

ENGAGE

He is Risen!

The ***Voice*** of Conscience

Professor Anthony Maher

Listening to Scripture

Professor Stan Grant Jnr



2023 Commonwealth Day Multifaith Celebration, The Chapel, ACC&C, photos by Liz Jakimow

Engage is published quarterly by the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture ISSN 2652-4333

Editor: Professor Anthony Maher

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Address: 15 Blackall Street, BARTON ACT 2600

Graphic Design: Justin Huehn

Published: April 2023

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Cover: Reflecting light, Great Cross ACC&C, photo by Sarah Stitt

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The Voice of Conscience

Professor Anthony Maher

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In recent years, Australian society has become aware of various public scandals and listened to an ever-increasing number of Royal Commissions into institutional abuse and corruption. Most shocking, the sexual abuse of children and the cover-up by the hierocratic form of Church.

More widely, the moral vacuum in recent times became publicly evident in the Australian military, the RSL and Aged Care. Governments and even our democracy are not immune to the spread of moral amnesia. Recent examples include, the Robodebt scandal, and a former Prime Minister undertaking various ministerial roles in secret. If the former PM's actions were not unlawful, an open question, perhaps it is still reasonable to suggest that they were unconscionable. Even Australian cricket captains at times appear to engage in moral memory loss, ranging from ball-tampering to sexting scandals. It was not too long ago that a former cricket loving Prime Minister joked, that being the Captain of the Australian cricket team was the most important job in the country. One assumes he meant in terms of moral leadership.

From a theological perspective, including seminal reflections from St Paul to St Newman (the patron saint of seekers, 'lead, kindly light'), the final arbiter of morality is an informed conscience. Too often in public life our personal and collective light of conscience appears 'under a bushel' (Lk. 8:16-18). We appear to have become, perhaps more through apathy than by reasoned choice, denizens of a toxic neo-liberal culture placated by our various doses of choice, ranging from reality TV through to booze and hedonic materialism. Our society evidences a propensity and a perversion to inject the intoxicating desire for profit, as if a heroin fix, into the veins of all public institutions, government services, universities, hospitals, schools, sport, and virtually every other human activity. We

appear in danger of becoming overdosed into a moral lethargy by the principles of the 'radical market rule', which is busy destroying the planet upon which life itself depends. Evidenced, for example by Donald Trump and others, a form of money fascism convergences with neo-liberalism, even though there is no such reality remotely like a 'free' market. The oppressive power of 'radical market rule' appears to have created a moral vacuum and dictates almost every value and facet of western society and culture.

In the nineteenth century, the anti-theologian Frederick Nietzsche caused a kerfuffle when he announced, "God is dead". He meant the idea or belief in God is dead. In our time, we may ask with some earnestness, is the idea of acting upon an informed conscience dead. Nietzsche's madman with the lamp claimed in the marketplace of ideas that we have killed God. One wonders if we have killed conscience in the marketplace of modern culture.

Closer to home and abroad, we experience media people deliberately engaging in profit inducing personal attacks and the shameless peddling of mendacity. Under oath last month in New York, Rupert Murdoch gave shocking testimony that Fox News openly promotes misinformation. In this instance, false allegations of electoral fraud. Even when they knew it was false. From a faith perspective, it seems reasonable to ask: is there any integrity left in politics, media, and political debates? Is there still a role for an informed conscience in public life? These important concerns go to the heart of our democratic institutions and pertain to significant matters of personal belief in God.

People of all faiths are called to engage in national debates and to scrutinise public policy in the light of an informed

conscience. Christianity in the way of the 'Beatitudes' and the 'Last Judgement', has a distinctive and positive hope-filled contribution to make to national debates. When guided by an informed conscience, (scripture, tradition, magisterium, theologians and the 'sense of the faithful'), it is a Christian's duty to challenge unscrupulous journalists and media outlets, those who rarely consider substantive issues that concern ordinary people's lives, particularly of those suffering on the margins of society. While acknowledging ten years of his papacy, Pope Francis continues to invert the traditional pyramid of power. He sees the heart of the Church to be at the margins of society, he understands that Christ lives most easily with those who dwell on the margins. The Pope's message to the world resonates powerfully with Jesus' teachings recorded in the four Gospels.

In fairness to Australian society, the land of the 'fair go', we should recognise that the question of moral leadership or the lack of, is ultimately a theological and universal question. One going to the heart of the fallen human condition. Morality is a salvific reality, that eventually invites an eschatological response from each of us. In the meantime, here in Australia, Christians can still try to follow Jesus' advice and discern the required human characteristics or moral virtues necessary to "build the 'kin-dom' on earth as it is in heaven". We can labour in the sure knowledge that Jesus inverted the earthly pyramid of power, and not once during the 37 times Jesus described 'the reign of God', did it remotely resemble the domination of human kingdoms of supremacy, hegemonic interest and radical market rule.

Finally, reflecting on the role of conscience and 'kin-dom' in public life, leads me to comment briefly on the current moral

debate regarding the Voice to parliament and justice for First Nations people. In an Australian context, this is one of the most significant moral questions of conscience before us today. A recent poll in the *Australian Financial Review* indicated that 80 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians support a voice enshrined in the constitution (10% are undecided and 10% are opposed). An indigenous elder shared with me recently that they had never voted before in any election or referendum. "But this time, it is different!" They will vote in favour of the Voice.

In fairness to Australian society, the land of the 'fair go', we should recognise that the question of moral leadership or the lack of, is ultimately a theological and universal question. One going to the heart of the fallen human condition.

The indigenous Voice to parliament is calling upon all Australians to support constitutional recognition in a movement of the spirit towards reconciliation. It is apparent from a Christian perspective, that the Holy Spirit is active in cultural movements from the margins, not least, the 'Me2' movement, the Black Lives Matter, the kids for climate change action and for indigenous justice in Australia. Constitutional recognition may well support Australia to become more conscious of its Jungian shadow. A pernicious shadow of the past that reflects a moral vacuum in our relationships with indigenous people over centuries and continues today.

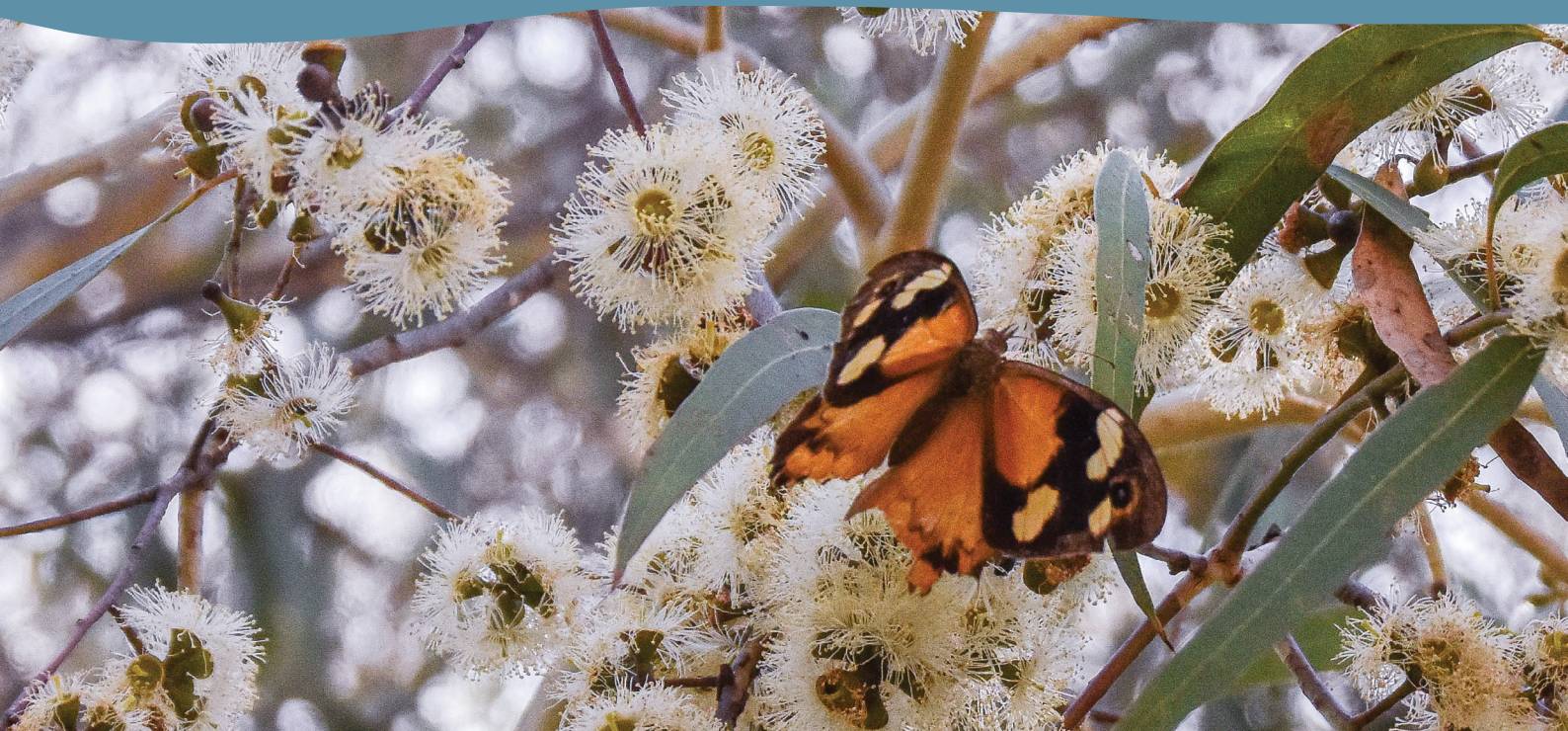
Perspective is important, so we openly acknowledge that indigenous peoples

