly needed in Australia. Encouraged by her family, she opted for that. What a bold decision! Her fellow-students at LSE were much younger. At that time computing could be done only on large mainframe machines, and programming them was cumbersome and left largely to technical experts. It was nearly two decades before personal computers became widely available.

Jean joined the Institute in July 1967 and quickly extended her interests to welfare reform. She was an important part of the team led by Henderson that produced in 1970 *People in Poverty: A Melbourne Survey*. She was active at all stages of this and subsequent projects: helping with data collection, programming, policy formulation, and writing up. In modern terminology, she was a pioneer in evidence-based policy recommendations.

She directly contributed two chapters to that Poverty Report. Her study of poverty among migrants was funded by the Social Science Research Council. She found that while, on average, the incidence of poverty among migrants was not significantly higher than for the population as a whole, big concentrations of Southern Europeans in the inner city areas were beset by problems of poverty, poor health and expensive housing. Two of her recommendations were for more low-rent housing and more long-term loans for house purchase. Typically of Jean, she also noted that non-economic issues were as serious as economic ones: inadequate English, divergent cultures, isolation and loneliness, not knowing how to access social services. Her second chapter in the Report was a survey of domiciliary services. 5000 people in Melbourne, she estimated, were in need of domiciliary help but not receiving it.

The impact of the Report was remarkable: the first print run was sold out within two months. The findings were taken up by government and had a major influence on government policy from 1968, when parts of the findings were released.

Lessons learned from the Poverty Report gave direction for further research. Jean was particularly concerned to explore why services so often failed to reach those who needed them. In 1971 she commenced a project that conducted in-depth surveys of 120 low-income families and a smaller survey of the aged in three Melbourne municipal areas. The surveys documented how these households lived and coped. The work formed a chapter of the book *Who Cares?* that she jointly edited (1977). It sold 9000 copies. A number of interconnected factors were found to affect the ability of families to access welfare services, including family structure and resources and level of ability to deal with external authorities. The book was serialised in *The Age*. The State Minister for Social Welfare, having received a proof copy, used the proposals in a reorganisation of his department.

After Ronald Henderson retired, Jean drifted away from the Institute's work, but in 1993 was invited by Richard Blandy to join the Advisory Board. She resigned the next year, with two others, over a dispute about the conduct of a project on unemployment.

Jean remained committed to displaying the need to improve provision for those less well-off and advocating that improvement. Running through all her work is the strongly-held view that we need to find out from people what they want before we formulate policy.

> The material gives the unequivocal impression of the apartness of families and bureaucracies ….
>
> *Jean Martin, quoted by Jean McCaughey,* A Bit of a Struggle*, p.227.*

Flies with Personality?

KRISTIJAN JOVANOSKI *is the Victorian Rhodes Scholar for 2014, and began a Ph.D. at Oxford in October. He is at Magdalen College. A member of Learningguild, he promoted the take-up of the most recent examination, named May 2014, for our Certificate in Reasoning and Expression, as documented with his own achievement in it on p.1 of the Report on that exam (at 'Certificate' on our website) This article is based on a talk Kristijan gave at the annual dinner in August for Rhodes Scholars and partners resident in Victoria.*

The notion that flies could have personality, or even vary markedly in behaviour, may seem quite strange. How often do we think of flies as different individuals that could be intelligent, grumpy, or lazy? It is a truth universally acknowledged that flies appear to have only one real motivation: to ruin our barbecues every summer. Perhaps we're so busy trying to swat them that we don't really watch them for long enough. In a more controlled environment, say a laboratory, we can have many flies in a small vial and watch them closely without worrying about their landing on our lunch or going out of sight. Scientists can breed fly populations in such a way that all of the individuals in a particular vial are genetically identical. Behavioural experiments involving flies quickly reveal two things taken for granted by researchers but astonishing to others: flies learn, and they can have long-term memories. If you give flies the choice between two odours, one paired with sugar, most flies will learn to associate that odour with the tasty nutrient and will fly towards the odour if presented with the same choice twenty-four hours later. This memory is long-term on the timescale of a fly's lifespan, and scientists have deciphered much about how the fly brain works by genetically tweaking particular cells in the brain and testing how fly behaviour changes in response.

