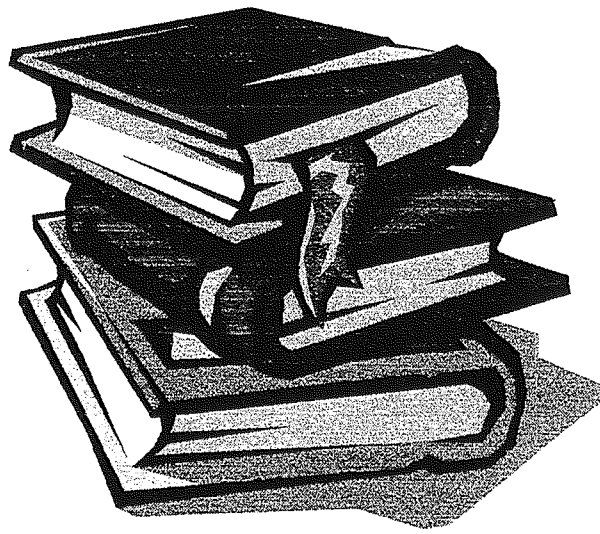


*Autobiographical
Fragments*



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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FRAGMENTS

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The genesis of what you have begun to read was in the content of several pages I put together some time ago as the basis for a talk as a guest speaker at a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have talked on countless occasions at such meetings and always extemporaneously but in recent years I have found it more difficult to do so when something other than the more usual five or ten minute talk was expected. Perhaps a certain vanity also played a part in that I thought that I might come across more coherently and I suppose more effectively by having a script.

The talk went off well enough but for future occasions of the same kind I resolved that I should not depart from the more spontaneous approach. The short sincere off the cuff personal story - 'how it was, what happened and what it is like now' - is what can be most effective in getting across the simple AA way of recovery from alcoholism to newcomers who although often fearful, demoralised and near the end of their tether nonetheless can be highly suspicious and sceptical, especially for fear of falling in with some kind of religious style zealots.

Anyhow, afterwards I was moved to send a copy of what I had set down to a few people, including sister Carmel. So far I have had no comment from her other than a brief acknowledgment which provided me with quite an apt tag for a now considerably expanded 'Autobiographical Fragments' memoir! I provided brother Eddie with a later, somewhat expanded, version mainly because he figures more than others in my family from our being thrown together at times in Dublin, London and of course in Australia.

I recently mentioned to Eddie that one reason for embarking on this task is linked to my own regret that I got to know so little about my other relatives and their lives and now with eighteen nieces and nephews and three step-children many of whom have their own children I thought that some of them at any rate might appreciate getting a better insight into the personality of at least one older member of the family about whom they have of necessity only a fairly superficial knowledge and inevitable misconceptions. The approach of my 75th birthday seems as good a time as any to set to before too many more neurons shut down.

I have been adding 'fragments' over the last few months as the spirit moved and the time was available and it may be that you have by no means yet received the finished version. I will be interested in any reactions shared with me and naturally I would appreciate having attention called to any errors of fact or egregious blunders as to grammar, syntax or even spelling.

Seven is said to be favoured by composers and mathematicians as the perfect number. Being far from perfect but looking back over my life I am struck by the pattern of significant changes of direction in it at intervals of about seven years. Although neither a Jesuit nor a Marxist I've often thought that there was something in the claim of each to do with the importance of the first seven years in setting the course of a person's life. The famous Jesuitical dictum has of course now been overtaken by the plethora of newer theories about the effects of early childhood experiences on the formation of character, personality and lifestyle choices.

During my first seven years the most significant event I know of was being separated from my family and being sent to live with two aging female relatives in a small isolated seaside settlement in County Wexford, Ireland.

Few memories survive from this period other than a vague recollection of being immediately in some kind of trouble over a prank or misdemeanour involving, I think, an old woman living in a nearby thatched cottage or perhaps to do with the cottage itself. I think that it was the same cottage later used as a summer holiday place for people like the Walshes and MacDonalds.

I spent the next seven years there in Cahore before returning, aged 14, to my family in Dublin to continue my education. The trouble was that against all family expectations I had failed badly in the final primary school certificate the achieving of which was a *sine qua non* for going on to the Christian Brothers secondary school. It took a long time for me to accept that the way the course of my life was affected by that failure was, *sub specie aeternitas*, for the best.

So began an eventful and crowded period in my young life. Within this seven year span I was enrolled at a Technical School by my father where I spent about a year learning nothing very much. It was then arranged that I go to work as a kind of junior storeman with a wholesale grocery firm where my brother Art was employed. I lost that job for petty pilfering and after an interval of some months got another job as an office boy which I lost for a similar reason.

Next I found myself at the Curragh, Kildare in the Construction Corps, a non-combatant branch of the Irish National Army. This was also arranged by my parents for the dual purpose, I suppose, of keeping me from further burdening them and also as a means of straightening me out. After nine months I was able to organise a transfer to the Regular Army and spent two years there before a three month interval back in Dublin with the family which had moved from Fairview to Clontarf while I had been away. Not feeling at ease at home I took off after a few months to join the Royal Air Force from which I was soon discharged on medical grounds finishing up in London with a job with the Australian High Commission.

Then began a frenetic period involving constant change of residence, employer and activity. Between 1949 and 1956 I moved between London, Dublin, London, Jersey in the Channel Islands, London, Sydney, Yallourn in Victoria, Tasmania, Sydney, Brisbane, Darwin, Katherine, Darwin, Adelaide, Woomera, Melbourne, Sydney, Lae in New Guinea, Sydney and finally back to Melbourne where I had a life changing experience.

This latest arrival in Melbourne at the time of the 1956 Olympics enabled me to enter into the most settled period of my life since my Cahore childhood. It also marked the beginning of new more mature outlook on life and I believe the beginning of a spiritual journey which also was to have its ups and downs. As to travel, well apart from a few brief holidays I remained in Melbourne until 1960 when I left to take up a challenging managerial job in Brisbane in which I remained for just over two years. The end of 1963 however saw me once more on the move to Perth and from there to Derby in the Kimberleys on the north west coast of Western Australia.

In mid 1964 I moved from the Kimberleys to Millgrove in Victoria where I put in some eighteen months at Pallotti College before embarking on a new round of changes which took me briefly to Melbourne, Sydney, Lightning Ridge, San Francisco, Seattle, Panama City, New York, Seattle and then to Canberra in 1968 where after a bit of labouring work I entered the Australian Public Service . 1969 took me briefly to Sydney on relief duties, then back to Canberra and part-time University study and a busy three month stint as a Diplomatic Courier ranging as far as the U.S., U.K., Tokyo and South East Asia.

In 1970 I accepted, with some reluctance, a posting to a new position of Administrative Attache with the Australian Embassy in South Africa from which I resigned half way through my three year term to take up a five acre subsistence type allotment as part of the Christian Community at Saint Benedict's in Gladysdale Victoria with which I had formed a certain bond when I met up with its founder Father John Heffey while at Pallotti College. My time at Saint Benedict's was punctuated by absences working in Melbourne with the Postmaster-General's Department, studying at Melbourne University and later at the Australian National University in Canberra.

I completed a law degree course at ANU in 1977 and after graduating and doing a professional practice course in 1978, also at ANU, and working briefly as a barrister and solicitor for the estimable John Daniel Donohue in Canberra City I returned to Saint Benedict's in 1979 to assist Rita Flipo the only member, apart from Syd Rattenbury, of Father Heffey's community to stay when the others moved to Cygnet in Tasmania. By 1980 after Syd's death things had pretty well fallen apart as far as the revived community ideal went. At the same time as working on building a mud brick house on my block I went back for a year to the Public Service with the Australian Taxation Office in Melbourne and then opened my own law office in Yarra Junction.

By late 1982 I took a decision against continuing with the growing practice, returned to the bureaucracy, this time with the Department of Veterans' Affairs Canberra where I remained until my appointment as a South Australia based full time member of the newly created Veterans' Review Board .

I took up my new job in January 1985, met and married Kate, established a home in Adelaide and for the next seven years travelled extensively around Australia in my work as a member and acting senior member of the VRB and during this period also took Kate to Ireland, England and Italy to meet up with an army of our relatives.

From 1992, retired now from my nominal Public Service position I continued with the VRB as a part-time member and senior member until 1997 when the new Liberal Government decided on a wholesale revamp and got rid of nearly all the original appointees. By then of course I was in my 70th year and not entirely displeased with this change of pace except to the extent that it involved a sharp drop in income.

The current seven year cycle began with a major change when at short notice we took the opportunity to buy a house some 30 kilometres south of Adelaide where since 1998 we have lived for us a fairly quiet life in retirement with occasional short forays Interstate but more usually to Naracoorte in the South East or up into the Flinders Ranges.

So much for the summarised accounts of my movements and doings keyed to successive seven year cycles and now to a somewhat amplified version which I hope is not too repetitive or self-serving

Rosanna and Timothy O'Leary's fourth child was born on 4 August 1928 in the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin. Carmel, Art and Patricia had already been born there as later were Edward, Donie (Daniel), John, who died in 1997, and Michael.

The new baby, a nine pounder according to my mother's memory in later life, was named Denis Redmond. The latter was her own maiden name and the former was carried by my paternal grandfather and also one of his sons. Uncle Denis and Clare Perry, who later married and went to live in England, stood as Godparents for me according to a Baptismal certificate provided to me by the Parish of Our Lady of The Visitation, Fairview where all my family worshipped.

I never met my Godparents or heard from them in later life although when my father was transiting London on his way back from a pilgrimage to Rome for the Holy Year in 1950 I joined him on a trip out to Dagenham, Essex to look up the brother he apparently had lost contact with and who was reportedly working at the Ford Motor Company's works there. We did not locate my Uncle Denis.

However, the couple of days spent in my father's company on that occasion for the first time allowed me a glimpse of his human side. It left me with a better idea of his real character and I was quite surprised at his willingness to join me in visiting more than one or two London pubs drinking weak English beer. Another memory of that visit was of attending Mass at Westminster Cathedral and afterwards my father's less than favourable comment on the quality of the sermon which had quite impressed me.

Apart from the Cahore relatives, my mother's sister Mary Redmond and her Aunt Bessie Bolger as well as cousins Ned and Nanny Redmond, I had no contact at all with any of my parents' relatives until my father's death in 1972. By then an old family feud had been healed and my first cousin, Arthur O'Leary, son of my late uncle Jack (Sean) came up from the family farm for the funeral. I later learned that while I was away during the 1940's my father had been down to Cork several times and made it up with Jack and others from whom he had been estranged since an undertaking that he would inherit the family farm had not been honoured.

It seems that Tim, a bright lad taken from school after his father Denis had a row with the Parish Priest because his son was passed over for the job of Monitor in favour of the offspring of a more influential farmer, had been promised the farm for the great help he had been when Jack, the eldest son who would normally have inherited the property, had gone off to work in Wales. His mother Honoragh had died in 1903 when he was 11. Apparently there was an understanding among all in the family that the farm would go to Tim.

As the story goes, after a row with his father, Tim went in to the garrison town of Macroom where perhaps with a drink or two taken he made an impetuous decision to enlist in the British army during one of the intensive recruiting drives the British authorities launched to get more cannon fodder for the disastrous campaign in France.

That my father was blown up in a trench in France during World War I is certain and there is a record in his service documents, which brother Art accessed, of a subsequent hospitalisation. What remained unclear at his death was whether it was that event or an earlier boyhood accident when he hurt his leg was the actual cause of the lifelong problems he suffered with it.

It seems that his father died while young Tim was away, without putting his wishes as to the farm in writing and when he returned after the war a family council favoured reversion to the customary succession practice given that the eldest son had now returned. Unhappy with this but accepting the situation my father then agreed to give up his claim to the land in return for some manner of cash payout the delay in full payment of which I think was also a cause of some dispute.

I have no very early family memories of my own. From older siblings I have been told that at that time my father was what in those days was called a Commercial Traveller and my parents were able to afford a maid. I don't remember maid Annie but she was apparently one of those young women from very poor country families who was willing to be at the beck and call of large families in return for bed and board and a few shillings a week.

A memory I have from the small two storyed family home in Cadogan Road, Fairview is being taken next door where young Aidan Sweeney was being waked by his staunchly Republican family. The Sweeneys had been in the thick of the War of Independence and then in the Civil War. The external bricks of their house were and probably still are pockmarked from bullets fired by the Black and Tans. The story goes that on one occasion Charlie Sweeney, the father, had escaped through climbing out the rear bathroom window and squeezing into our bathroom until the coast was clear.