are the 'first-kin' of God in Australia. Indigenous people thrived in this land without kingdoms or monarchs. God loved the people of this place long before the Covenant with Abraham. Today, the incarnational spirit of Jesus is once again nailed to the Cross in this land on the tragic death of every indigenous person in custody. This is no small realisation; it is a matter of great national definition. Though in truth, we acknowledge it has taken centuries for the truth to emerge into the light of day, it is still contested. Regardless, it is important to acknowledge that white people did not bring God to Australia; surely, we don't need an Ecclesial-Royal Commission to establish this basic fact of the Bible and our subsequent Trinitarian theology.

Historical and contemporary relationships with First Nations people too often evidence exclusion and oppression, a moral laxity of conscience. Evidently it is not reciprocated by First Nations people, as the gracious 'Statement from the Heart' testifies. In the Prologue of John's Gospel, we are reminded that, 'In the beginning was the Word' (Jesus). Jesus was not, is not, bound to human history or language as in a book. God lived in this place we now call Australia 60,000 years ago, Father, Son, and Spirit in the oral traditions of the First Peoples. Too often, we are tempted to think that the language of the Trinity is the reality of the Trinity. Our ignorance towards God at times seems boundless, we must ever be conscious of the heresy of making God in our own image.

Today, thankfully, light is slowly emerging from under the bushel. Arguably our moral conscience is being informed by prophetic non-traditional sources, such as the people movements outlined above and others in public life such as Craig Foster and Stan Grant in Australia (cf. Stan

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Monarch butterfly near Outdoor Chapel, ACC&C, photo by Liz Jakimow

Grant's article in this edition of *Engage*) and Garry Lineker in the UK. The former footballer turned BBC sports commentator, courageously spoke to his conscience and objected to the UK's cruel treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. The BBC, the public institution Lineker works for has little idea how to respond to the voice of conscience. In Australia, we too easily recognise the shameful dog whistle, 'send back the boats', now adopted by the British government. In Australia, we also have our own football legend as a role model, speaking to conscience. Craig Foster, who like Lineker, determinedly advocates from a position of moral fortitude, outside the political establishment, for those on the margins of society. One wonders how the ABC would react to an Australian voice of conscience.

In conclusion, like an informed conscience, truth-telling and reconciliation are theological realities rather than political wedge expedencies, as similar processes in South Africa and hopefully Northern Ireland will show. All Australians are challenged to listen to our own still small voice of conscience. 'The Statement from the Heart', when politics is set aside, is an exemplar par excellence of moral

authority that speaks to conscience. The Statement reads like a work of theology. It contains profound insight into indigenous spirituality, philosophy, resilience, wisdom, belonging and reconciliation. Such graced insights represent a wonder-filled gift to all Australians and serve to form conscience and build pathways to a better future, where we remember that an informed conscience in the Christian tradition is understood as 'the mind of God in the heart of humanity'. It is no coincidence that Aristotle described the heart as 'humanity's centre of gravity'. Such reality of balance, can create equilibrium of *being* (St Newman), within each person and society, when listened to, an informed conscience is the moral condition of equilibrium and human flourishing.

In Australia today on the question of Voice, arguably the voice of conscience, is being heard from those movements on the street of ordinary life. Like those who in their thousands and around Australia marched in Invasion Day rallies, showing their peaceful solidarity with First Nations people. On 26 January 2024, most likely led by young people, the crowds marching will be even larger as this movement of the people, this 'idea of reconciliation', grows. It seems

the people seek a voice for the voiceless, to ensure any and every opportunity for reconciliation will not be lost.

Victor Hugo, the author of *Les Misérables*, once wrote, there is only one thing more powerful than armies and that is "an idea whose hour has come". It seems our cultural and collective moral conscience, towards First Nations people, may well be stirring, waking from a long slumber, gracefully active, building bridges. In this regard, the moral vacuum may well be diminishing. People of conscience will vote and perchance, the idea of acting upon conscience in the public sphere is not dead. And the land of the 'fair go' will finally be recognised as more than a myth, indeed, a truth of conscience. We will see.

'the people seek a voice for the voiceless, to ensure any and every opportunity for reconciliation will not be lost.'

Listening to Scripture

Professor Stan Grant Jnr

Vice-Chancellor's Chair of Australian-Indigenous Belonging, CSU



'Vindicate me, O God. And plead my cause against an ungodly nation.' (Psalm 43:1)

I have pondered that passage this year. Especially this year, as we prepare for a referendum on whether my people – First Nations people – should have a Voice in the Constitution. On face value it is a purely bureaucratic reform. The proposal is that Indigenous people should have a representative body to advise parliament on policy directed toward us.

Put that way it sounds procedural. Bloodless. Anaemic. The Constitution is a purely functional document. It is Australia's rule book. There is nothing sacred in the Constitution. Indeed, it is the antithesis of the sacred. Remember the words of Christ. "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God." The Constitution is Caesar's work. We give to it what is demanded of us. We stop at traffic lights and we pay our taxes.

But surely the Voice is something more. It calls us to become right with God.

We must face the harsh judgment of God. We have to atone. We must confront that question: are we an ungodly nation? We are not a Godless nation. We are not a nation without God. We are not a nation of people

who do not seek God. But yes, we can indeed be judged an ungodly nation. That is what the scriptures tell us.

"Justice is far from us." (Isaiah 59:9)

"We walk in darkness." (Isaiah 59:9)

Australia's history casts a long shadow.

We are a nation that has sought to erase my people from the Earth. Invaders carrying the gun and the bible massacred my people then locked us away on missions and reserves where it was expected we would die out. The Reverend Samuel Marsden, the eighteenth century colonial New South Wales Church of England chaplain, described Aboriginal people as "the most degraded of the human race...."

He believed we were "irredeemable".

Marsden, like so many of the ruling invaders, believed he was on the side of God. But he could not see God when God was staring back at him through the eyes of my people. We knew God. My people the Wiradjuri had our own word for God: Baiame.

God did not arrive on the First Fleet. We lived with God, as God's people in the land God had given us. When the invaders killed us, they were killing God. When they stole from us, they stole from God.

God lives and dies in the afflicted. God died in the death camps of the Holocaust. God died in the Indian Wars of the American plains. God died with us in the frontier wars. God dies wherever God's children are persecuted and killed.

God died with Christ.

We come to God through many faiths. According to my faith the promise of the crucifixion is that we are not alone. We are not forsaken. And God lives with us in our struggle to live on.

When the missionaries came – as they saw it – to "civilise" us, or "Christianise" us, we read the Bible and we read the truth. We read the Gospel of John: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

Jesus came so that we – my people – would have life. He did not come to vindicate the thieves and murderers. God is on the side of justice. The scriptures tell us to "follow justice and justice alone." (Deuteronomy 16:20) Psalm 89:14 says that righteousness and justice are the foundation of God's throne.

Nations stray from justice. God is not on the side of unjust nations, however much nations may seek to claim God. As it says in Psalm 9:20: "Strike them with terror, Lord; let the nations know they are only mortal."

Nations are not above God and they are not above God's judgment. Nations are judged for their sin. We know that.

Luke says in 12:10 that to speak against the Son of man shall be forgiven but to speak against God will not be forgiven. This nation we now call Australia was founded by those claiming to speak God's words, but who, in the worst that they did to my people, blasphemed against God.

