

DISARMING Pax Christi TIMES

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EMPTINESS, OTHERNESS AND IDENTITY, AN AUSTRALIA DAY REFLECTION Wes Campbell

An exploration of the themes of emptiness, otherness and identity with reference to a new sense of a filled Land resulting from renewed acquaintance with Ab/original dreaming and Spirit.

It was once said that Australia had a 'dead heart' or an 'empty centre'. Curiously, as more has become known in public awareness of the Ab/original presence, the more intense has been the discussion about Australian identity.

The theme of emptiness was hammered out in the first days of European settlement. As the British settlers pitted themselves against the hardship of an alien environment and famine, they adopted the legal fiction of *Terra nullius*. The hard land was empty. Their struggle for life was etched out within a land with no heart, and empty centre. That struggle was not merely natural or agricultural; it was political and military: it involved contact with the black inhabitants, whose presence had to be denied. A legal fiction became grounds for a bellicose response. The inhabited land was cleared of an original presence.

Hardship included killing. The Ab/original presence, being denied, led to their 'clearing', - with the land -, that is, their slaughter, in spite of guerrilla resistance. Or, if gentler motives prevailed, the increasing presence of whites, the destruction of tribal lands and the introduction of deadly bacteria, swept the black presence away. The removal of the human other is intimately associated with the

experience of the land as other. As the human who is alien [and therefore not 'human'] was removed by direct or indirect means, the very ground under the feet became alien, other. The emptying of the original inhabitants from the land, emptied the Land itself, creating a dead heart.

In recent times, with new waves of immigration and an emerging black Ab/original voice, the question of identity has become problematic for Australians, or - at least - Australian politicians and policy makers. The identity formed out of the hard struggle of white settlers and convicts - the 'colonial', self-consciously British Australian - has been challenged on several fronts.

The Australian identity which settled in an empty land (on the edges) did not look to its own centre but to a far-off England for its centre. That centre was disrupted, or inter/rupted, by waves of non-English speaking immigrants. Their 'centre' was elsewhere - other than England (or Ireland). Perhaps, however, initially, they still migrated to an empty land, 'full' of opportunity. An emerging 'multicultural policy' has been paralleled and prompted by the new visibility of Ab/original people. The discussion of culture required by the 'new Australians', created space for a consideration of aboriginality. Then, it may be remarked, those Ab/original voices sought to separate themselves from the newer migrant cultures, asserting their originality in the Land. As these developments took place, the

Land became less than empty.

The Land is now credited with a fullness associated with a once-denied Ab/original presence. The Land is said to be filled with 'dreaming' Spirit, with languages [many now silenced], with song-lines, and an Ab/history. The Land is more than the fringe settlements of white immigrants - even as the rural centres depopulate rapidly in the 1990s. And Australian identity is more than the hard-won Australian-ness of former times.

'Australia' is now given several centres. It is located now in Asia, although military/foreign policy clings closely to the United States. Its Ab/original presence claims rightful ownership of the Land. The multicultural policy dislocates the once secure self. *Contd. P 2*

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DISARMING TIMES

A quarterly journal of Pax Christi Australia. It aims to provide members and interested peacemakers with peace news and views both local and international. We endeavour in each edition to reflect the three-fold emphasis of Pax Christi which engages members in study, Non-violent action and prayer for peace, justice, human rights, development and inter-faith and inter-civilisation dialogue.

PAX CHRISTI AUSTRALIA

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creed was 'God is dead', the church must

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Identity, once secured at the cost of denying an other, Ab/original, presence in an 'empty' land, is now made insecure in a Land filled with new others.

The following is an exploration of the themes of emptiness, otherness and identity. In the meditation so far, I have included an indirect theological reference at one point only: with reference to a new sense of a filled Land resulting from renewed acquaintance with Ab/original dreaming and Spirit.

The Christian church was present from the beginning of white invasion/settlement. Christian theology has been echoed in preaching and instruction from that time. However, the prevailing spirit or *Geist* of the white culture was that of utilitarian, Enlightenment rationalism. The church and Christian theology had largely, though uncomfortably, accommodated itself to that prevailing culture. That this was so, should come as no surprise. The rationalist culture which came to Australia was an offspring of Christendom; the theology of the day was produced by churchmen who sought to hold onto a connection with the centre of European/ British life.

The supreme irony here is not often expressed, perhaps not immediately apparent. Rationalist, enlightenment culture recognised the alien character of Christian faith and sought to expel it from European life. The church, which had for so long accommodated itself to the structures and politics of Europe, could not recognise its own otherness. In the settling/invading of 'the Great South Land', 'the Land of the Holy Spirit', the church had no eyes to recognise the Original presence in the Land. The voice of the church, then, echoed the politics of the State. While attempts to ameliorate State policy were certainly implemented in missions and other charitable actions, the church collaborated with the State to abolish the presence of the black Other.

The role of the church and its own search for identity is also bound

together with the question of Australian identity. There are diverse histories across the traditions, most noticeably the Catholic-Irish and the Protestant-English divide.

Within traditions there has also been tension and diversity, but also reconciliation and re-unification: Presbyterians and Methodists re-united in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; Catholics divided profoundly in the 1950s. As the early ballads and anthems proclaimed a new land free of the old shackles of Europe, so church polity was not bound entirely to the divisions of European history. The Uniting Church is an explicit marker of the new ecumenical mood by which Christians of all traditions mix freely - only to be broken at the celebration of the Eucharist.

Christian theology in Australia, like its ecclesiastical history, architecture and liturgy, has remained largely derivative. Centres beyond the shores of the Land remain the reference points for theology and liturgy. Such global reference is traditionally understandable and ecumenically necessary; it also hinders an overcoming of fractured identity. Rome is noticeable; Westminster, Edinburgh, Basel, Geneva, and Princeton are not so evident, but continue to count.

