

ENGAGE



Rewording the Australian
Constitution: A Voice to Parliament

Bishop Philip Huggins

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Our Noah Moment – A Time to Discern While ‘The Lord and the Devil still play Chess...’

Professor Anthony Maher

Executive Director, ACC&C



It is encouraging to witness how the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius have been embraced both ecumenically and by interfaith groups around the world. They offer a pathway for discernment along which people of faith may draw closer to God, walking together in the pursuit of peace and reconciliation. Writing on the feast day of St Ignatius of Loyola (July 31st), with the *Examen* in mind, and having viewed the world for the best part of forty years through the lens of Ignatian spirituality, it is not too difficult to discern two competing forces or spirits in our

world. What Ignatius called, ‘The Two Standards’. One for good the other not.

A Noah moment may be interpreted as a time to choose between the two spirits, to ‘read the signs of the times’ and respond: personally, nationally, and as an international community. With multifarious pending storms on our global horizon, do we build an inclusive Ark for all humanity or a nationalistic armada?

The good spirit experienced in all faiths and cultures is known by its works. It invites, welcomes, unites and seeks integral human flourishing ‘on earth as it is in heaven’, for all peoples. The other metaphysical spirit is not so gracious. It divides, subjugates, terrorises and deals in death. These two transcendent forces compete in history, in real human time, past, present and into the future.

On a global level, we witness the evil spirit active in Vladimir Putin’s war in Ukraine. Artist Michael Galovic, on the cover of our magazine, draws parallels with the fascist terror-bombing of the civilians of Guernica in 1937, and our thoughts go immediately to the suffering of the civilians in the Donbas region of Ukraine today. Remaining on the world stage, notably lead by Donald Trump, we are witnessing the continuing rise of popularism and jingoism. Trump is predicted to win the next general election in the United States. Turkish author-journalist, Ece Temelkuran, refers to this populist trend as ‘post-truth politics’, ‘the evil of the educated’, maliciously creating ‘mobilised ignorance’, a trend she argues that is prevalent in the entire world.

Further examples of separatism range from Brexit through to numerous countries around the globe pursuing their own nationalistic interests regardless of the

United Nations Charter, the pursuit of the Common Good, international law or care of our common home. In a back-to-the-future moment, we see an increasing number of nations currently embarking upon a new arms race, Australia is no exception.

On a local level, in Australia, one can be forgiven for feeling equally concerned about the moral ‘state of the nation’.

The Royal Commission into institutional sexual abuse of children is shocking, in terms of the crimes and cover-up. The treatment of our senior citizens, another report from a Royal Commission, is equally beyond the pale. So too, the emerging consciousness of the treatment of First Nation peoples is disturbing. More generally, over recent years, virtually all our major organisations, from the Church, defence force, financial institutions through to the national cricket team have tarnished their reputations for good governance and ethical leadership. The evil spirit, or so it seems, is experiencing a resurgence in human history. Temelkuran warns, ‘this is our common problem. We are all in this together’.

Reading history, one may discern that the spirits (plural) act through human agency. The daily decisions you and I make contribute to the bigger picture of historical reality. Responsibility reaches far beyond those in institutional or political leadership. And yet, in the Australian context, the recent election of the Australian Labor Party and Mr Albanese as Prime Minister, seems to have given the nation a moral viaticum, symbolised most memorably by the new government’s decision to grant the Nadesalingam Tamil family the right to return home to Biloela in regional Queensland. It was simply the ‘good’ thing to do.

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► *Editor's Note*

The nation celebrated as the Biloela community welcomed the Nadesalingam family, the Prime-Minister did the right-thing on behalf the Australian people, we felt pride in our national identity. We 'rejoiced and were glad', this is really who we are!

And still, there are some in our society who would divide us, segregate us due to racial, gender or religious affiliation. Too often some of us seek profit regardless of the human cost or the damage to the earth. Too often peddlers of mendacity are given a platform on populist media, where they play to our anxieties and insecurities. In Australia, we understand why the establishment of an integrity commission is vitally important.

Discernment of the two spirits in daily life evokes the lyrics of [Spanish Train](#) by Chris de Burgh:

*'The Lord and the Devil are
now playing chess...*

*The Devil still cheats and wins more souls...
but as for the Lord... well... he's doing his
best...'*

Ultimately, recognition of the two spirits was the 'Noah Moment' for the 'rich young man' in Matthew's Gospel (Mt. 19: 16-26). We all experience Noah moments in daily life. Jesus asked him directly: 'Are you doing your best?' The question went deep. It is also the question God asks each of us.

It seems from the smiles of Kopika and Tharnicaa that we may well have discerned the 'best' thing to do in their case. The Nadesalingam family, the community of Biloela and the Prime Minister of Australia are inspiring us to build an Ark of compassion in daily life, that gives witness to 'God in all things'.



Priya and Nades and their Australian born daughters Kopika and Tharnicaa with the Prime Minister.

Rewording the Australian Constitution: A Voice to Parliament

A reflection on the plan to add three sentences to the Constitution of Australia

Bishop Philip Huggins – Director, Ecumenical Studies, ACC&C

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese spoke at the Garma Festival at Gulkula in north-east Arnhem Land on Saturday 30 July 2022. His recommendation is that, by referendum, the Australian people agree to add three sentences to the Constitution:

"In recognition of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia:

1. There shall be a body, to be called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.
2. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice may make representations to parliament and the executive government on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
3. The parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have the power to make laws with respect to the composition, functions, powers and procedures of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice."

This referendum proposal is a profound moment, full of possibilities for the repair of relationships on our national journey of reconciliation. To focus our awareness on why this moment is so profound it is helpful for people of faith to recall how our world can be made better by the words we choose. Here are three reflections for the time of advocacy that lies ahead.

Firstly, the Bible makes plain what is the creative power and beauty of the Word. As we read in Hebrews 11:3 "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible."

The Bible's first verse is: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light." Genesis 1:1-2. Thus, we read of the world prepared, created by the Word of God.

And in the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." John 1:1. Yes, the Bible makes clear what is the creative power and beauty of the Word. "And the Word became flesh and lived among us ...full of grace and truth." John 1:14. Thus, for us, the Name of the Incarnate Word, Jesus, should be spoken with all of our capacity for love and reverence. (Hence, one of the great practitioners of the *Prayer of the Heart* writes evocatively that to say the Name of Jesus with all reverence and love is a sufficient aim for a human life.)

Secondly, the moral imperative is to be cognisant of the power of our words to heal or to cause harm. Remembering that

To focus our awareness on why this moment is so profound it is helpful for people of faith to recall how our world can be made better by the words we choose.

"anyone who wants to lead a happy life ...must banish malice from their tongue, deceitful conversation from their lips... let them seek peace and pursue it." 1 Peter 3:10-11.

This is a very practical morality. We are a species which coordinates our interactions through shared symbols more than by instinct. Our words shape social cohesion and therefore must be trustworthy. 'I shall be there, as promised, tomorrow' we might say. Trust and social order break down if we do not then turn up.

This rather minor example of the power of our words to either shape or diminish trust and cohesion amplifies what is at stake as regards the addition of these sentences to our Constitution. There have been so many promises made to our First Peoples and then broken. Words said have not been honoured and we know that a

person, a collective, is only 'as good as their word'. The moral imperative is to follow through with this change by referendum. A successful referendum will be healing; strengthening of trust; mutually ennobling; nation-building.

In his beautiful book, *Pools of Peace: Reflecting on the Collects of the Book of Common Prayer*, Henry Speagle quotes our former Governor General, Dame Quentin Bryce: "In my career and throughout my life, I have seen the power of language that connects and propels, the grace of words that heal." Wisely, our former Governor General encourages the grace of words that heal and do no harm. There is much healing needed, as is the noble intention of this referendum proposal.

We know how our thoughts will shape our words, actions and thus will, over time, shape our character. Hence, we know the need for care as regards what we think about and what we let influence our thinking and our ways of enunciating our thoughts.

With this, we come to recognise the importance of meditation and prayer so we have clear awareness and can more freely choose which thoughts will shape our words and actions. Godly words are those that are true, beautiful and kind. Our moral imperative is to try and choose such words for when we speak and act. The words chosen for this referendum proposal are imbued with this most appropriate moral imperative.

In this context a third reflection speaks more to the significance of this particular moment in our national story. This reflection pertains to the power of our words to create a better way forward, a better future to which all First Peoples call Australia, through the invitation of the Uluru Statement, a better way of being and a better world.

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This time in our story, as an Australian national community, brings to mind the words of Sarah Sentilles. When she was working on *Draw Your Weapons*, she tells us she became interested in people of faith who venerate saints. Why? Because in the recognition that the holiness of saints transcends their death and stays attached to their bodies, even when buried or entombed, Sarah perceives an incarnated holiness. She writes of that faith in the Word made flesh which means that holiness, it is understood, will and does travel from the body to material objects that are and have contact with the saint's body. Hence, too, people are drawn to places experienced as sacred because they are the places where the saint is buried. Sarah writes evocatively, making a link to 'the holy work of making art'. This national

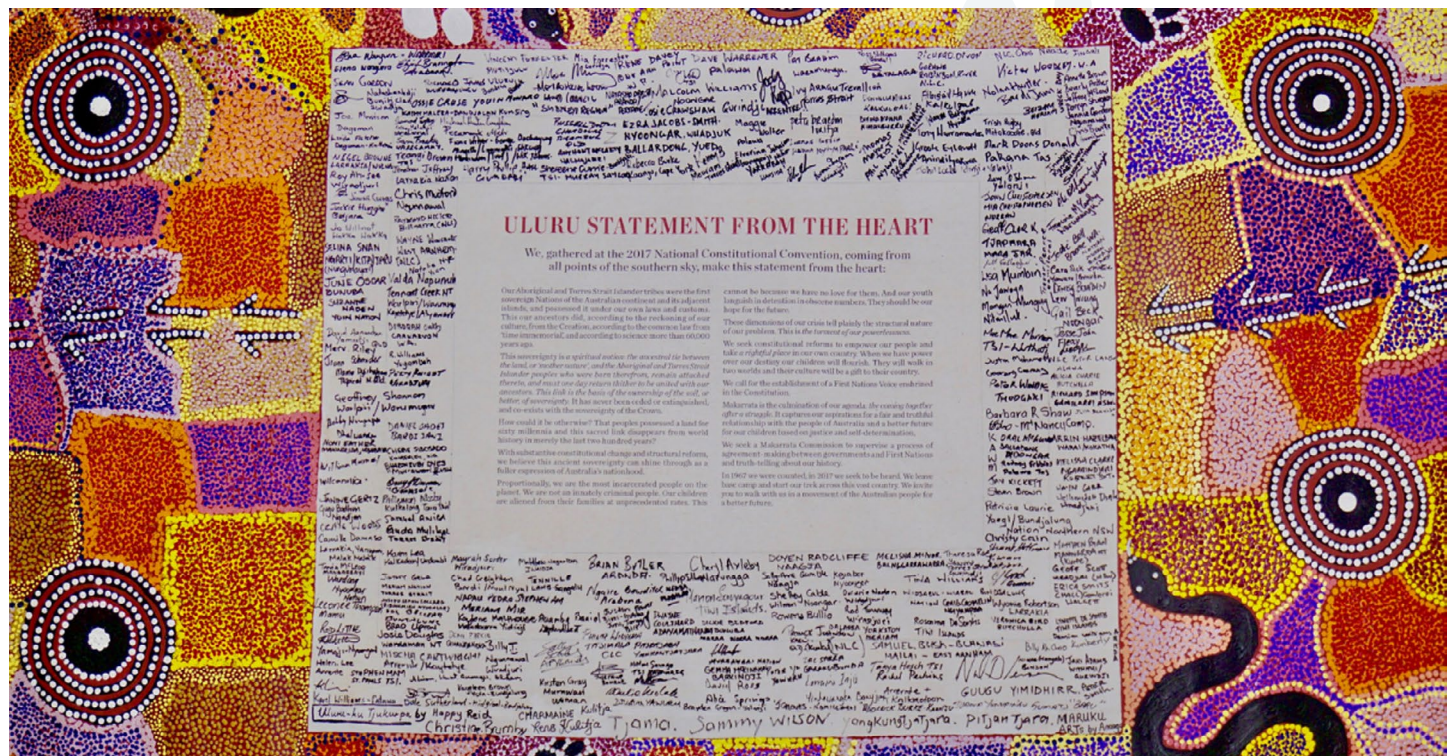
moment and the choices we make on how we encounter it, express and name it, tell us about who we are and the potential that transcends but is visible through our words.

