

God and Australian Federation – A Mismatch?

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Abstract: The paradigms for theological discussion of public affairs were set by Eusebius of Caesarea, who believed they could accurately be located within God's providence, and by Augustine who was sceptical. While most theologians would follow Augustine in restricting themselves to an ethical rather than a theological account, a rich theology of the multiform body of Christ suggests a distinctively Christian perspective for reflecting on events like the Centenary of Australian Federation (1901-2001).

IN 1901, THERE WAS SINGULARLY little explicitly theological comment on the Federation of the Australian states. Most likely there will be equally little during the Centenary of Federation. This reticence is not for want of willingness to speak of public events but out of a perceived lack of fit between theology and public events, particularly events which have no high symbolic value. During the Olympic Games, for example, Cathy Freeman's symbolically laden lighting of the torch was often a theme for preaching. Her gold medal victory was usually only a trope.

The reason for reticence is not that theologians are usually short of a word; it lies in the difficulty of relating our words to the Word. While we might speak ethically about the Olympics, about the goodness of human aspiration or the false values of success, it is harder to speak persuasively and concretely of them within theological discourse. We find it hard to say how human celebrations and activities might be related to God's work in the world through Jesus Christ.

The desire to celebrate public events by locating them within an account of the Gospel is long standing. So is scepticism about any attempt to do so. In this essay, I would like to look at Eusebius' response to the thirtieth anniversary of Constantine's rule in 331 AD. His oration is significant because it offers an early reflection on a reign that had transformed the position of the church within the Roman Empire. I shall also consider briefly Augustine's scepticism about the possibility of giving an explicitly theological account of contemporary historical events, before suggesting that an explicitly Christian theology

may offer a distinctive perspective and set of questions on events of political and national importance, like the centenary of Federation.

EUSEBIUS' TRICENNIAL ORATION

In his oration, delivered in Constantinople in the presence of the Emperor, Eusebius was conscious of attempting something new. While a modern reader recognises it easily as eulogy, and may find in it nothing to dispel the notion that Eusebius was a sycophantic courtier, the text questions this assumption.¹ Eusebius announces hopefully from the beginning that his hearers "prefer to the Emperor's human achievements the virtues of the emperor which are pleasing to God and his devout accomplishments."² And the listing of even these virtues occupies a small place in the speech. Eusebius is more concerned to fit Constantine and the Empire into the larger narrative of God's providential action through the Word. Indeed, the Oration ultimately is less an account of Constantine's achievements than a statement of the theological criteria by which his accomplishments can be judged.³

Eusebius grounds his praise of Constantine in the iconic relationship between divine sovereignty and imperial sovereignty.⁴ Constantine's seminal virtue was to acknowledge the sovereignty of the one God,⁵ which enabled him to see his subjects as fellow creatures, and allowed him to model his administration on divine government. Eusebius then compares Constantine's imperial policies with God's rule, emphasising his role as teacher. Constantine encouraged faith in the one God among his subjects,⁶ and discouraged idolatry by supporting those who melted down idols and confiscated the precious metals released. He also destroyed temples associated with prostitution or homosexual license.⁷ In return for this fidelity, God allowed Constantine to enjoy a long reign and to pass down his Empire to his children.

1. A recent and swingeing criticism of Eusebius on this score is by K. Gutzman, "Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea and his Life of Constantine: A heretic's legacy", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 42 (1997), 351-358. M. Hollerich, "Religion and politics in the Writings of Eusebius: Reassessing the first Court Theologian", *Church History* 59 (1990) 309-325, argues persuasively against the common dismissal of Eusebius as no more than a Constantinian apologist. He correctly situates Eusebius' treatment of Constantine into a more general relating of history and theology. The negative judgement on Eusebius' obsequiousness perhaps arises partly from the understandable assumption that bombastic language always discloses chauvinist attitudes.

2. Eusebius, *De Laudibus Constantini* Prologue (PG 20, 1317B). The translation of early texts throughout this paper is my own.

3. For a comparison with contemporary eulogy, see Libanius, *Oration* 13 on Julian. Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, however, offers a more fulsome account.