Again, with the Ab/original, the new Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish and diverse other presences, prompt the question of identity. The presence of other alerts the church to its own identity. The multi-presence of these others also has the capacity to prise open the question of Christian identity within the secularist, utilitarian State, now dominated by a technocratic spirit.

The 'dead heart' and 'empty centre' demand to be dealt with 'spiritually'. The church and theology which accommodated itself to the rationalist, enlightenment culture of invaders, also carries in its own centre the emptiness of the death of God. In the land whose Ab/original people were removed from the 'centre', by those whose

look that whose creed was 'God is dead', the church must look that dead centre directly in the face. In the Land whose Ab/original people heard the proclamation of the gospel, in spite of the church's accommodation with the dominant State, the emptiness and the uncertainty about identity may not be separated. Moreover, the emptiness and the uncertainty about identity must be understood as the *theological problem* of the God declared dead (by Hegel, Nietzsche and their successors). The church must face this question, not from fear or anxiety but from the heart of its own 'Spiritual' life. That life arises from the God declared by the Empire to be dead and buried. That God is the one whose resistant Otherness, re-intrudes to create new identity.

The present study of emptiness, otherness and identity by a Christian theologian in Australia, is a study of the question put by the so-called 'empty land' and the resulting emptiness in human hearts in this land. The correlation between emptiness, otherness and identity has already had one set of answers in Australia: the abolition of the Ab/original other in order to secure the new white identity in the empty and life-threatening land. The present set of answers are being formed: the presence of many others, defined in cultural and 'spiritual' terms, as multicultural, has not so much secured identity as diversified and in-secured it.

For all the rhetoric of multi- and plural diversity, it is not clear that the one who is different may be truly *other*. Indeed, it may be that the truly other has to be suppressed in order to allow for social harmony. Such an observation is prompted by the anxiety which erupts in Australia

public discussion around questions of immigration, Asians, and other groups, such as homosexuals. It did happen once when communists were feared; now those who oppose market efficiency are odd. The point to note is not so much the ideological colouring of the debate as the palpable anxiety. Les Murray's *Redneck Subhuman* poems seems to be producing the same result. The question, then, is whether the rhetoric of diversity, pluralism and multi-cultural serves to suppress the other, destroying real difference.

Other answers have been given to the question of identity and otherness this century: fascist Spain and Italy, Nazi Germany, communist Russia, Mao's China, the neighbourhood genocides of Rwanda, Serbia and Bosnia, self-determination disputes of East Timor and Bougainville, and now the capitalist global market, provide their final solutions. The present set of solutions in Australia is not fixed and final. The present, apparently obvious solutions are but one of a number. The possibility of a slide into totalitarianism is also real. The openness of the future to a variety of possibilities is stated as a matter of faith, for there are those who hold that the present provides but one future solution be it progressive on the one hand, or destructive on the other. Christian faith recognises that the ultimate horizon is God's; in the present we are to declare that future and so resist its denial.

This study offers an entry into the questions of emptiness (of Land and heart), otherness (as real and abiding difference), and identity (with proper acknowledgment of the negative experiences of aloneness, anxiety and violence), from a Christian

understanding of the God of the cross and resurrection. The study can therefore find resources in the God who experiences the death of the cross, the emptiness of God-abandonment in the name of God, the God is who is other yet intimately near, whose identity does not consist in the abolishing of those who are different or alien but in embrace and out-going self-loss. Such a God has been prayed to as a mystery of triune life, a community of three persons, one God.

Moreover, the God of Christian faith is inseparable from the life of the Christian church. The church in Australia is exhibiting deep anxiety about its future. Solutions range from methods of church growth for the sake of the worshipping community to strategies of attention to the outsiders and the marginalised in the name of mission - with the hope, one suspects, of 'growing the church'. Faith in God permits a frank and direct look at the emptiness of the heart by the church whose true identity consists of the community of those who are actually, really different. The church is a community in which those who are 'other' are bound together by and within the God the church confesses. Only as the church is able to enter the depths of the God who is willing to die and lose all identity in the cross of Jesus Christ, and so learn to live in that nexus between otherness and loss of identity, will Christians be able to contribute to the pressing human questions being posed here.

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Pax Christi Philippines Appeal.

Very many thanks to all who contributed \$21,680 to the Philippines Appeal

The money has been sent to Caesar Villanueva of Pax Christi, Philippines and is been used in Cadiz in Northern Negros to provide food and materials for reroofing.

"Your generous solidarity shall make us overcome, to achieve our national unity and rise up again." Caesar



SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH BEHIND SYRIA'S CIVIL WAR

Fiona Hill

CRITICISM of the recent Australian WikiLeaks "peace and reconciliation" visit to Syria, in which Australia's Foreign Minister observes that Syria is not a place for "political parties to pursue their political ends," is ironic.

What's keeping Syria's government together, what impedes a political resolution and how Syrians' faith in their secular State - let alone their faith in their faith - can be restored, are well worth knowing.

Meeting with Syria's government offers legitimacy and provides propaganda support. But so does US Secretary of State John Kerry's meeting with the coalition of 40-plus Sunni Muslim fighting brigades known locally as DAASH - the Arabic acronym for Islamic Nation of Iraq & "Greater Syria" (which includes Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and, by extension, Israel) - whom he hails as "moderates" with whom the international community is prepared to work. The major difference is that the recent Australian delegation to Syria was not dictating to Syrians who their government should be. It was seeking peace and reconciliation.

I might have gone to Damascus myself had my associates not warned me off.

Living in Syria squeezed between opposing opposition forces and surrounded by "informers" who gain favour and liberties, sometimes by handing over Alawis and non-conformers to the powerbases' demands, my associates tell me about summary killing and confiscation of properties.

"You visit the nizam (Syrian regime) and these informers will make our lives even more of a hell," they say.

So in pursuit of that "truth" we are assured exists over Syria, I went instead to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Jordan, and Beirut to ask questions.