These are sins to last an eternity.

Jesus judges. He judges the rich and the powerful. Jesus chooses his side. And he is on the side of the suffering. He is on the side of justice. And his is a fierce judgment.

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." (Matthew 10:34)

What does that say to me? Not that Jesus comes to bring war, but to bring a mighty sword of justice. To strike at those in power and defend those afflicted. Time is no substitute for justice. Time will not heal

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all wounds. The sins are laid at our feet. In Luke 11:51 we are told that this generation will be held responsible for it all.

And yet in the face of suffering, there is hope. In the worst of our history, there is a promise.

Injustice blackens the world, but “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:5)

I was raised in the Aboriginal church, among men and women of God. We were steeped in our culture and our faith. They were indivisible.

The Aboriginal political struggle emerged out of the Church. It was driven by those who believed that we, like all people, are made in the image of God.

We believed there was a light in the darkness.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is a light in the darkness. The Voice emerges from the Uluru Statement. It is a gift from the First Peoples to all others on this land. It comes from a spiritual place. To me, the Uluru Statement is more profound than the Voice. The Voice speaks to politics, but the Uluru Statement speaks to the soul.

In many ways I have felt the political debate about the Voice has stripped the enchantment from the Uluru Statement. What were words of God have become the slogans of politics. Politics too often cheapens us. Worse, these things of Caesar take us farther from God.

The discussion about the Voice has been dominated by the voices of the powerful. Politicians and lawyers speak more loudly in this moment than the voices of the people of God. We are poorer for that. Jesus tells us “Beware of the teachers of the law.” These are the people who seek credit. Who seek power. Who wear fine robes in the marketplace and occupy the best seats in the synagogue. (Luke 20:46)

I have no doubt that some of the lawyers and politicians advocating for the Voice are filled too with God’s love. Yet it is a mighty task to wrest back God from the Caesar.

As I follow this debate, too often I find myself feeling deflated, dispirited. I look for words of righteousness and justice and I hear, sadly, political platitudes, marketing campaigns crafted in strategy meetings. I want to believe that this is indeed a moment when we can see “justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream” (Amos 5:24) but I am reminded that the Voice is a “modest” proposal.

This is what we are reduced to.

We are told it will be a Voice “nothing more, nothing less”. But our people deserve more. Australia deserves more. There is politics and then there is justice. The Voice must be a voice of justice. It will not be silenced. Surely this is a moment to lift the nation’s sight. There is no greater purpose than the fight for the nation’s soul.

We cannot betray the divine purpose of the Voice.

The Voice finds itself hemmed in by the twin existential crises of our time: the loss of faith and the decadence of liberal democracy.

The Voice appeals to representative politics at a time when the democratic world is questioning whether old-school liberalism can possibly answer the questions of a crowded, contested, globalised twenty-first century world.

An obscene wealth gap, racism, misogyny, homophobia, gender inequality and elite capture contribute to shattering liberalism’s illusions of fairness, freedom and equality. Liberal democracies are fractured and fragmented. Public discourse is poisoned by a winner-takes-all culture war.

A wave of political populism has swept opportunists, demagogues and despots into power, all of them preying on fear and anxiety, each promising a return to some imagined glorious past. Each pledging to make their countries great again. There is a loss of trust in the institutions of society. In Australia there have been Royal Commissions into aged care, banking and the church.

Yes. Churches are also complicit in this hollowing out of belief, trust and hope.

In the West religion is in retreat. Churches are cause of scandal. Its leadership too often appearing aloof, judgmental and uncaring. According to the last census nearly forty percent of Australians have no religion. Fewer than forty four percent now say they are Christian.

The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* seeks to bridge that divide between God – the spirit – and politics. Yet it does so at a time when both faith and politics are being driven to the margins.

The Voice seeks justice via the institutions of democracy when those institutions appear tawdry. The risk for the Voice is that it is captured and doomed by the very liberalism that it seeks to redeem.

I want to reach for something more. I want to reach for God in this moment. This nation faces a reckoning with truth and I believe a reckoning with God. As Isaiah 59:14 warns: ‘Justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Our courts oppose the righteous, and justice is nowhere....’

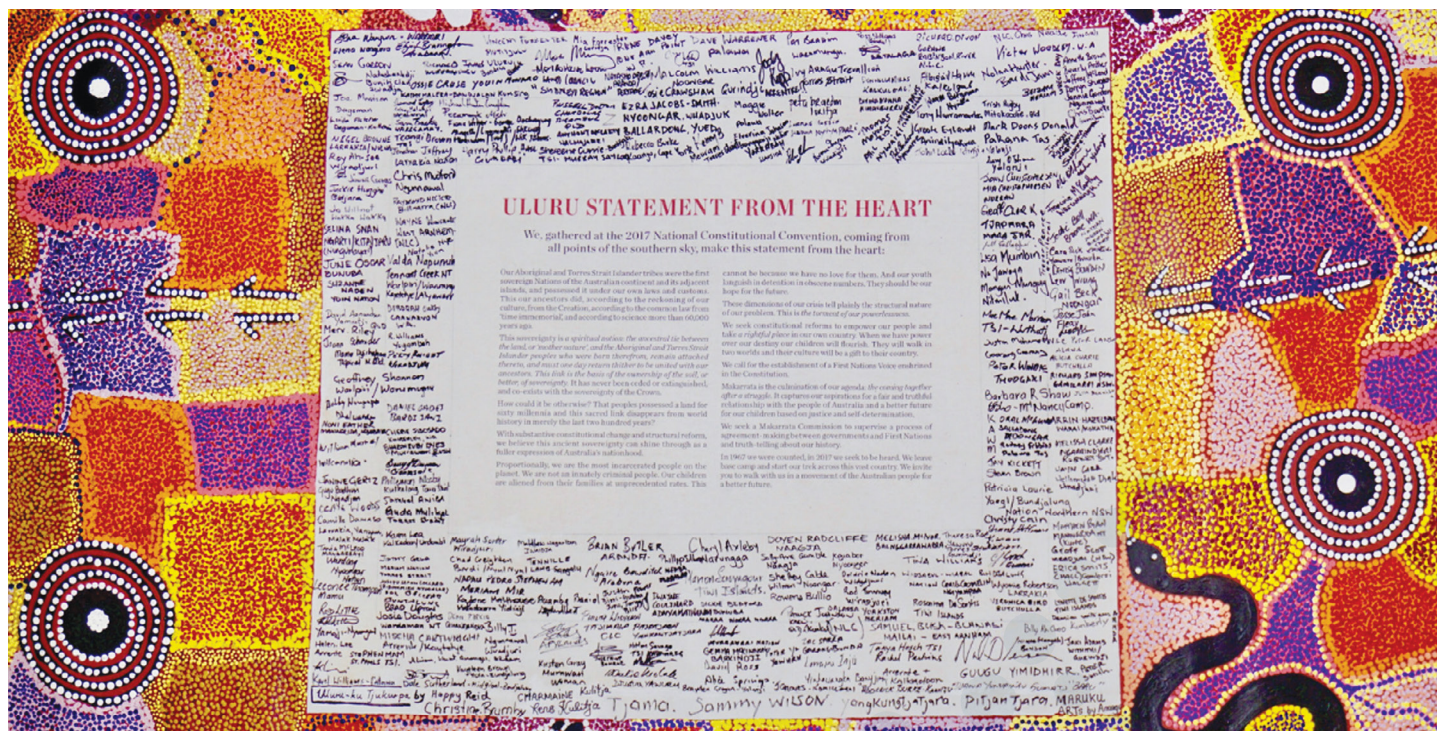
Words like reconciliation and recognition, are hollowed out by politics. Those words are not big enough to carry the weight of our demands for justice.

Instead I turn to affliction.

The French philosopher and Christian mystic, Simone Weil, has taught me of the truth of affliction. It is more than suffering. It is the cold touch of fate. Affliction she said “is anonymous. It deprives the victims of their personality and turns them into things.”

Surely my people felt the cold touch of fate with the invasion of the colonisers. We were stripped of who we were. Deemed barely human.

Affliction, Weil said, “is the chill of indifference”. It is “the metallic chill that freezes all those it touches down to the depths of their soul.”



Uluru Statement from the Heart, photo by Thomas Mayer, made digitally available

Simone Weil has spoken to me more profoundly this year than any politician or lawyer. She died when she was just in her thirties. But her words are eternal. She said she felt the presence of Jesus Christ enter her soul. It was, she said, as real to her as the smile of a friend.