4. Eusebius, *De Laudibus Constantini* 2-5 (PG 20, 1325A-1339A)

5. Eusebius, *De Laudibus Constantini* 1.3 (PG 20, 1325C-1328B).

6. Eusebius, *De Laudibus Constantini* 1.3 (PG 20, 1325C-1328B).

7. Eusebius, *De Laudibus Constantini* 8 (PG 20, 1358D-1361A)

Eusebius' deeper concern however, is to locate imperial prosperity theologically in an account of God's nature and dealings with the world. He argues that the root of worldly prosperity lies in the recognition of the importance of unity in the world, and in the acknowledgment of the source of unity. In Eusebius' account, the principle and source of unity is the Father. From that source derives the Word whose creative and ordering work is the principle of harmony within creation. The sub-human world is created for human beings. When human beings use their own reason to recognise and to respect the work of the Word within the unified order of creation and are so led to the one Father, they will live in harmony with one another and with the rest of creation. The unity based on the recognition of one Father finds its counterpart in a harmonious life lived under one Emperor:

God, the Emperor of all, is proclaimed to all, and his Evangelical Word joins the human race to the King of all, proclaiming the Gospel of the beneficent and heavenly Father to his children on earth. Victory songs extol him, and every mortal being sings in harmony with the angelic choirs of heaven.... Races of east and west are educated in his teaching. and are united in acceptance of the same laws and teaching in pursuing a devout life, in praising the one Lord of all, in acknowledging the only begotten Son and saviour as the cause of every blessing, and in acknowledging the Emperor as the one ruler on earth.⁸

This account of the relationship between divine and imperial unity is not innovative, displaying, as it does, familiar Platonist and Stoic elements.⁹ Eusebius deploys it, however, in order to ground reflection on the empire within a Christian account of the world, which could be shared and commended to non-believers. This concern leads him to develop a civil or apologetical theology that can deal with the public human condition through the lens of the classic Christian doctrines of God, creation, fall and redemption.

Eusebius must then deal with the actual, disharmonious state of the human world. He attributes this disharmony to polytheism, which is demonically inspired.¹⁰ Humanity moved away from acknowledgment of the one God to endorse a multiplicity of Gods, increasingly more crassly material and perverse. In turn, the acknowledgment of many gods led to pernicious practices such as human sacrifice, and also naturally caused divisions, faction and the breakdown of civil society.¹¹

8. Eusebius, *De Laudibus Constantini* 10.6 (PG 20, 1373 B-D).

9. See G. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, 2nd rev. ed.; (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986) 143-45.

10. Eusebius, *De Laudibus Constantini* 7 (PG 20, 1352C) 13 (PG 20 1497A).

11. Eusebius, *De Laudibus Constantini* 13 (PG 20, 1401A).

So, acknowledgment of one God and harmonious life under one ruler gave way to polytheism, a disordered life and to murderous anarchy.

To this situation God offers a remedy through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This forms part of a providential plan to draw humanity back to recognition of the one God and to a rational and harmonious life. In Eusebius' account, Christ deals with the destructive effects of polytheism pedagogically. By acting bodily, the Word is able to teach, provides a refutation of the power of idols for people who looked for God in material reality, and also offers fresh and convincing evidence of his existence and activity in the world.¹² His death and Resurrection showed that the power of death had been overcome.

God's providential plan also involves the Roman Empire, whose unity under one emperor overcame human divisions and created conditions favourable for the spread of the Gospel. Emperors flourish to the extent that they encourage recognition of the Word and, through him, of the Father. Eusebius sees the prosperity of the Empire as favourable to God's work in Christ, but also as conditional on the encouragement it gives to Christianity and to the recognition of one God and Word.¹³

At one time the races of the earth and the entire human race were divided into provincial, national and local governments, into tyrannical and factional governments. The results were war, conflict, famine and enslavement. One would correctly attribute these things to the deceit of polytheism. But when the saving instrument, the holy body of Christ, was revealed to be stronger than demonic deceit and to be immune from evil in deed or word, and was raised as a monument against demons, all demonic power was abolished. Neither did separatist and factional governments, tyrannies and democracies, nor the resulting local famines and sieges continue. But the one God was proclaimed to all peoples. Simultaneously, the one and universal Roman Empire flourished, and the inveterate, inexorable and implacable hostility between nations was abolished. As the knowledge of the one God was transmitted to all human beings, together with a single form of piety, the saving teaching of Christ, so at one and the same time, the one rule extended through the whole Roman Empire and brought a profound peace to all. At the one and same time, by the will of the one God, two branches grew to benefit human beings - the Roman Empire and the teaching of true religion.¹⁴