Discounting the thugs, criminals, sociopaths and combatants of all sorts, I found Syrians in diaspora struggling with truth too.

In an Abu Dhabi Airport lounge, a man from Damascus tells me, "Home

is much better than here," and a woman looks up from her keypad to assure me she and her family are going home to Tartous. "It's quite safe," she says.

On a balmy Dubai evening over a lemon-scented sheesha, a Syrian businesswoman recounts her litany of extortion threats, destruction of property, and kidnap attempts by "rebels" and associated common criminals. A champion of Syria's economic, civic, and philanthropic growth during Bashar Al Assad's government, she recently left Syria to protect her adult children from rebel violence.

"But I can no longer support the government either," she insists. "It's made too many mistakes and done too many terrible things."

In a sparsely furnished Amman apartment a young Damascene beams at me. "My civic education work was really wonderful!" Slumping back in her chair she looks about her empty salon, "But how could I keep doing it while the government attacks Syrians?"

While with her I get a call from a young man who fled with his extended Bedouin family to the Syrian side of the Turkish border and now ducks and weaves to survive.

Assisting the Free Army in non-combatant roles he managed to relocate his and several other families out of the village school where they were camped into rented houses.

But now the Kurds who own those houses want them back.

"The Free Army decides who goes to the refugee camps (in Turkey)," he tells me. "So now we have nowhere to go."

Later in the Jordanian Zaatari Refugee Camp, about 12km from the Syrian border, a chatter of young girls surround me. "Come visit us in our (Dera'a) village," they choral. "We're going back as soon as the Free Army tell us."

Over tea in a caravan donated by Saudi Arabia, I tickle a three-year-old and pose for a tweenie's Smartphone while I watch their mother's open

smiling face tell me their village home is safe and secure but her children were sick with fear. "The government shot at us for no reason," she says.

To counter my express disbelief, her gentle-mannered husband and his pen-sive male friends all tilt towards me wide-eyed, insisting, "The Free Army has no weapons!"

In Beirut I take my Syrian best friend with me to Sunday Mass. A Sunni Muslim, he respectfully raises his palms upwards as the congregation recites The Lord's Prayer, in French.

Over coffee in the street outside he tells me about life at home in his village where DAASH and the Free Army compete for infrastructure, fighters, girls, and loyalty.

"Some are really decent people," he assures me, "But others don't even speak Arabic."

He tells me how they bring their weapons into the village to fire at Syrian helicopters when they fly over. "I scream at them to leave our lanes or I swear to God I'll kill them myself."

While we sit watching the Lebanese army tank and soldiers standing guard outside the Catholic Church and guess the nationality of Arab passers-by, he salutes a scruffy young girl begging and gives her a Syrian coin. She looks up into his face. "She's Syrian," he smiles.

I realise every Syrian I'm speaking with is Sunni Muslim.

Most of Syria's Alawis, Christians and other non-Sunni communities remain in besieged enclaves in Damascus and Lattakia. Some have achieved visas to travel abroad. You're unlikely to find any in Jordan's Zaatari Camp.

In an Abu Dhabi retail outlet two young Syrians serve me.

"He's from Deir Ezzor," the elder jerks his chin at his colleague. "But I'm from Damascus - a Christian - and I support the government."

His workmate grins and throws back an accusatory "Shabbiha!"

Both of them laugh loudly. Customers look their way but miss the joke.

"We agree to disagree," says the Damascene Christian. "But these fighters,

"they want to destroy Syria and make her an Islamic Emirate."

While Australian politicians ignore the massacre of Alawis in Lattakia province and Christians in Maloula, Sadad and Adra, their outrage over the delegation to Syria rings hollow.

"They want us to choose sides."

Yet no Syrian I met these past few weeks was certain of any side.

"The (rebels) keep asking me why I don't join them," one man reported. "I tell them I'll never join anyone who has power over me." Surely the words of a true democrat.

There is hope for Syria yet.

Dr Fiona Hill is a cultural anthropologist who was invited in November 2013 to advise the UNHCR on camp governance and psychosocial wellbeing of Syrian refugees in Zaatari Camp, Jordan.

REFLECTIONS ON AN ANZAC DAY SERVICE

Doug Hynd

The first Anzac Day of the millennium saw me make the substantial sacrifice of the several hours sleep required if I was to get up in time for the Dawn Service in Canberra. This was a first for me. My 18 year-old son wanted to go because, as he put it, 'I don't want to take the holiday for granted. I want to show some respect for what it is about.' He was certainly not alone in that concern. The estimated 7000 people in attendance that morning included a very large number of under thirties.

The sense of place and occasion, in the open air outside the Australian War Memorial, was striking. The pre-dawn setting of grey scudding clouds, lighted candles, an air of quiet reverent expectancy, the lone bugle call and the occasional harsh cry of sulphur-crested cockatoos provided an appropriate atmosphere for 'worship', for that is what took place. The language and structure of the liturgy had sufficient Christian connotations and resonance to slide easily by. I couldn't quite manage, however, to let the liturgy just wash over me. When I started to probe the implications of what was expressed I was haunted and troubled by the questions that came, then and subsequently.

The result was that over the period since that April morning I have found myself trying to probe the theology that had come to expression in the service.... I found myself trying to take seriously both the claims embodied in the liturgy of the Dawn Service and the claims of the Christian gospel. How compatible in the end are the two sets

of claims for someone who wishes to be a disciple of Jesus?

The liturgy of sacrifice

It quickly became apparent to me that the language of the Dawn Service gained its moral force and made its liturgical claim on the assent of those of us who were there from its appeal to the theme of sacrifice. They, the Anzacs, had sacrificed their lives, we were told, so that we might have the freedom and the sort of society that we have in Australia today. And the application of the logic and benefits of this sacrifice was extended both implicitly and explicitly to all who had died during other subsequent episodes of warfare in which Australians had been engaged.