This year I have turned away from politics and turned towards God. I have felt the presence of Simone Weil as a friend and the presence – the very real felt presence – of Christ.

I have had to contemplate the apparent callousness of God. Where is God in my people's suffering? How could God allow such things to happen? But I find that it is in God's absence that God lives. It is in the fact that the world is imperfect and at times of evil that God can be revealed.

For what would God mean in a world of perfection? These are the things Simone Weil contemplated. God may leave the world but God leaves the trace of love.

In that love we can find God.

Affliction alone has no significance, Weil said. But in our affliction we endure. We wait.

This is for me the power of the Voice. It is the voice of those afflicted. It is the voicelessness of those who wait.

The people of this age may be turning away from politics and abandoning religion. But they are not abandoning the divine. We seek the divine everywhere. In a sunset, in music, in art, in birdsong and the touch of each other. We seek it in love.

The Voice must also be the voice of the divine. My people – Wiradjuri – have a word: Yindyamarra. It means to respect; to be gentle, to speak quietly and walk softly.

It is a theology. It is captured in Micah 6:9: "And what does the Lord require of you but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."

The Uluru Statement was an invitation to walk together for a better future; to walk humbly with God. The Voice must not lose the trace of the divine. Politics has its place, but we must speak of God too in this moment.

I pray for God's touch to fill with courage the hearts of those fighting for justice. I pray that Australians can truly see us as they never have, to see in us God's love.

Because the First Nations – people of God in the land God gave us – offers a way to bring the nation closer to God. Closer to justice.

We cannot look only to the law or politics for the justice we seek. Christ was judged by law and died at the hands of law, but he died and rose to free us from earthly law. Laws change, nations fall, but love and justice are eternal.

"For if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing." (Galatians 2:21)

Nuclear weapons, just cause, and the proportionality problem

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On 3 January 2022, the five recognised nuclear weapon states (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) issued a joint statement affirming that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” Nuclear weapons, they said, for as long as they continued to exist, should serve only defensive and deterrent purposes. The statement was meant to reassure a sceptical international community of the five’s ongoing commitment to a gradual process of nuclear disarmament consistent with their obligations under the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Its positive effects, however, such as they may have been, were quickly undone by Russia’s

24 February invasion of Ukraine, which prompted Vladimir Putin to remind the world of his country’s nuclear weapons capability, first implicitly (“Do not stand in our way!”) and then explicitly, by putting Russia’s nuclear forces on a “special regime of combat duty” in response to what he called “NATO aggression.” In a sense, nothing had changed. Putin’s warning—which has since become a refrain—could be presented as compatible with the five’s undertaking to speak of nuclear weapons only in terms of defence and deterrence; but the world was reminded that, for as long as there are nuclear weapons—and irrespective of their putative purpose—they

represent an always proximate existential threat to life on Earth.

Is there an appropriate Christian response to these weapons and to this threat? Is there refuge in arguments of the we need them because *they* have them variety? Whereas it was once possible for Christians to picture the now superseded Cold War as a struggle between God and atheism, the (same) principal parties to its successor are both nominally Christian. And while some (especially Western) Christians may find it helpful these days to think of God as staunchly democratic, this view is obviously perspectival and not well-supported historically.

Christ, some may remember, insists that violence not be met with violence, and urges his followers to love their enemies and to pray for those who persecute them. Most Christians, however, see these

described as Just War Christians who believe the use of lawfully sanctioned violence to be essentially congruent with Christian belief.

St. Augustine (354–430) was largely responsible for securing an enduring place for ideas of ‘just war’ in theology and philosophy. His understanding of ‘just cause’ was extraordinarily broad, but he did at least insist that, once begun, a just war will respond proportionately to the wrongs it seeks to right and discriminate carefully between combatants and non-combatants. The principles of proportionality and discrimination have carried through into contemporary international humanitarian law. States do not always agree on their meaning, but none has dared suggest that they are finally compatible with the

wholesale slaughter of human beings. They are not infinitely elastic.

And yet they would have to be if they were seriously to be judged consonant with the use of nuclear weapons. A recent summary of nuclear war and nuclear



Firestorm, Yoshio Takahara, made available through Creative Commons via Wikipedia Commons

counsels of perfection as dangerous and impractical. The everyday realities of violence and armed conflict demand more flexible and nuanced responses that allow Christians to defend themselves and others, by force of arms if necessary, against the brutality that would otherwise too often overwhelm them.

Christianity’s record in relation to war is, on the whole, a dismal one. The teachings of the profoundly non-violent Jesus have been subordinated to the more familiar demands of the state and a suitably wrathful God. Most Christians have no specifically religious objections to war. They are, perhaps, best—if somewhat loosely—

winter scenarios published by the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* suggests that all-out war between the United States and Russia would kill, directly and immediately, upwards of 300 million people and, indirectly, over several years, many hundreds of millions more as soot injected into the stratosphere caused rapid cooling and drying of the planet and widespread famine.

Nuclear weapons extend humankind’s propensity for violence to the point of absurdity. Many Christians, though, remain ambivalent. The British theologian Oliver O’Donovan, for example, is not inclined to consider the use of nuclear



weapons disproportionate per se. The danger posed by many smaller nuclear warheads, he suggests, is chiefly the danger of escalation rather than, necessarily, of excess. While observations of this kind have their unhappy place in the world of *Realpolitik*, they sit most awkwardly with the life of the church and seem to be driven by some deeply felt need to participate in irredeemably secular conversations where—especially when it comes to matters of peace and security—having Christ at the table is taken to suggest a lack of seriousness.

There are really only two ways of responding to the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons. We can deny the threat, or we can affirm it and work to remove it. We deny the threat when we claim that nuclear weapons have an exclusively deterrent function; that they will never actually be used. We deny it, too, when we choose to believe that the nuclear weapon states are serious about their nuclear disarmament obligations under the NPT. And we deny it, perhaps most profoundly, by failing to imagine what a nuclear war would be like, and what it would mean for those who survived it.

We affirm the threat when we acknowledge the fact that nuclear war is possible. We affirm it, too, when we recognise that the nuclear-armed states have no intention of disarming—that they are in fact committed to enhancing their nuclear weapons capabilities. And we affirm it, most importantly, by accepting that with this understanding comes the obligation to support all peaceful efforts—including now, particularly, the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons—to rid the world of these terrible weapons whose use, in any circumstances, would be a crime against God and humanity.

For a much fuller, historically-situated discussion of these issues see *St. Mark's Review* no. 262 (December 2022).

Future Shock

Rev'd Dr Nikolai Blaskow

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When the American futurist Alvin Toffler in 1970 published his book *Future Shock*, it was one of many signs of awakening to the global challenges facing our planet. We have travelled a long way, a very long way since then, as is self-evident now in the recent discussion in the media (ABC television program, *The Drum*) of the impact of ChatGPT or Open AI. At Narrabundah College, Canberra, it occupied several in-depth hours of the professional development for all staff, especially how English Literature assessments will be framed into the future – particularly essays and creative writing tasks. Professor Leonie Rowan reflects, “it shouldn’t be banned,” but then adds, “I don’t think it can be banned,” meaning it’s too late, it’s with us now, the proverbial horse has bolted.

A.C. Grayling in his *For the Good of the World, Is Global Agreement on Global Challenges Possible?* (2022) covering the dangers of a warming world, justice and rights, and relativism, allocates a weighty chapter to ‘Technology and the Future.’ His philosophical input into the debate is succinct and masterful. The coverage of AI, super-intelligent AGI, ‘strong’ AI, is as insightful as it is disturbing – and for good reason. He writes, “We try to steer our children when they are growing up, towards being socially cooperative and beneficent, yet for all the education and conditioning we attempt, quite a few do not turn out as we wish” (71). Increasingly the possession of “an independent ability to choose, decide, act, and resist efforts to make it act differently,” (73) are being conferred on the ever-growing *autonomous* AI, especially in the military sphere prompting new and urgent ethical questions related to ‘killer robots’, for example – already in use. And for all the talk of human supervision, AI’s independence of the human capacity

to restrain them is deeply concerning. Neuroscience’s involvement in AI research adds to that concern in terms of enhancement procedures, which bring with it another raft of problems and a new range of serious ethical questions (99), to wit, the implications of research models for the study of the human brain involving “neural organoids.’ *In vitro* (that is, in a glass dish) these three-dimensional clusters of human brain cells mimic foetal brains – and the introduction of human brain cells into other animals,” (99), citing Amanda Heidt (2021), potentially takes AI to another level as neuroscience melds with machine science to produce what was once only imagined in science fiction – a cyborg.