12. Eusebius, *De Laudibus Constantini* 14 (PG 20, 1407C).

13. For the background and detail of Eusebius' treatment of the emperors in his *Church History*, see R. Grant, "Eusebius and Imperial Propaganda", in H. Attridge and G. Hata (eds.), *Eusebius, Christianity, & Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1992) 652-86.

14. Eusebius, *De Laudibus Constantini*, 6.1 (PG 20, 1421B-1424A).

Because Eusebius places so much weight on the pedagogical character of the Word acting through history and through the life and death of Jesus Christ, he must be able to demonstrate how we can know God's work in history. He argues that it is evident in the harmony that follows from acknowledgment of the one God through the Word. It is also evident in the fulfilment of prophecy, particularly in the destruction of the temple, evident in the heroic life and death of the martyrs, and finally evident, too, in the prosperity and peace that attended Constantine and the Empire after the favour shown Christianity.

EUSEBIUS' THEOLOGY OF PUBLIC EVENTS

Eusebius' incorporation of Constantine's anniversary into theology is relatively simple but is in its own way impressive. In the first place, he appeals to a public or apologetic theology that is available to all who read the world honestly. His understanding of a rationality embodied in the harmony and structured interdependence of the cosmos, and depending on a divine principle of rationality that depended ultimately on the Father who is beyond being, established with many of his non-Christian readers a common ground that could be tested against a shared experience of the world. Eusebius' presentation of the pedagogical work of the Word in Jesus Christ was also supported by publicly available contemporary evidence that could persuade the well-intentioned hearer. Constantine's life, then, is situated within a publicly available account of God's action through the Word.

Second, Eusebius gives an explicitly religious and philosophical account of society and its predicaments. He relates the discontents and conflicts in society to an incorrect understanding of God and God's relationship to the world, which are in turn encouraged by demonic forces. Similarly, when society returns to correct adherence to the one God who is known through the Word, it will find prosperity and harmony under a single ruler who images God's rule. Prosperity and harmony in society, then, derive from faith in one God and in one Word who is made visible in Jesus Christ. This faith and the vision that flows from it find their natural expression in and adherence to a single ruler, which in turn guarantees prosperity.

Third, as a corollary of Eusebius' understanding of society, public events bear signs of God's providential activity whose shape can be read within them. For if the acknowledgment of God's unity through the work of his Word leads to harmony and prosperity, it follows that where we find harmony and prosperity, we may reasonably argue to God's providence. In particular, where an imperial government encourages acceptance of the true God and displays wise and prudent administration, then we can assert on sound theological grounds that God underwrites the prosperity that the Emperor will certainly enjoy.

And conversely, in Eusebius' view, if emperors persecute Christians for their adherence to the Word, or Jews turn away from the Word, disaster will beset them.

Fourth, the public events which are taken into theology are the large events which involve emperors and nations. Furthermore, they are seen from the large perspective of public policy and cultural influence – the standpoint of imperial policy and public affairs – and not from the experience of those who are affected by such policies.

In trying to give a theological account of the large public events, Eusebius set himself an ambitious task. He compounded the difficulty by adopting an apologetical framework, which demanded a public theology. The public nature of his theology was commendable, for it enabled conversation with those who were not Christian about the directions of public life. But it left him vulnerable at two points. First, it led him to define Christ's work in almost exclusively pedagogical terms, and to situate the persuasive power of the Christian narrative in reasonable argument. This makes it very difficult for him to incorporate the counter-cultural aspects of Jesus Christ's life and the paradoxes of the cross and reconciliation within his theology. Secondly, the belief that God's providence is invested in particular outcomes is always likely to be tested sorely by new events. A pious emperor may be humiliated and killed; a perverse emperor like Julian might decide to fund the rebuilding of the Jewish temple, and so falsify prophecy. If historical events can substantiate faith, it must also be possible that they can discredit it.