Sentilles writes "in *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry calls pieces of art 'fragments of world alteration'". Sentilles says: "If artists can alter the world in fragments – a cup, a painting, a paragraph – then they can help us remember our agency. They remind us that transformation is possible, that the world is made and can be unmade and remade. To turn toward our art then is to turn toward the world and remember it is possible to repair it. It's an urgent task ..." [Sarah Sentilles' essay 'A Line Across the Deep', "Wonderground", Australia 2022 p.59]

It is true then, that a holy life, as with a great song or painting, a great speech or poem

can be world altering. Our words, written or spoken, sung, painted or danced can make a profound difference. Words that are faithful, faith-filled, can make our world better.

For people of faith we know how profound is our responsibility and scope to create a better world with words of truth, beauty and kindness. Accordingly, remembering the beautiful intention and poetic yearning of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, we see how this proposed change to our Constitution can be world-altering for the better. We are blessed to have this moment and the freedom to make Australia better by supporting the addition of these words to our Constitution by referendum.



Uluru Statement from Heart made available digitally from photographer Thomas Mayor



Women Seeking Wisdom for the Common Good

Dr Janet Salisbury

Founder, Women's Climate Congress

In early 2020, over two meetings held in the Chapel of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, women came together in grief following the devastation of the Black Summer fires, believing that we can work together across political differences to stabilise the climate before we suffer more catastrophic impacts.

From these meetings the Women's Climate Congress was born and has grown into a nonpartisan, national organisation with members all over Australia and overseas. Our vision statement states:

"We share a vision to create climate security by 2030. In this future, women's leadership has helped turn the tide of political culture from polarised discord to collaboration and cooperation. Nurture of life and care for the Earth are at the centre of every government decision."

Why do we think women's leadership is so important? Because for far too long women have been underrepresented at the negotiating table. The lack of diversity in decision making has contributed to where we are now. As founder of the Women's Climate Congress, I have seen women rising in communities across Australia, united in the belief that a new approach to leadership on climate change is urgently needed, moving beyond the adversarial party politics towards collaborative national action.

And women's voices were in abundant supply in the first sitting week of the 47th Parliament. It was exciting and moving to hear a succession of diverse women's perspectives coming into that place. One after the other, in their first speeches, the newly elected women in the House

of Representatives from across the political spectrum, including First Nations women and women from multicultural backgrounds, spoke of wanting a safe future for their children and grandchildren, action on climate change, repair of the environment, and a fairer, kinder and more compassionate country for all Australians

Zoe Daniel MP, the member for Goldstein, wore white and purple – paying homage to our suffragist foremother Vida Goldstein after whom Ms Daniel's electorate of Goldstein is named. Vida was not only a suffragist but part of a worldwide pacifist movement of women whose 1915 International Congress of Women, held at the Hague during the First World War, produced a set of resolutions that today read like an agenda for the past 100 years of international human rights law reform. This is a story that has been told to packed audiences at the ACC&C Chapel by artists in residence, A Chorus of Women.¹

In September, inspired by our foremothers during the First World War, women from across the country will come together at Canberra's Albert Hall to take part in a two-day [National Congress of Women](#) and bring their voice to a [Women's Charter for Change](#) on climate action, which will give a voice to the longings of diverse women and inform the ongoing advocacy work of the WCC.

This event will weave together two years of work by the Women's Climate Congress, exploring the aspirations and vision of women who have joined our movement, the potential for collaboration on developing a national climate policy, and the systemic shifts needed across government, business and the wider community to respond to the current climate emergency.

Like the resolutions of Vida Goldstein and the other women in 1915 to (1) stop the war and (2) establish the conditions for a sustainable peace, women today are calling for both immediate and far-sighted actions to restore climate security and ensure the long-term safety of humans, biodiversity and the environment upon which we depend.

Working together we can reset the course of the next 100 years, from repeating and increasingly debilitating climate disasters, to one of climate security and renewed wellbeing.

The National Congress of Women will be held on 11-12 September at the Albert Hall, Canberra. There is also an online option. For further information, registration and program details, visit nationalcongressofwomen.com.

1. In 'The People's Passion' by Glenda Cloughley, 2018, 2019, and other presentations.



Drs Janet Salisbury and Matilda House (centre) and the Women's Climate Congress Hub, photo supplied



Lt Gen (retd) John Sanderson with the Land Mine Clearance Team, Battambang, photo supplied

Return to Cambodia

Lt Gen (retd) John Sanderson
ACC&C Ambassador

Because we keep telling people that we Australians live in Asia and that is where our future will lie it is useful to reflect on my recent visit to Cambodia where I had been the United Nations Peacekeeping Force Commander in the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in the early 1990s. I was invited back this year by the current Australian Ambassador to participate in an event to launch a display to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the beginning of UNTAC and the seventieth anniversary of the beginning of diplomatic relations between our two countries. It turned out to be a journey of nine days with up to four major events a day, renewing old acquaintances and meeting many new generation Cambodians who had not been born when I departed in October 1993. I was welcomed everywhere with great generosity and my version of why the UN

... perhaps we should not be surprised that political stability is valued more highly than human rights. Where does this leave us in the struggle between liberal democracies and autocracies?

had gone there in 1991 was well received, even though it often clashed with the Cambodian Prime Minister's version of his role in saving the country. Hun Sen is the longest serving Prime Minister in Asia and it looks like his son will succeed him.

The national development of the last thirty years was astonishing given the fact that there are few Cambodian industries of substance except for some clothing manufacturing, mining in the northwest and a heavily COVID affected tourist industry. Rice production has improved to the stage of having a surplus for export and there is a massive cassava industry in the old battlefields where landmine clearance is nearing completion. Much of the national forests have been sacrificed to build the state coffers. The national road system connecting provincial cities would put many Australian states in the shade.

In the cities old Cambodia is hidden in the shade of modern high-rise. The population has doubled (67 percent of the population is under 30 years of age) and there are clear signs of a growing middle class throughout the countryside. Unfortunately, even though elections at the national and local levels continue to be held, there is little sign of an effective opposition, or the human rights regime that was a key focus of the Paris Agreements of October 1991 and the UN Resolutions that mandated the UNTAC Mission in 1992.

Cambodia is well and truly on the Chinese Belt and Road with investment temporarily constrained by COVID but massively noticeable. The Japanese have also invested heavily in both Vietnam and Cambodia. Neither nation seems to mind the fact that Cambodian democracy is less than liberal. Given the experience of



Young Cambodian Human Rights' leaders at launch of UNTAC Exhibition, Phnom Penh, John and Lorraine Sanderson, centre, photo supplied

conflict in Asia perhaps we should not be surprised that political stability is valued more highly than human rights. Where does this leave us in the struggle between liberal democracies and autocracies?

The fact that much goodwill towards Australia continues to exist in Cambodia to this day is a reflection of enlightened periods of Australian foreign policy going back to the time before the war in Vietnam, when Australia was active in supporting the independence and development of many former colonies in Asia, including Cambodia. The Commonwealth Colombo Plan of the 1950s and 60s saw many Cambodian leaders educated and trained in Australia.

Since the UN intervention at the end of the last century an increasing number of Cambodians have been completing their studies across the world, including many in Australian universities. The more recent Colombo Plan initiative begun by Australia in 2014 is a reversal that sees young Australians studying and working in Asia for the purpose of broadening the nation's understanding and engagement with the region in which its future is bound.

The United Nations intervention in Cambodia was the result of a similar enlightened engagement by Australia in

helping to forge a peace agreement and UN mandated mission to resolve the civil war resulting from the war in Vietnam. These activities have generally been more fruitful in terms of national interest than the various wars that Australia has participated in on behalf of its alliance with America.

"The fact that much goodwill towards Australia continues to exist in Cambodia to this day is a reflection of enlightened periods of Australian foreign policy..."

The primary focus of the intervention was a ceasefire in the civil war that had lasted for nearly a quarter of a century, to be followed by a universally enfranchised election of a constitutional assembly and the establishment of a national government that could take its place in the international community. This was an enormous challenge that included many requirements not attempted by the UN before. The end of the Cold War in 1989 made it possible for the international community to conceive of the idea of taking responsibility for a dysfunctional nation and guiding it through the steps to liberal democracy. Attempting to do this while avoiding becoming

submerged in internal security operations was a widely misunderstood challenge. The successful outcome of the election process with ninety percent of the electorate voting under the threat of violence was truly uplifting if seemingly miraculous.

There was broad international engagement in this process, particularly by nations from the immediate region, including Australia. The Force I commanded included service people from thirty-four different nations. All the nations of the sub-continent and the Association of South-East Asian Nations ASEAN were involved. Particularly noteworthy was the participation of all the permanent five members of the Security Council of the UN for the first time, and Japan, that had to change its constitution to send troops outside its country for the first time since the Second World War.

The truth of the matter is that without China's cooperation there would be no peace in Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge had provided agency to China's confrontation with Russia in Vietnam and the South China Sea. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 subsequently provided an opportunity for both China and Japan to seek to stabilise South East Asia as an arena for economic competition. By withdrawing support from the Khmer Rouge at the appropriate moment in 1993, China allowed the UN to conduct an election, thus providing legitimacy to government in Cambodia and successfully substituting itself as the primary guarantor of Cambodian security. This stroke of genius allows Cambodia enough wriggle room to maintain its sovereign flexibility vis-à-vis its neighbours, Thailand and Vietnam, in exchange for less control over Chinese investment and more dependency on its continuation. This is the World we live in in the 21st Century.

Conspiracy Theories: Causes, Dangers and Responses

Rev Dr Gerald A Arbuckle SM, MA(Cambridge)*

Co-Director of the Refounding and Pastoral Development Unit, Sydney



The world is flooded with conspiracy theories, the beliefs, contrary to reality, that individuals or groups are secretly acting to accomplish some malevolent purpose. Once COVID-19 was identified, conspiracy theories emerged. Some said it was a hoax or a campaign to disrupt the presidential re-election of Donald Trump; others that the pharmaceutical industry spreads the disease.

Conspiracy beliefs may satisfy people's needs for certainty, security and a positive self-image in a world they feel is disintegrating. When the comforting securities of cultures crumble, paranoia makes sense. An inability to live with uncertainty and ambiguity draws people to conspiracy theories when they validate their apprehensions. One story answers all their fears. As conspiracy theories provide their devotees with a much needed sense of identity and security in the midst of chaos, they are not easily discredited by rational presentation of facts.

