

Book Reviews

Bringing Churches Together: An Introduction to Ecumenism

Gideon Goosen. 1993

E J Dwyer, Sydney. ISBN 0 85574 173 2.

Pb 176pp \$19.95

What is the ecumenical movement about? I once heard someone facetiously define it as the movement of paper from one desk to another. There may well be times when those who are employed as ecumenical staff persons feel there is some truth in the definition. However, Gideon Goosen, in this valuable book, asserts a different view, namely, that the ecumenical movement is more concerned with people than with paper (:2).

The writing of this book is clearly the product of a strong conviction and a clear aspiration.

The conviction is that ecumenism is unstoppable simply because more and more people recognise the scandal of disunity, and those who seek to discredit ecumenism by accusing it of faithlessness, or leading to a super-religion, or being nothing more than 'one big insidious Roman plot', will not be successful in their attempts. Indeed, those who adopt such rigid positions are not able to address the real ecumenical issues: they have missed the ecumenical bus (:91). Throughout the book this strong conviction of the author comes through unmistakably.

His aspiration is to produce a clear, accessible resource on the ecumenical move-

ment, that would be a general introduction to the movement, offering a broad survey of its history, its successes, its difficulties, and the current issues confronting it, as well as being a source of ideas for further progress, especially in encouraging individuals to promote ecumenism by becoming actively involved in the process locally (:xii). The book is commendably successful in achieving both aspects of this aspiration.

Ecumenism seeks reconciliation; it is about healing wounds (:1). Critical to such reconciling healing is the personal encounters that bring people together across the old divisions. For the author, this is at the very heart of the matter, because it is only through the increased understanding that comes from listening with one another, the mutual building up that is experienced through the sharing of faith, and the new insights gained through conversing with others that the ecumenical endeavour is advanced.

However, the reason for advancing the endeavour to restore the lost unity of christianity is shallow, the ecumenical movement is without direction, if it is not grounded in a firm theological basis. The starting point for establishing that basis is Scripture, from which the Church knows the expressed will of Christ in prayer for the unity of his followers. Christians can have no more compelling reason for commitment to the restoration of their lost

unity. Insofar as christian unity is not given visible witness, the Church is not sufficiently 'Church' (:5). With such words, the author establishes his conviction that unity belongs to the nature of what it means to be Church, and unless vigorously engaged in the struggle to restore her unity, the Church is not being true to herself. That struggle involves a search for truth, which in turn requires a going back to the origins and early sources of christianity, in which is to be found a theology of fellowship, *koinonia*, which affirms that all christians share something in common (:6-7). Thus, also, the search for unity is fundamental to the Church's mission; her disunity weakens the credibility and obscures the sign value of the Church (:8).

With that point in mind, in turning to a history of ecumenism one is tempted to think of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, the holding of which was motivated by the realisation that the scandal of division within the Church diminished her authenticity and hindered her mission. It is true that the conference usually dates the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement that has led to the formation of councils of churches at the world, regional, national, and local levels. But Gideon Goosen rightly puts the twentieth century history into a much broader context, for the wrestling with the divisive issues and the struggling to hold the Church in visible unity have been part of christian history since New Testament times. His brief outline of that struggle is a valuable reminder, and helps to put the ecumenical developments of the last eighty years into a more accurate perspective. That, of course, is not to devalue those developments, for they represent enormous steps forward towards regaining the unity of christians.

Fundamental to that progress has been the formation of the World Council of Churches and the profound changes that took place within the Roman Catholic Church at Vatican II which has seen the Church become increasingly engaged in and committed to ecumenism. This book provides the reader with a very helpful entrée into these developments, while assisting us to perceive them within the broad context of christian history.

It is within the scriptural and theological tradition that the fundamental reasons for seeking the unity of the Church are to be found, but the pragmatic reasons why an ecumenical movement is needed are to be found within this history. Christian history has been marked by periods in which deep division has occurred, such as the fifth, eleventh, and sixteenth centuries. So, two chapters of this book are given to a survey of that history as a background for understanding why the Church is divided and what the issues are which have to be addressed if the quest for restored unity is to be advanced.

The following chapter then turns to a number of key contemporary issues that are being explored through various dialogues, both multilateral and bilateral. The degree of convergence achieved through dialogue regarding these issues is clearly noted, as well as a description of different styles of dialogue, concluding with the observation that the methodology, which achieves a common statement about the issues being addressed while leaving space for each party to explain their particular theologies, emphases, and concerns, is the most positive approach to dialogue (:113).