Aidan was in the Irish Republican Army and had been provided with a new motor bike in his capacity of despatch rider. It seems that he invited his sister to go for a spin before tea and on turning back off the main road towards his own home he met a truck head on and was killed instantly. His sister survived. His brother, a musician, became head of the Garda Siochana Band as Superintendent Charles O'Donnell Sweeney.

There were at least two other prominent IRA families in our street, the Russells and Gouldings. Sean Russell died while engaged in some IRA activity and the Goulding's son, Cathal, in later times became Chief of Staff of the Official wing of the IRA after one of the regular splits in that organisation.

My own primary school years however had all been spent away from my family and apart from the death of Aidan Sweeney my only other vague recollection from early Dublin childhood was of the bells and smells from the 1932 Eucharistic Congress.

For reasons which remain to me unclear some time in the early 1930's I was sent off to Cahore, County Wexford to live with Aunt Bessie Bolger, a long-time widow and her niece, my Aunt Mary, a middle aged spinster who to me at that age seemed a quite stern and formidable person. They shared a little whitewashed thatched cottage no more than a hundred yards from high water mark with only low sandhills keeping it from the intrusion of the Irish Sea. The cottage was held under some mysterious tenure from Sinnott, the local coalyard owner and small farmer who later sold it off in rather highhanded fashion after it fell vacant following the death of both women. The immediate locality was called ' The Burrow ' .

This fairly isolated coastal settlement over the centuries could well have been a transit point for the young Patrick, the Norman invaders the Cromweilian Roundheads and possibly even the Black and Tans . Yet I recall no talk about such significant historical personalities or events. Conversations by the fireside of an evening touched on more immediate local matters, more recent events such as, for example, the death by drowning of two crew members from the schooner " Venturer " , or was it the " Mary V. Mitchell " ? , returning by rowboat to the vessel after a night playing cards at Aunt Bessie's cottage.

In those days coal was brought across from Wales in those bigger ships and discharged into a small barge which could take it into the pier and thence to Sinnott's coalyard where it was sold for 2/- a hundredweight bag. One of the annual rituals was the carting of the winter's supply of coal from the coalyard by Ned Redmond, a cousin, to our cottage. On one such occasion when Ned went to pay for the coal he found that the 10/- note provided to him by Aunt Bessie was missing. Ned was flummoxed at the sudden disappearance of the money and thought that it must have fell out of his pocket . Suspicion fell on the coalyard attendant, a neighbour not on particularly friendly terms with Ned.

It seems that Ned seethed over the matter for quite some time and occasionally alluded to his suspicion in guarded language to one or two other locals. Then one night in Horgan's pub where Ned and the perceived culprit were among the few clients enjoying a leisurely pint the dam burst and the fateful question was put directly : " Did you change it yet ? " .

The subsequent action in criminal defamation was decided in favour of the plaintiff and Ned was ordered to pay something like fifty pounds in damages. He stubbornly refused to pay up and instead accepted to serve three months in Mountjoy Prison in Dublin rather than satisfy the judgment and of course the plaintiff.

Ned lived with his sister Nannie in a little dwelling near the old Coastguard station and over many years had courted Mary Martin, the cook at Cahore Castle wherein resided the Misses George in genteel poverty to alleviate which they began to take in 'paying guests', a source of some comment by the locals. Anyhow just when everyone despaired of Ned ever marrying Mary a wedding was announced and the Misses George generously took off for foreign parts and left the Castle to the newly weds and their guests for the celebration. As I recall a great time was had by all and a popular song of the day, 'Deep in the Heart of Texas' always reminds me of the occasion.

After a simple meal on winter evenings at the Burrow it was usually just the three of us, a paraffin lamp and or a candle and a small coal fire in a simple oven grate. The clay floor would be swept and sanded, the paper read, the rosary recited and perhaps a cup of cocoa taken before bed. If there was an occasional visitor the talk would be, by turns, of relatives and family connections, a round of ghost stories and a recounting of significant local news and gossip.

I first heard the Irish version of my name, *Donnachada*, outside the cottage door one afternoon when the Parish Priest, the Reverend Father Owen Kavanagh, a somewhat commanding presence, came visiting. I became an altar boy, without any remembered enthusiasm, and had to memorise the Latin responses for the Mass. These were meaningless to me as Latin was not on the curriculum at the National School I attended. The rote learning of those days carried no necessary implication of understanding what was being lodged in the mind, it was simply a matter of getting the responses to the Priest right.

Sunday afternoons I was usually required for 3 pm Benediction. On my way to the Church there would be gathered on the roadway a little group of local men amusing themselves either with a game of 'pitch and toss', for small stakes or a game of 'Horseshoes' for love.

There was little or no direct contact with my family in those years and the only highlights were the summer holidays when some visitors would come to spend time at the seaside. These included the Walsh family from Enniscorthy, I think, who would spend a month in the old Lacey cottage each year.

Their only son Jim and I got on famously. His ambition was to go to sea and in fact although I never met him in adult life I learned that he achieved his ambition and became a master mariner. Mr Walsh was a schoolmaster and my main memory of Mrs Walsh was of her lying on the beach, or strand as we called it, reading "Gone With the Wind", the then best seller. At night there would be a card game in the cottage with the visitors including at times some from England.

That was also around the time when 'Galway Bay' came out but as the only wireless in Cahore was at the Sinnott's house I don't remember where we heard it or if Bing Crosby was crooning it. When the All Ireland hurling and football finals were on the men of the place would gather outside the Sinnott's parlour window of a Sunday afternoon to hear Michael O'Hehir call the game.

That period of my life, spent with a spinster aunt and widowed grandaunt, was not all that happy and my memories are for the most part hazy. In my later years I came to realise that no blame for this should be laid against those two simple women or indeed my parents who had their own hands full trying to survive in the city as the worldwide depression and the Anglo-Irish economic battle raged in a battered society still trying to recover from the aftermath of the Black and Tans terrorism, the Treaty squabbling and then the Civil War.

I also came to recognise that at least in a material sense I was probably better off in Cahore where, although life was pretty frugal by modern standards, even after the European war started and rationing came in my aunts were not living in the same straitened circumstances as my parents, sisters and brothers.

What I also came to see much more clearly in later life was that I could not really recall any demonstrations of love and affection within either household in Cahore or Dublin. Emotions were kept very much out of life apart of course from the spontaneous family rows which I don't have much memory of either.

In attempting to bring together some of the early strands of my life it is necessary to acknowledge that my recollections of those times are still tinged with feelings of guilt and of course regret over a pattern of youthful dishonesty and deception the details of which need not be gone into in this context. Suffice to say that for whatever reason early in my time in Cahore I had a sense of being expected to express a preference for being there rather than in Dublin. I found myself dissembling in regard to how I was doing at school, how I liked being in the country instead of back in the city with my family and, generally, my tendency was to try to please these two women, especially Aunt Mary. I also found it very easy to help myself regularly to loose coin from Auntie's purse.

A particularly embarrassing memory was being saddled against my better judgement with the Confirmation name of ' Pius ' - I suppose after the then Pope - when that Sacrament was being administered by the Bishop of Ferns, Dr Staunton. Again, this seemed to be about pleasing these two women who I suspect were not very close to each other. I was embarrassed of course because I was very conscious of how singularly lacking in true piety I was and ever afterwards until this time I have suppressed the unwelcome but mandatory additional given name.

At any rate after 8 to 10 years in that situation it was decided that I should return to the family home in Dublin to start secondary schooling. The trouble was that despite all the glowing reports which had apparently been going back to my parents I failed the fairly straightforward examination at the little local National (State) school and as well I had done no Latin which in those days, along with proficiency in Irish which I lacked , was an essential preliminary subject for joining my five brothers at the Christian Brothers' school in Dublin.

My poor scholastic progress was quite a blow for my father in particular who although a good man and something of an autodidact had a pretty domineering personality and had, I later realised, his own demons from being blown up in France in World War I and out of sympathy with those vying for power in the post-British Irish Free State. He had I believe a very keen intellect and also a capacity to detect and challenge humbug which would not have endeared him to those running things. He was also of course highly opinionated, a trait inherited by his offspring, including the writer !

I continue to be astonished now about the paucity of information I carried into adulthood about important aspects of Irish history and especially the then fairly recent events to do with the Easter Rising against the British occupation, the War of Independence and the tragic civil war that followed. I have no recall of any teaching or explanation concerning these.

My main memory of Irish history from my primary school years is of a great emphasis on the coming of Saint Patrick, the Viking raids and then the Norman invasion of 1170. Certainly some later significant dates up to and including the 1898 Rebellion in Wexford, Father Murphy and all that, as well as Catholic Emancipation in 1829 figured and I suppose that there must have been some reference to upheavals in Irish society during the early part of the 20th century. But mostly what I remembered was to do with the earlier times and this through such stirring ballads as

**' Stand ye now for Erin's glory
stand ye now for Erin's cause
Long we've groaned beneath the rigour
Of the Northmen's savage laws '**

Of great 20th century Irishmen such as James Connolly, Padraig Pearse and Michael Collins I knew nothing. Perhaps this was because Eamon de Valera was by this time consolidated in power and the influence of his Fianna Fail party which opposed the Treaty yet became the beneficiaries of that limited control over Irish affairs flowing from the agreement which cost Collins his life, was all pervasive. I do remember when back in Dublin some of the big meetings at General Election times when the voices of Dev and his opposite number, Mulcahy or Cosgrove, would be blaring out from loudspeakers across O'Connell Street or College Green or wherever their platforms were erected.

My arrival back in Dublin coincided with the onset of puberty but although that significant biological process had already been evident while I was in Cahore I had no real idea of what was happening in my body and no one to whom I was able to turn for guidance. To the best of my recollection I suffered no abuse of a sexual nature as a child and the only adult male who behaved improperly was a local named Eddie Gall who exposed himself to me once or twice. He was known to be a bit of an "eejit", as they say in Ireland, and pretty harmless. As well, sometimes during the 10 to 14 year years there was a certain amount of furtive boyish exploration and discussion with Lar Crowe, a local lad a year or two ahead of me and from a family not favourably regarded by Aunt Mary.

On the general issue of sex there was of course no discussion let alone instruction about this aspect of the human condition in those days and to the extent that there was any learning I guess that this was mainly by osmosis and through being close to nature and domestic animal life thus being able to observe some of the procreative activity in that domain. Biology lessons were unheard of although I assume that at the secondary level its elementary principles must have been included under the science rubric.

Then of course there was a certain amount of fairly indirect sex education passed on through exposure to religious teaching and practice. I remember no such school based education - my teachers were in any case all lay persons - but there was no doubt regular emphasis on the importance of the virtue of purity in sermons, especially by those thundering old style Redemptorists during Parish Missions, a regular feature of Catholic parish life in those days.

When I hear the Catholic Church blamed for inculcating in its members an unhealthy and puritanical attitude towards sex I am not always convinced that the charge is well founded. My own experience has been that the local Church in the various locations where I lived had little or nothing to say directly to me about the subject. Perhaps this had something to do with my not going to a Catholic school or had much to do except *en passant* with priests, nuns or religious brothers when I was young.

What has influenced my mind and conscience about sex and sensuality in all its forms has been actual experience matched with what I have come to understand from time to time through reflection and studying the sayings of Jesus, the evangelists' accounts of his teaching as well as a close reading of the Scriptures. As well, the writings of some of the early Christian writers and later holy men and women have obviously helped to inform my mind and conscience.

Sure, I've listened in Confession to counselling on the importance and value of purity but this would always have been only after I had myself invited attention to this area of my life about which I was disturbed or felt badly in my conscience. The so called sexual revolution of the latter part of the 20th century will only be evaluated with some measure of objectivity long after all of us who have lived through it are dead and gone and I would not risk offering any commentary here.

A few points I can make. One is that I have had over the years innumerable dealings with a wide range of priests and religious from the Catholic tradition across several continents and for such people I retain the highest respect and admiration. That some I have had to do with have departed from the ideal standard of purity probably goes without saying given what we know of the frailty of human nature.

If among those I have known some have also transgressed not only their own freely accepted commitment to live chastely but have been involved in corrupting others, particularly young people for whom they had a special responsibility to give good example, there is no defence that I can or would want to offer. May God forgive them and in the all powerful Divine scheme of things bring good out of the evil done. All I can say is that my spiritual life would be much the poorer had I not had the opportunity to be in contact with the many dedicated religious men and women I have had to do with down the years.

The passage of time and even the ageing process has done little to unravel the great complexity of human sexuality for me. The virtual disappearance of the imperious urge makes it much easier of course on many fronts, not least when preparing for Confession. Reconciliation, actually, as that Sacrament is now generally referred to. Since the onset of a new view of sexual morality, including among Catholics, fewer and fewer penitents are reported to front up for reconciliation nowadays. Where have all the sinners gone ?