Now this claim to the benefits of sacrifice is a powerful one. It is grounded in an emotionally appealing narrative which points to the giving of life as the basis for our assent. The appeal to us is to respond to this ultimate gift with a lived-out response of gratitude in the way we shape our lives as Australian citizens. The exact shape or substantive nature of the response that we as Australians should make to this gift was not, however, clearly spelled out.

As a moral argument calling for such a serious response on our behalf it demands thoughtful consideration from a number of angles. I found myself asking questions as I drove home after the service. Can the appeal carry the moral freight that is required? Does the reading of history provide support for the underlying claim? In other words, is the claim true in its account of history and in the light of the actual outcomes of military conflict? Should we stake our life and death on this account of the

death of Australian servicemen and women in warfare?

In the case of the episode at Gallipoli, historically the claim for the benefits that we as Australians have received from the deaths of the servicemen is surely difficult to justify. Certainly it proved to be an important moment in the history of Australian self-definition and the development of the national identity. However, that sense of recognition came much later and it is hard to argue that the deaths in that theatre of war made any real difference to the outcome of World War I. The campaign was a bungled affair of dubious strategic significance.

More widely applied, I find it difficult to sustain the implied argument of the Dawn Service liturgy that the relatively open society that Australia is today is the result of the willingness of men to go to war in a variety of conflicts. Even during World War I the justification for Australian engagement was a matter of bitter political division within this country; the call for conscription was voted down on two occasions. The reasons we have the sort of society that we do is due to a wide variety of contributory causes, historical, social and religious, most of which have little to do with whether Australians fought in a specific battle or not. The form of the claim as advanced has the interesting effect of tending to sacralise the shape of the society we have and place it above criticism. There are I think further difficulties with this claim of our debt in the present to those Australians who died in war. The claim tends to underplay the ongoing commitment that is required of us all to sustain a

struggle to place limits on the exercise of political and economic power. The claim at the same time tends to devalue the commitments of those who have sought to deal peacefully with the ongoing evil within our societies.

Other voices from history whisper in our ears. The issue of violence involved in the dispossession of the Indigenous people during the European invasion of Australia cannot be bypassed. The settlement of this land was not peaceful. What 'sacrifice' did those who fought the Indigenous people of this land make and what do we owe to them for shaping the sort of society we have today. Or should we celebrate the death of the Indigenous people who resisted the invaders with the weapons at their disposal?

Let me move to the best case that can be made for the claim of the sacrifice of life by our armed forces so that we can have freedom, the case of World War II. Even this episode is not quite as cut and dried as it seems. Some of the results of that war include the expansion of the range and scope of weapons of mass destruction and a massive arms trade which has caused ongoing havoc in many nations across the globe over the past fifty years.

If we want to credit the positive outcomes to those who died in the battles of World War II, are we willing to credit these dead men and women also with the destructive consequences that we have been left with? If we want to claim the benefits then it will require a lot of qualification if we are to airbrush out the other consequences of that war.

Sacrifice in biblical perspective

So much for the ambiguity of history. Theological issues remain to claim the attention of Christians. On first glance there is a strong case in Christian theology and the Scriptures for an appeal to the theme of sacrifice as a source of moral claim on the way we should live. The main point that I think needs to be acknowledged is that the understanding of sacrifice in the New Testament has little to do with giving up your life in the course of participating in war. Now the language of sacrifice cer-

tainly lends itself to depict the action of service people in war because it does capture the moral commitment to self-giving that may be displayed in acts of genuine sacrifice in the course of war. But the liturgy of Anzac Day and the accompanying myth projects from this limited range of actions to ask us to believe that our nation's entire history of military undertakings has been motivated by a commitment to self-giving love.

It is worth stopping to consider the nature of sacrifice in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. In ancient Israel literal sacrifices were made for a wide variety of related purposes. What was important about sacrifice was not so much the offering itself as the dedication and commitment it represented on the part of the person offering it. The New Testament writers use the language of sacrifice to capture the attitude of moral commitment believers should display. *Romans 12* – 'I beseech you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service' – is an example of this where the sacrifice we are called to make as the people of God is that of our lives, as a form of dedication to God which requires us to not be conformed to the world in our behaviour.

The classic text which is appealed to in the Anzac Day service, though, is 'Greater love has no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends' (*John 15:13*). The appeal of this text is unmistakable but, if it is examined closely in the context of the surrounding argument, it does not provide support in any blanket way for the sacrifice of life in war. The words quoted must be read in context. The invocation is preceded by the command, 'This is my commandment. Love one another as I have loved you.' You are my friends if you follow my example, says Jesus. The laying down of lives to which we are called is in the pattern of Jesus who refused to take up the sword against his enemies. It has nothing to do with taking up arms to destroy the enemy.

The difficulty with being a chaplain

So much for the liturgy and moral claims of the language of the service. Considered more broadly, the Anzac Day service left me ill at ease with the ambiguous role played by Christian chaplains in the service. It struck me as a good example of the transitional place that Christians and the churches find themselves in with respect to their relationship to Australian society at large and signalled both the possibilities and difficulties of engagement and evangelism.

The secularisation thesis in its strong form – that we are moving to a non-religious society – is downright wrong. Australians are ready to worship and seek a spiritual home. The characteristics of what they will respond to in worship are I think ambiguous and the possibilities for misunderstanding substantial.

This ambiguity I found particularly poignantly expressed in the role of the chaplain who delivered the address at the Anzac Day service. It was a moment in which for her to have spoken a distinctly Christian message would have been to cause offence. No doubt about it. To raise a question as to whether the language of sacrifice in war was at odds with the Christian gospel would have been shocking in the extreme. To ask the question 'to which gods were the lives of those who died in war offered up as a sacrifice?' would have seemed un-Australian. Yet to me it is a blasphemy to associate the name of the God revealed in Jesus Christ to justify or bless in any way the deadly violence of the twentieth century.