Harmful Consequences

Conspiracy theories can cause immense harm to people, influencing political policy decision and, social behaviours, including medical choices. People are scapegoated because they are assumed to be causing harm to individuals and groups. By transferring the blame for their afflictions onto others, people are able to distract themselves from the real causes of crises. Hitler claimed that the Jews were poisoning the German Aryan blood and Aryan soul, thus holding back Germany from becoming a dominant nation. Many Germans accepted this conspiracy theory. Today anti-vaccine conspiracy theories are globally poisoning the minds and endangering the bodies of many citizens.

Conspiracy theorising is one of the most problematic subjects to expose. Devotees apply so much intellectual and emotional energy to their conspiracy theories that it is nearly impossible to keep track of what they are saying and argue against them. Although a dialogue is theoretically possible, it will not usually have the desired effect. To challenge the theory is to shatter the self-image of the person. However, if people are not *entirely* convinced of a theory there is a greater chance that they will accept that the theory lacks objective truth. A sensitive low-key method is necessary; people need to be listened to and invited to give the sources of a conspiracy theory. In a calm atmosphere the challenger is then able to show that a theory has no foundation in reality.

Scriptures and Conspiracy Beliefs

Not lying is the ethical *sine qua non* of any human communication; to knowingly create or foster conspiracy beliefs is to falsify truth. Trust includes an expectation of honesty, the assumption that others will do their best to meet their commitments, because they have the appropriate knowledge, skill or ability. Lying is any intentionally deceptive message. Truthfulness in communication demands, first, avoiding lies and deceiving people directly and intentionally. Otherwise, communication becomes a violent manipulation of people. Truthfulness, however, is much more than not telling lies or deceiving; it necessitates disclosing information to those who have a right to it.

As a basic normative ideal, the New Testament stresses the striving for exemplary truthfulness and trustworthiness (Matt 5:37). All kinds of lying damage community and credibility, and must be cast aside as the old self, the sinner (Eph 4:25; Col 3:9). Ananias and Sapphira, who purposely deceived their community and introduced an attitude of hypocrisy, were severely punished (Acts 5: 1-11). Ananias and his wife Sapphira freely and publicly

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► Features

agreed to pool all their goods for the benefit of the young Christian community, but they secretly held back some for themselves.

Peter discovered the deception. To Ananias he said: "How is it that you contrived this deed in your heart? Why did you lie to us but to God!" (Acts 5:4). And to Sapphira: "How is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test?" (Acts 5:9). The seriousness of fraud and lying by Ananias and Sapphira, punished by their death, evoked great fear in "the whole church and all who heard of these things" (Acts 5:11).

St Peter warns his readers against leaders who aim to exploit their fears; he writes to reassure Christians whose faith has been disturbed because the predictions of the Parousia have not been confirmed. They must carefully assess the credentials of leaders before accepting what they are saying: "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who secretly bring in destructive opinions" (2 Peter 2:1). The same wisdom is needed today lest deceitful people twist reality by their conspiracy theories to suit their malicious intentions.

Conclusion

The potential for conspiracy theorising is within every human heart. Scapegoating falsely focuses on an external cause of problems thus negating or lessening the guilt of the agent; it also makes people feel bonded as they unite with others to scapegoat the victims. Yet the commandment "Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbour" (Deut 5:20) applies to all forms of scapegoating, including conspiracy theorising. Just as Adam, in the Genesis myth, tries to blame Eve for what has happened rather than admit his own role in the incident, every person has the capacity to blame others for their afflictions and to ignore their own role in causing them.

*Gerald A Arbuckle is a theologian and social anthropologist; an award-winning author of several books, the most recent being *Fundamentalism at Home and Abroad*; *Loneliness: Insights for Healing in a Fragmented World*; *Abuse and Cover-Up: Refounding the Catholic Church in Trauma*; and *The Pandemic and the People of God: Cultural Impacts and Pastoral Responses*. He is presently writing *Conspiracy Thinking: Analysis and Responses*.

► The Centre

The Jewel in the Crown

Sarah Stitt

Events and Corporate Services Officer, ACC&C

Some people ask, what do we do at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture? In the past, I have admitted to being unaware of what happens here myself. From the outside, it is hard to know. So, allow me to try and explain.

Some view it as seemingly untouched land on the perimeter of the Parliamentary Triangle and the foreshore of Lake Burley Griffin, looking across to the eagle on the pole, Mt Ainslie and out to the Tinderry Ranges. Some see it as a rare commodity and quite a special precinct. While others have thought and voiced that it is the jewel in the crown of Charles Sturt University (CSU).

This is where we begin. The land on which the Centre rests has always been a place of meeting and vigorous cultural engagement. As a place of theological and ethical research, the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture is a partnership with the Anglican diocese of Canberra Goulburn and CSU. On the one hand, the

Centre emulates the European tradition of classical and philosophical studies at the centre of university life, while also engaging a pivotal dedication to Indigenous and Australian spiritual tradition, on the other. National Reconciliation is primary to its mission. There is quite a history to be shared, but maybe another time. The land itself is approximately seven hectares, about three of which are protected native grassland, which is held dear. This land has a strong spiritual presence. When one wanders across the site you can feel that this would have been a meeting place for the Indigenous traditional custodians of this country.

The Centre, as it were, was several decades in the making. From 1927 until the 50s a cross had been erected to indicate that there was some idea that it would be home to a Christian organisation; the hope was for an Anglican cathedral. It was during that time a theological library was created and

the birth of St Mark's National Theological College took place. Whilst the idea for a cathedral was strong, it never came to fruition. It was during the 1990s that the Centre was conceived, the idea being that the time for a cathedral had passed and that instead a centre for interfaith dialogue would be created. This indeed has evolved.

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Labyrinth, detail, photo by Sally Mordike

So, what do we do here? Within the Centre many higher degree scholars of theology, history, ethics, philosophy and other subjects have found a home and earnestly pursue their research and projects. Some work onsite, others are adjuncts from afar. The Centre is also home to a number of post graduate students from CSU and St Mark's, from next door. The staff, of which there is but a handful, help organise the many events which take place and ensure that the site is well cared for and everyone is happy.

We host conferences, seminars, workshops, interfaith forums, musical performances and school retreats - for both students and teachers, peace-making dialogues, exhibitions, the Spiritus Short Film Prize, ceremonies, book launches, and devotional services. Around the campfire there are often First Nations led welcomes to and acknowledgements of country and yarnings. It is a many-layered base for not-for-profit organisations such as Christians for an Ethical Society, Concerned Catholics, and the Australian Network for Spiritual Direction, to name a few. The Centre is home to A Chorus of Women who have had a residency here for a number of years. It is also a place for other Canberra choirs to rehearse. Scottish bagpipes can be heard eerily playing across the landscape, harmonising Celtic tunes with the soil of these ancient grounds. The intentional inclusive spirit of the site is a legacy strongly cultivated since its inception, respectfully welcoming everybody.

Whilst the land is private, over 4,000 people per year - either formally or informally - walk, play, converse, write, perform, research, debate, pray, worship, dream and work on the site. The grounds offer a quiet meditative place for many to wander through. There is a bible garden and a labyrinth. Both are very special, not to mention instructive and contemplative. There is also the Pilgrim Walk, the Great Cross and the Pool of Reflection. Some have commented that when they cross the road from the Barton office buildings to the Centre, the feeling they experience is peaceful and calming. There are Aboriginal totem poles that demonstrate the rich and necessary relationship to the Australian

continent and its megadiversity, something that the Christian mission at the heart of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture is committed to and develops in its advocacy. The depth of meaning and mission undergirding this place is inspiring and a source of serenity for many.

As humans, often, we do not appreciate the natural space which the site offers. Many think the space is wasted and that more development should take place. This land is not pristine nature. It is quite developed already, in that it has been landscaped, but gently. It is full of conversations and is a centre of culture. In its simplicity it is an emblem of how sustainability can inform our way forward. In this light, in 2018, the Sydney Opera House celebrated the

architect Jørn Utson's centennial birthday. It is perhaps poignant to mention is that this stunning, quintessentially Australian piece of architecture was informed by nature and the study of ancient cultures. Utson reflected that it was not because they were primitive or exotic, but because he perceived them to be authentic, healthy and pure. "You have to draw close to the natural motif in order to find that which is blessed. Comfort and peace are both found in nature. A calmness that has come to be in short supply and a peace that is a rarity." This is exactly what the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture offers without our having to overthink how this can be attained. It is a jewel to be acknowledged.



Great Cross & Chambers Pavilion, photo by Sally Mordike



Oliver O'Donovan: A Critical Engagement

Dr Jonathan Cole

Assistant Director, Centre for Religion,
Ethics and Society (CRES), ACC&C

I never set out to do a PhD in political theology. Nor had I ever heard of the great Anglican political theologian Oliver O'Donovan when I sat down with my supervisor, Dr Andrew Cameron, for our first discussion about my PhD in 2014. Initially, I had planned to do something on the relationship between Christianity and Islam, and it was Andrew who first suggested I could do a PhD in political theology, thinking the subject would be a good fit for someone who had already studied politics at both undergraduate and postgraduate level and who had just spent thirteen years working across several federal government departments and agencies in Canberra. At the conclusion of that first, fateful meeting, Andrew urged me to read O'Donovan's classic work in political theology, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology*, and the rest, as they say, is history.

That history is the first book-length engagement with O'Donovan's political theology, called *The Reign of God: A Critical Engagement with Oliver O'Donovan's Theology of Political Authority*, recently published in the T&T Clark Enquiries in Theological Ethics series. The book is the culmination of seven years' research into the thought of one of theology's most erudite and famously difficult minds—Lorish and Mathewes have wryly noted that O'Donovan cannot be accused of “writing too simplistically.”

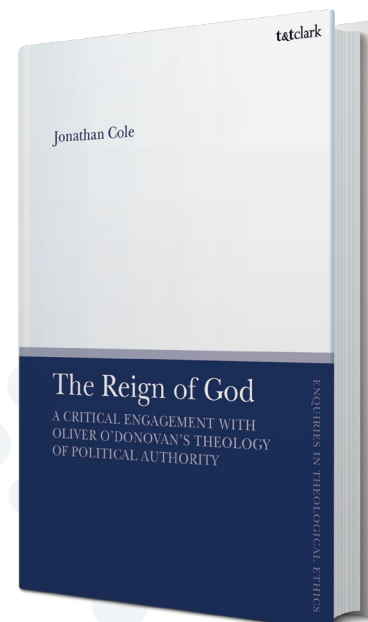
The book argues that O'Donovan's theological account of political authority is not tenable on the basis of exegetical and methodological problems, but that by better incorporating insights from his own work in moral theology, that account

can be refined in such a way as to offer a cogent basis for thinking that the Christ-event redeems the natural political authority embedded in the created order and inaugurates its new historical *bene esse* in the form of Christian liberalism.

The book marks a significant step in the developing reception and growing secondary literature on O'Donovan's seminal contribution to Christian political theology. Christian political philosopher, Jonathan Chaplin, observes the following in his endorsement of the book:

At last, a full-length monograph on Oliver O'Donovan's remarkable theology of political authority. Jonathan Cole does us a great service in this comprehensive, clearly-written and constructively critical account of O'Donovan's political thought. Both seasoned readers of O'Donovan and newcomers to his corpus will find this an invaluable companion.

In O'Donovan's first book, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine*, based on his own PhD, he spoke in the preface of the “life-shaping experience” of living with Augustine's thought “intermittently for ten years”. Although I have not lived with O'Donovan for quite so long, I can relate and “fear” with him that “the reader of [my] study will gain barely an idea” of just what a “life-shaping experience” it has been to wrestle with O'Donovan's political theology for seven years.



