

Book Review

by Anthony Gooley

Directions: A vision for Australia

By Sir William Deane, St Paul's Publications, RRP \$19.95

Directions: a Vision for Australia makes for some challenging reading, particularly if you accept the proposition that William Brennan suggests in the foreword that "by expressing and reflecting the values of our society, a Governor General interprets the nation to itself." The collection of abstracts from speeches made by Sir William Deane during his tenure as Governor General, and some of Lady Deane, are drawn from a variety of settings and collected into themes. It is the kind of book that is not suited to reading at one sitting. The book is most valuable when time is set aside to consider a small selection and the opportunity to reflect on it and to ponder its creator.

The book is challenging because it reflects both an Australia of which we can all be proud and at the same time takes up the challenge on issues that identify areas where growth and change in Australian culture are required. Some of the issues considered are war, peace, multiculturalism, reconciliation, land rights, native title and tolerance. At times the words resonate with the Prophets. On the need for reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians he says, "Where there is no room for national pride, or national shame, about the past, there can be no national soul"(p 29). About poverty and marginalisation, "It is my firm belief that the ultimate test of our worth as a democratic nation is how we treat our most disadvantaged and vulnerable" (p 80).

Directions: A vision for Australia is a book to engage with. Through the book we see the best of what Australia has achieved and what it can be. The fact that Sir William and Lady Deane have decided not to accept royalties but direct them to "Youth Off The Streets" program, not only represents the qualities of the authors but provides us with a positive incentive to buy the text.

Book Review

by Brian Grenier cfc (courtesy of *'The Catholic Leader'*)

Come back! The Church loves you
By Cardinal Edward Clancy, St Pauls Publications, RRP \$17.95

Addressing 300,000 people at Randwick racecourse in November 1986, Pope John Paul II made this plea: "To all those who have wandered from their spiritual home I wish to say: Come back! The Church opens her arms to you, the Church loves you."

From these words of the Holy Father, Cardinal Edward Clancy has drawn not only the inspiration to write his recently published book but also a suitable title for it.

In the years that have elapsed since his retirement from the leadership of the Archdiocese of Sydney, Cardinal Clancy has been increasingly concerned by the fact that a multitude of Catholics have ceased to participate in the sacramental life of the Church.

He believes that many of these people "would like to return to the practice of their faith, but, because of their uncertainty or misunderstanding about Church teaching, lack the confidence to take the first steps toward doing so."

Come Back! The Church Loves You is his attempt to provide appropriate assistance to them in this undertaking.

Though he is well aware of the controversies that have raged in the Church in the decades following Vatican II and that "continue to claim so much attention", the author's purpose in these pages is not polemical or apologetic but pastoral. As he states, "I do not in this booklet argue or defend the Church's case, but simply present it as clearly and briefly as I can." Only on the basis of what the Church actually teaches can an informed commitment to reject it or to involve oneself in its life be made.

Cardinal Clancy's text, which is divided into fourteen chapters and three appendices (The Nicene Creed, St Cyril of Jerusalem's commentary on the Creed, and the Te Deum), is conspicuous for its clarity of expression, its compassionate and non-judgmental approach and its readability. It is also, especially in the reflections which conclude the various chapters, very personal. In this connection I am pleased that the book ends with a biographical note on the author.

It would be a pity if this work were seen as relevant only to Catholics who are disillusioned with the institutional Church and have parted company with it, for it could be read with profit by all followers of Jesus, including (and perhaps notably) those who are in catechumenate programs.

Ideally, it would be read in one sitting and then reread more meditatively chapter by chapter over some weeks or months in conjunction with other books/courses which Cardinal Clancy recommends.

Book Review

by Brian Grenier cfc *(courtesy of 'The Catholic Leader')*

Across the great divide: bridging spirituality and religion today
By David Ranson, St Pauls Publications, RRP \$19.95

David Ranson's concern at the split between 'religion' and 'spirituality' in popular consciousness has prompted him to write an exceptionally fine book in which he seeks to transform what, for him, is an untenable division into a potentially enriching distinction. Rejecting the notion that spirituality can exist as an entity in itself or as 'the religion one can have without being religious', he poses this basic question: 'How can we imagine "spirituality" and "religion" in a way that respects their distinctiveness and yet maintains them in a creative and constructive tension?'