From the historical survey that Gideon Goosen presents in this book, a further point stands out for me. From the history he draws lessons that are profoundly rele-

vant to the contemporary ecumenical movement, because they are true for the Church at any time. The sixteenth was the Reformation century, when tensions caused by the obvious need for reform resulted in deep divisions. But from that history comes the recognition that the requirement for reform and renewal is never absent, for 'the reformed Church is always in need of reform', and questions have to be asked about those things that need reform today (:64). From an earlier time, the differences in customs between Romans and Greeks exposed in a practical way the ancient but ever-new problem of maintaining unity in diversity, and not confusing a soulless uniformity with unity (:50).

These matters are at the centre of the ecumenical quest: the unity for which Christ prayed, so that the world might believe, will be effective and authentic only within a diversity that is accompanied by a constant openness to reform and renewal. Gideon Goosen, in producing this book, has provided us with a glimpse of that vision and a resource both to motivate and equip us for the task of giving the vision some reality.

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**Australian Anglicans and their
Constitution**

John Davis

Canberra, Acorn, 1993 xii + 202 ISBN 0
908284 14 4

Doctoral theses generally, and those dealing with constitutional history and complexity in particular, are rarely likely to attract a wide readership. Yet, Wangaratta's Canon John Davis has pulled off the seemingly unlikely and produced a

scholarly but highly readable study in *Australian Anglicans and their Constitution*.

Covering the period 1910-1962 Dr Davis' analysis unfolds the tenor and temper of the debates that gave rise to the prolonged and protracted birth of a national constitution for the Anglican dioceses in Australia.

With care and insight this work is more than a good history it is an indispensable resource for all those concerned for the current constitutional review initiated by the 1992 General Synod. Although the period of study concludes with the inauguration of the national constitution in 1962, Dr Davis astutely points out the lessons of history and the inheritance of division and dynamic contradiction that characterise the Australian Anglican compact.

The personalities and ecclesiastical imperatives that constructed, in such a direct way, the politics and final constitutional settlement of the Anglican Church of Australia are carefully identified through the pages and not least the footnotes of this book.

The author is to be applauded for clearly outlining the purpose and structure of this study.

The Introduction is a concise overview of both the book and the central issues of Australian Anglican association. Pages 175-178 provides the best instant lay guide to the 1962 constitution that I have read.

Dr Davis acknowledges that time and resources prevented an adequate inclusion of archival sources from Queensland or Western Australia. This is a pity, for both provinces, as the author indicates in the text, contributed significantly if not always constructively to the constitutional settlement.

In essence Canon Davis has brought together a clear distillation of the inherent

tensions and contradictions that make up Australian Anglicanism. His work is not merely excellent history but the provision of many of the intellectual, theological and ecclesiological imperatives that today's Anglican Church of Australia must address if the constitutional compact is to remain relevant let alone legitimate.

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Grail

An Ecumenical Journal published quarterly by the University of St Jerome's College, Waterloo, Canada

This Canadian Journal commenced publication in 1985. It is an ecumenical publication which seeks to explore issues of concern to the socially conscious and religiously minded. Its editorial consultants range through bishops and theologians to cover a wide spectrum that includes sociology and philosophy and the performing arts to music and literature.

Grail attempts 'a multi-faceted approach to an exploration of the human condition'. Social analysis and ecumenical discussion are accompanied by regular sections devoted to poetry, book reviews, arts and media and film reviews. Extensive responses to views of major contributors permit a greater depth of dialogue than multiple letters to the editor though these, too, occasionally feature.

Here is a Canadian contribution to the major issues of our world. There are the topics of universal concern - peace and development, the status of family life and marriage, sexism, liberation theology, the option for (or against) the poor, sexuality, divorce and remarriage. Some Canadian issues are of particular relevance to Australia such as education in a multi-relig-

ious society, separate Catholic schools, family-life education.

The distinctively Canadian experience of what it means to be Church is explored in articles such as those by Bishop Remi de Roo on the role of the Church in Canadian life and by Cardinal Carter on Church and State. There is consistent attention to Canadian social issues and the development of a Catholic social teaching in the Canadian context. At the same time domestic issues such as labour relations, the position of the unions, and the Canadian school system are accompanied by critical attention to foreign affairs, especially those of Latin America. The ecumenical nature of the journal appears in a range of articles on Christian churches and the situation of ecumenical relations in Latin America. This concern is not confined to the Christian religion but extends to Judaism and Islam. The theological questions of Christian uniqueness and a universal theology of religion is also raised.