“The book is the culmination of seven years’ research into the thought of one of theology’s most erudite and famously difficult minds...”

Palliative Care – the Voluntary Assisted Dying Debate

Professor Ann Harrington RN PhD FACN

Associate Director, Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies (CAPS), ACC&C

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill (VAD) 2021 was passed in the NSW Upper House on Thursday 19 May 2022. There were 23 in favour of the Bill with 15 against. Its passing means every State in Australia now permits terminally ill people to have access to euthanasia if they fit the criteria of their State. Proponents of this Bill argue that 'people should not die in pain'. Very few would disagree with this sentiment, yet 15 voted against the Bill - more than half the number of those who voted for the Bill. The question should be asked, is there an alternative to VAD?

Palliative Care

Those who support palliative care at end of life argue that with *good* palliative care in place, no one should die in pain. That statement means anyone at end of life should have access to *effective* pain relief (in some instances narcotics are not the 'go to' for pain relief), with physical, psychosocial, spiritual and bereavement counselling all available.

So, what is palliative care?

The term was first used in the 1970s by a Canadian doctor, Dr Balfour Mount, to describe care that focussed on maximising the quality of life for patients living with potentially life limiting illness¹. Life limiting illness is more than cancer and is defined as one where it is expected that death will be a direct consequence of that illness. It includes both malignant and non-malignant illnesses. Examples are - motor neurone disease, end-stage kidney disease, cancer, end-stage cardiac disease².

Is palliative care always in hospital?

The answer is 'no', with care of people with life limiting illness provided across a diverse range of settings including hospital, residential aged care, respite services, the community (in private homes) and through specialist palliative care services such as hospice care. The development of modern hospices across Australia followed the work of Dame Cicely Saunders in the UK, through her St Christopher's Hospice³.

Cecily Saunders believed that people should be encouraged to live life to the full, even while dying. This belief, captured in the motto for the Nairobi Hospice states palliative care *Puts life into their days, not just days into their life*⁴.

The myths of palliative care

It is estimated globally that only 14% of people (of 40 million) who need palliative care currently receive it⁵. Most often this poor implementation is caused by the label placed on the term 'palliative'. It can be believed (incorrectly) that once a person is diagnosed as 'palliative', they do not have long to live. In fact, most people who have access to palliative care have better outcomes through the dying process and live longer than those who do not

have access. In addition, with palliative care intervention, the World Health Organisation (WHO) argues that a caregiver's quality of life improves as well (WHO 2022). Palliative care is (w)holistic care that includes the person's psychosocial, physical, emotional, existential and spiritual needs. It affirms life and agrees that dying is a normal process. Bereavement care features for the person dying and their relatives, continuing after the death of the loved one.

What about pain?

Given the different types of life-limiting illnesses mentioned above, pain is not always present. When pain does occur, the WHO motto of 'begin low and go slow' is applied. With this philosophy narcotics are not prescribed in the first instance, rather a mix of medications (ie: anti-inflammatories, anti-convulsants, anti-emetics) to name a few.

In summary, in this new era of legalised assisted dying, the reason for choosing VAD should not be because palliative care could not be accessed. *Science says: We must live and seek the means of prolonging, increasing...amplifying life making it tolerable and acceptable. Wisdom says, we must die and seek how to make us die well*⁶.



St. Christopher's Hospice, Sydenham, London, UK, photo from Wikipedia

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“To fulfill the promise of a truly multiethnic democracy, the nation must navigate deep peril. We need to shore up our democracy, move out of the anocracy zone, and rein in social media, which help reduce factionalism...”



For such a time as this

Rev'd Dr Nikolai Blaskow

Adjunct Research Fellow, ACC&C

My pathway to this time has been surprising. It began with a focus on “ressentiment” (resentment) and the profound insights of two great theorists, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and René Girard (1923-2015) into the mechanism of deception, self-deception and the relentless cycles of emotional and physical violence which have afflicted our planet from its very beginnings. In the words of Barbara F. Walter in her new book, *How Civil Wars Start*, more than diagnosticians, here we have thinkers who concentrate on the measures which are required, to stop such “violent fraternities” (Shruti Kapila: 2021).

That road led me to the ACC&C, where I first began my PhD journey.

At that time, I met Professor Johannes Zachhuber (Oxford University, who unbeknownst to me would become my viva's Chief Examiner). On an academic round trip to Australia which included CSU, our ACC&C and St Mark's National Theological Centre, his talk on what was at stake personally for him at the highest level of academic research inspired me. I decided there and then to follow the research pathway.

My wife Susanna Pain and I had served the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn for ten years and more – Susanna as Rector of Holy Covenant (and for a period as Archdeacon) and here at ACC&C as Associate Director; I, as Teaching Chaplain at Radford College, and for a short time at Canberra Grammar School. And most recently, over the last five years, Susanna as Dean of Sale Cathedral, and I as Head of RaVE (Religious and Values Education), Teaching Chaplain at Gippsland Grammar School, Chaplain to Victoria Police in the Wellington Shire.

So here am I surrounded by distinguished colleagues, and our new visionary Executive Director, Professor Anthony Maher, dedicated to take the ACC&C to another level and into the next decade. What a privilege to be here at this exciting point in the Centre's research development.

The focus of research for me will be through as many theological, ethical and philosophical lenses as it takes (including Nietzsche's and Girard's insights and *metamodernity* – an emerging and stimulating new platform of theory analysis) to examine the existential implications of the development of Artificial General Intelligence. How to create empathic, ethically, sensitive “digital people” without imparting to them the dysfunctional gap of our, “This is not who we are, but this is what we do.” I am currently enrolled in a writing course for these ever-sophisticated emerging people in the hope of achieving a sound balance of theory and *praxis*. I also have four book projects in mind, and a screenplay in prospect.

When asked, ‘what sort of time?’ few would dispute the answer to that question given the post-election results in Australia and the global landscape which confronts us today.

The challenge which faces us is considerable and not to be underestimated.

It is one which Barbara Walter defines for the United States of America, but which so accurately describes our factional global situation (Ibid, 225): “To fulfill the promise of a truly multiethnic democracy, the nation must navigate deep peril. We need to shore up our democracy, move out of the anocracy zone, and rein in social media, which help reduce factionalism. This will give us a chance to avoid a ... civil war. If we can do that, we might be in a position to tackle another looming threat ... A warming planet ... increas[ing] the number and severity of natural disasters, endangering our coastal cities, and causing heat waves, wildfires, hurricanes, and droughts. It will also certainly increase migration ... In the absence of a strong and effective government response, it will tear at our social fabric.”

These are the personal, global stakes – and for such a time as this.

The Beauty and Significance of 'Forgiveness': A Story

Bishop Philip Huggins

Director, Centre for Ecumenical Studies, ACC&C

"Where do you most intensely experience Jesus"? This question was posed by Rev'd Dr Callan Slipper at an international Zoom gathering of Bishops connected to the Focolare movement. The wider context was our consideration of how we make our most unifying contribution in a rather divided world. Certainly, one place where we intensely experience the Risen Jesus in our midst, is in forgiveness stories. There are examples in our *Forgiveness: A Study Guide*.

And daily life keeps adding to the stories. One Sunday, at Holy Trinity in Port Melbourne, I told a story from a funeral in the previous week. This was about a young man who spoke amidst other beautiful family eulogies. Let's call him James.

James spoke about his circumstances during the pandemic. Without much money for more independent accommodation, it seemed he had to be at home with his mum and stepfather. His pattern was to wait until everyone was in bed and then, for a bit of freedom, to roam about the house. Free to roam, he would head for the fridge and pantry to do a little foraging.

One night there wasn't much to be found, except a tin of biscuits. James had one. Liked it. He had another. Liked it too. He took the tin back to bed and emptied the tin. The next day, he was present when his stepfather went to the pantry. He heard the exclamation: "Where are my biscuits? I need them for my blood sugar levels!"

James told the packed Church, present for his stepfather's funeral, how terrible he then felt.

Breaking into tears, he told us of the anger and vehement disapproval he then expected. As with other young people, late teens onwards in this pandemic era, we could see his poignant vulnerability.

The latest Census data conveys that "young Australians have reported far higher levels of psychological distress than any other age group, with the Census capturing the

upheaval and mental toll of living through a pandemic". (The Age 29 June). The disruption to study and work plans, plus the effects of isolation, obviously will and have impacted on many at a time in life when our young people are seeking belonging and purpose.

Watching James, as the celebrant of the funeral, I wondered whether he was going to be able to complete his eulogy. Especially given that he was speaking without any notes that might have helped him settle. Through tears, James conveyed that his stepfather did not admonish him or shout at him, notwithstanding his evident disappointment to find his biscuit tin emptied!

"...a reminder of how important simple acts of kindness are in daily life..."

James went on to convey a learning from his time as a volunteer at the Salvation Army. He told of how the founder of the Salvos had wanted people's faith in Jesus to be more in deeds than in flowery words. With more tears, James said this was the nature of his stepfather - a real Christian of deeds, not just talk. Then he described how his stepfather had, later that day, bought two new tins of these biscuits, marking one tin as his own. Thus, making a bit of a joke out of the saga, in a kindly fashion!

Back at the funeral, after further beautiful eulogies and while people watched photo cameos of the deceased's life, this dear young man, who had conveyed his vulnerabilities and his expectations of an unforgiving response to his mistakes, walked quietly to the Church piano. He sat, and without sheet music, exquisitely played Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata".

One shouldn't over interpret a single event. However, isn't this a story of how powerful,

beautiful and healing is a simple act of forgiveness, offered with humour and in an uncomplicated fashion? Isn't it in the practice of forgiveness that we do intensely experience the presence of Jesus in our midst? Further, given what the Census data is telling us about our young people's wellbeing, isn't this a reminder of how important simple acts of kindness are in daily life?

The Age report further conveys that the Census data says 3.4 million Australians aged 16 to 85 years - roughly 17 percent of the population - saw a health professional for their mental health; that 2.2 million Australians now had a diagnosed mental illness and that women were more likely to report high or very high levels of psychological distress than men, [19% compared to 12%]. Since the Census, the stress caused by the pandemic has been amplified by other stresses - including the terrible suffering in Ukraine and the related economic disruptions. The recent 2022 Lowy Institute poll on international affairs has found that "only 53% of Australians feel either 'safe' or 'very safe', a 17% drop from last year, and a sharp decline from the period of 2005-10, when that figure hovered around 90%". (ABC News Report by Stephen Dziedzic, 29 June).

As one who works with refugees and asylum seekers, I know how these impacts on mental health and perceptions of safety are exacerbated for those on various temporary visas, many of whom have had years of uncertainty regarding their future safety and settlement. Hence our current advocacy, as multi faith leaders, for a regularising of visas and permanent residency for folk like the Nadesalingam family, now settling more happily in their Biloela community.

In sum, wherever we look we see the same need for healing and kindness in daily life. Public and private discourse has to be

(continued next page)

► *Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations*

more sensitive to the vulnerability of very many people. We all make mistakes. It is how we deal with each other's mistakes that makes such a difference. Given that the Census also says almost 40% of Australians now have no religious beliefs, those of us who live aware of Jesus in our midst, can see the implications for ministry.

The practice of Jesus' teaching on giving and forgiving must be so much more intentional. Any renewal of faith will be directly related to how people look after each other in daily life. There are no shortcuts and nor should there be.

Reflecting on James' poignant, beautiful tribute to his stepfather led me to consider these wider implications. Obviously, when James' dear stepfather made his kindly and forgiving response, he could not have imagined this would become part of an eulogy at his funeral or be affirmed in an article such as this.