Nonetheless, a common and fundamental conundrum in science presents itself during these experiments: individuals behave differently. Even though the flies are effectively genetic clones of one another, most **but not all** of them remember the odour or choose to go after it when they are hungry. We could think of twins and bring up the old dichotomy of nature versus nurture, but it is unlikely that each of our flies has had a different upbringing, especially when we have controlled for all of their experimental conditions since they were born. We must revisit one of our first assumptions. Individual flies may have been genetically identical to begin with, but are they still identical? Does their genetic material never change? We know our genetic material is far from static throughout our own lives; after all, many cancers and other diseases only develop after a harmful genetic mutation. But scientists keep flies away from chemicals or environmental conditions that could cause such mutations. It turns out that something else may be changing their genetic material.

The research group that I recently joined at Oxford discovered a few years ago that small genetic elements called transposons are active in cells of the fly brain. Transposons are also known as "jumping genes" because they have the ability to move around a fly's genetic material, cutting themselves out of one spot and inserting themselves somewhere else. This process is inherently random and could make every fly brain unique. In particular, these jumping genes are known to insert themselves into important genes concerning memory. Does this help a fly or harm it?

That question is important because transposons have been found in the brains of rodents, and of humans too. Historically, these jumping genes have been considered to be problematic parasites, especially since new insertions can sometimes disrupt genes: transposons are associated with human disorders such as schizophrenia. But perhaps this historical picture is incomplete: transposons might also create variation within cells, ultimately giving some individuals an advantage over others, above all in memory and behaviour. My aim in doctoral research is to develop reliable molecular markers that indicate when transposons have inserted themselves into particular genes and to develop methods that stop them from moving in the first place. It might be possible to reduce or eliminate this random diversity of fly behaviours.

Although I do not have the typical Oxford experience of weekly tutorial sessions to discuss readings and essays with an expert in my field, much of my project depends on the individual relationship that I have with my doctoral supervisor. It is usually more important to choose a suitable mentor than an interesting project, because the main goal is to learn how to use scientific methods fruitfully. My project, one might say, is to find out whether differences in types of fly behaviour are inevitable.

Eric Sibly

MICHAEL HOWES *writes about his friend. Michael has for many years written about National Parks in Victoria, and is the Editor of* Park Watch*, the journal of the Victorian National Parks Association. He and Alan are my brothers. A photograph of Eric, in front of the Taj Mahal, is available on request. JH*

Appropriately, given that he spoke twice about railways at Learningguild's Friday-evening meetings, it was on a train that Dorothy and I first met Eric Sibly. (One of those talks was the basis of an article by him in *L'g L* 1.2010, advocating extension of public transport in Melbourne.) Our meeting with him was in 1968, when we were both still at university, and the historic steam-hauled train was the very last train to run from Melbourne to Heathcote, in central Victoria.

We somehow got talking to Eric in one of the compartments and soon discovered that he was a fellow train-enthusiast, and also that he was very friendly and polite, and a good listener. We found that he worked on the suburban railway system, was a staunch Labor supporter and public transport advocate, laughed a lot, and knew a great deal about the voting system called proportional representation.

Eric Clifton Sibly was born on 12 March 1940, the eldest of five children, the other four all girls. He grew up in East Kew and in fact lived in the family home in Inverness Drive for much of his life. Like John and me, he attended Melbourne High School, in his case from about 1954 to 1957.

Although later a loyal supporter of the school and the Old Boys Association, it seems that these years were not entirely happy for him, as he suffered from bullying. A genius at maths, he had what would today be called a mild form of Asperger's Syndrome, and appeared to have no romantic interests. But this didn't prevent him in later years from having many, many friends, both male and female. He was also a great supporter of Scouts and of Guides.

On first meeting Eric, some people probably thought he was rather strange – perhaps simple, or at least naïve and innocent. I'm sure this was the case when he met a group of our teacher friends. The conversation happened to turn to voting systems, including proportional representation, which no one could understand. Eric proceeded to give a clear and masterly explanation that left everyone amazed. We could see their opinions of him changing before our eyes.

Following our first meeting on the Heathcote train, we met Eric occasionally. I think he visited us in Yarram (in South Gippsland) where we were teaching in the early 1970s, and he helped celebrate my 30th birthday in 1977 when we lived near Bacchus Marsh.