One of the strengths of the five years of the journal scrutinised by the reviewer is a series of interviews with figures such as Cardinals Koenig and Carter, Ernesto Cardenal of Nicaragua, and Archbishop Ortega of Havana. Hans Kung, Michael Novak and Jack Dominian also find niches in this gallery, though an autobiographical piece by Sheila Cassidy carries at least an equal appeal. Australian readers will be introduced to major Canadian figures not yet so familiar to most of us.

It is hoped that these lines of appreciation will be accepted as *amende honorable*. Unfortunate circumstances have delayed their appearance for an almost unconscionable period. The issues scrutinised were those from 1985 to 1989, in which period each of the issues averaged 100 pages and represented remarkable

value for the price of three Canadian dollars.

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Sources of the Pentateuch. Texts, Introduction, Annotations

Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993. pp. xix + 266. ISBN 0-8006-2701-6. Pkb, np.

It is a rare thing in these days of reader response criticism, deconstruction, narrative criticism etc. to be confronted by a work on the Documentary Hypothesis of the Pentateuch. At first glance some may be tempted to dismiss it as anachronous but such a judgment in the case of this book would be hasty. In several ways Campbell and O'Brien make a positive contribution to current methodological debates over the Pentateuch. This is the case chiefly at the level of the textbook but the usefulness of the book is not restricted to this status. It also offers the scholar interested in the formation of the Pentateuch considered opinion on the scope and nature of the redactional work in the combination of sources.

The aim of the book is variously stated. It is 'to enable assumptions about the Pentateuch to be vigorously and thoroughly challenged'. Campbell and O'Brien do not intend to 'advocate a source-critical model of the Pentateuch' but to present 'one example of a source-critical model as clearly and intelligibly as possible' (:ix). The example they have chosen is that of Martin Noth in his *History of the Pentateuchal Traditions* (trans. B. W. Anderson; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972; reprint, Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981). Noth is selected not because the authors are wedded

to his analysis but because it offers a useful example of how source analysis works and presents something of a 'consensus position' (:x) on the Documentary Hypothesis which had been achieved by the time of Noth's writing (1948 for the German original). Campbell and O'Brien state that their 'primary aim has been to make [Noth's] view of the text easily intelligible, so that others can move on from there' (:xi).

The authors have gone a step further than Anderson did in his translation of Noth's book. Anderson supplemented Noth's work, which had simply listed in paragraph format the biblical references assigned to each source, with an 'Analytical Outline of the Pentateuch'. This set out in schematic form an analysis of the Pentateuchal material according to the presumed documentary sources (:261-276 of the 1972 translation). Anderson's analysis was based on Noth's in the main but necessarily omitted some of the refinements of the analysis. In chapters 2-5 of their book Campbell and O'Brien set out the full text of the Priestly Document, the Yahwist Narrative, the Elohist texts and nonsource texts in the Pentateuch era as delineated by Noth. Each chapter has a brief introduction to the relevant source. In each case the biblical text reads as a continuous work. Where appropriate the text is footnoted to indicate the basis of Noth's analysis. Campbell and O'Brien occasionally add their own comments on the source division or the nature of the sources or note where other scholars differ from Noth in source division. The biblical text is presented in a fashion which makes the shape and nature of the presumed sources clearly visible to the reader. The significance of the various fonts, indentation and ellipsis points used is clearly explained in the Preface. The

translation of the biblical text used throughout the work is the New Revised Standard Version. Minor changes have been made to translation only in places where the separation into sources demands it. All changes are clearly marked.

It is in this area of presenting Noth's analysis in a clear and intelligible fashion that the book is of greatest value. In a further statement of their aim, Campbell and O'Brien say they intend to 'provide teachers and students of the Bible with access to the sources hypothesis in a form that does justice to the preeminent position it has held, and still holds, in biblical studies' (:19). They achieve this aim with a good deal of success. The book should provide students being introduced to historical critical studies of the Bible or who wish to deepen their appreciation of source criticism, with a ready way into some of the argumentation of the source-critical method. A very useful summary of the history of pentateuchal source criticism, including discussion of some recent challenges to source criticism and reflections by the authors on the implications of the method, is contained in chapter 1 of the book.