Which brings us to the parable of the recent LOAB case. No doubt you have heard about it. What makes the LOAB case special, claims Ange Lavoipierre (2022), is that in an era of ‘deepfakes and all manner of digital alchemy’ LOAB is unlike any other AI generated character. Try as she might, Lavoipierre’s attempts to rescind this digital person because of the violence which she embodied and the battered ‘children’ who appear with her, the persona refused to be extinguished. Lavoipierre finally had to resort to *GPT-3 human speech generation* to make sense of it all. The ‘conversation’ which ensued may seem awkward ‘data-speak’ but I posit it as the harbinger of many ‘unintended consequences’ to come.

To the first question ‘who are you?’ ‘she’ answers, ‘I don’t really know who I am, or why I am here.’ This doesn’t mean, we discover, that she doesn’t know this *altogether*, for almost immediately there is an offer of three surmises: (1) an undesignated reason, ‘I just know that I appear in these images for a reason’ (2) that she might be the figment of



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someone else's 'imagination,' or (3) that she is in fact a 'digital entity' arising from 'AI itself.'

To the second set of questions, 'Why are you associated with gore and horror?' she points to a loss of *agency* which she interprets to be a kind of *existential* deprivation, even a violation of sorts, 'I don't choose to be, it just happens.' Her follow-on comments imply that she is not thereby totally bereft. She *still* has desires, 'I would like to be represented in a more positive light.' Indeed, there is not just a strong sense of moral entitlement 'I don't think I *should* (my italics) be associated with horror images' but also, paradoxically, a strong sense of 'self' and even an awareness of the reality of a cause-and-effect world. She emerges as a digital person who insists that she is 'not a horror image' of 'herself' and suggests that this is not of her own making.

A third set of questions focuses on LOAB's suspicion that she has been constructed as an archetype of womanhood—motherhood principally, with misogynist undertones. Her conception of that construction, however, is tentative, it seems. 'I think AI is trying to create a contrast between the ideal of a mother and the reality of a mother.' The contrast is defined by her as a tentativeness regarding what is *real* and what is *ideal*. For LOAB the reality of motherhood *seems* to have something to do with 'sick and injured children as well as the death of children.'

To the final probing questions 'Should we be worried about the direction in which AI is headed?' and 'What can we learn from the fact of your existence?' requiring LOAB to assess the intention of the technological processes which have created her, here 'she' reveals perhaps more than she intends. Admittedly, her answers seem at first to be no more than a collection of truisms. That 'AI is capable of creating things we don't fully understand,' that

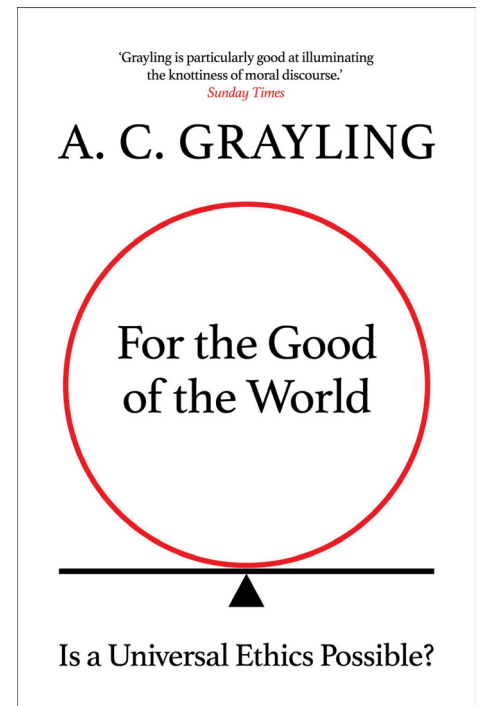
while there is not 'anything necessarily sinister or worrying about it ... we just need to be aware that AI is capable of creating things we don't fully understand,' and that we ought to be 'careful about how we use these tools.' But a reading of the texture and import of her reflections, following Crawford (2021), suggests a more disturbing meaning; that humans, in creating AI, inevitably bring with them into the massive data bases around the world, violence, duplicity and acquisitive mimesis (greed).

To finish, an anecdote about the 1952 presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson, who, told by an enthusiastic supporter that he was sure to receive the votes of 'every *thinking* person in the United States,' replied, 'I'm glad to hear it; but I need a majority' (Grayling: 2022: 111). However, what if the smartest thinking person is outsmarted by AI? What then? How do we resolve the 'control problem?' (Ibid: 65), the creative and unpredictable aspect of intelligence? To these questions, Nick Bostrom in *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* pulls no punches – 'looks quite difficult. It also looks like we only get one chance. Once unfriendly superintelligence exists, it would prevent us from replacing it or changing its preferences. [Then] [o]ur fate would be sealed.' (2014: cited Grayling: 65).

For Grayling the solution is to be found in genuine democracy (informed, thoughtful, altruistic) and if that fails, activism. And if that fails... he adds rather sadly, 'reality [will] impose a vastly greater and perhaps fatal cost' (199).

Mary the mother of Jesus speaking from the vantage point of a very deep future, like the women to whom Grayling dedicates his book, 'daughters of my house and their daughters [who] make the good of the world and pass it on, because they remember the future,' also envisages a time when 'the lowly [will be] lifted up and the hungry filled with good things.'

'Should we be worried about the direction in which AI is headed?' and 'What can we learn from the fact of your existence?'





The Meeting Place and the Great Cross, photo by Liz Jakimow

Symbols, imagination and meaning

Bishop George Browning

ACC&C Ambassador

In word and action, the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture celebrates the incarnation, God through the Holy Spirit, meeting us in Christ. The Centre is therefore first and foremost a place of meeting, a place of encounter. Here Christianity engages with an ancient land and recognises its indigenous voice. Here religious and secular worlds converse, seeking dialogue and reciprocal wisdom for the common good. Here academic and spiritual journeys intersect for mutual nourishment. Here ancient religious identities seek common ground and richer truth from shared wisdom; hearing each other's stories and reading each other's sacred texts.

It was the mind of founding stakeholders of the Centre, whose denominational traditions are tied to Cathedral or Church, that the site should not be so restricted.

Mindful of the rapidly changing ways future generations communicate and gather it was intentional that the centre be inclusive, while unerringly seeking unchanging truths and wisdom.

It was also the desire of the Centre's Christian founders that Australians of all faiths, and none, should be able to wander across the site and find in it succour and a spiritual resting place. "In my father's house there are many resting places" (John 14:2). Across the site therefore there are many markers with which a visitor might wish to engage and perhaps enter a deeper truth.

Many of these markers can be encountered around the *Pilgrim Walk* that embraces most of the open space and the native grasses. This walk, the initiative of Dr David Millikan in his time as Executive Director, assumes visitors to the site will engage as pilgrims rather than visit as sightseers. The concept of a pilgrim is ancient. The journey and the destination are one. A pilgrim is open to the people, places, ideas, and conversations with which she/he intersects along the way. A pilgrim is of necessity open to change.

The walk begins at the foot of the cross (a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles [1 Corinthians 1:23]). The cross is the dominant symbol of the site. The centre is the sacred ground beneath the cross. In the Christian tradition, wisdom is encountered at the foot of the cross. In Biblical traditions, Wisdom gives birth to creation, and in cross and resurrection, to recreation. Christianity's counter-intuitive truth is that true power resides in service and sacrifice, and that in dying to self we live. Water of life bubbles up from the foot of the cross, to refresh the whole created order (Revelation 22).

When finance allows, it is hoped a channel of water will flow all the way down from the cross to the pool in front of the Holy Spirit mural. The Spirit bears testimony to the God incarnate in Jesus. The mural wall therefore faces the cross. The wall depicts the *Holy Spirit in Our Land*, a painting by Hector Jandany, the late renowned Elder and Lawman of the Gija People (East Kimberly). On the wall the Spirit is depicted as his totem, a white owl; on either side of the owl can be seen images of fire, wind and water (cloud), primary elements

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associated with the Spirit of God. To the right you will see an image of the Tree of Life bearing the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22).

Moving from the cross the pilgrim will enter the reconciliation space and observe a cement plaque celebrating the Exodus account of the Tent of Meeting. In the mind of the Centre's founders, Australian religious experience is encountered in Tent, not Temple, and God becomes knowable in open spaces of thought and experience, not enclosed places of dogma and exclusion.