I suppose what I want to argue for here really is that in so far as moral problems to do with sexuality attract criticism of Christian teaching in general and the Catholic Church in particular all human beings and especially adult educated Catholics in the 21st century surely must learn to take responsibility for the moral positions they come to hold and not seek to divert this responsibility by blaming others whether the agents of the State or the Church.

For me it beggars belief that grown men and women who in so many other areas of life continue learning and developing their thinking in matters to do with the secular and social aspects of their lives and minds are so ready to lay blame at the door of the Church or some over zealous, misguided or even incompetent teacher of their young schooldays for implanting in them ideas which are now seen to be wrong, perhaps plain stupid or maybe simply out of date.

We live at a time when it was never easier to access the enormous and growing body of knowledge across the whole spectrum of human endeavour and in the field of spirituality and religion there is an endless flow of information and ideas to be examined, rejected or accepted or perhaps just left aside to be looked at in another context or from a different perspective.

So, it will be seen that I have little patience with those who put forward facile excuses for dropping religion altogether such as the poor opinion they have formed of religious leaders or people or suggesting that the reason for their not continuing on with its practice after school or leaving home was because of the defective way in which parents, teachers or other mentors had sought to convey knowledge and understanding of this very complex subject to them many years ago.

Here I have to acknowledge that for the first three decades of my life my own practice of the Catholic faith into which I was baptised was sporadic and religious exercises attended to more or less by rote. It was not until I had read and re-read the New Testament and later the complete Bible that I began to get a glimpse of the wonderful spiritual *milieu* in which I lived moved and had my existence.

But back to the main thread. After an unsatisfactory year or so when I was enrolled in a Technical school to learn a trade or whatever I went to work, at first as a storeman with a wholesale grocer where my brother Art also worked and after losing that job for petty pilfering I got another office boy type job which I lost for similar reasons resulting in my being sent off to join the Construction Corp, a non combatant branch of the Irish Defence Forces. I had then just turned 16.

The fact that I had brought shame on my parents and Art has never left my consciousness as is the fact that preoccupied with mostly sublimated resentment I behaved so selfishly towards my Aunt Mary and my parents during their declining years and really did nothing for them. Art, with whose personality I had great difficulty when younger, has never mentioned how the Carton episode affected him or his life and I suppose I have always taken the easy way of dealing with the matter by assuming he has forgiven me. Certainly he has over the years, especially since I married Kate, shown me many kindnesses, and one in particular which has materially benefited both of us, and I have come to accept his unusual personality and also regard him with enormous respect and indeed affection.

While serving in The Curragh, Naas and Kildare I was pretty well out of touch with my whole family for several years. Of course the only one that I had formed any sort of bond with in the family was Eddie who shared some of my better qualities including an extroverted, optimistic and even enthusiastic personality. But he was always a much shrewder person and in later life I came to hold him in special regard. In different ways of course I have been blessed to develop a very good relationship with all my siblings and indeed others of them, in addition to Art, have in recent years surprised Kate and myself with quite unexpected as well as very generous practical expressions of their regard for us.

Anyhow, at 17 I was able to transfer to the Regular Army, just as the war was ending, Ireland of course having been neutral. Interestingly, interned in separate enclosures on the Curragh at that time were IRA prisoners locked up by De Valera's Government and German sailors who had been rescued from sunken ships or airmen whose planes had crashed or were brought down over Irish territory. British survivors were of course allowed to make their way back North to the Six Counties still occupied by the forces of the Crown.

That was when I had my first experience of the effects of alcohol when we went out on the town to celebrate the end of our basic training. I got very happily drunk, probably on just a few of the famous Guinness, in a little pub in Newbridge, County Kildare a few miles from our Barracks on the Curragh.

As far as I know there was no immediate drink or other anti-social problem in the family history although an uncle who disappeared in America and a Cork first cousin I never knew may well have been alcoholics. A second cousin who liked a drink did three months jail rather than pay defamation damages to a man he accused before other neighbours in a pub one night of stealing a ten shilling note ! As far as I can recall, the defamatory act consisted of a hissed question in the hearing of a handful of customers in Horgan's public house sipping their nightly pint of Guinness : " Did you change it yet ? ". I believe this became a bit of Cahore cant and for years afterwards a local wag would punctuate a conversational lull by repeating the expensive query for the amusement of companions.

I put in two fairly uneventful years in an artillery unit but it was from then on that my drinking pattern began to develop on lines which I came to recognise as being associated with my particular alcoholic nature. Although I kept out of trouble and carried out my duties satisfactorily my greatest satisfaction came from the times when I could escape from life's harsher day to day realities into the world of fantasy.

Leaving the Army I returned briefly to the family home but found myself not particularly at ease in the situation and besides at that time there was little or no work opportunity in Ireland for some one without any qualifications or marketable skills.

Indeed I was fortunate to get a temporary clerical job with the Dublin Board of Assistance but as my three month stint came to an end the future looked fairly bleak. The only bright spot from that period was that I had a strong attraction to a girl working in the DBA and there were signs that my feelings were reciprocated but somehow the relationship never really got established.

So I went North, joined the RAF but soon found myself in hospital with a lung ailment resulting in my being invalided out after some fourteen months service, eight of which were served in the Wroughton RAF Hospital for half of which time I was confined to bed in a Tuberculosis observation ward, such was the concern about that then serious health problem in England and Ireland.

At age 20, having worn three different uniforms, I found myself in London. I got work as a clerk with the Australian High Commission, I was pleasantly surprised to be also given (temporarily) a War Pension by the British and so for a while I had the time of my life - no responsibilities, a modest income but sufficient to allow me to indulge my increasing fondness for alcohol or rather not so much the alcohol as the effects this produced and the drinking environment which I loved.

One memory from those days was getting to within a few minutes of my digs in the West End one night after a great drinking session and falling down in the middle of the street to be roused by a bicycling London Bobby who found a safe bed for me in the local nick. This cost me a 10/- fine the next morning in the Bow St Magistrates Court and that night I was actually boasting of this experience in my favourite pub to the bemusement, I think, of the barman !

A curious interlude then intruded. I had resumed some kind of contact with my family in Dublin and out of the blue I got word from my mother that the local health authorities had been in touch and I was supposed to have been admitted to a Dublin TB hospital after leaving the RAF. This was the first I had heard of this but with characteristic impetuosity instead of making further enquiries I resigned my job in Australia House and hotfooted it to Dublin where almost immediately I was admitted to a Sanatorium in Chapelizod where I stayed for about four months. During this time I was perfectly well physically but I can only look back now and wonder how I was psychologically.

I had some few visits from family members but none that I recall from my father. I remember also making friends of a fellow patient, whose name escapes me, the son of some senior Garda Siochanna official who had acting ambitions and, as I recall, a certain effeminacy . Myself, I had my eye on a stunning Sister named Igoe but there was nothing doing on that front.

Although by no means sexually ignorant at that time I was obviously pretty naive as I recall quite innocently using the word randy in reference to a patient I had hardly noticed earlier and he got fearfully upset and threatening. I had no idea of the primary connotation of the word but clearly he had and whether the reason was righteous indignation or a direct hit I've no idea,

As soon as I was discharged from the Sanatorium I returned to London and got my old job back in the Migration Branch of the Australian High Commission. Although at first I scorned the idea of emigrating to Australia , a geographical solution to my increasing restlessness then began to seem more and more attractive so after a summer working and boozing at a Holiday Camp in the Channel Islands I found myself in late 1951 on a liner bound for Botany Bay !

I had travelled on the *RMS 'Oronsay'*. It was her second voyage having just been built and put into service to handle the huge flow of migrants from a still war scarred Britain. Interestingly I was many years later to learn that the *Oronsay* on her maiden voyage earlier in 1951 had carried the beautiful young Kate O'Callaghan to Adelaide. More about that later, but first an anecdote.

I had gone to Jersey at the beginning of the English summer partly because the previous year brother Eddie and his mate Mick Moore had spent a short holiday there and I was impressed with their accounts of the lively times they had. I went there alone and soon blew my limited funds living it up around St Helier, the capital. One escapade I recall from then was being thrown out of the Resident's Bar of the *Pomme d'Or* Hotel late one night. Seething with alcohol fuelled indignation I then concocted a story which involved impersonating a guest with whom I had earlier been drinking and was so persuasive that the Hotel Manager allowed me back in. Fortunately I stayed only long enough to have another quick drink, savour my triumph and take off before the *bona fide* guest turned up.

After Kate and I met up and were comparing the stories of our journeying I found out that she had holidayed with friends from Cork in Jersey the year before I was there and actually stayed at the *Pomme d'Or*.

Those were the times when jobs were easy to get wherever you were. Soon I was working as a barman at the Parkin Holiday Camp at one end of the island. There was of course food and accommodation provided, a long six day work week, booze cheap and plentiful and a motley camp staff. I enjoyed myself there after a fashion, learned some *patois* from the mainly French catering staff and got on generally well with everyone. A more careful and mature person would have attempted to save a bit but when it came to leave all I had to show for my three months there was a weeks pay. Talk of a bonus at the end of the season had been floated but Mr Parkin, the owner, was not about to share his profits. He dismissed that idea loftily when the matter was raised, limiting his expression of regard for our services to him to the offer of a drink which in dudgeon was refused.

I returned to London and found out that my Australian immigration application had been approved and I was booked to sail on the *RMS Oronsay* leaving in mid-November. To keep body and soul together in the meantime I took a live in job as a barman in a pub in North London.

Departure from Tilbury docks was a low key affair for me. No one farewelled me and my only recollection of that occasion was being in one of the ship's lounges in the late afternoon or evening and listening to 'Some Enchanted Evening' one of the hit songs from *South Pacific* then running in London and which I had been to.

I occupied a four berth cabin in the Tourist section of the ship and one of the other occupants was a young anthropologist just down from Oxford or Cambridge, I forget which, who when drunk loved to don his academic robes. I later ran into him in a pub in Madang, New Guinea when I was myself on the wagon. Not so when we were at sea. Although my partying was limited by a lack of funds I still managed pretty well given the cheap booze and suffered more than one hangover as well as, out of Naples, what could, sober, have been a disastrous fall down some stairs making my way to my cabin !

Arriving in Sydney a few days before Christmas 1951 I put up in the same boarding house as my brother Eddie who had managed to wangle a job as a wharflabourer- very much a closed shop- and our friend Chris Shearman who was a Traffic Officer with Qantas, both of whom had been in Australia from earlier that year, Eddie like myself as an approved migrant under Arthur Calwell's 'ten pounds' scheme and Chris having jumped ship after working his way from London on, I think, the *Himalaya*

Within days of my arrival Chris, who I thought of somewhat condescendingly as a bit of a drunk, baldly told me " Denis, you're a nice fellow but you should not drink " This was after I had apparently disgraced him by insulting his boss while I was in some kind of blackout while we were all guzzling in a Sydney pub to beat the " Six o'clock swill ".

Our landlady was a Mrs (Ma) Crockett who on my first morning out of the kindness of her heart served up a huge Aussie breakfast of steak and eggs to this scrawny new arrival from rationed England. Apparently I grievously offended her by expressing some astonishment at this culinary mix at breakfast time !

Ma had a wayward grandson who was on the fringe of the Sydney underworld. He arrived home one day in a flash new car and invited Eddie to go for a spin with him. It was only when they were speeding off that Eddie was told that the car had just been 'borrowed'. The Royal Commission into the NSW Liquor Industry was on at the time and X figured in some of the newspaper stories.

My arrival in Australia coincided with one of the cyclical economic recessions and without marketable skills or qualifications the only work I could find was as a commission salesman of vacuum cleaners at which I was convincingly unsuccessful. So, I decided to leave Sydney and a few weeks into the New Year set out to hitchhike to Melbourne.

So began what was to turn out to be a five year geographical which took me to every State and mainland Territory as well as Papua and New Guinea. I found Melbourne had nothing to offer me either and being broke and in desperate need of sustenance and some kind of accommodation I found that the State Electricity Commission would employ me as a cleaner at their worker's hostel at Yallourn about 130 kilometres away in the Latrobe Valley. So I got there and soon moved to a job as a canteen hand with the YMCA which operated two such facilities which within a few weeks I was managing as existing staff moved on. I remember that the manager from whom I took over re-enlisted to go off to the war in Korea.

Meanwhile, I put on the staff my brother Eddie who had arrived by motor bike from Sydney after a rugged journey over the Snowy Mountains. Paddy Ward also turned up having jumped ship in Melbourne where he had arrived as a steward on a P & O liner. Paddy had at one time been with the Christian Brothers and invariably favoured clerical black, even turning up at Bondi Beach, 90 degrees, on that first Christmas Day after I had arrived in Australia ! He, too, I found a spot for on the YMCA Canteen staff and so we had an Irish Catholic trio in a bastion of Protestantism and we all got on very well.