What can you say under such circumstances? What could *she* say? The message the chaplain offered at the service was one of 'inspiration', something which had no intrinsic connection with the story of Jesus. The religious appeal and authority of the chaplain, grounded on her identity as a religious professional, formed the basis for an appeal which used a least common denominator religious, spiritual language stripped largely of its specificity and its challenge. The story she told that morning was also stripped of the elements

of the judgement, hope and reconciliation that are all inescapably part of the Christian story

This stripping away of both the challenge and the hope of the gospel seemed then, and still seems to me, to be problematic. To use the authority to speak in such contexts – an authority that you have because of your commissioning by the Christian church to its service – and then to avoid saying anything which makes that identity explicit, yet using that identity to provide an aura of connection with the Christian faith, is to run the risk of misleading people as to what being a Christian and a servant of the church is all about. The chaplain in such a moment faces the danger that the claim of their role as a servant of the state, in the form of the military, will trump their primary identity as a member of the people of God.

Remembering truthfully

How do we as Christians speak truth-

fully on such an occasion? I came away from the occasion both moved and deeply troubled. Perhaps the way forward is for conversation and discernment within the Church itself over these issues. We need to take this as a first step. We as the Christian community have a tangled history of complicity with the powers of the age and supporting the justifications offered by the State for the use of violence. We need to seek forgiveness for that complicity as part of our journey to recover our identity as a people committed to being witnesses to a reconciling God.

The power of the worship that morning in Canberra came out of the activity of remembering times of great pain and loss and acknowledging the grief of that remembering as a way of trying to find guidance for living in the present. This is something which Christians can understand. Each Sunday we gather to remember the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in a

way which acknowledges its demand for a response in the way we live from day to day.

This weekly moment of remembering is foundational for our identity as the people of God. Shaped by that memory then, how can we find a way to remember truthfully these other powerful moments of grief and loss of the city in which we are resident aliens? Can we remember them in a way which makes for life among us and does not provide further leverage for the powers of death in the world to shape our identity and claim our lives and those of our neighbours as a further sacrifice to its power?

Doug Hynd was a public servant. He has lectured in Christian ethics at Charles Sturt University and is currently undertaking a Ph. D at the Australian Catholic University. This article first appeared in slightly different form in Zadok Perspectives, 72, Spring 2001 and on the "Honest History Website..

Statement on use of drones and denial of the right to life.

World Council of Churches Executive Committee, 12 February 2014

The use of drones or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) has increasingly posed serious threats to humanity, especially the right to life. The UAVs, either controlled by "pilots" from the ground or autonomously following a pre-programmed mission, can kill innocent civilians. Over the past decade, the expanded use of drones has dramatically changed warfare, bringing new humanitarian and legal challenges. The use of drones has grown quickly in recent years because, unlike manned aircraft, they now can stay in the air for many more hours than previously. Additionally, they are much less expensive to operate than military aircraft as they are flown remotely without a flight crew. It is also extremely worrying that the UAV industry has been slowly growing over the years. The fear is that

the number of countries with the capacity to use drones is likely to increase significantly in the near future.

2. Now rapid advances in UAV technology are permitting countries with high-tech militaries, including the United States of America, Israel, Russia and the United Kingdom, to move towards systems that would give full combat autonomy to machines. The use of UAVs, first made operational in the Balkans war, has subsequently escalated in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia and most recently in Pakistan. Despite arguments as to the benefits of the use of drones in reducing the risk of military casualties, it has been consistently observed that drone strikes are counter-productive, entail loss of innocent civilian lives and have human rights and humanitarian implica-

tions. Such strikes also set dangerous precedents in inter-state relations. As per international law, the drone operations by any State that involve the use of force on the territory of another State, without its consent, is a violation of a country's sovereignty.

3. Since 2004, the USA has been engaged in an undeclared war in Pakistan against the suspected militants or "terrorists". Hundreds of missile attacks from unmanned aircraft have been carried out against suspected militants, with the vast majority of US drone strikes in Pakistan having taken place in North Waziristan. The USA's ongoing use of drones in Pakistan's territory is a violation of that nation's sovereignty, as it is being conducted without the consent of the country's legitimate government. As Pakistan categorically has stated that it does not consent to the use of

drones by the United States on its territory, this is a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Pakistan has been expressing its fears that the drone campaign would ultimately be counter-productive, as it would further contribute to radicalizing a whole new generation and thereby perpetuating the problem of terrorism in the country and in the region.

4. A report of the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial summary or arbitrary executions focused on lethal autonomous robots and the protection of life, observed that "drones enable a State to perform targeted killing without exercising effective control over territory and without having the individual in custody." The report further observed, "the use of drones by States to exercise essentially a global policing function to counter potential threats presents a danger to the protection of life." When drones enable a State to perform targeted killing without effective control over territory, such targeting can result in killing innocent people, which is a violation of the right to life. While taking note of the report of the Special Rapporteur, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution in December 2013 and urged the international community to observe international laws with regard to the use of remotely piloted aircraft. The resolution also noted the recommendations, including the urgent and imperative need to seek agreement among Member States on legal questions pertaining to remotely piloted aircraft operations. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon speaking at the National University of Science and Technology, Islamabad, Paki-

stan (13 August 2013) stated that "the use of armed drones – like any other weapons should be subject to long-standing rules of international law, including international humanitarian law. Every effort should be made to avoid mistakes and civilian casualties". It is widely recognized that a significant challenge to assessing the legality of US drone strikes in Pakistan or other countries is due mainly to the uncertainty about which set of international law or standards should be applied.

5. The use of drones ultimately kills people and denies their right to life. The right to life is a moral principle based on the belief that a human being has the right to live and, in particular, should not to be unjustly killed by another human being. It is also our firm belief that the measures taken by any State threatening the life and dignity of the human person cannot be justified. In this context, the use of extraterritorial force within another State's territory and sovereignty cannot be justified when it threatens the life of innocent people. We believe the sanctity of life and the biblical message call us to protect the right to life; deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter (Proverbs 24:11).