After we moved back to Melbourne we saw him more regularly, especially when we began taking him each year to visit his older Anderson cousins at Smeaton, near Daylesford. These sisters, Shirley and Lynette, owned and lived next to a former flour mill built by their Anderson forebears in 1860 and powered by a giant water wheel which still functions today. (The mill now belongs to the State Government and is open to the public at times.)

Eric didn't drive a car, and it's hard to get to Smeaton by public transport, so this was a good opportunity for him to see his cousins and take them gifts of fruit and other produce. While our children played in the nearby creek or around the mill, he would catch up on family news and do household chores. He was very interested in family history and supplied information for a book on the mill.

He also helped with research for another book, on Melbourne's famous Outer Circle railway, built in the 1880s Land Boom, which ran from Fairfield to Hughesdale but is now closed (except for the Alamein line). He actually remembered some of the last trains on the line near Kew when he was just three or four.

After he left school, Eric worked for a time as a locomotive fireman based in Korumburra in Gippsland, then in a bank for some years, and from 1961 to 1965 as a tram driver. But after that, for some 40 years, he worked on the Melbourne suburban railway system, rising to the important position of Relieving Stationmaster at major stations like Camberwell, Ringwood and even Flinders Street. This involved considerable staff supervision, and he must have been greatly helped by his patience, tolerance, good humour and commitment to customer service (long before it was actually called that). The large number of Metro staff at his memorial service showed how much he was loved and respected.

Eric enjoyed many railway and bus holidays. He travelled through much of Australia, and in the UK, Europe, Russia, China, the USA and India.

In England in 2007 he persuaded me to go with him to the Isle of Man, with its varied and historic transport systems including a horse-drawn tram, an ancient electric one, and a steam-hauled narrow-gauge railway network said to have been the inspiration for the Thomas the Tank Engine stories of the Rev. W. Awdry.

Eric lived alone for much of his life, enjoying vegetable growing and (later) keeping hens. He often generously supplied us with fruit and vegetables. Later in life, however, he took in boarders, mostly Indian students, who regarded him as a sort of favourite uncle and with whom he enjoyed an easy friendship.

He had some health problems, but his death in 2013 from a heart attack while on a bus trip in outback South Australia was quite unexpected.

His memorial service was almost overwhelming – hundreds of people packed the Paton Memorial Uniting Church in Deepdene, which he had attended for many years, and many moving tributes were paid.

His oldest sister Pat described him as the nicest person she had ever met. We felt privileged and proud to have had this unusual man, kind, warm, cheerful and loyal, as a friend.

Eleanor Walsh

In her retirement Eleanor returned to Adelaide, in which she had grown up. She died there in 2014.

She was modest, reserved and quietly-spoken – and amazing. To convey her range of activity, I cannot do better than repeat the heading to her article in the 1.1996 issue of this *Letter*:

> ELEANOR WALSH is a physicist with wide experience of teaching and of research into teaching methods. She took her first degree at Adelaide and her doctorate in theoretical physics at ANU. In the seventies she taught at Mitchell CAE, Bathurst, and had two years at the University of London, gaining an MA in philosophy of education. From 1980 to 1986 she taught in PNG, and from 1987 to 1997 in Health Sciences at La Trobe University in Melbourne. In October 1997 she took up the position of Course Adviser in Engineering at the University of Melbourne. Eleanor has been active in CEDAH (Community Education, Development and Health), which conducts courses for overseas agencies and for health professionals proceeding to developing communities. A member of Learningguild, she has written two articles for the *Letter* (2.'91 and 1.'92) about Kanaky (New Caledonia). After studying Chinese, she went in 1995, on secondment, to Kunming Medical University, Yunnan Province, China, to teach English.

Her article on that occasion was on dealing with student reluctance, even indignant refusal, in China as earlier in PNG, to recognize that "intelligence could be regarded as an attribute superior to knowledge" (where 'intelligence' is defined as 'the capacity to choose perceptively with reference to criteria and thus to give reasons for your choice'). The students thought that what mattered was knowledge (such as theirs) of facts learnt or learnable by way of notes copied from a blackboard.

She decided, but was later frustrated by illness, that she would try to enable her students gradually "to take on my position in such a way that my reasons became their reasons"; but she was not sure that it would not have been better to confront them openly. Sympathy won out: "It was understandable that [her students, doctors who had suffered under the Cultural Revolution] regarded knowledge as being of paramount importance because they had invested so much energy in achieving it."