A lot of my time off duty was spent boozing either in one of our small hostel rooms or at the local hotel. I remember at one point being barred from this establishment for unruly conduct by the licensee, Mrs Dixon Browne. Yallourn was a model company town and is long gone, bulldozed out of existence to allow the further exploitation of the rich brown coal reserves just under the surface.

A memory I have is going to the local hospital to visit an Irishman, a customer I'd heard was there, and being met by a certain hushed response when I enquired of the nursing sister. Ushered in to see him I saw the reason for there was just a seemingly lifeless form on the bed, still and yellowish in complexion. A few days later I heard that he had died but it was years later, when I joined AA and found out more about alcoholism, that I realised my acquaintance from the YMCA was in the last throes of the disease when I saw him.

Interestingly enough one of the first persons I met in AA at 75 High Street, Saint Kilda was another old customer from Yallourn, Canadian Stan, who was sober then for a year or two and quite an identity in the Fellowship. He later married another well known AA character, Marie, and I believed that they lived happily ever after.

The Yallourn sojourn ended with the three of us deciding to move on, Eddie back to Sydney and later to a job with Qantas in Darwin, Paddy to the ships again and myself on a jag to Tasmania a place about which I had heard a lot. We got a lift to Melbourne with a Frenchman who owned a Citroen and was glad to get a contribution to his petrol money.

After a night boozing in the Hotel Cecil in I took off the next morning on my first airplane flight aboard a Trans Australia Airlines Convair, I think it was, on a bumpy ride to Hobart where I checked in to the famous Hadley's Hotel. My exploration of the Apple Isle on that occasion was restricted to a coach ride to and from Launceston about which I have little recall, probably because I would have spent most of the time carousing there.

It's only in recent years that I have begun to fully appreciate how irresponsible that whole early period of my life was. It is also no great wonder that I remained unattached. I was wholly selfcentred in the pursuit of pleasure wherever I could find it and I doubt if I ever seriously gave thought to the idea of trying to save towards getting married and settling down.

On the other hand, paradoxically perhaps, along the way a keen sense of right and wrong helped me recognise that I was not living right. At first all this meant was that I became a bender drinker, often making a virtue of necessity since if I didn't work I had no money to drink. So in between bouts of drinking I had short periods of total abstinence from alcohol during which I would try and clear up the latest mess I had made of my life.

Although unskilled and with little formal education I found in those days that I could always get a job and more often than not progressed in it and got on well with most people. And I intuitively knew about the change in personality which occurred after taking a drink this was more a subconscious awareness which did not really surface and get named until I reached AA. So, inevitably after one of these dry episodes when everything was going well and with not a care in the world I would find myself once again with a beer in my hand and back in that world of illusion and unreality which alcoholics of my type seem to inhabit.

This is very well described by Dr William D Silkworth in "The Doctor's Opinion" which is set out in the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" from which AA got its name. Dr Silkworth, who had for years known Bill Wilson as a seemingly hopeless drunk for whom he could do nothing, in 1935 noted that after coming to from his most recent disastrous drinking bender, Bill appeared to have undergone a profound change. Bill himself described this as a spiritual experience. As a psychiatrist Dr Silkworth was initially wary of what he was hearing but after observing the surprising recovery of his former patient and the success Bill was having in maintaining sobriety and sharing his insights with other problem drinkers he became a strong lifelong supporter of the AA program of recovery from alcoholism.

In words borrowed from Dr Silkworth's opinion, I can say that I drank essentially because I liked the effect of alcohol. Although vaguely aware that drinking was injurious to me I found it hard to differentiate the true from the false and when I was in my drinking phase this seemed the only normal life. I found it difficult to cope with people who did not drink or even light social drinkers. So I looked for the sense of ease and comfort which came with taking a few drinks which I could see others taking with impunity. But of course after I had succumbed to the desire again the craving would develop, a spree would ensue and after doing something I regretted the remorse would set in and another resolution to stop drinking would be made.

But I knew nothing about what was really wrong at that point of my journey. So from Tasmania I returned by air to Sydney and met up with Eddie prior to his Qantas phase. I took lodgings out at Bondi and got a job selling insurance. Then disaster struck. We were drinking all afternoon in a city pub and when 6 o'clock closing time came I was very reluctant to leave before finishing the several beers still unconsumed. That cut no ice with the bar staff who soon bundled me out the door. In a fit of drunken rage and resentment I kicked in the plate glass door and in no time found myself in the lockup. The upshot was that on the Monday morning and while still in something of a daze I was charged with malicious damage and, I suppose, the usual drunk and disorderly and fined something like twenty pounds. I had to spend another night in custody while Eddie was organising to get into the city from where he was living and arrange the payment of the fine and Court costs.

After missing a couple of days work when I eventually fronted up I was promptly sacked after explaining with probably unnecessary frankness the reason for my absence. My employer was the Australasian Catholic Assurance Company and for some years after that incident I suffered under an enormous sense of injustice towards all things Catholic !

So, I packed my bags once more and set out to hitchhike to, Brisbane this time. The one thing I remember about that actual trip was being given a lift by a New England resident who was keen to share his knowledge of local history with this New Australian recently out from Ireland. He must have been a Catholic and before dropping me off he insisted on driving me to the cemetery in Forbes where the remains of the notorious bushranger Ben Hall rested under a headstone marking his brief life, to say a prayer.

Arriving in Brisbane I soon made for the Cathedral for a visit to Father Gerry Nicoll, a member of a family living near my parents in Dublin. While still at Yallourn my mother had written urging me to look him up and I had filed the request away without any real intention of further action. In fact I found that Father Gerry was most welcoming. He was in a office in the original little sandstone Cathedral and secretary to the Archbishop, the formidable James Duhig. Years later I spent an exhausting day with this prelate chauffering him to the Sunshine Beach Estate in an unsuccessful attempt to interest him in land for a church site. Father Gerry sat me down while he conducted various telephone conversation on matters to do with 'the Boss' including ordering some shirts and talking with someone called Vince, later identified to me as the Premier of Queensland, Vincent Gair, then a man to be reckoned with in Australian politics but later a somewhat diminished and even tragic figure.

Gair, after forming and leading the Queensland Labor Party following the split of the 1950's finished up as a Senator for that State in the Federal Parliament until after the famous 'Night of the Long Prawns' when he was seduced by the wily Gough Whitlam to accept appointment as Ambassador to Ireland to even the numbers in the Senate. The political careers of both men ended unhappily, Gough being trumped by the even wiler Sir Joh Bjelke Petersen, the incumbent Premier of Queensland and Gair becoming an embarrassment because of, among other things, his behaviour in Dublin.

Anyhow, I was recommended to the establishment of two pious spinster sisters, Gertie and Ollie, where I could get bed and breakfast. My main recollection of that period was that Gertie obviously disapproved of my smoking and literally followed me around the house with a brush and dustpan for the falling ash. The other feature of the place was that it was a bit of a wayside stop for country priests, mostly bluff Irishmen, where they were always welcomed and given a drink or two.

I soon became acquainted with several Irishmen, mostly met in pubs and then at the Queensland Irish Association where I got some kind of honorary membership. Jobless for a while, my first Brisbane work was as a barman at the Royal Exchange Hotel, Toowong where Percy Bishop was the licensee with a rather frowsy blonde wife who seemed very well disposed to the head barman, a gloomy fellow from the West of Ireland with whom I maintained a barely civil relationship.

I remember that on Saint Patrick's Day 1953 there was a big party for the Irish at the Sportsmans Hotel in Spring Hill where Mick Thrayer was the popular licensee. Father Gerry was among those present and showed that he was quite partial to a few drinks. They are both now dead I visited Mick at the Mater Hospital before he died after I had returned to Brisbane during a more settled stage of my career. Father Gerry, who became very well known both as a radio Priest and for founding the Damascus Rehabilitation facility for priests and religious, I missed seeing again. Again however there was a certain synchronicity in that Kate had independently met and became very friendly with Father Gerry before we had encountered each other.

Out of the blue, one of the sisters told me one day that it had been arranged that I should see someone they knew who was a member of the Brisbane City Council. One thing led to another and I was told that there was a job going as a bus driver. This of course involved a test and so I appeared at the bus depot where an inspector took me to a bus, showed me the driver's seat and invited me to take the bus out so that he could assess my skills. Well that these were minimal soon became clear and God only knows how many errors I made but somehow this did not seem to faze my official and fortunately only passenger. I suspect someone up the line must have passed the word that I was to get this job and he was not about to incur some blame if an adverse report put a spoke in the patronage wheel.

So, armed with a ten year license I was soon let loose on the Brisbane travelling public and while I had no serious mishap and did not drink while driving it was more by good luck than good management that my bus driving experience did not come to a dramatic and sudden end. In those days the fleet included trolley buses and a favourite run was from Spring Hill, above the city down to the Botanic Gardens at the bottom of Edward Street.

In the meantime I had parted company with the spinster ladies and taken a room elsewhere on the Sandgate Road. Off duty a lot of my time was spent either doing the rounds of the Queen Street pubs or at the QIA where I had a widening circle of drinking acquaintances including one Frank Castignola who I think was in the State public service.

In those days the club facilities were very basic but there was usually available an inexpensive nourishing evening meal and in the absence of any other home comforts or companionship the QIA and the friendly Celtic environment was a welcome amenity in a city which I did not take to very much. So it was that just as I had been made a member I decided to move on, this time to Darwin where I had word that both brother Eddie and Chris Shearman were located with Qantas.

As usual I was low in funds and decided to hitchhike most of the way and made in in this fashion to Rockhampton. From there I took the train across to Cloncurry, an uncomfortable and seemingly interminable journey. From there I resumed my hike and soon got a lift from a guy who was on his way to work as a baker in Mount Isa in a little new Morris Minor.

It took from memory most of the night to cover the distance of about 120 kilometres via a barely formed rocky bush track which must have just about wrecked the little car. Soon after that boneshaking trip uranium was found in the area, the well known Mary Kathleen mine developed with its thriving township and a first class highway was put through.

Mt Isa seemed a very hot and uninviting kind of place so I was immediately on the road again and this time I was picked up by the driver of a fairly comfortable larger sedan who had as passenger another male. It emerged that they were two plain clothes policemen on their way to Camooweal close to the Queensland/Northern Territory border. I later heard that they were visiting that frontier settlement to investigate some trouble there which also involved police colleagues.

The date ? Coronation weekend 1953 and even out in Camooweal the event was being celebrated , albeit with more gusto than style. My own recollections are of getting very matey with a ringer named Casey who had just come in off a station and who gave me a small beautifully leather bound copy of Fitzgerald's translation of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam. I managed to hold on to that for many years but it finally disappeared although not before I had learned by heart the old Persian's take on life, love and the vine's effects on one's perceptions. The only other thing about that weekend was being told on the Sunday morning that the kindly local cop had seen me safely to my bed in the hotel after I had passed out in the bar.

I was soon on my way again and obtained a lift with a man who was overlanding with his whole family. They were *en route* Darwin and had travelled in an old rickety converted truck which eventually made it right up to Darwin with numerous punctures and breakdowns but somehow the typically resourceful Australian battled through all the minor mishaps. I never did keep track of what became of my travel benefactors and parted from them at journey's end after a shared beer or two.

The Qantas base was out at Berrimah, some 15 kilometres from the city and I did not see all that much of either my brother or Chris Shearman. When they came to town the venue was always the pub, either the Victoria run by the Fong brothers or the more upmarket Darwin Hotel owned by Mick Paspaley who already in 1953 was probably the wealthiest person in the Territory. The Don Hotel was the only other pub in Darwin then and that was regarded as a bit of a bloodhouse and to be avoided.

On arrival I first camped on Mindil Beach but I was glad to get away from the sandflies and mosquitoes when I got a labouring job with the Commonwealth Department of Works which provided me with very basic accommodation in the shape of an old World War II 'donga' or bare sleeping hut.

I was a chainman in a gang of four lead by surveyor Ted Richter, a gentle German, who was doing survey work in the mangroves to do with the development of the new Darwin port. When that was finished the gang was put to pot hole repair around the Darwin roads and it was remarkable how diligent our leading hand was in fixing the holes near the pubs !

Always on the lookout for an easier softer way of making a living I saw an advertisement in the local paper for a barman in the Darwin Club. After working there for a short time I heard of a vacancy for a clerk at the Katherine Hospital, some 400 odd kilometres south of Darwin, submitted the usual inflated *curriculum vitae*, got the job and after a cursory briefing flew down to take up my duties in the now elevated title of Hospital Secretary.