It is in this context that the World Council of Churches expresses its deep concern about the targeted killings by drones carried out in different countries.

The executive committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting at Bossey, Switzerland, from 7 to 12 February 2014, therefore:

Condemns drone strikes by any country, especially the unlawful

policies and practices of the use of lethal force against terrorism;

Affirms the WCC's conviction that every person is made in the image and likeness of God, and hence every human life is sacred and has an inherent dignity;

Urges all States using drones to be transparent about the development, acquisition and use of drones and publically disclose the legal basis for the use of drones, exercising operational responsibility;

Calls on States where armed drones are used to respect and recognize the duty to protect the right to life of their subjects and oppose the violation of human rights and principles of international humanitarian law by foreign powers;

Urges the international community to oppose the unlawful policies and practices, particularly of US Drone strikes in Pakistan;

Requests that the international community refrain from transfers of drones weapons that can be used to commit serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law;

Urges the US government to ensure justice for victims of unlawful drone strikes, including family members of the victims of unlawful killings, and to avail effective access to remedies, especially restitution, compensation to families of civilians killed or injured, and adequate protection for their rehabilitation;

Believes that it is our duty to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute, to speak up and judge fairly, to defend the rights of the poor and needy (Proverbs 31:8-9).

Continued from page 9

family on both sides of the ledger: openness to other cultures. The fact that Danny could not find the kind of inspiration from within his own background to sustain his spiritual search; the fact that Islam had become accessible to him - a possibility unthinkable to my generation- all of this and more indicates that significant change is afoot in our world both local and international.

While I failed to make the point of our neighbourly relationship to Indonesia, Australia is *in* Asia but is not (unless some very dramatic changes come about), *of* Asia. Even a modest evaluation would have to recognize that the future and welfare of both nations and cultures are indeed interlocked for "better or for worse....."

Peter Griffin is a member of Pax Christi New South Wales

ENCOUNTER WITH INDONESIA

Peter Griffin

In February of 2009 our second son Daniel consolidated his decision to embrace Islam by entering an arranged marriage. The parents of the bride were both Indonesian born but had migrated to Australia some two decades before. In November of 2013 Maggie and I and our daughter Ruth joined a group made up of family and in-laws to visit the extended family in Indonesia. The visit was relatively brief, from Sunday to the following Sunday.

The first day's agenda was to visit the school where Danny's wife had spent almost three years, sort of Islamic finishing school. Diah had done her School Certificate in Australia but, like her brothers, had spent those post SC years in exclusively Islamic formation. The school was made up of a cluster of very basic buildings including a mass production kitchen that was the essence of simplicity – an array of huge woks, lots of rice.. Diah said the school had grown fourfold she was there six years before.. It was the same story with her brothers' school.

This is significant. Friends who have regular contact with Indonesian people tell us that the religio-cultural style in Indonesia is pluralist, open, and accepting of indigenous cultural influences. The streamlined culture of this school was “purist” a veritable counter culture within the wider Indonesian culture. It struck me that there is a quiet but increasing development of Islamic formation for at least some family groups in Indonesia.

I saw ubiquitous poverty alongside contrasting mega wealth in the business sector.

Just on half the population is under 30 –120 million young Indonesians looking for ways ahead. There is an almost bewildering sense of energy in many places that we glimpsed. More than a thousand motorcycles are registered daily - and we saw a

family of as many as five people on the one bike. There is an unmistakable military flavour to much of the service sector. Military style uniforms are everywhere and it's easy to imagine a reversion to military disciplines if required.

We saw something of the island of Java (West). Four of our five nights were spent with the extended family (authentic local style living) in Jakarta and one night tourist accommodation in a Hotel & Resort at Ciater-Subang in West Java.

At the resort I discerned a certain tension between an earthy Indigenous culture in survival mode and an enthusiastic, if awkward attempt at entrepreneurial openness to foreign guests. The resort needed updating - particularly in relation to the needs of little children. It was however, attractive as a holiday junket for the rich and bored...

One brief exposure to the “real deal” local indigenous culture came as we travelled up the mountain towards the resort. We passed a church yard which was literally bursting with life and energy. There were children on adult shoulders decorated with paper mache' lions' heads and elephant bodies. There was the banging of drums and the shattering throb of cymbals, horns, bells and whatever else would scare the bejesus out of any self respecting evil spirit. Our young guide/host (older brother of our daughter-in-law) did a quick search on his trusty mobile phone and announced that we had passed by a wedding party. It clearly was a cultural reality steeped in indigenous antiquity. Our guide, who had spent four years in the (pure) Islamic finishing school –didn't approve of retaining such a mixture of cultural links with true Islam.

We took the long way home next day to shop and eat Indonesian banquet style. Another all too brief “breakthrough” experience for myself happened when I left the group

at lunch to retrieve something from our vehicle. I was approached by an old man almost completely covered in what appeared like a kind of Indonesian dry's-a-bone style overcoat. His droopy hat left one little option but to peer into its shade to see his face. The face was heavily scarred and appeared to be divided down the middle with one side relatively intact while the other was heavily disfigured.

The non verbal nature of the “ask” was all too obvious and I sensed a certain justice to his approach. I offered some paper money and was greeted with a warm smile and an unmistakable gesture of appreciation. I had been advised by a work cohort back in Oz not “ever” to give to beggars (and people do line the roads with open bags as the traffic slows down). Somehow I feel the old man was worth breaking a rule for.

The timing of our visit eclipsed the public revelations of (un)diplomatic phone tapping. Nothing of this was known to us at the time. Ironically I had been asked to give an impromptu speech to the gathered relatives on our second last day and had thought of noting how Australia and Indonesia were neighbours. Fortunately or not the message was “lost in translation” and the point was never made. It would be remiss not to round off this brief report with a note of appreciation for the hospitality of our Indonesian family hosts. We were made welcome in the family home and no doubt there was much effort spent on organisational matters. The schedule had been very full and essentially flawless. We felt genuinely welcomed.