When I finished telling this story, our Church pianist played Beethoven's "[Moonlight Sonata](#)". Then people prayed quietly and lit candles. It was a transfiguring moment. After the Service another older Church musician told me how, as a young man, he had heard Arthur Rubinstein play this piece in the Melbourne Town Hall. "I am not one who cries easily, but the sheer beauty of that music and Arthur Rubinstein's genius brought me to tears".

As young James had also alluded, it is in such beauty that people do find faith in the divine presence. Certainly, after James played for his stepfather in that packed Church, we were ready to offer our loving prayers of committal, as we trusted the dearly departed to God's eternal care.

Any renewal of faith will be directly related to how people look after each other in daily life. There are no shortcuts and nor should there be.



Following Sunday service, Bishop Philip with young parishioner, photo supplied

Friendship and Inter-Religious Dialogue

Archbishop Christopher Prowse

Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn, ACC&C Board member

Every year I invite leaders of most faith groups in Canberra to join me for a lunch. It has become a kind of little tradition. These times are well attended and appreciated. It gives us a time to socialise in friendship and gently discuss issues of importance that we share here in Canberra.

It is a practical response to the openness in more recent decades of Catholics to the world religions.

This was the fruit of an important document of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

Prophetically and ironically, this is the shortest and most extraordinary, in my opinion, of the 16 final documents of the Council. The document is called *Nostra Aetate* (28 October 1965), the "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions." In a unique manner, it originated in the hope to better the relationship between Jews and the Catholic Church. This was the document's original intent. In the development, however, it evolved to include our relationship with Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

It is positive in tone. It aims to examine what we "have in common and what draws (us) to fellowship." (1) Its key observation is that the "Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions." (2) This inspired document has given a real compass direction in the encounters I have had with members of various religions in formal and informal settings over the years.

History sadly demonstrates much hostility over the centuries between religions. Present day attempts by terrorist groups to enlist religious motivations for abominable global terror, is a tragic fact. A new compass direction in our relationships is well overdue.

Friendship is surely the ultimate answer to the misuse of religion as a false pretext for war and terror. If the perception is that religion only causes world problems and creates enemies, then friendship between us is an urgent priority.

However, friendship among religions cannot be forced. There first must be a willingness to be friends.

With *Nostra Aetate*, our willingness for friendship has been established. This is a great achievement in our times. Where do we go from here? How can different faiths deepen friendship so that the one world of peace may flourish?

May I offer humbly a suggestion? It has three parts. (I am indebted to Fr Patrick O'Sullivan SJ for the following expression)

When power meets power, there is a power struggle.

When power meets vulnerability, there is alienation.

When vulnerability meets vulnerability, there is intimacy.

History is replete with examples of power struggles arising from individuals or communities, even religious communities, refusing to give way or make room for each other. Likewise, the alienation of vulnerable peoples when they meet the force of an advancing power can be devastating. For example, our own Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are witnesses to this. However, when vulnerability in the human heart meets the vulnerability of another, the intimacy of a strong and constant friendship has a chance of growing. It is like a little seed that might grow as tall and strong as a mighty Australian gum tree.

It is this latter type of encounter between religions that may enable a friendship to grow that is worthy of our common humanity. It is a shared vulnerability that becomes a fertile soil enabling peace to grow and the flowers of mutual respect to bloom.

Are religions strong enough to be vulnerable to each other?



Interfaith gathering 2022, photo supplied



ACC&C Meeting Place, around the campfire, photo by Jennifer Rowland

Celebrating National Reconciliation Week

Rev'd Dr Tim Watson

Adjunct Research Scholar, ACC&C and ACT Churches' Council member



In 2022 the international Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which is held every year in the southern hemisphere between the Christian festivals of Ascension and Pentecost, coincided with National Reconciliation Week. The theme for the 2022 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, "We saw the star in the East and we came to worship him" (Matthew 2:2), highlights our unity in Christ, while the theme for National Reconciliation Week 2022, "Be Brave Make Change", emphasises our need for common action.

To mark the occasion, the ACT Churches Council decided to combine the two complementary themes by holding its first ever National Reconciliation Service. The ACC&C was the natural location for the event, not only in the light of its profound ecumenical commitment, but also as an expression of the Centre's vocation to be a place embodying the need for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, as symbolised by its central campfire and three Pilgrim Poles. An Action Group worked in consultation with local Aboriginal Christian ministries and community leaders to devise the liturgy, which took the form of an ecumenical service of reconciliation and healing.

The service began at 4.30pm at the Meeting Place Fire Circle with a Welcome to Country from Ngannawal elder Uncle Wally Bell and words of welcome from Rev David Campbell (minister of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Forrest and chair of the ACT Churches Council) and Professor Anthony Maher, the new Director of the ACC&C. Rev'd Dr Tim Watson shared a reflection

on the Gospel chosen for Christian Unity Week, the visit of the Magi to Jesus. Around sunset at 5pm, the congregation walked in procession to the ACC&C Chapel while singing the hymn "What a friend we have in Jesus", chosen for the occasion by Aboriginal Christian leaders.

Having arrived at the Chapel, the participants took part in a powerful act of acknowledgement and commemoration focusing on colonial era conflicts, led by Rev Hazel Davies of Making Peas/ce www.makingpeasce.com reconciliation ministry, assisted by Rev Dr Katherine Rainger of Radford College. The Uluru "Statement from the Heart" was then read by Centre Scholar and Awabakal woman Felicity McCallum, after which participants broke into small groups to reflect together on how their churches should listen to the Statement and respond in real and practical ways. The service closed with a time of sharing and prayer, and the singing of "O Lord Jesus Marrkappmir", a traditional tune from Arnhem Land with English words versified by D'Arcy Wood. After the service, a time of refreshment and hospitality allowed for further conversation.

Several key denominational leaders and representatives from more than a dozen Canberra churches attended this profound and moving occasion, and it is hoped that the success of this event will lead to the establishment of an annual National Reconciliation Service, hosted by the ACC&C.



The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Dr Peter Hooton

Public Theology, ACC&C

Fifty-five former Australian Ambassadors and High Commissioners have signed an Open Letter to the Prime Minister in support of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which entered into force on 22 January 2021. The letter welcomes the ALP's pre-election commitment to have Australia sign and ratify the Treaty and hopes to see this commitment swiftly realised. It takes the view that Australia is "at its best when it pursues a principled foreign policy" and looks forward to the reinstatement of the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world as an Australian foreign policy priority.

The letter, coordinated by Australian members of the International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), was timed to coincide with the First Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW in Vienna (21–23 June). The new Australian government sent Susan Templeman MP as an observer to the meeting, marking Australia's first engagement with a treaty that is firmly opposed by the nuclear weapon states and their allies.

There is a wealth of support for the Treaty in Australia. Most Australians, including 100 Federal Parliamentarians, are in favour of Australia becoming a party to the TPNW. But there is also significant opposition from those who claim that the TPNW poses a threat to the established nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament framework; that it lacks the support of the only countries that can make it work; and that joining the treaty would

make Australia less safe and complicate its alliance relationship with the United States. These claims are at best misleading and mainly wrong, but they are entrenched and will not easily be overcome.

Meanwhile, the world remains awash with nuclear weapons more than fifty years after the adoption of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968), which includes a much-neglected undertaking by nuclear weapon states to pursue "good-faith" nuclear disarmament negotiations. These weapons, as the letter says, "pose an existential threat to human life. That threat is again underlined now by Russia's nuclear sabre-rattling over Ukraine and, more generally, by the abysmal state of relations between the United States and its two most powerful nuclear-armed rivals. Unless we chart a new course, nuclear weapons will almost certainly be used again, with predictably catastrophic consequences."

I was pleased to participate in the drafting of the letter and to be one of the signatories.

Link to recent [article](#) on ACC&C website



The Nobel Peace Prize 2017 medal awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), photo Sarah Stitt



Modern Slavery Laws

Toni Hassan

Adjunct Research Fellow, ACC&C

Human exploitation as modern slavery is all around us. It is in consumer products from high-risk sectors including seafood, chocolate and coffee, tech devices and fashion where, sadly, modern slavery and child labour thrive. It's estimated that over 40 million people around the world are experiencing severe exploitation for the financial gain of others. They are tricked or coerced into this work and they do not have the freedom to leave.

The good news is consumers are more generally aware of the problem and expect companies to demonstrate they are assessing and addressing risk.

The Asia-Pacific region is the epicentre of the global problem but this is by no means confined to overseas. More than 15,000 people work in slave-like conditions in Australia. Migrant women and workers on short-term visas and students are most at risk.

In recent years governments have recognised they have a duty to force public sector and private business involved in the development, procurement or sale of goods to recognise and eradicate modern slavery when found in supply chains.

The first jurisdiction in Australia to do so was New South Wales. Its Modern Slavery Act 2018 was world-leading. It recognised the undeniable moral imperative to take action in relation to all forms of modern slavery.

After years of delay putting the Act into effect and watering it down considerably - notably taking away penalties - the NSW government finally moved in late June to appoint international lawyer James Cockayne as the first NSW anti-slavery commissioner. Professor Dr Cockayne will oversee compliance of the Act. This is welcome. The legislation, behind which

lies the work of many advocates including Christian churches and agencies, has finally commenced. Cockayne's job includes maintaining a public register identifying government agencies which don't comply, helping business combat modern slavery and identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery with a justice lens.

The Commonwealth adopted its own Modern Slavery Act - in the same year, 2018 - but put it into force more quickly than its state counterpart. That Act is already under review with advocates glad for an opportunity to point out the federal

law's shortcomings including the narrow group of entities the Act covers. Entities are expected to provide modern slavery statements. These are made

public but there is little weight attached to them. There is also no analysis of the statements to discern which companies are performing well or adopting best practice.

The NSW Act is a victim-centred and systems-wide modern slavery Act, whereas the Commonwealth legislation is more narrowly about supply chain transparency. There is no support for victims or penalties at the federal level.

Meanwhile, other jurisdictions, Tasmania and the Australia Capital Territory, are also looking into establishing their own modern slavery laws. State and Territory laws needn't compete with the Federal law, but seek to complement it just as the NSW and Federal legislation co-exist, similar but different. We see this sort of complementarity with other issues from housing to emerging integrity measures. It's heartening to see the conversation about modern slavery thickening around Australia.

We know that modern slavery is devastating to human health, both physical and mental. Given we are all consumers in a highly global economy, modern slavery is in fact a part of all our story. Readers for whom the Jesus story rings true will know that His ministry inspires us to free the captives, as we see all people (creation in all its diversity) as made in the Divine's image.

Actions that any of us take - by way of a submission, letters to government, ethical and informed choices we make as business people or consumers - can contribute to the transformation we wish to see: stamping out the practice of modern slavery.

Toni Hassan has served as a Director on the board of [beslaveryfree](#).

*Given we are all consumers
in a highly global economy,
modern slavery is in fact a
part of all our story.*



Berlin: It could be wurst

Professor Clive Hamilton

Public Ethics, Centre for Religion, Ethics and Society (CRES), ACC&C

In his anthropological travelogue, *Tristes Tropiques*, Claude Levi-Strass commented on the state of open-mindedness that arises when we visit a new city, a state of mind that is likely to bring one to suspend one's usual self-discipline 'and produce an almost ritual outburst of prodigality'.

While working in Berlin for a month over May-June this year, I can't say I went on a spending spree but being in a foreign place does make one more adventurous, even in small ways. A case in point, in Australia I would not think of visiting a McDonalds; but such is the disinhibiting effect of travel that in Berlin I ate currywurst.