I had to put up at one of the two hotels and then moved in to what rejoiced in the title of Staff Accommodation at the Commonwealth Department of Works. The Administrative man there was one Alec Richardson who had previously been in the British Colonial Service and brought with him to Australia some of the less acceptable notions which often went with the more junior members of that class.

It was customary for a few of us to gather of an evening and share a few drinks outside our quarters. On one occasion I apparently gave great offence to Alec by voicing either some Republican or anti-colonial sentiments. Nothing was said at the time but I was a bit puzzled shortly afterwards to be informed by Alec that there was a shortage of room for Departmental staff and I would have to give up my place. Only later was I told by one of the group that had been present of the real reason why I was considered an undesirable resident.

The same Alec Richardson I later heard to my surprise had been appointed a Justice of the Peace. This was in the days when indigenous people were not allowed to drink alcohol and those supplying it to them were guilty of an offence. I was somewhat shocked to read one day in a Melbourne paper that he had handed out a quite stiff sentence to an unfortunate aboriginal for getting hold of some booze. Happily I later heard that the case had been taken on appeal and the decision was overturned.

My own time in Katherine was marked by a short period of complete sobriety. I remember getting down on my knees in my living quarters and making some kind of commitment not to drink. Everything went well but on Christmas Eve and without any premeditation I took that, for the alcoholic, fateful first drink. I had taken a vehicle into town to fill up with petrol and the garage owner offered me a Christmas drink which I took in all innocence. That was to be the start of yet another bout of uncontrolled drinking. I was virtually drunk for the next week and in the New Year made a half-hearted and therefore unsuccessful attempt to straighten out.

One of the japes a few of us got up to in Katherine was to promote the candidature of a local who was not, as they say, the full quid and used to voice all manner of odd ideas, for a seat on the proposed new Legislative Council for the Northern Territory. We devised and had broadcast over the Darwin ABC station an hilarious policy for Alf, including the provision of a soup kitchen in the main street of Katherine for the down and outs passing through as well as the planting of an avenue of mango trees to provide extra nourishment.

In the event Alf's modest level of support split the vote enabling Tom Ronan to claim the honour of being the first elected representative for the Katherine district in the new but then fairly powerless body. He was a local farmer who had also gained some publicity as the author of a prize winning novel the name of which now escapes me. The favourite candidate was the better known mining engineer and prospector, Harold 'Tiger' Brennan, whom I knew. Tiger was none too pleased but of course he later went on to bigger things and became a much loved Mayor of Darwin and is now posthumously honoured with a main Darwin highway named after him.

I must leave for later a fuller account of what I can remember of the complete mess I made of my life during the ensuing year. Suffice to say that after making quite a hash of things in Katherine I arranged a transfer back to Darwin where I worked for a time as a pay clerk in the Commonwealth Department of Health. I joined the Darwin Club where I had earlier worked briefly as a barman. Soon however I realised that I had to get out of the Territory or I would never get myself together.

So I resigned, took a plane to Adelaide, got a new job with the Commonwealth Department of Work in Woomera and after waiting a month to get security clearance finally got there aboard a lumbering Bristol Brabazon freighter to last only about ten days most of which I spent in the bar between working spells. A boon companion was a very gregarious Australian plant operator named Michael O'Leary, no relation and quite a different personality from my reserved, quiet conservative brother of the same name.

So, another spur of the moment decision to move on. I had to take the midnight rail car to Port Augusta, which I caught at the second attempt - Michael and myself were enjoying ourselves so much that I missed it at the Woomera whistlestop and someone had to race me in a jeep along the track to catch up with it - and then The Ghan back to Adelaide and on to Melbourne on The Overland.

A job with the St Kilda City Council and a week of abstinence until pay day when after a night on the town it seems that I chose to relieve myself after closing time against a Police van. I came to in the lockup next morning and got some sage advice from a Sergeant O'Connor - no relation to my now longtime friend Jim.

The Police Station and Court being directly opposite the St Kilda Town Hall where I worked I was too ashamed to face up to work where there was frequent contact between the Health Inspectors with whom I worked and the Court staff. I decided yet again to take off and took the nighttime Spirit of Progress to Sydney.

So , now aged 27, I found myself back in Sydney getting over a particularly bad binge which saw me, not for the first time, flat broke, homeless, hungry and near despair. After queuing for a Salvation Army Hostel bed I decided that camping in the Sydney Domain was preferable and I finished up putting in a week there. My Catholicism never quite left me of course and I remember going to confession at Saint Mary's Cathedral which was closeby, my confessor being none other than the redoubtable Cardinal Norman Thomas Gilroy. I also suffered some fairly mild Police harassment but generally my week of sleeping rough in mid-summer in Sydney was unremarkable except for not having anything to eat for a couple of days. I remember that up to this point I had managed to live in Australia for several years without ever being able to face a meat pie, an Aussie staple. Well, hunger is certainly the best sauce and my first bite to eat was a very well relished meat pie.

I think that it was on that occasion that I went into a phone box in Darlinghurst and frantically rifled through the Yellow Pages (Pink as they were then !) searching for some source of help to get me out of my predicament. Clearly at that time the thought that AA could help me must not have entered my consciousness.

Usually I dodged manual work like the plague but beggars can't be choosers and so after teaming up with another young down and outer who I think had provided me with the meat pie, Simon Garvey from Belfast, I took a week's work in the cellar of a brewery where I could drink all I wanted and finish with a big paypacket sufficient to move back into a room in the Cross, a favourite haunt of mine. I never did see or hear of Simon after that week and have often wondered what happened to him and hope that he too eventually found himself in calmer waters.

Soon, however, I had a quite good job as a Traffic Officer with Qantas and managed to get through nearly a year of heavy drinking without any major disaster such that I was given a posting to Lae in New Guinea where I duly arrived with a fearful hangover after an all night flight on the old DC4 Skymaster. Taken to my quarters at 8 o'clock in the morning by my new boss the tone was set by an offer of a drink at the bar which was adjacent to the staff dining room.

I loved the work and the people I was with. The job took me all over New Guinea, New Ireland and New Britain as those places were then called in the dying days of the colonial era. On one trip to Honiara in the Solomon Islands, technically an international flight, on which I acted as Purser I was met on arrival back in Lae by the whole of Qantas top management there with a demand to produce my passport. In fact I did not have one since I originally arrived in Australia on a simple Document of Identity. I had however, possibly from latent Republican sentiment, put myself on the crew manifest for the flight to Honiara, a British territory, as an Irish citizen and it seems that a sharp eyed bureaucrat back in Canberra had noticed this and had a bit of a fit because under the purser's control was the Diplomatic Mail for the British Resident in the Solomons. This of course was more likely to contain some goodies for that worthy or his lady wife than top secret despatches from the Colonial Office, Whitehall !

Actually we did not even disembark when we reached Honiara on Guadalcanal on that occasion where ordinarily we would have remained overnight. Instead we left Rabaul very early after being forced to nightstop there and we had to bring out some very important people who had been involved in a sensational trial. . There had been a gruesome murder involving a missionary and our passengers included the Anglican Bishop of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and the noted Sydney forensic psychiatrist Dr McGeorge. Trouble was that our small DC3 toilet had not been cleaned out during our hurried turnaround and as almost everyone on board seemed to have had the runs the crowded cabin was smelling to high heaven. The crew in particular was glad when the long day of island hopping was over and we were able to get back to the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Rabaul to relax and put away some ice cold beer.

Realising that I had no hope of surviving life in the Islands unless I left the booze completely alone I resolved to give it up in the approaching New Year, Which I did with no great difficulty, winning a bet that I could not stay off the booze during, I think, the month of January. Yet disaster was round the corner perhaps not entirely unrelated to the run-in I had had over the Honiara incident.

After over three months of fairly uneventful sobriety and with no prior thought of going back on the booze I nevertheless found myself falling down drunk one night after stepping in to a pub that morning in Port Moresby to get out of a tropical downpour. As simple as that. I had in the meantime got through several celebratory occasions such colleagues' birthdays, St Patrick's Day and Easter when it would have been perfectly appropriate to have a drink or two but I knew that if I did I would be unable to stop or guarantee my behaviour. Yet a shower of rain, a quick turn into a pub for shelter and inexplicably I found myself with a pint of South Pacific lager in my hand. The first of very many. Within a couple of months I had moved into a full blown bender resulting in being put on a plane South with 12 hours notice, losing my job and living back in Kings Cross, throwing around my meagre funds and laden with a huge resentment against my former employer and the world generally.

During this period my sister Pat passed through Sydney on her way to meet up in Brisbane with , I think, her then fiancée. We all had a great time while her ship was in port. I also had great intentions of keeping in touch with her and providing brotherly support while she was settling in to life in Australia. Alas, my good intentions were soluble in alcohol and the next I heard, after I had sobered up, was that Pat was back home in Dublin and married to Robert O'Farrell. That all turned out very well and they produced a talented brood who have achieved success in medicine, music, law and commerce.

After a few months in a boring clerical job in an industrial area of Sydney, which I endured chiefly to provide drinking money for my playtime in the exciting Kings Cross environment, I cleared out for Melbourne to avoid facing up to the consequences of another alcoholic escapade of which I was quite ashamed.

Happily, on this occasion after a few days and some more heavy drinking I made contact with AA. I had in fact made an earlier abortive attempt to get help in Sydney but after reaching the then AA Central Office I walked out in a bit of a huff because nobody took any notice of me ! This was probably providential since it may be that I had not then quite reached the necessary rockbottom which I believe is the essential preliminary for latching on quickly to the AA message.

So many problem drinkers come to AA after a recent episode and full of remorse and good intentions but soon things don't seem quite that bad and they imagine that with what they have now learned they can stay sober on their own. Alas only in the rarest of cases does it seem possible for the real alcoholic to go it alone. Matt Talbot, it seems, was one such case.

On this occasion I found myself in a Collins Street cinema watching "I'll Cry Tomorrow", the story of Lillian Roth's descent into alcoholism and recovery with the help of AA, a film which ordinarily I would have avoided like the plague. As it was the movie made no great impression until the last scenes which depicted the dissipated former star entertainer being taken along to an AA meeting and listening to some of the speakers tell of their own alcoholic journey and recovery into a sober and happy life.

As soon as I left the cinema I went to a phone box, looked up the AA number and address and put in my first appearance that night, not without a deal of liquid refreshment along the way. And I had great difficulty in actually making the decision outside to open the door. There was a very well spoken Englishman in the chair, a corpulent middle aged man holding forth on what I later learned was the Third Step of the AA Recovery Program, a few others sitting on the hard wooden chairs and the small upstairs rather dingy room was enveloped in cigarette smoke. I promptly excused myself and returned down the street to finish my bottle of claret in the dining room of the Junction Hotel, Saint Kilda. Those were the days of 6 o'clock closing in Melbourne and the only way to get a drink after that hour was to find a hotel with a dining room open at night.

Anyway the next day was the Caulfield Cup which I attended to no profit and I drank steadily through the day but with my mind focused on attending again that night at the AA address. Which I managed to do and from my first encounter with it I knew that AA had the answer for me. I was not all that pleased about the situation I found myself in but I accepted almost immediately that I was an alcoholic and more to the point I also accepted the implications of that reality - that I could not safely take a drink again. What I was hearing in the drunkalogues matched my own experience of the disastrous consequences of taking the first drink. I needed no persuasion that I was powerless over alcohol and still less that my life was unmanageable.

So I joined AA, developed a whole new circle of friends, got a place to live and a suitably low level job in the Correspondence Section of the then Department of Public Works. The Bolte Government had recently come to power in Victoria. I went to AA meetings on a daily basis and gradually left the old drinking life and habits behind me. More importantly as I later came to realise I had also left behind all my old drinking companions and associations so that I was free to concentrate entirely on staying sober.

Of course I soon recognised that alcohol was not my real problem but simply the means I used to escape from reality. So, minus the booze I found that I had to face up to myself as I was and this was neither a quick nor easy task. I was still the same person with all the personality difficulties and shortcomings which I had been carrying through life. For a short time in AA I think that my attitude was that having found out how to stop drinking I could more or less go on in much the same way as before without the necessity of the fundamental changes which are indeed an essential component of the recovery strategy proposed by AA.

My arrival in Melbourne coincided with the final preparations for the 1956 Olympic Games in which I have to say I had little interest. My concern was reorganising my life from a wholly new perspective which is to say not only without the option of escaping into the fantasy world which in the past alcohol had provided but also in a frame of mind which accepted that for the future drink in any form for me was out of the question. Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic. On this issue I have not changed my mind to the present day.