AUGUSTINE

By Augustine's time, the argument from public events had been turned on its head. Critics of Christian faith argued that the unprecedented sack of Rome by the Goths in 410, proved that the decision to believe in one God and to abandon the traditional gods and associated practices caused this sign of divine disfavour.

This provided the occasion for Augustine to write the *City of God*, which developed into a meditation on the relationship between faith and human culture. To what extent he had Eusebius in mind is doubtful, but his response to the questions posed by Eusebius' account was sharp and sceptical.¹⁵ While Augustine could read signs of God's providence in times of prosperity, and praised Theodosius for seeing off the threat of a pagan revival as effusively as Eusebius praised Constantine,¹⁶ this was not his natural metier.¹⁷ He argued that while

15. The best account is still that by R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

16. Augustine, *City of God* 5.26 (CCL 47, 157).

nothing happened without a purpose, God's reasons were impenetrable without special revelation. He put the point offensively, reminding his hearers that God assigned empire to the Persians, the great enemies of the Romans, and to the best and worst of emperors: "So (the one God) gave rule to Marius and also to Gaius Caesar, to Augustus and to Nero... the same God who gave the Empire to Constantine the Christian gave it also to Julian the Apostate."¹⁸

Furthermore, he attributed the building of the Roman Empire to a morally ambiguous pursuit of peace and glory, which called into question its pretensions to divine legitimisation.¹⁹ Deprived of the legitimacy that the empire might enjoy as a divine project, the individuals who served the empire carried in their own lives the relationship to God. Augustine's test of individuals asked whether they belonged to the kingdom of God or the human kingdom. Those who pursued the kingdom of God might be led to public service because it was necessary to defend the peace in which people could serve God faithfully, but they would lack any sense of high calling or any illusion about what such necessity entailed. Augustine's view of a judge's proper attitude to his work is characteristically sombre. After analysing the ineffectiveness of torture which he saw as necessary to the judge's work of uncovering truth, he remarked,

How much more reflective and humane an attitude will he display if he recognises the wretchedness in his necessity, hates it, and - if he is devout - cries out to God, "Deliver me from my necessities."²⁰

In the Augustinian world, public life stands under ethics, but it has a privileged place neither in God's providence nor in theological reflection.

This view of public life was consistent with Augustine's primary interest in God's providential care of the individual human person. In identifying where God's providence leads the individual, he is also profoundly aware of the tangled inclinations of the human heart which leads us to misread both our own motivation and God's will for us. To recognise where God is leading us personally requires illumination by God's grace. To know how human events which involve the hidden motivation of so many individuals stand in God's sight is impossible unless, as in the case of the events narrated in Scripture, we have a

17. Markus, *Saeculum*, 71, argues to a considerable development of Augustine's ideas in the course of writing the *City of God*.

18. Augustine, *City of God* 5.21 (CCL 47, 157).

19. In *City of God* 19.21 (CCL 48 (687), Augustine deconstructs the Empire by using Cicero's definition of the State as including justice. Given the absence of justice, the state has the moral legitimacy of a band of robbers. Augustine later adopts a more useable definition of the civil power.

20. Augustine, *City of God* 19.6 (CCL 48, 671).

revealed account. The best that we can do is to give an ethical account for the actions of individual rulers.

Thus, Augustine's account undermines the major theses of Eusebius' public Christian theology and the confidence that public events can be situated confidently in God's providence. To know and give oneself to the Father of the Word requires such radical transformation of the human heart that the work of Christ can only be described therapeutically rather than pedagogically. Furthermore, while public events find their reasons in divine providence, that providence is hidden from us, so that no theological inferences can be drawn from particular events or situations. Moreover, because the privileged theological locus is the human heart, the public shape of imperial lives and action counts less than the personal faith and motivation which inspires them. They are subject to political ethics.

That sceptical view leaves a vacuum in which comment on public affairs takes place. Augustine fills it fairly conventionally in ways that re-establish some common ground with Eusebius, and leave room for many approaches to the relationship between church and state. In dealing with imperial reigns and climactic events, he does ascribe reasons, more to illustrate the different shapes of divine providence than to relate it definitively to these events.²¹ Elsewhere, he evaluates imperial actions by the service that they offer to the church. This, however, is an ethical and not a theological perspective.