The high culture of museums, galleries and the theatre is all very well, but to understand how a city ticks you need to experience the culture of the street.

Currywurst is a Berlin fast-food speciality of sublime unhealthiness. It consists of diced pieces of fried pork sausage (or bratwurst) accompanied by chips with a good smothering of curry-flavoured tomato sauce and a dusting of mild curry power. Mayonnaise on the chips is optional. (Bizarrely, some outlets will sell you a vegan currywurst.)

During my time away I was on long-service leave working on a secret project. Nothing to do with China or anything like that, just something I am keeping to myself until I am ready to expose my labours to the indifference of the world. Here is a clue, though: eating currywurst was part of the research.

Available from street stalls in all but the more up-market districts of the city, currywurst is described as the best way to eat pig in the world. If it sounds like the

kind of food Donald Trump would sneak out at night to buy, or just order into the Oval Office, then it is indeed the kind of thing a child's palate craves.

The high culture of museums, galleries and the theatre is all very well, but to understand how a city ticks you need to experience the culture of the street. Experiencing is not necessarily understanding, so sometimes amateur anthropologists like me need to have it explained. (Come to think of it, when Levi-Strauss travelled to the remoter corners of Brazil in the 1930s, his guides were indispensable).

And so it was that I joined, with a motley half dozen others, a walking tour of Berlin's 'underground', not the U-Bahn subway but the gritty streets of Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain where, we were promised, we would learn about the city's 'subcultures, alternative lifestyle, street art, crazy stories and urban legends'.

Our guide Harry gave up teaching high school in Munich to become a magician and, on the side, donned teenage streetwear to show visitors the side of Berlin that gives the city its worldwide reputation among the young and hip. He was true to his word, guiding us through the intricacies of the street art culture, young African art and the techno-music scene.

Did you know, for instance, that the most celebrated street art crew is named One United Power or that the most inaccessible and dangerous places to wield the spray cans, usually high up on a building, are known as 'heaven spots'?

We found ourselves at the Holzmarkt, a kind of urban village on the Spree River attempting to preserve a bohemian lifestyle. Its founder, who aimed to build a utopian enclave within the city, is reputed to have said: 'The only thing that connects us to the real world is the weather.'

You could write a book analysing that statement. In fact, I think I already did and it was elaboration of its themes that took me on side trips to lecture at universities in Copenhagen and Wageningen.

But does any of this culture, high and low, matter? Levi-Strauss, who spent a lifetime devoted to studying and trying to understand the varieties of culture around the world, saw them as no more than 'transient efflorescences' because ultimately the function of humankind, through our civilisation, is only to hasten 'the disintegration of the original order of things'.



Currywurst, photo supplied

Anthropology, he wrote, could therefore legitimately be called 'entropology'. Yes, the second law of thermodynamics tells us that it is all going to end in collapse. It is natural, when meditating on this unavoidable fact, to reflect on what one might enjoy just before Armageddon. Currywurst, anyone?

Ecumenical Travels in Europe

Dr Virginia Miller, Adjunct Research Fellow, ACC&C

The poet, Robert Browning, famously said, “Everyone soon or late comes round by Rome”. Evidently, this continues to be the case, as I am currently in Rome undertaking research at the Gregorian Pontifical University. Recently I was giving a talk at the Roman Anglican Centre and noticed Dr Rowan Williams in the audience. I was delighted to share dinner with him, where we discussed ecumenism and my talk on Austin Farrer’s biblical scholarship. Of course, Rowan Williams is a great fan of Austin Farrer even going so far as to publicly remark that Austin Farrer was “possibly the greatest Anglican mind of the 20th century”. Indeed, I had utilised Williams’ comment in my presentation because I believe it to be an important endorsement of Farrer.

But if everyone sooner or later comes to Rome this is not to say that ‘the Romans’ do not travel outside Rome. During a recent visit to the University of Oxford I encountered Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, ex-Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, at St Cross College where I was staying. This gave me an opportunity to share my research on child sexual abuse with the Cardinal. He was pleased to receive my recently published book, *Child Sexual Abuse Inquiries and the Catholic Church: Reassessing the Evidence* (Florence University Press, 2021).

Cardinal Müller was in Oxford to give a lecture on Cardinal John Henry Newman, a leading figure in the Oxford Movement.

Common to my encounter with Williams and Müller was the high regard they both hold for the Anglican intellectual tradition, especially as it relates to Oxford scholars and the Oxford Movement. Müller greatly admires Cardinal Newman *inter alia* because he sees him as an ecumenical

been reinvigorated by Cardinal Newman being declared a saint in 2019. Indeed, a Newman scholar recently told me that he had acquired contributions from three cardinals for a book he is editing to honor Newman’s life and work in light of his sainthood. Clearly high-ranking

Catholics are impressed with Newman and more broadly with the Anglican intellectual tradition at Oxford.

For me, the inspiration of Newman in relation to ecumenism is that he ultimately made a decision based on what he perceived to be sound reason and prayerful reflection, and acted on it. The ecumenical dialogue between Anglicans and Catholics today appears less decisive, at least as far as it relates to agreement on doctrinal issues and shared communion. Today the emphasis is more on shared appreciation, shared mission work and less on the pursuit of agreement on the doctrinal issues upon which shared communion ultimately depends. This is not to say that Newman’s conversion ought to be the preferred model of ecumenism, as Müller suggests. Nor is it to say that shared mission work

is less important than doctrinal agreement. But it is to say that decisions can actually be made about doctrinal differences at a personal level. Moreover, it may also give hope that bilateral dialogue can yield decisive action on doctrinal differences and, thereby, ultimately result in shared communion.



Dr Virginia Miller with Dr Rowan Williams, photo supplied

exemplar, given Newman returned to the Roman Catholic Church. Certainly not everybody agrees with Müller’s interpretation of ecumenism! However, it is interesting to note his great regard for Newman, whose work Müller began reading as a young teenager.

The general interest in Newman’s work and the Oxford Movement has undoubtedly

The Experience of Homefulness: Living with Dementia

Sally Mordike

PhD candidate, Charles Sturt University

Up the road from where I live, there's a residential aged care facility whose slogan is "It's still home, it's just a change of address!" I wonder whether the residents there actually call it 'home'?

The concept of home is important to us all, as human beings. Sometimes, home can seem almost indescribable simply because it is so meaningful. To date, research into the meaning of home for older people has typically been investigated from physical, psychological, and sociological viewpoints, yet the meaning of home is deeper than a list of qualities, and stronger than a description. We need to look at the meaning of home from a spiritual perspective, as it is not found in the external 'things' around us, but from something internal, deep within us: something spiritual. I particularly want to know about the meaning of home for older people living with dementia.

We fear dementia in our society. The pervasive stereotype of a person with dementia is that they 'lose' who they are, defined by deficits and losses, with no hope, and no way to engage meaningfully with the world. Too often we hear dreadful, negative expressions about people with dementia – that they 'suffer' from dementia, they're a 'shell' or – the most atrocious expression – the 'living dead'. These are despicable ways to talk about anyone.

People living with dementia are *people*, who have a disease that affects their cognition: they can still feel emotions, relish a good laugh, enjoy gardening or singing, being with others or playing golf, or whatever it may be. We don't stop being a person because of a diagnosis. It is vital to hear the voice of the person with dementia: we need to ask how they are experiencing life, and take the time to listen. Furthermore, we need to hear the voices of people with dementia who are living in the community – in their own places, be it the family home or a retirement village, alone or with others – not just those in residential aged care.

The word 'homefulness' gives a unique framework for my research. Brueggemann describes homefulness as "being with and belonging with God and being with and belonging with the neighbour in community" (2014). The essence of 'homefulness' is what I'm trying to capture in my PhD research, and I hope it will provide knowledge that can benefit wellbeing and resilience in the presence of dementia, as well as inform the provision of spiritual care, especially at critical times of diagnosis, transition to residential care, and the end of life.

Brueggemann, W. (2014). *The Practice of Homefulness*. Cascade Books



Exploring Homefulness, photo by Sally Mordike



Exploring homefulness What does home mean, for you?



My name is Sally, and I am exploring the depth of meaning of home for older people diagnosed with dementia who are living at home. This research aims to increase knowledge about 'homefulness' for people with dementia, by finding out what is important and meaningful about their idea of 'home.'

If you have a diagnosis of dementia, are aged 70 or above, and living at home, I would love to hear from you! All I need is an hour or so of your time for an informal interview - you choose the time and place.

If you would like to take part in this research, please contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

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Charles Sturt
University

This research has been approved by the
Charles Sturt University Human Research Ethics Committee



An Academic Sojourn: ACC&C to Cambridge

Aden Cotterill

Master of Theology (Research) Student at St Mark's National Theological Centre

It was perhaps serendipitous that, some six months ago now, it was from the Research Students' room at ACC&C—from where I write these very words—that I hopped on Zoom for an interview with Cambridge University, aiming to secure a place in their PhD in Theology and Religious Studies program.

Much has transpired since this interview. I eventually received an offer of admission. Then came several months of waiting to hear whether a scholarship would be forthcoming. It was—praise God—my very last avenue for finances that ultimately proved successful. I applied online and then interviewed in Sydney for a [World Universities Ramsay Postgraduate Scholarship](#) from the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilization. I have since attended an award ceremony and an orientation event where I was able to [meet the other scholars](#) from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds.

In my PhD I will be exploring theological engagement with the intersection of doubt and pluralism. I plan to enter the topic through a concept articulated by the Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor in

A Secular Age: the Nova Effect. Here “Nova” refers to the explosion of pluralism in societies like ours; the “Effect” of this milieu is the “fragilisation” of all spiritual or moral outlooks.

I suggest this concept warrants theological attention whether we entirely agree with Taylor's account or not. Taylor marries two themes in Christian theology that are typically treated independently: issues of pluralism or other religions and questions of doubt or uncertainty. It is along these lines I will draw on interlocutors like Rowan Williams and Czech theologian Tomáš Halík on whom I am currently completing a Masters in Theology (Research) dissertation through St Mark's National Theological Centre. These two theologians explore across their work themes of pluralism and the conditions of Christian belief. Finally, I propose—in conversation with Taylor, Williams, and Halík—that apophaticism and divine hiddenness are theological themes that might prove fruitful in this discourse.

I do think it indeed fittingly serendipitous—providential—that the Research Students' room and ACC&C would feature so symbolically crucial in my journey towards Cambridge. It has been the space where I could complete an MA (Theology) and a MTh (Research) which made an application to Cambridge conceivable. It is where I was able to write an exhausting litany of scholarship applications. It has been a hub for rich and varied conversations that always nudge your scholarship along in sound directions. The ACC&C has not merely been a building or a desk space throughout this process but a community. I am deeply grateful to, and will miss, all the co-pilgrims—students and staff—that have been a part of my academic sojourn to date. Please do stay in touch.

I plan to create an email newsletter where you can receive life and prayer updates while I study at Cambridge. If you would like to subscribe, I'm beginning to collect emails through this [Google Form](#).

Hire the Centre

Are you interested in hiring the Centre's facilities for your next event?

The Centre's facilities include an indoor chapel which (in according with social distancing guidelines) can seat up to 60 people or the Chambers Pavilion which can seat up to 17 people. We welcome inquiries from groups that run events that are consistent with the vision of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. Contact the Events' Team (Sarah Stitt and Lauren Bartley) for more information on acc-c@csu.edu.au





Theology and the People of God ed. Anthony Maher

Review: Rt Rev'd Stephen Pickard

Research Professor, ACC&C

Theology and the People of God is a book of over 400 pages representing the theological, educational and ecclesial wisdom of 19 scholars associated with the Catholic Institute of Sydney (CIS). The book is dedicated to the well-known and fine Catholic theologian, scholar and priest from CIS, Rev Professor Gerard Kelly. Gerard has been involved for many years with the ecumenical life of the ACC&C through the Centre for Ecumenical Studies and Ecumenical Roundtable conversations.