In my view the presentation of Noth's book could have been improved in places. The brief introductions to the various sources are uneven. The introduction to the Elohist texts (:161-166) is the fullest discussing the compass of the Elohist material in the composite text and then summarising Noth's arguments against Volz on the question of whether E was ever a separate source. Unfortunately the introductions to the chapters on P and J are much briefer and concentrate only on the general shape of the presumed sources. Further discussion on Noth's view on the 'narrative' nature of P and the employment of earlier material in that source

(*History*: 8-12) would have filled out his position. In the case of J, Noth's insistence on the 'unified narrative' consisting of pieces 'of either the J or the E variant' (*History*: 27) needs to be described briefly to get a fuller picture of Noth's position. The biblical material set out in chapters 3 and 4 of Campbell and O'Brien does, of course, follow Noth's outline but the presentation without some initial qualification gives an impression of an ease of source delineation which Noth would have shunned.

Chapter 6 contains three studies in 'composite texts'. These studies focus on passages where the final composition involves a complex integration of sources. The passages are the flood story (Gen 6:5 - 9:17), the beginning of the Joseph story (Gen 37: 1-36) and the deliverance at the sea (Exod 13:17-14:31). In this section the authors wish 'to give appropriate attention and interpretation to the final text when it is clearly a combination of disparate elements' (:210). Each study includes the biblical account set out in such a way as to indicate the source division according to Noth. A section on interpretation concludes each study. The comments highlight both the unity and duality in the text and discuss the combination of source. This is an exercise in redaction criticism and in my view involves a laudable effort to acknowledge the fruits, and limitations, of source criticism while endeavouring to recognise the unity of the final text. Of course, points of detail can be challenged. For example, more weight could be given to the emphasis on Noah's obedience to the divine word in the combined narrative in Gen 6:9-7:16. Obedience and conformity to the divine decree constitute a major theme within the P material.

While these final studies are fine in themselves it is in relation to them that I find myself a little confused as to the direction of the book as a whole. There is some tension in the book over whether its main task is to present the source analysis of Noth with attendant commentary, or whether Campbell and O'Brien wish to further the discussion of the relation of source analysis to more holistic readings of the biblical texts. While this tension remains unresolved for me, I would still highly recommend the work to teachers and students studying the intricacies of pentateuchal source-criticism. It offers, in part, a useful tool for understanding the process and results of source criticism. It also offers a model for moving beyond the old strictures of source criticism and giving credence to the unity of the final text of the Pentateuch.

Howard Wallace

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Sponsoring Faith in Adolescence.

Perspectives on Young Catholic Women

Carmel Leavey OP, Margaret Hetheron,

Mary Britt OP, Rosalie O'Neill RSJ.

1992. E J Dwyer, Newtown. \$24.95

How is commitment sponsored? I recall being part of a research team some years ago which looked at the correlation of commitment (whether to religion, peace, political change, the environment, anti-racism) and education. The outcome was never very clear but it seemed to indicate that the correlation was strained. People became committed or uncommitted despite their education. There were those who were educated at the most elitist schools, with every advantage and inculcated with the most snobbish values, who turned out to be militant activists for the

poor. Contrariwise, some of those brought up in alternative educational situations, confronted daily by exemplars of commitment, have immediately adopted a conservative, self-seeking life style upon graduation.

It was therefore with interest that I have read this book detailing the findings of research done by the Institute of Religious Studies. The Institute had earlier undertaken research, funded by the Catholic education authorities, on Catholic adults and the meaning of their religiosity. What helped them in their faith development and kept them in the Catholic church, what hindered them in their faith development and kept them out of the Catholic church? The results were published in *Catholic Beliefs and Practices* (1988).

That research showed that many adult Catholics did not understand the Christian 'story' in its Catholic variant form. The reason postulated by the research was that these Catholics were limited in their understanding and ability to appropriate the 'story' due to deficiencies in the faith stage competencies and life experiences. (As an aside, why do we perpetuate the use of 'master story' particularly when dealing with the lives of girls?)

It was therefore a natural progression to look at young people in the process of coming to an understanding and appropriation of their religious tradition. Hence the new phase of research and hence this book.

It should be made clear that the research has a very clearly stated objective. It aims to improve the faith sponsorship of Catholic youth in Australia. While such an objective may be peripheral to the interests of many of the readers of this journal the research problem, the research methodology, and the outcomes could, for various reasons, be of considerable inter-

est to those involved in the interface of the social sciences and religion.