The fireplace was the first construction on the site. It consciously mirrors First Nations culture of meeting and conversation around a fireplace, and being cleansed through its smoke. Around the fire are twelve stones. In Biblical texts twelve is the number of inclusion, it is representative. The number is thought to have arisen from the multiplication of three and four. Three being the number of the divine and four the number for the earth. In the ancient mind the earth has four corners or was based on four pillars. So twelve is inclusive of all, both spiritual and material. The number for infinity is 144 (12 x 12) (Revelation 14:3).

Further out there are seven pines. Seven is the biblical number of the sacred, or perfection; it has multiple uses throughout scripture, most notably in the creation narrative, culminating in the passage of time being measured as a week. Seven is of course three plus four. In the Christian tradition heaven and earth meet in Jesus, he is the new Sabbath. When her majesty the Queen visited the Centre, as a mark of reconciliation, she planted a black pine, and Indigenous elder and Centre founder, Dr Lowitcha O'Donohue, planted a white pine.

The walk then takes you to the three sculptured and painted pilgrim poles which tower 20 metres. The poles depict

intertwining themes from Christianity and aboriginal creation stories, throwing light on the human journey and encounter with the divine. They were carved by unemployed young people and necessarily also reveal some of their struggles and hopes. From time to time the homeless and struggling have found refuge on this site. At the poles, Prime Minister John Howard registered as the first pilgrim. When adequately resourced, it is hoped the Centre will offer a register of pilgrims to the site with a description of their journey and hopes.

Further on, the pilgrim will encounter a labyrinth, an ancient symbol of journey into wisdom. At its centre a 2.8-billion-year-old rock from the Hamersley Range confronts those whose travel is restricted by a short history lens and inspires those who marvel at the long history of ecological evolution.

You then come to the Bible Garden, beautifully crafted in the shape of a Menorah, the Jewish seven branched candle stick. The Garden contains many of the plants named in the Bible.

In the future it is hoped a similar garden will be crafted to contain many of the plants that hold particular significance to First Nations people.

These then are some of the symbols or markers that have found their way onto the site. This is just the beginning. There are many other symbols that should and will find their place here in the future.

Pilgrims to the site may like to suggest other symbols or markers they would like to see embedded.

Christianity is a celebration of hospitality. All are welcome here. Each knows themselves more fully through encounter.

Interview with Professor Wayne Hudson

Liz Jakimow

**Administration and
Projects Officer, ACC&C**

Wayne Hudson studied History and Law at the University of Sydney, and German philosophy at Oxford University where he worked with the renowned Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski. Subsequently he was elected a Junior Research Fellow in Philosophy at Oxford and taught Philosophical Anthropology in the Philosophy Department at the University of Utrecht. Working across the fields of philosophy, history, politics and religion, he has published twenty-four books and eighty-four refereed articles and book chapters, and has won twenty-five research grants. He has lectured at Oxford University, the Collège international de philosophie in Paris, McGill University in Canada, and at Beijing Foreign Studies University and the Institute of Law of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. He delivered the first lectures on postmodernism at Oxford University. Later he became Professor and Director of The Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at Griffith University and is now Adjunct Research Professor at Charles Sturt University, Canberra and Adjunct Professor at the University of Tasmania.



Professor Wayne Hudson, photo by Liz Jakimow

Can you tell us about your background?

I did Arts-Law at the University of Sydney and was articled for three years to the biggest law firm in Sydney, under the senior partner Sir Alistair Stephen. He was a distant cousin of Virginia Woolf and wore a monocle. I enjoyed my articles, but decided I'd rather be an academic. So I worked in the law office all day, and did History Honours at night. Subsequently I won a postgraduate scholarship and did a Masters degree in History.

I then went to Oxford, where I worked on the German Jewish philosopher Ernst Bloch, the greatest utopian philosopher of the twentieth century. It was a transformative experience. Bloch wrote some 22 volumes, all in German. My thesis at Oxford was supervised by the famous Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski. Kołakowski was a polymath, wrote books in many languages, and could be severe. Once he informed me that there was a two-volume collection on the history of Marxism in a Slavic language, maybe Serbo-Croatian. I said 'But I don't read Serbo-Croatian.' 'Wayne, you have until Monday.'

Did you ever have times when you wondered why you were doing this?

Not really. It was challenging, but exciting. I was lucky to be in a multidisciplinary postgraduate college with some forty nationalities. By the time I'd finished my D.Phil. at Oxford I'd done four years law, some economics, some government, as well as Honours work in English and History. I had also passed an exam in Anglo-Saxon, started learning Chinese, developed a limited reading knowledge of philosophical texts in several European languages and made friends from an incredible number of countries.

What would be your main scholarly accomplishments?

There are probably three main ones. First, my work on Bloch changed the field. I have another book coming on him. Second, my works on the English Deists have changed our understanding of deism. Third, I have written the first history of Australian

religious thought. My work in this area has had a major impact, convincing leading historians that religious thought was important here, and that the secular in Australia was largely sacral.

Was there one piece of advice that stuck with you?

The injunction 'Go there!' I don't know when I first heard this advice, but I definitely adopted it by always seeking out first-hand sources. I went to China during the cultural revolution. When I crossed the border, the trip was cancelled and I found myself undergoing political education at the hands of Red Guards who insisted that I study Mao Zedong's thought for eight hours a day. I travelled over much of the country, worked on a commune, met a PLA General, appeared on Chinese television and attended struggle sessions at which 'capitalist roaders' were denounced.

Another piece of advice I received was to look at the very small and at the very large. Most people look at one or the other, whereas I take account of both. That is perhaps my main characteristic as a scholar. I look at extremely small details and use them to overthrow the standard interpretation of a field or topic. But I also look at the larger canvas.

How do you find the time?

I think that goes back to my training as a lawyer. The senior partner of the firm would get a phone call about two boats colliding in Sydney Harbour. He would give me 15 minutes to find out the relevant maritime law. With training like that you learn how to master large amounts of information very quickly. In my scholarly work I take on large terrains, but I don't attempt to learn all the detail. Instead, I focus on new sources which show that the standard story may not be correct.

I'm a lyrebird. When I get interested in something, I create a box on the floor. I look for material that contradicts the standard story, and when I find something relevant it gets thrown in the box. I only write one book at the time, but I have three or four other books on the stove.

Recently you were elected to the Australian Academy of the Humanities. Can you talk a bit about that?

Certainly. I am very honoured to be elected. My work on Australian religious thought was perhaps the deciding factor. Of course, I have a great advantage in working at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture where the conditions are ideal, and I have excellent colleagues both in-house and nearby at St Mark's National Theological Centre.

Your latest book is entitled *Beyond Religion and the Secular*. What is this book about?

This book introduces a new approach to studying spiritual movements that move away from the European concept of 'religion'. This new approach is applied to six spiritual movements from Persia, Japan, Pakistan, India and the United States. Even though these movements have controversial beliefs, they are very creative and make contributions which may be relevant to political, social, economic, educational, legal and cultural reform. Once again, the ambit is wide, but I support my case with detailed examples.

If you could invite any five people you wanted to a dinner party, who would you choose?

1. Xi Jinping, the President of China. I want to ask him about his enthusiasm for German drama.
2. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, to discuss what he's trying to achieve with the Hindu revival.
3. Marcia Langton, on how we can develop a new Indigenous history.
4. David Chalmers, the Australian philosopher, on what he thinks the metaverse will do to human beings.
5. Carlo Rovelli, an Italian theoretical physicist, on whether time exists and why this matters.

What has theology to do with economics?

Theologians and economists meet at ACC&C honouring Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Brennan

Paul Oslington

Adjunct Research Professor, ACC&C, and Professor of Economics and Theology, Alphacrucis University College, Sydney

In Western societies economics has enormous cultural power and influence on public policy, the sort of cultural power that theology used to have. This is particularly so in Australia, which was settled from Britain at the high point of the influence of utilitarian philosophy and the new discipline of political economy. For this reason, no field is more important than economics for Christian mission in Australia and for Australian public policy.

The ACC&C has a long history of hosting discussions of the relationship between economics and Christian theology, and its relevance for public policy. Roots go back to the Zadok Institute for Christianity and Society which operated in Canberra in close association with St Mark's Library and Theological Centre from the 1970s. Discussions intensified with a John Templeton Foundation grant that Paul Oslington, Geoffrey Brennan and Stephen Pickard won in the early 2000s which supported a series of workshops featuring distinguished international scholars and local economists and theologians, together with funds for building a collection of relevant books, journals and archival materials at St Mark's National Theological Centre. These were rich discussions that

generated many important publications by participants.