This book has three overlapping contexts.

First *Ecclesial*. Here is a book from the perspective of the Catholic Church. It is self-consciously standing on the platform of Pope Francis and his vision for the Catholic Church seven decades on from Vatican 2. It is a vision of hope in difficult and challenging times. This platform is not unproblematic by any means. There are some distinct and contested trajectories from Vatican 2. The initial reforming energy of Vatican 2 has become increasingly differentiated over the past half century. For example, a new conservatism, which is a feature of Christianity in the West, has its particular Roman Catholic form. The more reformist, progressive trajectory (and I use the tag 'progressive' advisedly because it too has become weaponised in the ecclesial culture wars) is signalled in this volume of essays. However, reading this book as an Anglican and not a Roman Catholic, I find the essays resonate not simply with the Catholic Church but the church catholic. It breathes a genuine ecumenical air.

Second, *Theological*. Anthony's words make this theological focus clear: 'This book is a work of the local Church, seeking to contribute to the formation of clergy and laity in post-Vatican 2 theology. the book aims to deepen the faith of the reader through an exploration of some of the most challenging questions raised by history, science and philosophy'. Maher seeks a way forward for overcoming the divide between faith, theology and life; to recover the critical relationship between the mystical and the political; to pursue a theological rapprochement across the agencies of the church and especially a new harmony between theology and the 'entire people of God'. This, in Maher's view, 'is long overdue'. So, reader beware; this is a dangerous book. Maher again states that

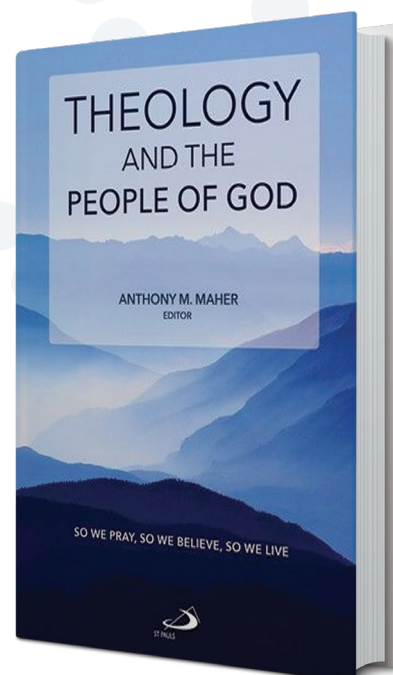
the insights regarding Christian existence, the sacrament of the neighbour and an understanding of salvation as a historical reality (insights and light from South America),

'must not be hid under a magisterial rock'. A dangerous book indeed; an iron fist in velvet glove as they say! And it could not be otherwise since the underlying current driver of this work is Maher's engagement with the theology and philosophy of Ignatio Ellacuria, one of the Jesuits murdered by the El Salvadorian military in 1989.

The trajectory of the book is captured succinctly by Maher in his opening essay: 'The only future for theology is to become the theology of the future'. This entails, in the words of Johann Baptist Metz, a 'mysticism of open eyes'. Open eyes to the realities of the world and its needs. Theology at the service of justice and liberation, human flourishing; in short, a re-founded theology for a re-founded ecclesiology.

Third, *Educational*. This is a book to encourage the people of God to undertake the important work of theology for themselves; to be schooled sufficiently in the tradition and the issues of the day to find a new language and voice to work for the coming kingdom of God. It is a book written for 'students, teachers and pastors in the context of schools, seminaries, tertiary institutions and parishes ...'. In this sense the book offers an outline of what a contemporary theological curriculum might include. It maps the terrain of the theological and ecclesial territory of the world in which we live. The essays 'explore many of the need-to-know issues of contemporary faith, theology and life'. The purpose is to recover the spiritual realm of the modern world in a 'spirit of dialogue and collaboration' with the whole people of God 'seeking their contribution to the retrieval of Catholic memory and future hope-filled imaginings of ecclesial possibilities.'

(continued next page)



The structure and content of the volume follows the well-known ancient pattern: so we pray, so we believe, so we live (*Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi*). Each essayist offers an overview of their chosen theme, an exposition of the main concerns, a consistent focus on praxis and a fulsome bibliography. The curriculum framework is clear. The themes cover a wide range of topics: holiness and the political saint, liturgy, reading the Old and New Testaments, philosophy, church history,

Trinity, Christology, Jesus Christ, Mariology, mission, the church, theodicy, sacraments, ethics, interreligious dialogue, feminist theology, pastoral and practical theology. Plenty for years 1, 2, and 3 of a theological curriculum!

Anthony Maher, initiator, creator and editor of this volume to honour a colleague, is to be congratulated. Maher has contributed three excellent essays that carve out the framework for the book and then go on to map out what is entailed in a contemporary

theology of hope. A hope that is grounded in grace and the historical realities of our time. One of his particular achievements is to recover the theological and ecclesial credentials of a properly pastoral and practical theology.

A deceptively radical book, this volume lays the foundations for many years of theology devoted to the future of a world beloved of God.

For I Was Hungry: Congregations & Church Agencies in Relationship ed. John G Flett

Review: Dr Douglas Hynd

Adjunct Research Scholar, ACC&C

The identification of Australians with the Christian churches continues to decline as the recently released 2021 Census figures have demonstrated. Despite the decline in the place of churches in the wider society, church-related welfare agencies continue to play a major role in delivering social welfare and human services for both state and federal governments. The recently published anthology, *For I was Hungry: Congregations & Church Agencies in Relationship* edited by John G. Flett, Professor of Missiology and Intercultural Theology at Pilgrim Theological College in Melbourne, explores the consequences of these changes particularly the growing dependence of church-related agencies on government funding.

The essays in this anthology originated from papers given at a conference organised by Pilgrim Theological College, the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, the University of Divinity, Melbourne, and The Institute for the Study of Christian Social Service of the University

of Heidelberg, Germany. The contributors to the anthology take up the issues from both a theological perspective oriented by questions of ecclesiology and mission and from an approach grounded in the experience of agencies in engaging with government policy.

Three essays in the volume were contributed by scholars associated with the ACC&C. Stephen Pickard in Chapter Five, "Remembering the Body: Six Theses on Congregation, Church Agencies and the Ecclesia of God" provides an ecclesiological perspective on the issues that are at stake for the churches. Douglas Hynd, in Chapter Nine "Does Theology Matter? Or How Church-Related Agencies Can Become (or Not) an Extension of the State" and Brendan Long, in Chapter Ten "Examining Mission in a World of Competitive Tendering: Disability Employment Case Study" ground the debate in studies of how church-related agencies have been affected by recent government contracting policy.



Ukraine, Guernica, and Angels...

Kerrie Magee

At the opening of his recent Canberra exhibition, Michael Galovic was asked if he was thinking of doing an artwork in response to the situation in Ukraine. The thought being planted, it germinated, and led to the creation of a rich and complex response, incorporating a variety of juxtaposed images based on works reaching back to the tenth century and back-grounded by Picasso's profound depiction of the destruction of Guernica, bombed by Nazi planes in 1937. As the first place where democracy was established in Spain's Basque region, the town of Guernica was a symbolic target.

Each of the three superimposed images is particularly apposite to the situation in Ukraine:

At the top of the work is an ethereal rendering of the Archangel Michael's defeat of Satan in the form of a dragon, both as imagined in the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* and as described in the Book of Revelation, 12: 7-9:

- 7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,
- 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.
- 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

St. Michael is the patron saint of Kyiv, possibly since its founding (c 882) and definitely since the 11th century. The archangel is particularly valued for his leading role in the struggle against Satan.

The second image is an icon of the Theotokos¹ and Infant Jesus. In 1037, Yaroslav the Wise, the Grand Prince of Kyiv, dedicated Ukraine to Mary. She is revered and sometimes referred to as the 'Queen of Ukraine' with her role as protector being celebrated in the Pokrova, or Feast of the Protection.

In a similar vein, on the Feast of the Annunciation this year, Pope Francis pronounced an Act of Consecration:

"Mother of God and our mother, to your Immaculate Heart we solemnly entrust and consecrate ourselves, the church and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine."

(continued next page)

1. Theotokos: Mother of God (used in the Eastern Orthodox Church as a title of the Virgin Mary)



Ukraine Response by Michael Galovic, mixed media on board, 2022
Donated to the ACC&C by the artist

The third image is that of a Hellmouth, an image envisaging Hell as the gaping mouth of a huge monster. The image was first depicted in Anglo-Saxon art at the beginning of the ninth century and was also alluded to in homilies and Old English poetry, in which Satan is imagined as dragon or whale, deluding and then swallowing the damned. Michael has used a particularly vivid image from the Winchester Psalter of the 12th century, where an angel is portrayed locking the gate of Hell on the damned, who are being devoured by demons.

The completed work is phenomenal, in every sense of the word! It brings together concepts and images from different times and cultures in a new context.

Picasso's 'Guernica' captured the first instance in history of the saturation bombing of a civilian target – an occurrence that has become all too common in Ukraine. The horror and destruction of 'Guernica' is unalloyed by any sense of hope or renewal: a dead child is held by its grieving mother in an image that is Pieta-like, fragmented humans and animals are thrown about and the sun appears as an electronic flash.

Michael has overlaid this bleakness with three images that change that evocation of despair. He creates a different perspective of the ongoing battle between good and evil through his addition of a strongly spiritual context. At the centre is the Theotokos and Infant Jesus. The still calmness and compassion of this image is profound, with the deftly textured background increasing and highlighting the radiance of the gold-work.

The tranquility of this image contrasts with the dynamism of the other two images: the Archangel Michael is captured in the moment of victory, with the defeated dragon falling from the sky and, in the Hellmouth, the damned are being devoured by demons as an angel locks the gates of Hell.

The balance of concepts and ideas is formidable – each element is a part of history yet given new sense and relevance in this new context. The sheer amount of thought, care and effort that has gone into this project is awe-inspiring.

Religion, Science and Art become 'Meta-Art'

Yuri Kivshar

ANU Distinguished Professor, Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science

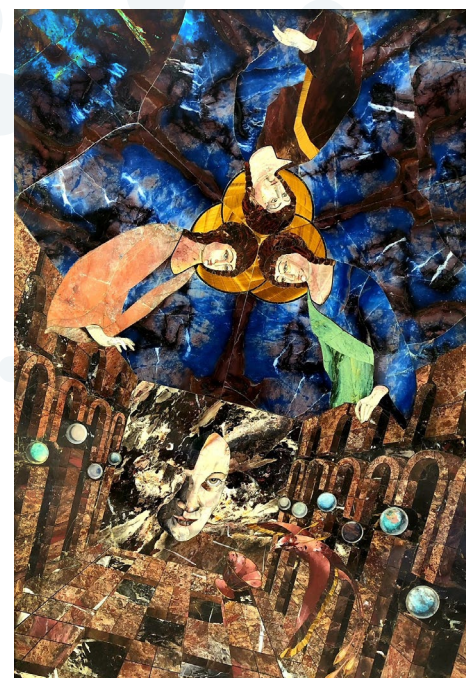
Religion and science are often considered to contradict each other and as being hard to mix. However, religion and science are both trying to understand the world around us and explain why life and the universe exist, so it is hard to imagine that they can exist without each other. Indeed, the famous physicist, Albert Einstein, used to say that science without religion has a limp, and religion without science is blind. Art can open a "communication portal" between religion and science, bringing them and gluing them together, by representing life in its various manifestations. I believe that Anatoly Golobokov's exhibition provides another example of this unity, like the Holy Trinity in Christianity. Many of Anatoly's works are inspired by religious motifs, but they are also informed by his endeavours to understand humanity and life, through advanced concepts of fractals and sacred geometries.