Two further factors influence Augustine's attitude to public affairs, inclining him to see them from above. Because of his focus on personal motivation, he sees public action from the perspective of the influential actors, and because of his doctrine of providence he sees public events as intended or allowed by God for our salvation. We must therefore make the best we can of them. This perspective encourages passivity in those affected by imperial action.

Augustine's demolition of Eusebius' theological account of public affairs generally prevailed in Western Christianity, which had to deal with the effective invisibility of the Emperor. The critical sacrifice of paradox that needs to be made in order to establish a civil theology, and the painful recognition that today's public blessing can become tomorrow's curse, ensure that most commentary on public events is ethical. The grounds for ethical judgement differ, ranging from an understood duty to serve the truth of Catholic faith to the defence of the common good more narrowly understood. But generally, the ethical analysis of public life is first of personal morality, and secondly an analysis from a general and philosophical perspective. Where appeal to the Gospel is made, it is made in order to illuminate motivation or to

21. Augustine, *City of God* 5.26 (CCL 47 161).

give priority to some values over others, and not to derive principles for evaluation.

In commentary on Australian identity, Augustine can be recognised more easily than Eusebius. Admittedly, prior to Federation, some Christians spoke in elevated terms of Australian destiny, combining themes from Vergil with those from prophetic literature. So, James Jefferis spoke eloquently of Australia's civilising role in the region:

rule over the barbarous peoples who inhabit these seas, if they wish us to, with justice and moderation, and to found a peaceful empire, open to all the world, in which the highest results of civilisation, the most perfect liberty of thought and speech and worship, may find full and ample expression.²²

Jefferis, however, was influenced more by a secular understanding of progress than by the large theological vision of Eusebius. Most Australian writers avoided comment in large terms. And it is significant that a poet who did sketch Australian beginnings on a large canvas, James McCauley, in the end explicitly contrasted the large national destiny with the smaller vision of the individual heart. Augustine again triumphs over Eusebius.

Terra Australis you must celebrate,
Land of the inmost heart, searching for which
Men roam the earth, and on the way create
Their kingdoms in the Indies and grow rich,
With noble arts and cities; only to learn
They bear the old selves with them that could turn
The streams of Eden to a standing ditch.²³

THE THREEFOLD BODY OF CHRIST

Granted the fatal weaknesses inherent in developing public theologies in order to locate public events, an alternative strategy may commend itself. This involves reflecting on public events from within a distinctively Christian theology based in the paradoxes of the Gospel and in the patterns of church that embody them. I would like now to explore the perspective on political events that emerges out of a theology built around the body of Christ.

This theological theme has been richly developed in recent years to integrate three aspects: the earthly and resurrected bodily existence of Christ; the communal body of Christ in the church; and the Eucharistic body of Christ. It is sometimes also developed tentatively to embrace

22. W. Phillips, *James Jefferis: Prophet of Federation* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1993) 180.

23. J. McCauley, *Captain Quiros* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1964) 81.

the universe as the cosmic body of Christ. To hold together these different aspects of the image of the body of Christ requires an associative theological imagination, one that can hold together and move easily from one aspect of the image to another. In Western Eucharistic theology, this imagination was eroded in the medieval debates about the presence of Christ, as the theologians analysed the unique character of the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, and privileged the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist over other forms of presence. It is not surprising, therefore, that the sources of contemporary theology are patristic rather than scholastic, and that the theology relies more on attending to the resonance of symbols than on an analytical methodology.