Happily I was able to land a minor clerical job with the State Public Service on the very first working day after I had sobered up. After a few months I moved to a better job with an airline and later became the manager of a small travel agency rejoicing in the grandiose title of Atlas World Tours from where I was, in today's jargon, headhunted to go to Brisbane to set up a whole new branch as Queensland Manager of T.M. Burke Pty. Ltd. The company was in the land development business and had just completed the very first coastal highway linking Noosa with Coolumberr on the then quite pristine Sunshine Coast.

Actually I had come to know by Noel and Mollie Burke a few years previously and other members of the well known Melbourne Burke family the *paterfamilias* of which had revolutionised suburban land and real estate development in Australia in the 1920's and 1930's. When elder son Marcus had died suddenly on the golf course Noel became M/D just as the big new Sunshine Coast development done in partnership with the Queensland Government was ready for marketing.

I was flattered to be offered the job of Queensland Manager and entered into my wholly new role energetically and fairly successfully to the point where within a couple of years the very sound cash rich T.M.Burke private company became a takeover target of a very much less secure public group. In the event Noel Burke found the offer of a multimillion pound buyout irresistible and sold.

My own future was guaranteed and for a while I got on well enough with my new masters and a rosy commercial future seemed assured. But with the departure of my old friend from the business and a completely new ethos my enthusiasm began to evaporate and for some policy reason which now completely escapes me I made a spur of the moment decision to resign.

Returning to Melbourne I took on a job trying to resurrect the fortunes of a failed Public Appeal for the Victorian Limbless Soldiers' Association and later did a short consultancy for Noel Burke's family company developing the new Grand Central Arcade in Brisbane before striking out literally in a new direction - to West Australia.

Times were bad there however and no job was forthcoming anywhere like what I had been doing so in some desperation I registered with an agency acting to recruit hotel staff.

So it was that I arrived at the Club Hotel, Derby in early January 1964 to work as a barman. Derby was something of a frontier town, architecturally and otherwise a bit of an eyesore, but a new port was being developed and the large indigenous community was on the cusp of the great change which a few years later was heralded by the successful referendum affirming the right of aboriginal persons to be counted as Australian citizens with the right to vote.

The job was live in, with meals provided and accommodation in a small bare hot hut with a cot and not much else. The work was hard, a 14 hour broken shift day, and some rough diamonds to cope with but I came to terms with all that without too much difficulty. It was there in my spare time that I set myself the task of reading the Bible for the first time from cover to cover.

I had with me a recently published copy of the then popular Knox translation which I had bought in Brisbane before going off for a week's retreat with the Trappists at Tarawarra in Victoria at a time when I had felt under some stress around the time of the takeover of the Burke business. It was the time of the Cuban missile crisis and although some news of that event filtered through the cloister at Tarawarra we were spared all the drama and excitement which I soon read about in Time magazine, one of my addictions in those days.

Anyhow, I did get through the whole Bible during those days in Derby and I count that as one of the formative undertakings of my later spiritual journeying. The ups and downs of the people of Israel strangely resonated with my own chequered life. I had already become acquainted with the New Testament which I had begun to read regularly soon after I joined AA when I also resumed the practice of the Catholic Faith. The accounts of the teachings and doings of Jesus, with which I was already fairly familiar, the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Paul and the other early disciples gave me great inspiration.

Anyhow, stuck in inhospitable Derby after a few months working in the bar with a moody Italian head barman I was able to lease a taxi from the Hotel licensee and then spent several months working a seven day week, 16 hour day making a lot of money mainly ferrying patrons to and from the one pub and also getting a lot of business from indigenous customers living on the fringes of Derby.

I had got to know got to know the Parish Priest, a laid back, laconic former solicitor, Father Don Brown, a Pallottine, to whom I confided my mind and interest in the religious life. Later I met the Provincial of the Pallottines, the charismatic Father Walter Silvester, a U-boat commander in World War II, in Derby and soon I found myself switched from thoughts of a trip back to Ireland to see my folks to making plans to go to Pallotti College Millgrove, Victoria as a student for the priesthood. Derby incidentally was in the geographically huge Diocese of Broome presided over by Bishop John Jobst, a former tank commander in the German Army. The idea was that at Pallotti I would have to set about remedying my defective education, including taking on Latin, knowledge of which was then still essential for seminarians and ignorance of which had earlier been a factor excluding me from study with the Christian Brothers in Ireland.

Beautifully situated on an elevated site in the Yarra Valley close to Mount Donna Buang the College had just been built and fitted out as a Novitiate/Seminary with funds mainly coming I believe from the German headquarters of the Order formally known as the Society of the Catholic Apostolate.

The Pallottines had been in Australia since early in the 20th century. Founded by the Roman, Saint Vincent Pallotti, with the then radical idea of working and living amongst the laity rather than living an enclosed monastic style existence apart, the Order had Houses in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth and had charge of several Mission settlements in the West.

I put in some eighteen months there interrupted at one point by my taking off on a frolic of my own to Tasmania where after a week or so I had second thoughts and thankfully was accepted back by an understanding Provincial. The life was busy but tranquil combining the usual religious exercises, some manual work and long hours in private study based on a correspondence course in preparation for the Melbourne University Adult Matriculation examination.

Ironically, just as the Church was moving to the vernacular liturgy here was I taking up from scratch the study of Latin the absence of which had earlier from enrolment as a 14 year old with the Christian Brothers in Dublin ! In the event I managed at the end of the year to get an honours level in the exam and also a fondness for the ancient language which I retain to this day.

Although the religious life did not work out and I left soon after completing the first year of my Novitiate. after a 30 day Ignatian Retreat .I still count that period as another significant turning point. For one thing I was forced back to study and I gained a new confidence that I could study successfully meaning that I was armed with some essential formal education. As mentioned, I was allowed to do intensive private full time study so as to gain the educational qualification which was a prerequisite for further clerical studies. In the event of course I did not continue with these after being told by a stern German priest at the end of a month long Ignatian retreat that I was not suited for the priesthood and indeed should never have been admitted to the seminary.

This advice was tendered to me after he had read the lengthy screed I had submitted which in AA terms we would call a 4th and 5th Step clean house process. Of course I did not have to act on the advice but I guess that, although at the time I had settled happily into the seminary routine and lifestyle, subconsciously it may have provided a welcome rationale for yet another change of direction.

In passing and for those who might be wondering what an Ignation retreat is this is a program of spiritual exercises. It is based on that devised around 1533 by Saint Ignatius Loyola after his own retreat from worldly pursuits to live for nearly a year in a cave at Manresa and the program was designed to train and prepare the group of men who followed him which he named the Society of Jesus, now popularly known as the Jesuits and notoriously so in Elizabethan England.

Another legacy of the Pallottine experience for me was meeting up with Father John Heffey, an enigmatic priest of the Melbourne Archdiocese who had been on leave for some years in pursuit of a rurally based religious ordered lifestyle. 'Heff' as he was affectionately known expounded a philosophy to which it would be difficult to put any name not least because of his idiosyncratic and elliptical mode of expression. Perhaps the slogan, "Five acres and independence" encapsulated the core of his thinking which of course was very much influenced by the English Distributists Chesterton, Belloc and perhaps Eric Gill although Heff would hardly have approved of some of the latter's more liberal ideas on sex. Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day, founders of the Catholic Worker Movement, were also admired exemplars for Father Heffey and his little group.

After leaving Pallotti I got a job first as a night porter in a hotel for a month and then a sales type job in a furniture factory. I was far from at peace with myself however and on an impulse I decided to go to Sydney to consult the late Dr Sylvester Minogue, a psychiatrist I knew and one of the founders of AA in Australia.

Sylvester's only diagnosis was that although not drinking my alcoholic personality and nature was showing and his only prescription was that I needed to go bush for a while to sort myself out. He gave me a medical certificate for six months which entitled me to the sum of eight dollars and twenty five cents a week sickness benefit. He suggested that I get some camping basics and go up to Lightning Ridge, the old opal mining settlement, to do a bit of fossicking and recover my equilibrium.

I took the advice and my life was set on yet another course. I met some very interesting characters but of all the people I met the ones who mattered most and were so very kind to me were the Bill and Pat Waterford and their family who owned and ran "Lorne" sheep station. In very different ways they were both staunch Catholics, Bill having a strong devotion to Our Lady.

Bill and his brother John were captured in Singapore in 1942 and spent the rest of the war as prisoners of the Japanese in Changi. Returning home they married into the huge O'Brien family, John to Nan, and both couples then set out to make a life on the land.

After a year at Lightning Ridge and indifferent efforts at opal mining and hawking fruit and vegetables around the camps I took off for the US where I had a sister. This was the first meeting with any family member for 15 years although I had resumed a regular correspondence with my aging parents soon after joining AA. Carmel was at the time the Irish vice-consul in San Francisco and later went on to become Consul-General in Boston. Also in San Francisco was my old friend Chris Shearman who was running in partnership with his wife Mary a very successful Bar in the financial district.

I spent an exciting year in North and Central America the latter during a short stint as second cook on a banana boat plying between Seattle, Costa Rica and Panama where I was beached for a month trying to get to South America. Finally I got a steward's job on a Norwegian tanker on a voyage through the Canal to Santa Marta in Venezuela and then up to Wilmington, Delaware where I was able to pay off. Back in the US I headed for New York, took a room in the faded Madison Square Garden Hotel - designed I believe by Walter Burley Griffin, the father of Canberra, and got casual jobs to pay my way.

The AA fellowship was then probably at its most vibrant before it became to some extent as much a haven for drug addicts as straight alcoholics. Soon after my arrival I had the great privilege of a brief meeting with AA's surviving Co-Founder, Bill Wilson, in his office at the GSO in midtown Manhattan.

For a time I worked as a sales representative on Manhattan and enjoyed the cut and thrust of the American way. I was even offered a better sales job with a large insurance company on the recommendation of one of my clients but I opted out of an opportunity to settle in the US.

An opportunity to take an automobile across to Seattle came up and so I drove across the States and found a cleaners job there, keeping an eye on the shipping lists. Soon I was working my way back to Australia in the engine room of a Norwegian tramp steamer. After spending some time in New Westminster and Vancouver we sailed for San Francisco and Long Beach. A few days out there was a major engine problem and we hove to in the middle of the Pacific. I remember we had just left Long Beach when we heard of Bobby Kennedy's assassination. Curiously my other memory from that trip was seeing the great Stanley Kubrick movie 'Dr Strangelove' featuring Peter Sellers, which perhaps we ought to see again in days like these when it is said that there is a group of people around the US President prone to engage in talk of preemptive war founded on faith in the supremacy of that country's nuclear capacity.

Back in Australia, I chose Canberra as the most likely place to make yet another new start and in fact I was to have three spells there. After some labouring work I joined the public service and then, as much because my work as a minor bureaucrat in the then Department of External, later Foreign, Affairs, was undemanding as for any better reason, I enrolled in a part time university course. In choosing a course I went right through all the degree courses on offer in the Handbook and I finally decided that the only one which interested me and which I thought I could get through was the four year LL B program.

Even then I lacked confidence in my ability to take on such a part-time workload and I consulted the Master of John XXIII College, a learned Dominican, for guidance. His name escapes me but I recall that he had quite a plummy voice and my status seemed to drop somewhat when I declined his hospitably offered 'Will you take a glass of port, Mr O'Leary' and also heard that I was living in one of the less fashionable Commonwealth Hostels in which at the time many single public servants lodged.

So in 1969 I started on a part time basis at the Australian National University and managed to get my two subjects in the Law Faculty. A bonus was the making of several new friends also in the public service and doing law. The brightest of these, Robert O'Connor, now a highly successful 'Silk' in Perth, still keeps in touch with me.

My studies were then interrupted when I took the offer of a three month assignment as a diplomatic courier travelling between Canberra New York Washington London Manila Tokyo and other South East Asian cities. Next I was offered and took a posting to the Australian Embassy in South Africa as the new Administrative Attache. Although I enrolled in some law subjects as an external student of the University of South Africa I found my job so demanding that I had to drop these.

I had spent a brief initial period in Pretoria where the Ambassador and Embassy operated while Parliament was in recess, usually for six months each year. Soon after arriving I travelled ahead of the rest of the staff to Capetown to arrange my accommodation and pick up a new Fiat car which I had purchased under the attractive diplomatic sales tax exempt policy.

I settled on a comfortable furnished apartment in Seapoint. From my lounge window I could look out on Robben Island where Nelson Mandela had been imprisoned for some years following his conviction on treason charges. I was well aware of his presence there having read his famous speech from the dock and strongly identifying with his cause. Later I moved to a house in Fresnaye, the French quarter and regularly used to walk to the Embassy in Adderley Street passing on the way some of the older Cape back streets where there was a strong smell of 'ganga' (marijuana) and a rather interestingly named Undertaking Firm, "Human & Pitt" !