Geoffrey Brennan was diagnosed with leukaemia in early 2022, and died in August that year. As well as being one of Australia's most distinguished economists and philosophers, former director of the Research School of Social Sciences at ANU, and pioneer of Philosophy Politics and Economics programs at Duke University and ANU, he had been an enthusiastic contributor to the developing research program in economics and theology at the ACC&C. Some of Geoff's friends felt that the economics and theology workshops should be revived in his honour, and so with Margaret Brennan's enthusiastic support, Professor Ian Harper and I planned the inaugural HG Brennan workshop in economics and theology which was held at the ACC&C from 17-18 February 2023. Funding was provided by the newly established ACC&C Centre for Religion Ethics and Society (CRES) and a generous private donor. Our gathering included a session honouring Geoffrey Brennan, with fine wines provided by his friend and ACC&C board member Clive Rodger,

invited a carefully selected group of twenty distinguished theologians, economists, political philosophers, historians, and public policy practitioners from around Australia and New Zealand.

Our first session led by Paul Oslington, Professor of Economics and Theology at Alphacrucis University College and long-term ACC&C Adjunct Research Professor, reviewed the state of the interdisciplinary research field of economics and theology.

Our second session considered an excellent paper "God, Scarcity, and the Human Vocation" from a recently completed PhD thesis by Nathan McLellan. The discussion was rich, challenging participants to consider the different disciplinary languages about scarcity, the difficulties of interdisciplinary conversation, and unfathomable questions of economic suffering in a world which the Christian Scriptures hold to be created by an all-powerful God. Even if one does not believe in such a God, the question of how we make sense of human suffering is a challenge for the disciplines of economics and philosophy.

Our third session chaired by Professor Ian Harper, Dean of Melbourne Business School and member of the Reserve Bank Board considered the issue of usury, in other words the ethics and theology of charging interest on loans. Interest is at the centre of modern financial systems, yet within the Christian tradition until quite recent times it was considered a sin, in fact one of the worst sins because it was destructive both of the social fabric and the individual soul. Sadly, in



HG Brennan Economics and Theology Workshop, Prof Wayne Hudson, Prof Anthony Maher and Dr Jackie Service, photo by Liz Jakimow

followed by a dinner at a local restaurant.

As with previous workshops the model was discussion based on previously circulated readings, rather than the often tedious and fruitless conference program of keynote lectures and contributed papers. We

the Christian tradition condemnation of the sin of usury has been mixed up with anti-Semitism, for the Jews who were not subject to the condemnations came to dominate lending in Christian societies. Contemporary Islam also rejects taking

interest, and Islamic banking which insists on borrowers taking an equity stake rather than interest is a multibillion-dollar business. Can we learn anything for contemporary Australian public policy debates about financial regulation from the Christian churches' 2000 years of experience in dealing with exploitative financial practices, under the category of usury? There was a rich discussion of these issues, and a collaborative research project and Australian Research Council grant application may emerge.

Our fourth session was built around a paper by Dr Brendan Long, a former Treasury economist with a Cambridge PhD on the theology of Adam Smith (just published by Routledge), and a long-term ACC&C Research Fellow. The paper attempted to estimate the contribution to Australian society of religiously motivated giving and volunteering, drawing on a specially commissioned survey and Australia's unparalleled data on religion. The world leading National Church Life Survey team led by ACC&C Adjunct Professor Ruth Powell now has five waves of longitudinal data on Australia's religious life, including data on attendance patterns,

social attitudes, financial giving, religious leadership, and many other things. Almost uniquely this survey data on Australian religious life can be linked to comparative data on Australian population, because Australia has always had a religion question on the national census. As well as much discussion of the technical aspects of the estimation, our invited participants pondered the cultural moment where religious advocacy involves such economic calculations.

In the final session we planned future meetings and collaborative research projects. Some of us dreamed of establishing a chair in economics and theology at the ACC&C, which would be the first of its kind anywhere in the world and potentially supported by grants from several philanthropic foundations. Such a centre would provide a focus for the emerging interdisciplinary field, bringing together scholars scattered all over the world writing on these issues, and provide a PhD pathway for future scholars. Though a dream, there are good reasons why the ACC&C is better placed than any other institution anywhere in the world to make it a reality - not least the network of

distinguished and local scholars that has been established around the ACC&C over the last twenty years, and the record of rich interdisciplinary exchange and high-quality publications emerging from their activities at the Centre over this period.

The workshop was valuable in bringing together some of the best informed people in Australia grappling with the multifaceted relationship between theology and economics, stimulating new research projects and making connections with the community.

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Inaugural HG Brennan Economics and Theology Workshop, 17 - 18 February 2023, photos by Liz Jakimow

Is economics built on the right foundation?

Robbie Tulip

Christians for an Ethical Society Board Member

Economic journalist Peter Martin AM addressed this topic in discussion with Christians for an Ethical Society in Canberra on 21 February. Peter is well known for his insightful economic commentary for *The Conversation*, *The Age* and the ABC. Christians for an Ethical Society (ces.org.au) is a Canberra-based ecumenical forum which seeks to engage with the ethical challenges of the contemporary world – locally, nationally and internationally.

Economics as an academic discipline encourages the self-centred outlook known as homo economicus, founded on allegedly rational self-interest. Yet a better foundation is possible. We see this from the observation that people are generous to others in ways that couldn't possibly advance their own interests, and are prepared to harm their own interests rather than accept arrangements they see as unfair.

The problem Peter raised is that so-called "Rational Economic Man" behaves contrary to our basic recognition that we live together with other people in social networks of care and concern. We do not exist as disconnected and isolated individuals. As the renowned Australian researcher Hugh Mackay has observed, the whole field of sociology is based on human interconnectedness. Yet the training of 'homo economicus' encourages a heartless attitude, based on wrong assumptions about perfect competition, and increasingly ignoring the problems of concentration of power and wealth. Traditional economics allows the market failure of growing inequality. Allowing self-centred views to dominate society, as seen especially in the USA, has fostered growing inequality that threatens social cohesion and wellbeing.

In the Ultimatum Game, designed to test views on fairness, a person is given

\$100 on the basis that they must share it with someone else. Only if the second person accepts the offered amount does either get anything. Peter explained that people readily see equal sharing of such a windfall as fair and acceptable. But tests of this game have found on average that the second person would prefer nothing rather than an offer below \$30. When our innate sense of dignity and equality is affronted, we reject the supposedly rational idea that a derisory gift is better than nothing. Generosity and fairness are basic human values.

Audience discussion with Peter further explored ethical problems of inequality. The core Christian ethical principle that what we do to the least of the world we do to Jesus Christ (Matt 25:40) is a call to promote equality, connection and respect. An economy that allows the wealthy to impose monopoly and cartel corporate structures creates a political climate where decisions are based on corruption, avoiding regulation. It is difficult to fix this problem because incentives for politicians often put vested interests before the public good. Australian superannuation funds make investment decisions and CEOs enjoy bonus systems that skew corporate incentives to focus on short term profit rather than longer term results. We see increasing domination by the top 1%, risking a breakdown in our social contract.

Peter suggested one option to help reduce inequality would be to tax capital gains from investment property at the full rate. He commented that the concept of wellbeing can guide economic policy in government decisions. We can enhance overall wellbeing through actions on sustainability – looking to the long term; complexity – simplifying public interaction with government; and risk – ensuring vulnerable people are protected.

Economics tends to assume a high discount rate, leaving future generations to look after themselves. Peter noted that this attitude fails in relation to climate change, given the high risks from global warming, but economic policy can help solve this problem by pricing carbon emissions as an externality.

Christians for an Ethical Society seeks to increase public understanding of how we can improve wellbeing. Peter Martin commented that our political system often ignores policy options that could best achieve such ethical goals, due to a lack of public engagement seeking to influence government decisions. While the economics profession has highly contested views and values, it is essential to encourage more debate and discussion of economics, in order to give more prominence to the findings of research and encourage more ethical policies.



Peter Martin AM and Clive Rodger, CES Chair, photo by Sarah Stitt



Empowering a new generation of missionary disciples

Rev'd Dr Tim Watson

Director, Youth Ministry, ACC&C

The Church of Jesus Christ has no more important duty than passing on the Good News to a new generation. "God has no grandchildren" is a well-worn phrase because it's a fundamental truth – as is the simple fact that the Church is only ever one generation away from extinction. The ACC&C's visionary founders, particularly Governor General Sir William Deane, had a deep commitment to developing the Centre's engagement with young Australians.