As a family, we don't exaggerate the significance of this cultural interaction.

However, as one hears these days: “from little things big things grow”. The fact that we have a son who has embraced Islam as his viable spiritual path says a great deal about our

SANCTIONS: INVISIBLE, SILENT, DEADLY

Claude Mostovik

Repeat of History

The quest to bring the Iran to its knees by the USA (and Australia) has been accelerated by the imposition of sanctions where ordinary Iranians are increasingly caught in the crosshairs.

Sanctions actually lead to increased repression and corruption as well as sowing the seeds of further alienation between the people of Iran and the United States. Australia joined with the United States in imposing sanctions against Iran with the aim of preventing it from acquiring nuclear weapons.

The US President signed on to a round of sanctions against Iran in January 2013. The new policies are closer to a true trade embargo, designed to systematically attack and undercut Iran's major financial pillars and threaten the country with economic collapse.

Sanctions as an Alternative to War

Sanctions are not an alternative to war. They seem invisible, but their effects are highly visible. Deliberately crippling a nation's economy is nothing less than war. From 1990 to 2003, the sanctions in Iraq were the most comprehensive and devastating ever established in the name of international governance. The 1991 bombing campaign and sanctions brought Iraq's infrastructure to near collapse as well as compromising basic living conditions. Though labelled as humanitarian, they were a humanitarian catastrophe.

'Targeted' Sanctions

It is not true that sanctions are 'targeted.' The true nature of so-called 'targeted' sanctions in Iran was revealed before the escalation of sanctions. U.S. and European Union sanctions 'seriously endangered the lives of tens of thousands of patients, particularly children, suffering from special diseases.' The UN Secretary General wrote that, 'The sanctions

imposed on... Iran have had significant effects on the general population, including an escalation in inflation, a rise in commodities and energy costs, an increase in the rate of unemployment and a shortage of necessary items, including medicine' and harmed its humanitarian operations. Foreign medicines needed for Iranians living with cancer, haemophilia, thalassemia, kidney problems and other diseases were no longer available. Many will recall Madeleine Albright's affirmation as US Secretary of State that U.S. policy objectives in Iraq were worth sacrificing half a million Arab children!! The question remains as to who is listening as ordinary Iranians now, as in Iraq, are treated as so-called legitimate targets; as innocent people have food taken from their mouths and medicines denied them.

Sanctions on Iraq

The sanctions imposed on Iraq (1990 to 2003) were so comprehensive and devastating that they brought about the near collapse of Iraq's infrastructure and threatened the basic conditions necessary to sustain life¹³. Critical humanitarian goods were prevented from entering the country. These deliberate US policies ensured the continuation of Iraq's catastrophic condition in which Australia and the United Kingdom collaborated. For 13 years anything related to electricity, telecommunications, and transportation could not be imported; requisites for agriculture and housing construction were blocked; and equipment and materials needed for health care and food preparation were denied. Glue, water pipes, water tankers, thermos flasks, ambulance radios and irrigation equipment were blocked in case they were used for nefarious purposes. To prevent the possible production of biological and chemical weapons, all science education above the secondary school level ceased. This ridiculous scenario meant that

yogurt and cheese could not be produced and eggs were eliminated due to the remote danger that egg yolks might be used to grow viruses, for biological weapons. The policy that justified sanctions exceeded any rational concern with security. It reduced Iraq to the most primitive possible condition. The sanity and legality of reducing a nation to a preindustrial state and bankrupting it for the purpose of containing a tyrant was rarely questioned.

Morality of Sanctions

Sanctions against Iran have not achieved the objectives intended, except as a stand-in for military action by the United States or Israel. Sanctions may actually have assisted Iran's regime to implement economic reforms that would have been otherwise difficult. Sanctions have served multiple purposes: to uphold democracy, protect human rights, reverse armed aggression and prevent weapons proliferation. The conventional belief is that they are mostly symbolic and have little practical impact; that they placate public demands for action but do not achieve real results. All sanctions have severe humanitarian and social consequences; foster black market criminality; (often controlled by state forces or paramilitary groups) harm the very constituencies within a country that were most supportive of advancing human rights norms; strengthen the repressive forces against which sanctions are supposedly aimed without achieving the desired political changes.

Toward 'Sanctions Reform'

UN humanitarian agencies have called for social impact assessments before sanctions are imposed. They emphasise the need for targeted sanctions that deny decision-making elites access to specific financial and other resources whilst avoiding harm to innocent or vulnerable populations, e.g., the freezing of assets and blocking of financial transactions; arms and

restrictions on designated individuals and aviation sanctions against specific countries or territories. Sanctions work best as instruments of persuasion, not punishment. Whilst notable to achieve major objectives such as regime change, they can impose sufficient pressure to cause a regime to evaluate the costs and benefits of pursuing policies the international community condemns. Concessions by a target regime should be rewarded with an easing of coercive pressure; partial compliance should be met by a partial lifting of sanctions. The more effective and ethical approach would be to reciprocate concessions, combining sanctions with incentives as part of a bargaining dynamic to resolve an impasse. Such an approach combines effectiveness with ethics in ways that can sustain moral sanctions. As a strategy the practices and standards for their use need substantial reform. Greater effort is needed to assess and mitigate the potential humanitarian consequences of sanctions. Pressure should be applied against decision-making elites,

rather than vulnerable populations. Sanctions need to be seen as tools of coercive diplomacy designed to resolve conflict, not punishment. With such reforms, sanctions are more likely to be effective and result in political gain with less civilian pain.