Brother Eddie recently sent on to me a letter I had written to him in 1971 when I had a brief spell as acting Australian Consul in Capetown. He found it when cleaning out old papers and in a covering note described it as 'extraordinarily prescient'. Obviously I would not disagree but I note that in this extract my natural irascibility shows in the reference to my encounter with an Afrikaaner switchboard operator in the days before automated exchanges.

One of the bright spots of that period was that the White Australia Policy was ending and my immediate predecessor had already begun accepting suitably qualified Indian, Coloured and African applicants for migration to Australia. During my brief stint I visited Durban. Port Elizabeth and East London to interview several applicants from those cities.

In my work as an Administrative Attache I was not of course either involved in the political work of the Embassy or free to engage in any such activity. I was a member of a privileged foreign element in South African society. One interesting encounter I had was with the feisty opponent of apartheid, Helen Suzman MP then, with Colin Eglin another Progressive Party MP, the only real and effective questioner of the National Party government's racist policies. We shared adjoining seats on a flight from Capetown to Johannesburg and although of one mind on the racial issue we disagreed strongly on the usefulness of independent members of parliament.

Soon after taking up my duties I had a row with my superiors to do with clearing up some laxities in the accounts area which I think was one of the reasons for creating the new position which I was first to fill. No support came from the Ambassador and to force the issue for a short spell I refused to attend at all for work. Eventually a compromise was reached- the alternative being my return to Canberra - and I settled back to work having made a decision that in all the circumstances I would not serve out my full three year posting. So, half way through my term I resigned and left South Africa for Australia on one of the Italian liners from Capetown in late 1971. I was delighted to reach Fremantle and get back to the more relaxed and open Australian social environment.

My aim was to join up with a small rural religious community in the Yarra Valley with which I had a strong affinity. That was Saint Benedict's, in some ways an offshoot of an earlier settlement at Whitlands in the mountains out from Wangaratta founded by a charismatic Australian/Italian lawyer named Ray Triado who gathered a band of likeminded Catholics around him to live out a quasi-monastic Christian lifestyle based on the Rule of Saint Benedict. Here I simply note two other rural Catholic community ventures, San Isidore outside Wagga Wagga in New South Wales under the patronage of Bishop Henschke and Maryknoll in Victoria founded by Father Pooley.

I had first heard of Father Heffey from Greg Walsh a tortured soul who used to cross my path from time to time in Melbourne. He had serious psychological difficulties perhaps in part related to an inability to live out perfectly the high Catholic ideals which he espoused. He later was very active in trying to start Schizophrenics Anonymous in Australia, modelled of course on AA. I lost contact with Greg through my own constant moves but I believe that he had some success in contributing to the dispelling of some of the misconceptions about schizophrenia.

Anyhow when I was at Pallotti College I began to hear about this priest who was living in some kind of community just across the valley at Gladysdale. I met Heff, as he was affectionately known to some of his admirers, when he arrived at the College to join in the concelebrated Mass there featuring the newly ordained Father Peter Willis SAC. Peter had upset his superiors when he returned from his Sydney studies and chose to do his pre-ordination retreat with Father Heffey rather than among his local Pallottine confreres.

Soon after taking possession of my five acres at Saint Benedict's word came that my father was dying. He had reluctantly agreed to have amputated a leg which had troubled him for decades. There was some irony in this in that Surgeon McCauley who did the operation was in fact the son of the doctor who many years earlier had advised that the leg would have to go. My father had a general set against the medical profession. There were many stories told in the family of his delight in besting doctors. On this occasion however it seems that the leg had become cancerous and was an immediate threat to life. In the event after a brief splendid recovery from the trauma and even talk of getting a prosthesis fitted there was what in effect amounted to the onset of dementia. My father had begun to refuse all nourishment just before I left Australia and in the weeks that followed his only concession to eating was to agree to be taken out to a family lunch at a hotel where he hardly ate anything.

The lead up to his death was a very trying time for everyone, especially our mother who stoically accepted the situation and carried on with her simple daily routine the highlight of which was going the couple of hundred yards to 10 o'clock Mass, doing a bit of shopping and exchanging snippets of news and views with familiar neighbours and shopkeepers.

One person my father showed some regard to was his daughter in law Barbara, Eddie's wife, who was tireless in her attention and a great support for my mother despite having a young demanding family of her own to care for and also to have to drive from way over the other side of the city and home again often through Dublin's notorious traffic jams.

There was little humour about during the somewhat protracted deathwatch but one incident bears recalling. My father had been a practising Catholic all his life but with, I suspect, a fair measure of that peculiarly Irish anticlericalism combining deep reverence for the office with scorn for any man who did not conform to the ideal in the secular as well as the sacred. There was also a love for the older liturgy then being savaged by the reform enthusiasts following Vatican II. Nevertheless he obviously accepted the introduction of Mass in the vernacular and he owned a well thumbed Irish language Mass booklet at his death.

The Parish Priest, the elderly Canon Carton, called to the sickbed of someone with whom he enjoyed some degree of friendship was startled to be challenged as to his identity and sent packing as an impostor. My worried mother fearful that her husband would die without the last sacraments then arranged for one of the curates, an elderly man, to visit. This time the visitor was required as a test to recite the Nicene Creed. After intoning the very familiar opening professions of faith the priest suffered a memory bloc and began to mix the Nicene version with the Apostles Creed, which would be of little significance to even the most devout Catholics. That was all the proof the sceptical patient needed and the unfortunate old priest was denounced as another impostor and had to retire in confusion .

There was of course a sequel. The end being certainly near, relatives had gathered, including cousin Arthur from Kilcondy, who had inherited the old family farm. Daughter Pat, who had always been Da's favourite, had spent some time by his bedside and suddenly came to the kitchen to say that the priest should be called as the end was near. My mother was overjoyed as since the episode of the Nicene Creed all appeals to Da to receive a priest were rejected out of hand. Even now Da had indicated that he would receive Canon Carton and Canon Carton only, no substitute would do.

This was a cold and wintry Dublin Saturday night and there was concern that the old and not very well priest would be very reluctant to venture out at risk of another rejection. One of my brothers, Eddie I think, and I were deputed to go for him, found that he was in fact hearing Confessions in the Church and were told by a very formidable and protective housekeeper that Canon Carton should not have to go on another futile visit after already being sent away. I was however prepared if necessary to kidnap him and get him to the bedside so that at least my mother would know that nothing had been left undone to bring the Last Sacraments to her dying husband.

So, over to the Church and as soon as the penitent in the Confessional left I jumped the penitential queue and instead of pouring out my sins simply explained the situation to the surprised priest. To his credit, after initially protesting that it would be no good when he had already been sent away and another priest should be sought the Canon accepted my insistence that no time could be lost and my father would not let any other priest near him. So the good man was persuaded that if he would consent to come with us transport was right outside the door and he would be assisted in every way possible.

In the event, everything went splendidly and as soon as the priest was ushered into the sickroom he was welcomed and the two of them were left together. Soon afterwards, the Last Rites of the Catholic Church having been duly administered and Canon Carton safely returned to his post in the Church, Timothy Vincent O'Leary within the hour died in the arms of his daughter Pat, probably his favourite child.

I spent several weeks with my mother and brother Michael, a family stalwart who went on to continue looking after his mother and in effect subordinating his own interests and perhaps greater fulfilment to the performance of that duty uncomplainingly. Of all our family Michael I would say is the best loved and especially by nieces and nephews to whom he has been a benevolent presence during their growing up years.

While in Ireland I took the opportunity to visit for the first time Connemara. I spent a wonderful week based in Clifden on the Atlantic Coast doing long all day walks and taking in the famed rugged beauty of that part of the West of Ireland. The latest phase of the North of Ireland had lately begun with the Bloody Sunday murders by the British army and Bernadette Devlin, the young Republican firebrand as she was then known was due to speak at a big rally in the town.

After returning to Australia I soon found my funds running low so I took a new job in the public service and at the same time I resumed studies at Melbourne University. This involved a daily 160 kilometre round trip by car, train and tram. After a year I gave up my job as with the advent of the Whitlam Government not only were university fees abolished but a modest living allowance also became available. After a year of study I decided that in order to concentrate and succeed I should return to Canberra and do fulltime study there while also surviving with the help of some parttime work.

After struggling through a law degree and gaining a practice qualification through the Legal Workshop I was admitted as a barrister and solicitor of the High Court of Australia and the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory. While in Canberra word came that my old shack at Gladysdale, known as 'The Hermitage', in which I had allowed a young fellow to camp while I was absent had burned to the ground incinerating all my personal belongings not with me in Canberra.

I worked for a while as an employee solicitor for John Daniel Donohue, a bit of a maverick who was in some ways as eccentric as myself but much wiser and more disciplined, before moving back to the Yarra Valley where I had some hopes of reviving the little community there many of whose members had been devastated by the removal of Father Heffey's little band to Tasmania. On my return to Victoria I also got myself on the Roll of the Supreme Court there.

The Saint Benedict's Christian Community, after a brief revival and the death of Syd Rattenbury never regained its vitality. So it was back once again to the public service, this time the Australian Taxation Office in Melbourne and more long daily journeys before hanging out my shingle as a country solicitor in Yarra Junction. Concurrently I had been building a mud brick house on my block which eventually I sold before putting the roof on.

After a slow start from scratch so to speak the practice was gradually picking up such that I was faced with expanding with more staff and bigger premises which would mean borrowing capital which I did not have myself. So I decided that at my age it was time to get off the treadmill. Fortunately in those days it was still possible to get a berth back in the public service once you knew which levers to pull and I was fairly knowledgeable in this regard. Indeed I probably had a record number of spells as a permanent member of the Australian Public Service, five in all, but usually I could only last a few years before feeling stifled by the bureaucratic system of those days.

So, back to Canberra for my last stint in the bureaucracy before I had the good fortune to get an appointment to a Commonwealth statutory authority which detached me from my Department and gave me the degree of independence which my particular type needed, a reasonable income and a change of location to Adelaide as a fulltime member of the newly created Veterans' Review Board in South Australia for a five year term.

Soon after arriving in Adelaide I met Kate and in her I really found the woman I had been searching for all my life. We met at an AA meeting and married six months later in a civil ceremony. By then of course I had settled in to my new work which involved a lot of Interstate travel. But I found that my more important and difficult new job was getting used to living with, loving and thinking of a person other than myself - a new experience for someone so selfishly inclined as I had been all my life. In talking now about those early times of our marriage both of us agree that the key to surviving was our basic commitment to making it work and also our insight into each other as alcoholics, albeit free from the drinking element which is only a symptom of the alcoholic's problem.

As an aside I should mention that both of us cherish the vital and much misunderstood AA principle of anonymity but hold each other free to disclose our status as recovering alcoholics. Use of the present tense in this context is of course also a difficulty for non-alcoholics but that is another subject which need not be dealt with now.

Kate had been told by a friend of hers who had run into me a few times at meetings after I had arrived in Adelaide: "I've met your husband"! And another friend had also told her about an Irishman who had just appeared on the scene that she should meet.

Our first meeting was at the Norwood Group where, after I had been pointed out to her, Kate greeted me with one of those stock Gaelic 'How are you' phrases, and I responded in kind. We soon confessed that these in fact constituted all the Irish we knew. That was hardly important however as in so many other respects we found plenty in common, culturally and spiritually.

Kate was an O'Callaghan, originally from Cork City, who first came to Australia in 1951 on the maiden voyage of the *RMS Oronsay*, the same vessel on which I came out on her second voyage. My own paternal ancestors all came from Kilcondy between Cork and Macroom.

It transpired that we were both in Jersey in the Channel Islands not long before coming to Australia. Kate went to Alice Springs in the Northern Territory soon after arriving, I went to Darwin. Later I found myself in New Guinea and Kate has told me that she was aiming to go there at one point but an early marriage to the Director of the Royal Flying Doctor Service ended those plans. Having met and married Don Gooding and borne three children, David, Karen and Mark, the marriage ended in 1978 and Kate had been living in Adelaide since her return from London in 1980.

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So, our paths did not finally cross until January 1985 at an AA meeting in Adelaide. We shared a common love and enthusiasm for AA which Kate had joined in London in 1979 and I in Melbourne in 1956. Kate, already divorced, had made some steps towards seeking a Canonical annulment but had given up in despair at the burdensome and lengthy process.

Meeting up with Kate put an end to the long search for a suitable mate which in my case involved many false starts. So this would be a very distorted record if it did not refer however cryptically to the several fleeting to brief relationships in which I was involved. Perhaps I'll find a way to expand a little on at least some of the more significant encounters later on as I set down things past but for now it will be sufficient to note that between 1955 and 1980 there were no less than seven - yes, after surveying this aspect of my history I found yet another seven - such relationships all of which would have taken an emotional toll on one and sometimes both parties. And I guess that I would have to acknowledge that in most cases, as well as the very human factors to do with personality and cultural issues, differences over religious values played a big part in each breakup.