In chapter 1, *Spirituality: What Is That?*, Fr Ranson makes good use of the epistemology of the Canadian Jesuit philosopher, Bernard Lonergan, in clarifying what he himself means by 'spirituality'. In schematic fashion he shows how it involves (cyclically) the four core activities of attending, inquiring, interpreting and acting. He contends that it 'comprises two foundational moments: the "spiritual" and the "religious" which, acting in harmony, can result in 'a spiritually charged religion [that does not present as doctrinaire] and a religiously charged spirituality [that is characterised by depth]'. Chapter 2 is entitled: *The Revisioning of Memory: The challenge of religion to bridging the divide*. In it the author addresses six questions which underlie and generate the spiritual aspirations of our contemporaries. He also calls for a revisionist approach (cf. David Tracy's work) in which religion, with the aid of memory and imagination, will be deconstructed and become more demonstrably mystical, political, sacral, communal, resourceful, and poetic 'rather than didactic in its discourse'.

Finally, in chapter 3, *The Where and No-where of Spirituality*, David Ranson points to the plethora of spiritualities in today's world, none of which, including those rooted in the Christian tradition, can be conceived apart from the cultural milieu in which they exist and the contexts - geographical, social, historical, political and economic - which gave rise to them. I am happy to note that he develops these ideas with special reference to the Australian scene.

As well as informative endnotes, this attractively produced book (complete with a front-cover image of the Great Dividing Range near Dorrigo) contains helpful suggestions for further reading.

I recommend it enthusiastically to the educated reader for whom perusal of its stimulating text may be an experience not merely of exploration but of discovery.

Book Review

by Br Brian Grenier cfc (courtesy of 'The Catholic Leader')

A Presence that Disturbs: A Call to Radical Discipleship By Anthony J Gittins, St Pauls, RRP \$27.95

In his seminal work, *Man's search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl asserts: 'To live you must choose. To love you must encounter. To grow you must suffer.' These themes are also central to Spiritan Father Tony Gittins's latest work in which he explores the Christian disciple's vocation to mission and ministry in today's world - a radical call to practical action within a revitalised and ecumenically sensitive community of faith.

Readers familiar with Wordsworth's 'Lines composed...above Tintern Abbey' will recognise the source of the title of the book, the delightful front cover of which features the ruins of that 12th century Cistercian monastery. Taking the poet's ruminations a step further, Fr Gittins identifies the disturbing presence that 'rolls through all things' as the Holy Spirit, 'the Lord and giver of life', the interrupter of human agendas. He contends that those who would truly follow Jesus must themselves become a presence that disturbs; for that is the cost of discipleship.

In seven thought provoking chapters the author invites 'Christians of good will to stand up and be counted, to galvanize themselves, to take the missionary dimension of their lives seriously, and to live up to their common baptism'. As mentors and midwives energised by God's Spirit, they will then fruitfully serve the community, bringing new life to birth in it.

There is so much in this book that I found enlightening: the twelve statements on the significance of the imagination as the 'dynamo for ministry' and as 'one of the key qualities of those who are working in situations of change'; the naming of the crises in the contemporary Church in terms of credibility, authority, creativity and imagination; the enumeration of the qualities of a gospel inspired vision; the distinction between *communitas* which 'provides energy for takeoff' and community which 'sustains level flight'; the lengthy reflection on the 'disturbing ministry of Jesus'; etc.

I warmly recommend Tony Gittins's new book to all readers of this brief review. The work of a fine scholar in the fields of social and theological anthropology and a good communicator, it will enrich and affirm even as it disturbs.

A Teacher's Prayer

*I want to teach my students more than lessons in a book;
I want to teach them deeper things that people overlook -
The value of a rose in bloom, its use and beauty, too,
A sense of curiosity to discover what is true;
How to think and how to choose the right above the wrong,
How to live and learn each day and grow up to be strong;
To teach them always how to gain in wisdom and in grace,
So they will someday make the world a brighter, better place.
Lord, let me be a friend and guide to give these minds a start
Upon their way down life's long road, then I'll have done my part.*

Jill Wolf