In outline, the theological development of the body of Christ is fairly simple.²⁴ It appeals especially to the Pauline image: "The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:16-18). Paul's subsequent enigmatic reference to discerning the body in the context of the celebration of the Eucharist by a divided community (1 Cor 11:29), and particularly his association of the image of the body with the Spirit in his discussion of the church (1 Corinthians 12), are also drawn into the theology. Patristic theologians developed the connections between Eucharist and church most strongly through the exegesis of John 6, the *locus classicus* of Eucharistic reflection, with its references to other places in John where the disciples are said to remain in Christ. In meditating on the part played by the Spirit in constituting the body of Christ as a reconciling act through the sacrificial bodily self-giving of Christ, theologians explore implications of Eph 2:11-22. The similar hymn in Col 1:15-23 is available for discussion in relation to the cosmic implications of the metaphor. Those who develop the theme of the threefold body also draw extensively on the writings of Augustine and Cyril of Alexandria and on Henri de Lubac's study of the early understanding of the Eucharist as the mystical body and the Church as the real body, and of the later reversal of these titles.²⁵ The connection between Eucharist and Church emerges best in the key text of Augustine:

If you are the Body of Christ and his members, your own mystery has been placed on the Lord's table; you receive your mystery. You answer *Amen* to what you are, and by answering you subscribe; for you hear, *The Body of Christ* and you answer,

24. See for example, M. Figura, "Church and Eucharist in the light of the Trinitarian Mystery", *Communio* 17 (2000) 217-39; M. Ouellet, "Trinity and Eucharist: A Covenantal Mystery", *Communio* 17 (2000) 262-283.

25. H. de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum. L'eucharistie et l'église au moyen âge; étude historique* (Paris: Aubier, 1949).

Amen. Be a member of the Body of Christ, so that your *Amen* may be genuine.²⁶

The theology of the threefold body of Christ is currently in vogue, forming the centrepiece of a theology of communion. But the theme can be played in several different keys. Sometimes it forms part of an exclamatory theology, in which the connections are of interest for their own sake and their implications for church life are left unexplored.²⁷ More often, the theology of the threefold body is developed in order to explore the theology of the church: sometimes to support the priority of the local community²⁸ with the dictum that the Eucharist makes the church, and sometimes, in response, to relate the Eucharist to the universal church through the ordered structure of the church under the bishops united under Peter. In the latter theology, the doctrine of ministry and apostolic succession control the understanding of the body of Christ.

Now the relative emphasis to be placed on universal church or on local church is an issue of some interest and importance. But it touches only marginally the image of the threefold body of Christ, which is best understood very concretely because it is grounded in ritual. Of its nature rituals are celebrated by particular communities in particular places. When we reflect concretely on Eucharist and on church, we cannot but think first of the community which actually celebrates the Eucharist. We will then ask what it means in concrete terms for that community to be the body of Christ and to do bodily what Jesus Christ did. From this perspective, questions of universality and of order within the church are important but secondary questions.²⁹

Concrete reflection on the body of Christ also demands that when we remember what Jesus did, we give full weight to the human reality of Christ's bodily self-giving in a death, which is remembered in the institution narrative. The Synoptic accounts of Jesus' death, which

26. Augustine, *Sermo 272* (PL 38, 1247).

27. See Ouellet, "Trinity and Eucharist", 282, who remarks that reflection on the connection between Eucharist and Church has helped us "recover the witness of the two-thousand year old faith of the Church and has given us the freedom to contemplate the eucharistic mystery, which is accessible to faith alone, as the Gift of the whole in the fragment – God the Bridegroom, the Church-Bride, and the wedding feast of the Lamb of the eternal Passover: which can already be savoured in the *sobrietas* of the Spirit in the hope of final consummation". It is difficult to know where one might go from there.

28. See J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1985). J. M. Tillard, *Église d'Églises, l'écclésiologie de communion* (Paris: Cerf, 1987). See, too, P. McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993).

29. In developing this theology, I am much indebted to William Cavanaugh's explorations. See W. Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist: Theology, politics and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); "The City: Beyond Secular Parodies", in J. Milbank, K. Pickstock and G. Ward (eds), *Radical Orthodoxy* (London: Routledge, 1999) 182-200; "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House", *Modern Theology* 11 (1995) 397-420; "The World in a Wafer: A Geography of the Eucharist as Resistance", *Modern Theology* 15 (1999) 181-96.

bring out in a strong though restrained way the brutal reality of execution by crucifixion, shape our memory. This death involves being taken away from friends, brutalised and isolated among soldiers, being taken out the city where civilised human beings belong, and in Jewish terms becoming a curse (Gal 3:13). In this kind of execution, the human shape of the body is systematically stripped away until it becomes no more than a piece of meat. As the humanity of the body disappears under torture, the person disappears from the social body. The body is dismembered. In the Eucharist, of course, we remember more than the brutality of Jesus' death. We remember it as a saving death in which the body is reshaped. The Letter to the Ephesians states the meaning of the Cross in terms of reconciliation into one body:

He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it (2:13).