In her review (also in 1.1996) of an introduction to physics, she welcomed explanation in words rather than formulae, though she was always firmly against any attempt to teach physics without maths. She spent twelve years as a course adviser at Melbourne (I think she preferred the description "student adviser"), and in 1.2009 reviewed a book of guidance to students beginning a university course in engineering. It "offer[s] students an efficient pathway through the course", she says, but she "[finds] no enthusiasm for guiding really good students … on how to excel in their studies".

She **was** a really good student, teacher and guide – as well as a lover of music. I recall her saying with relief one Friday evening "Thank God for Learningguild!" How much she gave us by being herself. JH

How much Millian discussion of religion, and where?

CHRISTIAAN MOSTERT *is an Emeritus Professor in the MCD University of Divinity, here in Melbourne. He was for many years Professor of Theology in the Joint Faculty of Theology. A member of Learningguild, he attended our Philosophy Seminar in 2013 when we were dealing with some Christian writings, many of them on the theme of sin, atonement, or motivation. I wrote in relation to that seminar in* L'g L *2.2013, first advocating what I call Millian discussion of such matters and asking why it is not more common. Sandy Yule joined in the debate in our last issue (1.2014), and further contributions are warmly invited.*

John Howes is a passionate advocate for "Millian discussion" (see *L'g Letter* 2.2013, p.1f). He quotes J.S. Mill on the discussion of "morals, religion, politics, social relations, and the business of life", in which "three-fourths of the arguments for every disputed opinion consist in dispelling the appearances which favour some opinion different from it." Mill then states his conviction: "[One] must be able to hear [counter-arguments] from persons who actually believe them; who defend them in earnest, and do their very utmost for them." John helpfully suggests that we speak of beliefs rather than opinions, since belief is not always propositional, as in believing that something is the case, but can also involve trust, as in believing in God in the wider meaning of that phrase.

This "Millian" requirement is an eminently reasonable one, especially of people who are reflective and accustomed to thinking with seriousness about the whole range of questions and topics that belong to civilised discussion. We should want to inform ourselves, not only of the facts of a matter but also of the views, opinions and beliefs of others who have earned the right, by their education, their wisdom or experience, or the force of their arguments, to be respectfully and thoughtfully listened to, and to be learned from, whether we come to agree or not.

In a recent conversation with John, I ventured the opinion that it was probably unrealistic to expect (or hope) that "Millian discussion" would become widespread. Subsequently he invited me to think further about this remark: should it nevertheless be fostered and engaged in, not least by academic theologians (of whom I am one)? Do I see a place for it in church-related colleges, including, of course, theological colleges (in which I have worked for close to three decades)? To this invitation I here respond.

One hopes that, at any level of formal education, respectful attention to the views and beliefs of others will be encouraged. It belongs to our "formation" as thoughtful members of society. .The extent to and depth at which this is possible is relative to age and level of study. At university level it would be extraordinary if it were not given very high priority. One might well regard a university education as a failure if students have not learnt to give such attention, not only in their reading but also in discussion. Whether it instils in them a habit of thought in which attentive listening to the views and opinions of others is more or less automatic is another matter. We are inclined quickly to come to the defence of our **own** opinions.

Even without the advantages of a tertiary education, it is not unreasonable to expect people to listen to the views and arguments of others, simply as a matter of courtesy. Some, by virtue of their temperament or personal formation, will be able to do so without being particularly intentional about it. But it is not uncommon, even among people with the highest credentials of tertiary study and people who are generally thoughtful, to find closed-mindedness in various degrees to the arguments of others. Perhaps for the majority of people, at least in some areas of their belief-system, "Millian discussion" does not even "get off the ground".

This is true in matters of religious belief and faith (these are not the same thing but they overlap). It is by no means invariably true there; nor is it the only area in which "Millian discussion" seldom occurs. That rarity characterises much discussion of politics and a wide range of personal and social moral issues. Here I confine myself to the discussion of belief and faith, in which many people feel that a great deal is at stake for them personally, for their entire existence. I should add that the absence or paucity of "Millian discussion" characterises the behaviour not only of people who hold religious beliefs and have a personal faith but also of those who reject religious beliefs of every kind and whose faith, if it can be described as such, is purely in human possibilities and resources.