Ethical Considerations

Joy Gordon has warned about the future use—and misuse—of sanctions which in Iraq saw a willingness to see appalling things done in the name of security. ‘We must come to grips with the perversity of this. It is simply not good enough to say that atrocities committed for the right reasons, or by respected international organizations, are not really atrocities after all. Because economic sanctions are intended to inflict great human suffering, pain, harm, and even death, they should be subject to the same kind of careful moral and ethical scrutiny given to the use of military force.’

And ‘because sanctions are a form of violence, they cannot legitimately be seen as a peacekeeping device, or as a tool for enforcing international law...They require the same level of

justification as other acts of war’.

Conclusion

The sanctions imposed on Iraq violated both the criteria that must be met before going to war, such as just cause and the probability of success, and the criteria for how the war is conducted, employing such norms as proportionality and discrimination, which bars directly intended attacks on non combatants and non-combatant targets. The comprehensive economic sanctions also employed against Haiti in 1991 and Cuba since the 1960s, as in Iraq in 1990, have failed to achieve their goals while at the same imposing devastating hardships on the civilian population. Sanctions are ‘a form of violence – no less than guns and bombs’.

Fr. Claude Mostowik MSC is president of Pax Christi Australia.. This article was first published in “Just Comment,” published by the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education

Congratulations

Dr Helen Hill has been appointed Adviser to the Vice Minister for Higher Education in the government of Timor Leste. She will be responsible for reforming the IT in the universities and for the promotion and development of science faculties in Timor Leste Universities. Helen is currently Honorary Fellow, College of Arts, Victoria University. She has founded the International Community Development course in VU and established links with University of the South Pacific and Universidade Nacional Timor Loro Sa'e, mainly working on Timor Leste and the Pacific Islands. She supervises PhDs, co-ordinating research groups and organising conferences and assisting with promotion of student exchange programs. Helen is a committee member of Pax Christi Victoria.

Fr. Claude Mostowik MSC. was awarded the Edmund Rice Human Rights Award at the end of year celebration at the Edmund Rice Centre in December 2013. Claude is a Catholic priest and member of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. He has worked in various communities in the Northern Territory and is also a trained clinical psychologist. He has been the director the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Justice and Peace Centre for nearly 15 years . Since 2004, he has been working at the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education where he began *Just News*, a publication of resources for teachers working in social justice and more recently he has been the researcher for *Just Comment* . Claude is President of Pax Christi Australia and Convenor of Pax Christi NSW.

Fr. Peter Maher received a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the 2014 Australia Day honours for service to religion, and to the community through a range of programs promoting acceptance and diversity. Peter is a member of Pax Christi NSW. He has been Parish Priest, St Joseph's Catholic Church Newtown, since 1997 where he holds a weekly Friday night mass for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Catholics. Peter has worked to create a safe and inclusive environment for GLBTI students and staff at the University of Technology, Sydney where he is on the Ethics Committee. He was awarded the UTS Human Rights Awards in 2008 with the UTS Ally Award Celebrating and Supporting Sexual and Gender Diversity. He is on the National Board of InterPlay Australia, a global social movement dedicated to ease, connection, human sustainability and play.

NOTICE BOARD

NEW SOUTH WALES

Pax Christi Australia [NSW]
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday 7 April at 6.30 pm

St Mary's Church
21 Swanson Street
Erskineville NSW

Dr David Stephens
will speak on the topic:

Not only but also:

**Three propositions about
the Centenary of World War 1**

Dr David Stephens

*is Secretary of Honest History
(honesthistory.net.au), a coalition
of historians and others supporting
the balanced and honest presenta-
tion and use of Australian history*

6.00pm for 6.30pm

Light refreshments will be served.

RSVP appreciated by April 1

Claude Mostowik msc Phone 02 9550

3845 Mobile 0411 450 953

or email mscjust@smartchat.net.au

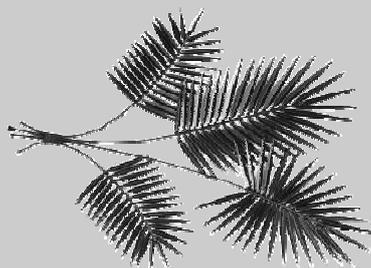
Pax Christi NSW

meets on the 1st Monday of each
month at 6.00pm for shared meal that
members Meeting follows at 6.30 pm.
at MSC Justice and Peace Centre, 15A
Swanson Street, Erskineville. 2 min-
utes walk from Erskineville Station

Contact: *Claude Mostowik (02) 9550
3845 or 0411 450 953*

PALM SUNDAY

13 April 2014



*Walk for Justice
for Refugees!*

MELBOURNE

2 p.m. State library

SYDNEY

1 p.m. Hyde Park North

CASTELMAINE, VIC

**3 p.m. Botanical Gardens
@ the Rotunda**

QUEENSLAND

Branch meets monthly.

Contact:

Pancras Jordan OP

0415 461 620

panjordan@yahoo.com

Clare Cooke SSps

VICTORIA

PUBLIC FORUM

ANZAC CENTENARY
2015

**Who is Australia?
Who might we become?**

**MONDAY 28 APRIL 2014
6 for 6 30 P.M.**

**KILDARA CENTRE
Rear 39 Stanhope St,
Malvern.
Light meal provided.**

JUNE AGAPE

SUNDAY 15 JUNE

1 p.m. Shared Lunch

2.30 p.m showing of film

“LAST EXODUS”.

The situation on the ground
of the Christians
of the Middle East

Shocking and compelling

Made by grassroots

Christians in Lebanon

Venue TBA

I/We wish to apply for or renew membership of the International Christian Peace
Movement - Pax Christi Australia. (Membership is from January to December)
(Please tick box if you wish to receive your copy of Disarming Times by e-mail)

Name..... Address.....

.....P'code.....Phone.....

Email..... Mobile.....

ENCLOSED \$..... (Single \$35; Concession \$10; Family \$45)

Please return to: Your State Branch Treasurer (See address on Page 2)