Like all adequate exploration of the meaning of the cross, the image of a body formed out of opposed groups is paradoxical because it comes about through Jesus' acceptance of a death which separates him from humanity and sees his body destroyed. Through this dismemberment, scattered members are gathered into one body with Christ, and with Christ into the life of God.

The Eucharist does not, however, demand more than a contemplative remembering of what Christ has done. We are also instructed to do what Jesus did and as his body to follow Jesus Christ's path in discipleship. As a natural consequence of being made into his body, we follow the movement of his bodily self-giving. In the Gospel, the images of doing what Jesus did are concrete. They are to take the way that leads him to confrontation with those who exclude from God's company, to exclusion from the body of society and to the company of thieves, one of whom in Luke's account (23:39-43) is finally included in the Kingdom. The way of the cross echoes the path of Jesus' ministry, where he included those who were naturally excluded from the body of the just: prostitutes, tax-collectors, crowds, women, children. In the same way the community which celebrates the Eucharist as the body of Christ is to remember the shape of his life and to go out to those who are excluded from the body and dismembered, and embody this path concretely in its own life as a project. This expresses the reality of the community as the body of Christ, and its hope that the body of Christ will finally be fully realised and reconciled in him.

The relationship between church, Eucharist and the bodily existence of Jesus Christ is seen most clearly and concretely in communities whose members face the prospect of martyrdom. Here, Christ's death is in-

evitably remembered realistically. The community must stand firm as the body of Christ against attempts to dismember it. To be the body of Christ will mean encouraging those who face suffering. It will also mean going out to reconcile those who have fallen away under pressure. The celebration of the Eucharist is food for life because in it the cost of being the body of Christ is born, the death of Jesus is remembered, and the hope that the dismembered community will be re-membered is nurtured.

But in quieter times too, the worshipping community may be engaged in the same project of remembering Christ in his dismembered body. The outreach of the community to those who are excluded and separated within the universal body of the followers of Christ is the natural expression of receiving the body of Christ, of remembering the body of Christ, and of being the body of Christ.

THEOLOGY AND PUBLIC EVENTS

Now a theology that relates in concrete terms the Eucharist, the church and the shape of Christ's bodily life and death inevitably leads the Christian to reflect on the public world. It impels Christians to take an interest in the world, and dictates the perspective from which the world is seen and commented upon.

Christians are led to take an interest in the public world, because it is impossible to attend to those within the Christian community who are dismembered without asking why they are dismembered. Where the local community faces persecution, it needs to give some account of the reasons for its persecution, and to say why the state will be blessed if it offers toleration. In El Salvador, for example, the communities whose identity under oppression had been forged through their participation in the Eucharist, were led to political analysis in order to understand what their own commitment to the body of Christ and their following of Jesus Christ in his bodily life involved. Christian communities are led to political analysis, too, even when their engagement with the dismembered takes place in more serene circumstances. Where, for example, a community encounters youth suicide, it must reflect on the social construction of society, of economic ordering, of schooling, and of family, if it is effectively to tend the dismembered body.

A theology that emphasises the threefold body of Christ will also generate a distinctive perspective on the public world. The perspective will flow out of reflection on the relationship between the ecclesial and eucharistic body of Christ and the body of the world. While based on answers to the same questions about the implications of the Incarnation and our incorporation into Christ that Eusebius faced, it will lead in different directions.

Eusebius saw creation as the locus of our incorporation with Christ and with one another. The universe has stability and meaning through its participation in the Word of God. Humanity stands at the apex of creation, and harmonious relationships between human beings depend on their use of reason and their acknowledgment of the Word. Consequently, human incorporation into Christ is lost by idolatry and the deification of the material world. While the incorporation of human beings with the Word and with the race is given in creation, the Incarnation is important because it adds visibility. Our association with Jesus Christ is ultimately pedagogical: it allows us to recognise the power of the Word, and so leads us to the Father. By Jesus Christ, we are also told how to live harmoniously with other human beings. In Eusebius' account, therefore, the universe is the body of Christ, and we are incorporated into the body when we recognise the Word from whom it derives its harmonious existence.