The strength of our convictions varies greatly from person to person, issue to issue and time to time. I have always found it impossible to think that my own convictions must necessarily be right. I often recall the recognition by a well-known defender of the Christian faith (I think C.S. Lewis) that, now that he was a Christian, the whole Christian thing sometimes looked terribly improbable, but that, when he was an atheist, it sometimes looked terribly probable. For me, as for many, certainty and uncertainty, faith and doubt are inseparable companions. Many therefore choose to be agnostic. The decision to be (or to remain) a Christian has been for me as much a matter of intellectual argument as of will and emotion. Attending to the arguments of those who do not share my beliefs has been an unavoidable feature of my faith and life. This, I take it, is at least in part what Mill was urging.

One cannot do this in every part of one's day or week. One hopes to find a measure of stability in one's belief and faith, even if only relatively so. One cannot radically question the very basis of one's beliefs every day. The same is surely the case for those who argue against religious beliefs. At its core "Millian discussion" presupposes a certain mind-set: an openness, even an eager readiness, to hear counter-arguments to one's own views and arguments. Because of other commitments, it is likely to be occasional, though not necessarily infrequent.

What is certainly to be resisted and criticised is fideism, the view that argument has no role to play in religious belief or faith, or that faith is a matter of blind assent. When I was young it was not uncommon to hear people say "One just has to believe this ...." Even today people, not least young people, adopt religious beliefs in a way that gives little sign of having much rational or intellectual depth. I have always liked those definitions of theology that emphasise faith's search for understanding (Anselm of Canterbury) or faith's constant need to test itself and rethink its content (Karl Barth). This requires serious wrestling with views and beliefs that differ from one's own or those of one's group.

One of the tasks of theological colleges is to challenge students to deepen and test their thinking about their faith and to encourage the development of habits of thought in which counter-arguments are given serious consideration, not pushed aside. In an age when religious belief is widely questioned, sometimes aggressively ridiculed, and talk in which the word 'God' is central has for many become like a foreign language, especially in the Western world, it is inexcusable for people of faith to refuse to think seriously about the counter-arguments. When possible, as Mill says, these arguments should be heard from those who advance them. To be realistic, most of the time we must hear them at second hand.

Arid rationalism may be the enemy of faith but reason is not. Reason – and by extension "Millian discussion" – can and should have an honoured place in the life of religious communities, not least in theological colleges. I can assure critics and sceptics that it does have a place in many such communities. It is also true that people are formed there in other ways of thinking besides the strictly rational, e.g. the imaginative, the contemplative and the worshipping.

"Millian discussion" can yield many benefits, including the deepening and strengthening of belief and faith. It also challenges, and therefore has the potential to disturb. On a longer view, that can deepen and widen one's thinking. Certainly, it carries the risk that one will end up with a much modified faith, a less confident belief, or even the loss of faith and the rejection of beliefs for which one has argued vigorously in the past. Any belief-system, and certainly any faith, is a kind of venture; so even is "Millian discussion". Any venture may have an unintended outcome but, as people have thought for hundreds of years, where nothing is ventured nothing is gained.

One of the benefits of being a member of Learningguild's Philosophy Seminar in 2013 was to consider and discuss a selection of Christian writings and to discuss closely particular passages. One is required to listen carefully to the views of those who don't agree with what has been written, as I sometimes did not, or others' understanding of it. Some writings were well chosen, some not so well. I should have preferred some more recent ones: scholarship has moved in other directions or advanced new ideas, and the more recent cultural context has required closer attention to contemporary objections. However, it was unfailingly the case that people listened with care and respect to the views of others, particularly when their own views were clearly very different. There were times of good Millian discussion. I usually find it very enjoyable to be in discussion with people whose thinking corresponds closely to my own, though there are invariably some differences of opinion. However, it is equally stimulating, and sometimes more thought-provoking, to be in dis-cussion with people whose disagreement is about the foundations of what I think and believe. This comes closest, I think, to what Mill intended.

Appendix: the four books

On p.4 I say that there is more about them here.