When I first saw Anatoly working on his mosaics, an idea came to my mind. Together with my colleagues and students, we work on the so-called metamaterials;

man-made structures composed of small (subwavelength) elements that enable us to control and change the macroscopic properties of materials. "Meta" is a Greek word that means "beyond", and this relatively new concept underpins a range of recent discoveries in physics. What Anatoly does is somewhat similar; he takes small "elements" of stones, each with their "personality" and unusual patterns, and combines them in a very clever and skillful way, thus creating impressive images with deep meaning.

Anatoly's approach is based on the power of Nature that produces stones of amazing colours and patterns. This type of art is much deeper than any Roman and Florentine mosaic. His creations go beyond regular observations of the world around us. They explore, question and challenge deep foundational topics of our existence. And combined with the new language of an accompanying visual 'media file' (from the digital project "From Stone to Ether"), they open an opportunity to experience art on a different and much higher level

of consciousness. Such an imaginative mosaic form truly deserves to be called "meta-mosaic" or "meta-art", and Anatoly can be recognised and understood as a "meta-artist".



The Trinity, Florentine mosaic by Anatoly Golobokov, photo supplied



Lamentation – *Beauty and Brokenness*

Rev'd Dr Jeanette Mathews

St Mark's National Theological Centre

Beauty and Brokenness was the title given to an artistic performance of the biblical book of Lamentations hosted by the ACC&C on 3 June 2022. The Sydney-based Christian arts group Exalt, led by David Krebs, brought the scroll of Lamentations to life through performance poetry, live art, mime and music. The Canberra Baptist Church choir gave support by presenting choral laments between the poems.

The performance was based on my own translation of Lamentations, prepared for my forthcoming book *Reading the Megillot (Scrolls)* to be published by Smyth and Helwys later this year. I attempted to capture the literary beauty of the original Hebrew poetry including the alphabetic acrostic structure of each poem in my translation. The multiple perspectives represented in the poetry are a keening woman, representing Daughter Jerusalem and voiced by Tabitha Thomas, the Observer read by David Krebs, and the keening strongman ably performed by Canberra-based Michael Smith. The choir represented the communal voice within Lamentations. The finale for the event was a musical piece written and performed by Caspian Scott. The space of the chapel was well utilised. The Observer spoke from the loft. The audience surrounded a focal point

of two artists: Mime artist Naomi Reichardt representing the "brokenness" spoken of in the poems and artist Élise Cook painting images as they appeared in the poetry.

I gave a short introduction to the scroll at the commencement of the event. It is not certain when the scroll was actually written, but it retains the immediacy of the painful events of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in the 6th Century BCE, neither ignoring nor glossing over experiences and emotions. It represents the voices of those who are observing destruction and those who are suffering themselves, but there is no direct voice of God, either in judgement or assurance. There is a dash of beautiful hope in the centre of Lamentations reminding us that

His kindness will not end,

His compassion not yet done
(Lam 3:22)

Yet this is not the lingering emotion. The scroll begins with a cry of pain and it ends in despair with this plea directed to Yahweh (the Hebrew personal name for God):

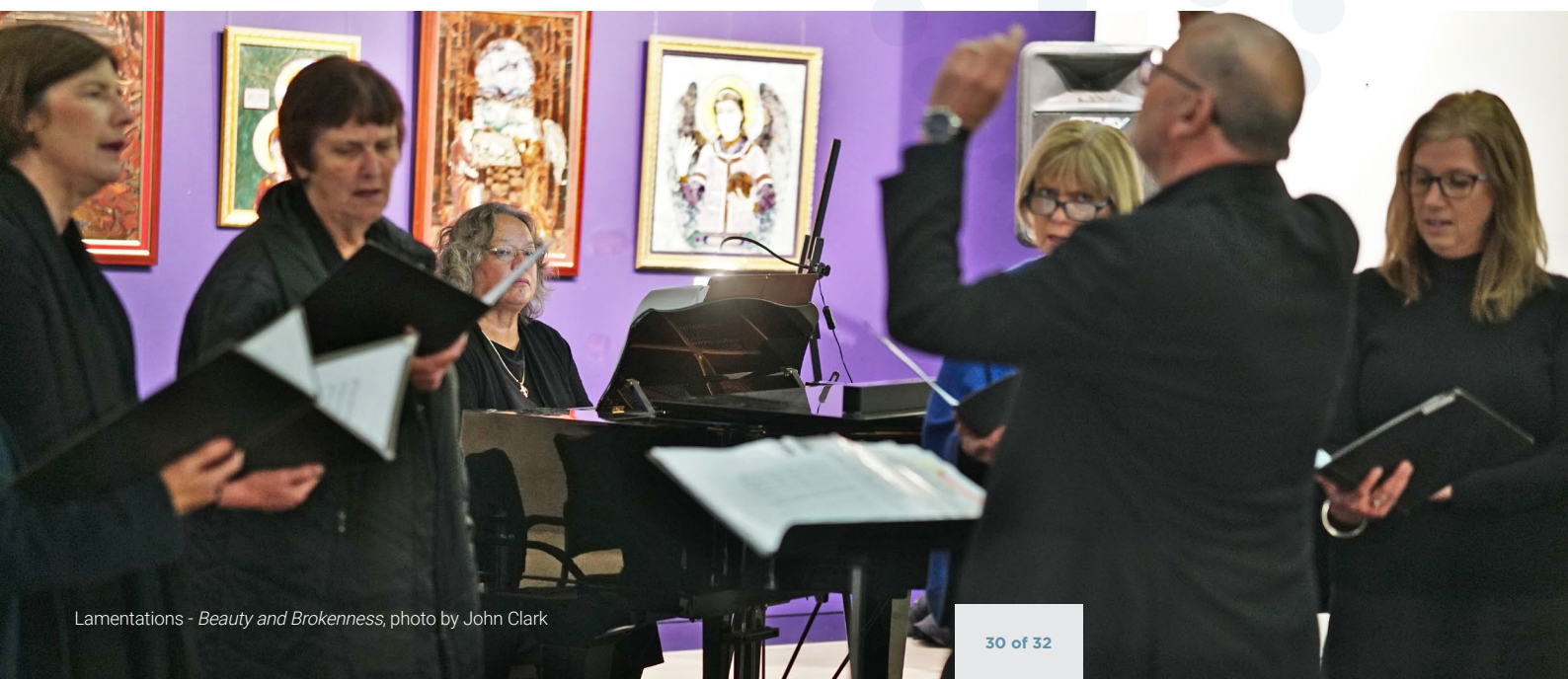
In rejecting have you rejected us?

Will you be angry forever? (5:22)

There is no prophetic voice of judgement that is so often found in the Hebrew Bible, and no envisaging of a new future like we see in some of the forward-thinking prophets. Instead, the voices of the scroll sit in the present and wait, keening over the loss of their home.

It was exhilarating to see this part of the scripture coming alive in performance. In our time, the world as we know it is rapidly changing and we are in danger of losing *our* home, this planet. The words of despair that were so relevant in the 6th century BCE may again speak to our hearts, testing our faith in our communities, our leaders, and our God. In this and many other experiences of life where disaster and death take hold, we can join our voices to our spiritual forebears and cry out to the God of creation to see, to hear, to act, to renew.

The words of despair that were so relevant in the 6th century BCE may again speak to our hearts, testing our faith in our communities, our leaders, and our God.





According to Mark, James Scott, photo supplied

"I have read the Gospel according to St Mark at various times ... but never have I been so struck by the immediacy of the story as I was by James Scott's telling of it."

According to Mark

Judith Clingan AM

Composer, Conductor, Performer, Multi-Arts Creator and Educator

Last Easter I was fortunate enough to catch James Scott's solo performance, *According to Mark*, at the ACC&C.

Firstly – the set. As we all know, the ACC&C was not really set up to be a venue for theatrical events. However, on entering, I was immediately struck by how cleverly James had transformed the usually unremarkable interior into a charming little kitchen, with counters to work on, shelves holding useful kitchen paraphernalia, and an oven which we discovered later actually worked! And James himself, resplendent in white T shirt and white apron, looked perfectly at home in a kitchen. The ploy of busying himself making hot cross buns throughout the entire rendition of Mark's gospel was ingenious.

Secondly – the story. Of course, I have read the Gospel according to St Mark at various times in my chequered Christian pilgrimage, in a variety of different translations from the original Greek – King James, the Revised Standard, the New English, Good News – but never have I been so struck by the immediacy of the story as I was by James Scott's telling of it. The program reveals that he made his own translation without being a Greek scholar, however, he managed it; he has hit upon just the right turn of phrase which draws the listener into the story as though it happened yesterday. The extraordinary three years from the beginning of Jesus' ministry until his death and resurrection are conveyed with breathtaking clarity and pace.

Centuries-old paintings accompanied the telling, shown on a screen above the kitchen. I actually found these slightly off-putting, as for me the mediaeval style jarred with the contemporary feel which the storytelling delivered so cogently.

And finally, the women having left the tomb, we were invited to partake of the freshly baked hot cross buns.

Thank you, James Scott! I would welcome more such retelling of old stories! Maybe Honest Puck Theatre could do a run of solo renditions of some of the more remarkable stories underpinning Christianity.

► Upcoming Events

CHRISTIANS FOR AN ETHICAL SOCIETY FORUM

The Meaning of Justice

Tuesday 23 August,
7 – 8.30pm, The Chapel



BOOK LAUNCH

Community Engagement after Christendom, Douglas G Hynd

Friday 16 September
6pm, Chambers Pavilion



SPIRITUS

Entries close 30 September



REFUGEES IN CANBERRA

Fundraising Dinner

Tuesday 13 September
6.30pm, Hellenic Club, Woden, ACT

High rents and living costs are hitting refugees in Canberra hard. Local organisations, Canberra Refugee Support, Companion House and St Vincent de Paul are working every day to support refugee families and individuals in our community, but their resources are stretched to the limit. Help support refugees living in Canberra. Come along to this fundraising dinner. Proceeds will go to these three local organisations to help fund their work.

Guest speaker: Karen Middleton, journalist, The Saturday Paper

MC: Genevieve Jacobs

Music: The Gypsy Jazz Project



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

Spiritual Reminiscence for Older People

Friday and Saturday, 14 & 15 October
Chambers Pavilion

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

CENTRE FOR AGEING AND PASTORAL STUDIES
 Chambers Pavilion
 Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture
 15 Blackall Street, BARTON ACT 2600

OCTOBER 2022

Fri 14 to Sat 15
9am – 4:30pm

Chambers Pavilion

Spiritual reminiscence for older people
Finding meaning in later life, especially for those experiencing dementia

Professional Development Workshop
 Aged Care Quality Standards
 Standard 1 – dignity and choice

Highly recommended for nurses, chaplains, pastoral carers, leisure activity officers, and professionals who work with older adults

General registrations open from 26 August and close 10 October. Limited places available.

The Centre is unique in Australia. It began in 1998 as an ecumenical venture for engagement with Australian culture and the issues of the day. It was established through a partnership between Charles Sturt University and the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn. It is situated at the eastern edge of the Parliamentary Triangle in Canberra on a 99 year lease to the University which currently provides the major source of its funding.



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