When Christians reflect on the public world from this perspective, they will try to do so from the viewpoint of the Word of God. This is a universal perspective that seeks the reason for human events in God's providence. It encourages distance and a view of the world from above, edging uneasily to particularity.

Within a concrete theology of the body of Christ, however, our incorporation with one another in the body of humanity is through our naked bodiliness in which we also share God's life. The corrosive effect of sin on our incorporation is exemplified by the biblical image of the skins donned by Adam and Eve. They signify the mechanisms of rationalisation, oppressive hierarchies and in individual self-assertion. From these flow exclusion and the dismemberment of the body of humanity. The Incarnation is a reversal of this process because in it the Son of God takes on our naked humanity, proclaims a God who loves us in our nakedness and a way of life that is inclusive of the excluded, and finally identifies himself definitively with those who are dismembered in the nakedness of the cross. In his Resurrection we are gathered into the body of Christ and share God's life through our association with the naked bodiliness of Jesus Christ. As members of his body, we follow Jesus Christ's way. This commits us to reach out to those who are excluded from the body for their naked bodiliness and to hope for a transformed and reconciled body. In this account the body of Christ is constituted by the reintegration of naked bodiliness, which is both a reality and a project.

From this perspective, Christian reflection on the public world must be concrete and based on the experience of those who are dismembered from society. For in them we are brought into contact with the naked bodiliness which forms the basis of our incorporation into Christ and shapes our following of him. From that perspective, too, we can safely reflect on those qualities necessary in a society into which they will be

reincorporated. The ethical perspective on public events will therefore be distinctive because it is based in the humanity of those who are excluded from the public world. They are experts; the task of public comment is to articulate and interpret their expertise in order that they may be reincorporated into the body public. In contrast to the approach of Eusebius, the perspective is from below, and edging modestly to universality.

THEOLOGY AND FEDERATION

Finally, let me return to the question with which I began, namely whether we may speak out of our theology about public events, and in particular about Federation? Reflection on Christ's threefold body does not rehabilitate Eusebius' confident assertion that we have available to us knowledge about divine providence when we reflect on the detail of our history. Neither does it diminish the importance of ethical comment about the values desirable in Australian life, nor diminish the importance of such comment being couched in a language that can be shared by Christians and others alike. The distinctively Christian character of such ethical comment, however, derives from its distinctive perspective that, in turn arises out of the distinctive mission of the church to be the body of Christ. It articulates the voice of those who have been separated from the body of the nation and proposes a vision of society as a body in which the excluded are included. A church which lives out of a Eucharistic theology will inevitably be drawn in her ministry to those who are excluded from the body. Theoretical discussion of policy and administration is grounded in accompaniment of those excluded from the body, and in commitment to re-member the body.

A Christian discourse on Federation, then, will look to the experience and mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion over the hundred years of Federation. While celebrating the ways in which the less privileged have been incorporated into Australian society, it will also point to the exclusion of refugees, of indigenous Australians, of unemployed and those whom received morality marginalises. It will emphasise narrative discourse, because it is based in the accompaniment of those who are shut out from the body. It will be idealistic in holding to the hope of a body in which the excluded are incorporated, and pragmatic in looking to the immediate and possible steps of reincorporation.

When we reflect on contemporary church comment on Australian life in the light of this theology, much of it, particularly that made by offices for social responsibility and for social justice, appears commendable. It is informed by solidarity with the excluded, while at the same time reflecting on the response needed by the whole Australian community. Where widespread cases of social exclusion are related to

issues of personal morality, however, as in the case of drugs, sexuality and the welfare of children, church statements are often less satisfactory. They ignore the body and appeal to an abstract reasoning untouched by the experience of those marginalised. In this respect, the churches reflect the dismembered society of which they are part and not the memory they celebrate. Within a realistic theology of the body of Christ, however, we should expect the church, too, to live between fragmentation and the hope of wholeness.