A group of 266 Catholic girls from three schools in Sydney (two Catholic, one Government) were interviewed regarding 1) their knowledge of the contents of Catholic faith; 2) their faith competencies (ie the skills they bring to the task of finding a personal faith); and, 3) the social networks that may have supported their faith development.

The outcome of the research was the delineation of four types of students identified on the basis of a religious awareness scale (mainly the first two research tasks), and Catholic plausibility (in the Berger/Luckmann sense). The four types were the *integrated* who showed high on both criteria, the *independent* who were religiously aware despite not having a plausibility base, the *rebellious* who were not religiously aware despite having a plausibility base, and the *antithetic* who had neither religious awareness nor a plausibility base. The integrated and the independent students (overtly religious types) are more likely to come from migrant groups. 79% of these students have parents born overseas and a second language is spoken in two-thirds of their homes. A sociologist should be able to make something of that even if disagreeing with the research process.

I have reservations about the process. While I would need to be closer to the interview schedule to pass any informed judgement, it seems at first blush that the questions concerning content are very dated, hunting for what would seem to be bygone heresies. The Christian 'story', as stated to the interviewees, sounds like something from a 1960s theological textbook. Nor am I sure that the questions concerning networks would actually reveal plausibility structures. Given that the

population was exclusively female, I would also have liked to have seen more made of the gender issue in faith development. However, I do not want to press any of these points, simply to indicate that the research cannot be blithely accepted without further demur.

Who would be interested in the research even if they wanted to examine it critically? Certainly those responsible for Catholic sponsorship of faith and those responsible for Christian nurturing generally would be interested. However, outside the area of commitment, I think that those like myself with an interest in the whole question of commitment and social forces would find the book of great interest. Sociologists generally are talking of universes of meaning. What is the universe of meaning shared by those who in some way come under a religious aegis such as Catholicism? Is that universe being deconstructed, should it be deconstructed?

Sociologists of education will be fascinated by Chapter 13. The research shows that 77% of Catholic students (female only of course) found no connection between Christian beliefs and the rest of the school curriculum or else say they have never thought of the matter. What does that say for the presentation of Christian beliefs or for the teaching of the school curriculum when two of the schools were avowedly Catholic?

I think that sociologists need to look very carefully at the book. The Catholic ethos of nuns, mortal sin, celibacy, and Latin ritual is obviously an intriguing topic as the welter of plays, miniseries, and books on the subject demonstrate. But what in the educational system of the 1930s-1960s produced that ethos? What is the present educational system producing? More than the Catholic educational

authorities who commissioned this book are interested in the answers and there will be more than the committed interested in dissecting this book.

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Stars of Tagai: the Torres Strait Islanders

Nonie Sharp. 1993. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra. xxii + 321pp.

This book is well presented, with interesting photographs, a glossary and an index. Interspersed throughout the book are sketches which highlight the theme of the book: the interconnectedness of Torres Strait Islander identity with their cosmology and the world around them. The symbolic spiral, represented both by the abstract and tangible forms give pictorial shape to the idea of the creation and re-creation of a Torres Strait Islander identity. The shapes and forms of the spiral and the wauri shell, the starfish and the octopus, are ever-present reminders of the continuing link between nature and culture and of the importance of these links to the people concerned.

The story is of the changing life of a sea people after *kole* (the white man) arrived in the mid-nineteenth century, and the Islanders' attempts at making compatible two vastly different worldviews. It explores the patterns and consequences of the interrelationships between the two cultures providing both a historiography and an astute analysis of social change. The coming of *kole* created an 'asymmetrical relationship' so different to the 'reciprocity between a vast mosaic of networks of diversities-in-unity'. The subsistence economy and social organisation of the Torres Strait Islanders was tied closely to the total ecology. People were 'recipro-

cal' with the land. Their cognitive base centred around the observance that one set of natural occurrences foretold another set of natural occurrences; if there was good *wongai* one season, there would be a proliferation of turtle eggs in the turtle laying season. The peoples' basic orientation to the world had reference points in place, clan, wind and season. The life cycles of persons formed a part of the eternal circle, signified by a spiral to recognise that nothing proceeds without change.