I had nearly given up hope of finding the right person by the time I moved to Adelaide. Yet as soon as I met Kate I felt a new hope and as I got to know her my confidence that this was it grew day by day. By this time I had reached the view that if Kate wanted to marry me I would let nothing prevent us coming together. So we settled on a civil marriage which took place without any fanfare. My own thinking had developed to the point where I had no great difficulty in simply taking note of Church law, of which we were seemingly in breach, but continuing on as usual with Catholic religious practice.

As it happened we were living in the Saint Francis Xavier Cathedral parish in Adelaide and in due time Kate's annulment matter was revisited in the Marriage Tribunal there which resulted in an annulment decree in 1990 enabling us to sacramentally celebrate our marriage with our friend Monsignor Robert Aitken as the celebrant.

Unquestionably, a major influence on my life has been my inherited Catholicism. I would say that until about 1957 I had not yet begun to seriously consider the rational underpinnings for my religious faith. Although I read a good deal this was chiefly the pious material of the time plus some more widely read religious material including Thomas Merton's "Elected Silence".

"The Imitation of Christ " by Thomas a'Kempis made a profound impact on me. Indeed I remember being so moved by a first acquaintance with that book that I mentioned it in correspondence with my sister Carmel who indicated her agreement as to its spiritual value. This approval was of some importance to me as Carmel was the standout intellect of the family and was held in some awe on this account. On a less lofty note it was Carmel who commended to me when I was about fifteen the reading of P.G. Wodehouse to improve my English and I have been a devotee ever since. Hardly a day goes by without my reading something about Lord Emsworth, Jeeves, Psmith , Ukridge or some of the many other marvellous Wodehouse characters who have I think helped preserve my sanity by giving me a different perspective during some of life's bleak periods.

Carmel's unremitting devotion to study and her work as well as edifying her family and friends has also brought her scholastic and academic success and an interesting and varied career in the Irish Civil Service, her final overseas post being Consul-General in Boston. At last report she was in an almost hyperactive retirement and in the process of bringing out a biography of the noted Fenian and sometime Tasmanian transportee William Smith O'Brien.

In the spiritual realm, however, my real awakening began when I discovered and adopted the recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous which in turn led me to become much more active as a Catholic in practical and intellectual terms. This in my experience was by way of a departure from the more usual path of members of AA who were Catholic. While many of these who gained sobriety with the help of AA no doubt retained and even developed their religious practice, my experience has been that those Catholics who join AA find its program and philosophy sufficient in itself and they let go of other religious practice and affiliation. That has not been my own path.

For whatever reason I was never satisfied that I could find any better way spiritually than through sticking with the Church even though many times I found myself at odds with institutional Catholicism and especially the ecclesiastical bureaucracy. More than once I have had to fall back on Jesus's admonition to his disciples against the religious leaders of the day, ' Do what they tell you but do not do what they do ' !

I was fortunate, I think, to develop a great love for reading a variety of religious and spiritual literature. Thomas Merton of course was an early favourite but I read also many of the standard religious classics such as ' The Cloud of Unknowing ', ' The Sacrament of the Present Moment ' as well as several of the works of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a much misunderstood visionary.

His "Le Milieu Divin" was for me perhaps the most accessible work of a man who remains, with that other modern Jesuit writer, Anthony de Mello, a very controversial figure in modern Catholicism. One of his earliest and most trenchant critics was the noted philosopher Jacques Maritain - Jack Martin as my old friend Paddy Handley from St Benedict's preferred to Anglicise the name of one of his heroes - and nowadays one can still read denunciations of the great Jesuit mystic by conservative Catholics who prefer their Christian religion all nice and tidy and not upset by the introduction of new ideas from uncertificated visionaries !

Another defining experience was first my effective exposure to the Catholic Charismatic Movement in Canberra in 1976, which had its beginnings among a group of Catholics at Notre Dame University in 1967, when I was going through a very low trough following the ending of a brief affair. It was then for the first time that I had a glimpse of the personal love of God as opposed to the more distant just God who had been such a presence throughout my life and in my consciousness. Here again however I must say that this idea of a judgemental or punishing God was not something drilled in to me by teachers, priests or other external instructors but rather the fruit of my own self education in the religious sphere. Naturally of course this learning was mediated through those human sources but the degree of acceptance of what was on offer remained still for me to decide.

In the realm of the spirit, a more profound and continuing influence was my introduction to the ancient tradition of Christian meditation, rediscovered, revived and promoted by the late John Main OSB and now spreading worldwide under the influence of the Holy Spirit and the World Community for Christian Meditation under the leadership of Laurence Freeman OSB, his successor.

This came about originally through wife Kate's attendance at a group in the Mercy Convent in Adelaide when curiosity spurred me to make some further enquiries and soon began attending the regular Thursday group. Since then I have the opportunity to attend two of the annual John Main Seminars, 2000 in Belfast where His Holiness the Dalai Lama was the keynote speaker and accompanied by Kate in Sydney in 2001 which was led by the man soon to become Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams then Archbishop of Monmouth and Primate of Wales.

My experience over the past decade or more of sustained involvement with meditation groups under the umbrella of the World Community for Christian Meditation has I believe been responsible for making me a lot more tolerant and understanding of perspectives other than Roman Catholic in the great Christian tradition. This is especially so with regard to the Anglican Church which of course was a background presence in my youth as the Church of Ireland.

Living most of my life in Australia with some exposure to somewhat similar predominantly Anglo-Saxon societies in England, South Africa and North America there were times and situations when I had glimpses of the strong antipathy for all things Catholic by those controlling the levers of power in government as well as the commercial and cultural arena. So as a Christian of convictions sourced in the Catholic ethos the task has in a sense always been to be counter-cultural without being constantly at odds with those around me of a different hue.

A strong interest in the history of the English Reformation through familiarity with the case of Thomas More's treatment at the hands of King Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell had a very profound influence on my thinking and attitudes towards Anglicanism since I first saw "A Man for all Seasons", with Robert Speaight in the lead, performed in Brisbane in the early 1960's, some years before the movie of the same name was made. Doubtless of course because of my background as a Catholic from the South of Ireland I would have carried through life a deal of prejudicial baggage to do with Protestantism generally.

I think that it is very important for anyone interested in Western Christianity to become familiar with the events on the Continent to do with the Lutheran phenomenon and the history of the Tudor/Elizabethan/ Stuart/ Calvinist/Puritan religious developments in Britain.

While my opinion remains that the hounding of More and his subsequent show trial, conviction on perjured evidence and judicial murder remains one of the worst stains on the record of English justice, in recent times I have come to accept that the ecclesiastical offspring of that period in English history has in God's providence come to occupy a legitimate and perhaps vital place in the contemporary Christian fold.

In passing I may note that whereas some if not most of the younger generation seem to have given up on any form of religious worship two of my nieces for whom I have great affection and respect, have moved from Roman to Anglo-Catholicism, obviously for reasons which seemed good for them. Indeed the husband of one, that I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting, is in Anglican Orders.

Here I would also have to say that meeting and hearing Rowan Williams at the John Main Seminar in Sydney had a big impact on my thinking about the Anglican Church and gave me a new insight and respect for the authentic spirituality of its committed members. My respect for the man himself has increased since then, especially for his willingness to voice concerns about his Church being part of the English establishment as well as for his outspokenness against President Bush and Prime Minister Blair during their rush to war against Iraq.

As I concluded these reflections Archbishop Williams was attracting more flak for his unwillingness to distance himself sufficiently from a decision to appoint a new Bishop with an acknowledged active homosexual past. Although that issue seems for the time being to have been resolved it will likely return in some new controversy which will feed the voracious sexual appetite of the media. For myself, I think that the real issue which sooner or later Anglicans will have to confront is the legacy of the priapic Tudor monarch responsible for the arrogation to himself and his successors in office of the role and title of Head of the Church.

The central reality of my own life is still an unshakeable belief in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and an acceptance of the implications of this belief, including the Apostolic succession with its dubious record of good, bad and indifferent occupiers of Peter's special place. Faith grounded in that reality is the great gift which has carried me through life so far and kept me more or less sane in difficult times and of course I have been fortunate to have lived through the reign of John Paul II and his immediate and respected predecessors, *pace* the campaign of denigration of Pius XII sparked by the publication of Rolf Hockhuth's play, "*The Representative* ", in the 1960's.

That I suppose is the reason for my continued membership of the Roman Catholic Church which, with all its humanly inevitable flaws, conspicuously evident in recent times through the widely publicised sexual crimes, failings and peccadilloes of some prelates, priests and religious, remains for me the only possible spiritual base on this earth. "To whom shall we go, Lord ? " remains as poignant a plea today as when Peter answered the question of Jesus.

Yet as I have grown older it has become increasingly clear that it is a commitment to the person of Jesus Christ that is important rather than to the Church as an institution with all its political, social, liturgical, canonical and ceremonial baggage which has accumulated down the centuries since those simple little Christian communities of the first century which we read about in the Acts of the Apostles and the Letters of Peter, Paul, James and John.

Finally far from believing that the world as we know it is nearing its use by date I am convinced that human history has barely begun and that as far as Christianity is concerned those of us who try to follow Jesus have hardly begun to comprehend what he was on about. Once we do or, more to the point, when succeeding generations of Christians gain more spiritual enlightenment, then those who for whatever reason stand apart will be confronted with people whose lives exemplify the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, fidelity, tolerance and self-control about which Paul wrote to the Galatians.

As most of those who will get a copy of these now rambling reflections will have been baptised into the Catholic Church, whatever their present stance about religion, I can't resist concluding with an extract from the *Christian Traveller*, the monthly newsletter of the Saint Ignatius Parish, Norwood, South Australia which I picked up while attending a day retreat run by our local World Community for Christian Meditation branch. It is part of an article headed "The longer and wider view" by Terry Kelly S.J. He says, in part,

"People worry about the church today, as they worried about it at the Reformation and in the 19th century when Evolution became relevant, and indeed in the first century. Around the year 70AD, the Christian community was expelled from the Jewish community, of which it was thought it was an intrinsic part, and must have felt in great danger. Yet it flourished. It flourished mainly because of Saint Paul who had been a liberated apostle, breaking copious new ground, theologically and geographically. He found the Spirit alive in many different non-Jewish people, fought for their inclusion within the ranks of Christ's followers - and as non-Jews - and the Church took on new life. Christ had come to the rescue by inspiring Paul in the celebrated vision and conversion.

At the time of the Reformation, the Church was in many ways corrupt. As whole countries defected, God was at work, restoring the Church to greater holiness at the Council of Trent, being with the reformers, at least as time went on, to open up the Scriptures to us and inspiring our own Ignatius in his eleven month stay in the cave at Manresa. "

For all that, we are probably only in the very early stages of the Christian journey from confrontational denominationalism to sincere ecumenism. Likewise we have barely started to glimpse the deep spiritual values which permeate the great Eastern religions and I suppose that in time too a way may open up towards bridging the seemingly unbridgeable chasm between the religious belief systems of East and West.

I feel very privileged to have lived not only through my own sometimes turbulent three quarters of a century while holding on to the precious gift of faith passed on by my parents and other mentors and also to be part of that great movement away from the absolutism of an earlier period which was perhaps sometimes a convenient cover for an underlying insecurity to do with having to explain or defend a menu of beliefs and practices which in a sense had been foisted on us at a time when we were too young or immature to give free assent.

For now however I would agree with the remark of G.K. Chesterton, I think it was , that Christianity has not been found wanting, it has been tried and found too hard. ! More optimistically I have come to put great faith in the statement from Saint Paul : “ All things combine together to work for good with those who love God “ (Romans 8 : 28) . And from Julian of Norwich : “ The worst has already happened, and has been repaired “ ! (Revelations of Divine Love).

After several months of adding snippets to the original speaker notes mentioned at page one I managed to close off this now much lengthier screed just before leaving on *The Ghan* for Alice Springs and thence by road to Barrow Creek, Tennant Creek, Mataranka and Darwin, returning vi^a Katherine for the final AA Round-Up weekend in the Alice in mid-August. When we get back home there will be some further developments to do with our future living arrangements related to a deterioration in Kate's mobility. For this reason the trip will be a useful test to gauge capacity in that regard. So, watch this space.

Thank you for your time, as media presenters, trained in the time is money school, often say. Was it Seneca, or maybe it was Cicero, who said : “ The hours perish, and are charged to our account. “ ! But who keeps the books ?