David Penington's autobiography ***Making Waves*** is enthralling. It is also of great value to anyone wanting to think hard about the kinds of teaching a university should provide so as to maximize students' intellectual development, and the ways in which leadership, along with collegiality, can foster excellence in teaching, research and university life in general. Four areas in which the book deserves attention are: the distant and recent history of the University of Melbourne; the controversy (1987-94: pp. 271-80) in which Penington, then Vice-Chancellor, valiantly resisted attempts to establish inadequate syllabuses and forms of assessment for the final year of secondary education; the troublesome failure by John Dawkins, the Labor Minister responsible for higher education 1987-91, to understand the importance of research in universities and their need for both adequate public financing and autonomy (Chapter 12); and the history of controversies and treatments in relation to both AIDS and drugs. Penington remains active in the struggle for more reasonable and proven ways of dealing with drug addiction and dangers to the health of young people especially, and there is now an Institute named after him.

He says that a book by Peters and Waterman, *In Search of Excellence*, helped him to realize that crucial in business and in universities was the kind of leadership that expressed and engendered "preoccupation with a culture of collective achievement and commitment to excellence" (p.220). That well describes what he has sought throughout an extraordinarily active life, whether as Dean of Medicine or as Vice-Chancellor or in providing direction for the numerous bodies he has been asked (sometimes in emergencies) to chair.

David Penington is deservedly proud of his achievements, as when he says "By December 1995, the University of Melbourne was a changed institution" (p.298), but that sentence begins a paragraph that illustrates one of the most prominent features of the autobiography, his readiness to express admiration for many people he has had as colleagues.

He refers sometimes, with an appropriate reserve but again with admiration, to the people in his personal life, and brings out both the difficulty that an extremely busy professional life can cause for a marriage and also the possibility of combining a marriage with such lives for both partners.

Any student who sees his or her future as perhaps in medical research and teaching should read this book, not least to see how David Penington combined the two.

Alongside what I have said about and quoted from ***Off Course***, by John Cain and John Hewitt, one should note that Chapter 3 is a valuable history of Australian universities and other tertiary bodies and their relations with governments, taking us from Menzies to Dawkins, and that the authors discuss (pp. 94-97) the changing emphasis at Melbourne from a perhaps undue emphasis on collegial committees to leadership from the Vice-Chancellor aimed at change in the culture. (One effect of Penington's is vividly described in *Making Waves* at p.238f!)

The quotations in Chapters 5 and 6 are telling. Some come from staff, including non-tenured teachers who may be given undue responsibility with little prospects, or grounds for satisfaction; some from students who notice overcrowding and limited opportunity to consult staff. The idea that a student can best be regarded as a kind of customer or consumer is, as the authors point out, in conflict with the tradition of "a learning community of teachers and scholars". One reason for our name 'Learningguild' is that the student in early years ought to be regarded as a kind of **apprentice**, to be trained, yes, but also helped to develop towards critical autonomy.

Davis McCaughey's book ***Christian Obedience in the University*** is, as I have said, much concerned with the debates about changes needed in the British universities in post-war years. It is a confidently but never complacently Christian book. Its chapter "The Impact of World Affairs" vividly conveys what that impact could be on Christians and others in Britain who in the 1930 and '40s kept themselves informed of the suffering inflicted by the totalitarian powers in Japan and Germany.

An enduring core of Davis's thought is apparent in his reference (p.69) to "the teaching of men like Ernest Barker and A.D.Lindsay that the survival and renewal of Western democracy depended on the strength and virility of institutions and societies which were neither State-controlled nor ecclesiastically dominated". "The Church", and the churches (which he respected but vigorously criticized), had a central place in Davis's thought; but he could never be called an ecclesiastic. The educational "institutions and societies" need to be both autonomous and responsible, and therefore also exposed to constructive criticism. Davis once gave a graduation address with the theme "Don't Go." Do universities today give their students much sense of ongoing membership beyond graduation, and of belonging to no mean city? Sustained membership is central to Learningguild.

Sir Walter Moberly's ***The Crisis in the University*** is an education in itself, alike in its range and in its manner. One main theme (pp. 50-53) is criticism of "something like a taboo on the treatment of contentious issues of politics or religion", for "It confines university education to the use of means as opposed to the choice of ends …. It abjures any contribution to answering the master-question – How shall a man live?". Sir Walter would approve of our theme for this year's Philosophy Seminar, "Aims and Ideals". Read his book, still thought-provoking 66 years after it was published, if you want to think seriously about education.

John Howes