Using the myth of Tagai as a central focus for the whole book, Sharp uses the four 'loosely interrelated themes' found in the myth to illuminate the 'social reality and cultural identity' of the Torres Strait Islander. Tagai is the sea hero, seen in the sky through imaginary connections between stars, as a man standing in a canoe holding in his left hand a fishing spear and in his right hand a fruit. This image of the celestial figure of Tagai incorporates the importance of Island culture. The four themes are: (1) identification of a sea people who share a common way of life and their ordering of the world; (2) the world is ordered so that everything has a place within the cosmos, and a path to follow; (3) Tagai is the harbinger of the new, as well as the sign of the repetition of the eternal cycles of time; (4) Tagai is a mediator integrating the Kala Lagaw Ya speakers and the speakers of Meriam Mir.

So the book also is composed of four main parts which serve as a modern treatise to an ancient myth. Part I is the encounter, which places the life and people in their setting. The fluidity of interconnection between the sea and the land, the people and culture, culture and nature is realised through Sharp's depiction of the daily routine, the *habitus* of Island life, giving us an almost Bourdieu vision of

the coming and going of the seasons and the rhythmic flow of life.

Part II discusses the ordering of the world and the cosmos. Here we see the Torres Strait Islander philosophy of order and the place of everything in that order, 'a philosophy that is lived and felt, not cognised'. Malo's law, the law of the sacred ones, is to keep to your own course, passing on and receiving land you have inherited, without encroaching upon that which belongs to others.

Part III discusses forces for change and renewal, the early missionary presence and the 'complexities of processes within a social context in which cultural difference became a condition of imperial power dominance'. Yet even the missionary message of Jesus Christ was seen as an extension of traditional thought. Malo was regarded as the preparation for the bigger truth of the message of Jesus Christ. The Anglican church was seen as the 'fulfilment of Malo'. The authority of Malo thus passed on 'like the Apostolic Succession'. The past refused to be negated, rather, it merged into the present to confirm and become the forerunner to the present. The personal stories graphically illustrate the move from 'genteel benevolence' and 'benevolent despotism' to the quest for autonomy.

Part IV discusses the challenges of the coming future and the rapid changes in the decade 1980 to 1990, a time of cultural renewal and the fulfilment of the promise of the ancient myths of the Torres Strait (bridging people in modern times); contemporary concerns with identity and the quest for autonomy.

Sharp's recounting and analysis of Torres Strait Island life is copiously interspersed with verbatim accounts of particular characters in the story, revealing both the nature of the people and their ways of

seeing. The reader begins to understand the impact of alien encroachment through the eyes of the people themselves, whose recollections and experiences have been faithfully recorded by Sharp, such that the story unfolds in the telling, much along the lines of the oral tradition from which the story is taken.

In spite of the changes brought in from outsiders, Torres Strait Islanders have continued to uphold their customary ways of being, and have forged an identity which fuses the old and the new. But 'new loyalties and attachments are enfolded within the old, not the other way round' as Sharp is quick to point out. Torres Strait Islanders have been able to reconcile differences, and arrived at a synthesis of the old and the new which has enabled them to create and recreate their own identities in the face of that change. Sharp explores the way in which this identity is founded on the diversity of numerous small Islander communities, the totality of which make up and give strength to the whole.

The unity of separate identities of the many small islands in the Torres Strait was apparent in the philosophy of reciprocity, which threatened to be undermined in the future by the effects of a market economy. In the past these people have shown their continued and continuing culture in spite of enormous changes. Their insistence in maintaining cultural continuity in the face of change has meant a synthesis of the old and the new while maintaining Malo's law: Keep your hands and feet off other people's land; have respect for others' land and land boundaries. This has led them to fight, and win, their continuity of tradition in the courts of the *kole*. Now, with the Mabo case, and the High Court decision to reverse the position of *terra nullius*, the strength of the

Torres Strait Islanders in their spiral of change is one of unity in diversity.

Given the recent High Court decision in the Mabo land case, and its precedence as a case for the Australian Aboriginal claims to land, this will be an important book on the shelf of anyone wishing to understand the meaning of the term 'a clash of cultures' and the social history behind land claims. The book shows a good understanding and is an insightful account of the complexities of social change. It should appeal to anyone whose interest lies in this particular area of the world, in the history of contact and, most impor-

tantly, to those wishing to understand the basis of indigenous land claims.

In the 'engagement with life the watch-words are encounter and commitment, not detachment and analysis', writes Sharp. The correct telling of a myth is important as the experience of telling 'reaffirms a moral code and a way of living'. And here, I think, the Islanders themselves would agree that Sharp has told it well.

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