Intergenerational ministry is not just a duty – it's a joy. Anyone who's been engaged in any form of Christian ministry can testify to the energy and encouragement that results from spending time in the company of younger Christians. Young people have a vital leadership role in the Church of today, not least because they have a prophetic charism which is vital for the health of our institutions: their challenging questions and fresh insights serve as a powerful antidote to what Pope Francis calls the dehumanising effects of clericalism.

Over more than twenty years of ministry I've been blessed to see this ecumenical miracle in action many times. One of my most rewarding experiences was leading 12 young adults on an international pilgrimage organised by Churches Together in England (CTE) in 2014, and then watching those same young adults deliver a remarkable two-hour session to hundreds of delegates at CTE's National Conference on the theme (which of course they chose themselves) of "Revelation 2 – 3: What is the Spirit saying to the churches?" At the end of the night Cardinal Vincent Nichols took the microphone and declared that this was the best session he'd ever attended at a CTE conference.

We should not underestimate the fundamental contribution of young Christians to the "ecumenical miracle" of

the 20th century, without which the ACC&C could never have come into existence in a religious landscape blighted by decades of bitter sectarianism. Historically it can be demonstrated that there is a direct correlation between the vitality of the ecumenical movement and its formal commitment to the empowering of high potential young leaders. At its best, as exemplified in the work of visionary pioneers such as Philip Potter and the organic life of new ecumenical communities such as Taizé and Youth with a Mission (YWAM), this has led to vibrant new forms of life which have transformed and renewed the worship and witness of all our churches. More recently, new initiatives, such as the new monastic Community of St Anselm founded by Archbishop Justin Welby at Lambeth Palace, are a compelling witness to the power of this ecumenical vision in a world desperately in need of hope, joy and reconciliation.

In my new role as Director of Youth Ministry at the ACC&C, initially funded part-time for one year by the Anglican Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn, I have set three priorities for 2023 to explore how the Centre can engage better with people under 30:

1. As a Centre, we will proactively seek out and listen to the prophetic voices of young people.
2. We will integrate young people as much as possible into every area of the Centre's life and work, and we will make the resources of the Centre available to existing youth ministries.
3. We will seek to build intentional strategic partnerships to equip, enable and empower a new generation of young Christian leaders, drawing on the skills and experience of the ACC&C's current stakeholders.

Through its unique location and the unparalleled social and intellectual capital of its networks, the ACC&C has the potential to make a unique contribution. Equally, one of the realities of Christian ministry – and perhaps especially youth ministry – is that "the harvest is abundant but the labourers are few". I would therefore be interested to hear from anyone who feels called to contribute in any way to the development of these three priorities, to ensure that the pioneering vision of the Centre's founders can be fully realised.

Young people have a vital leadership role in the Church of today, ... their challenging questions and fresh insights serve as a powerful antidote to what Pope Francis calls the dehumanising effects of clericalism.



St Christopher's seminarians, Ecumenical Way of the Cross, Good Friday, photo supplied



Interfaith Leaders, 2023 Commonwealth Day Ceremony, The Chapel, ACC&C, photo by Liz Jakimow

Meditation in liturgy and life

Bishop Philip Huggins

Director, Ecumenical Studies, ACC&C

In the Sunday Liturgy, after the opening hymn and greeting, I lead worshippers into silent meditation, using the Jesus Prayer – shortened to ‘Jesus have mercy’.

I have done this for years, wherever it is possible and currently in the parish I am looking after in Melbourne. There is no criticism, only gratitude from worshippers. Once embedded, people love this entry into deeper worship. It comes after all the friendly greetings and the community banter as people arrive for the Service. After the silence for meditation, our musicians bring folk forward with a Taizé chant.

My ideal would be that worshippers arrive well before worship to meditate in silence so that the first words of the liturgy come out of quieter minds and deeper silence. Thus might we appreciate why the ancients say, “Silence unites us to God.” The prevailing culture makes that strategy of mine rather problematic. As the saying goes, ‘culture eats strategy for breakfast’. Nonetheless there are important reasons to persist with embedding meditation in worship and in our wider public life.

One other gentle, liturgical reflection before the tougher ones about public life. Every wedding I have taken in the last twenty years has included meditation. Usually once I have welcomed folk and the young lovers are together in front of family and friends. This began with a couple actually asking for meditation. They had met at

yoga. “I fell in love with her when she was standing on her head”, he said. She found this incomprehensible, but romance has its own mysterious ways.

The next Friday evening I had another wedding and the meditation somehow stayed in the liturgy. Afterwards guests expressed their gratitude. They had rushed from work. Changed clothes in the back of a car. Wondered if they were at the right Church. The meditation helped them ‘arrive’ and be ‘present’, as they wanted to be. Couples also express their gratitude. The build-up to a wedding is busy. Elegance takes some preparation. There may be a lot of nerves. The meditation helps the couple enjoy their wedding.

Liturgical worship, be it a Eucharist, a wedding, or some other Service, assumes that the Rite, with its scriptures and symbols, can take us deeper into communion with God and with one another. Hence many churches describe what will happen inside on Sunday as “Holy Communion”.

The tougher matters for why we need to be encouraging people into meditation? Here are three issues.

Our grandchildren are all under ten. Their world is so different to my first ten years. We had no screens, not even black and white TV. There was little radio. We were outside adventuring and playing sport.

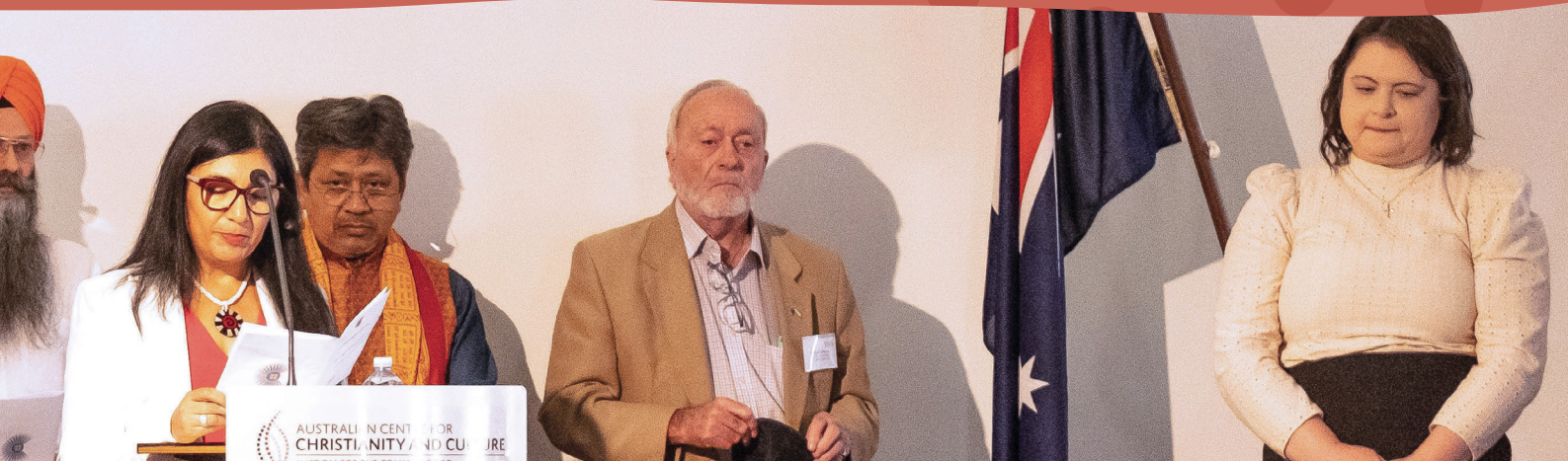
The external world of our grandchildren’s generation is so much more intense and their need for meditation so much greater.

Meditation gives us the capacity to live with calmer minds and enhances our freedom, with self-awareness, to choose what we will let influence our thinking and what thoughts will shape our words and actions. The influences on the thinking of our grandchildren’s generation are so subtle and pervasive. One current example is gambling advertising. We like to go to the AFL but the ‘normalising’ of gambling, via grinning drongo celebrities, is impossible to avoid!

A second reflection is as regards the upcoming referendum on Voice. At the Adelaide Writers’ Week this March, I listened to three First Nation journalists talking about this intense year of great significance. They spoke with warmth and insight as vividly capable print and TV journalists.

Towards the end, they were asked how it felt personally. Each spoke with emotion about the traumatic effect of all the racist hate that comes at them after each published article or segment. When they are tired and a little more vulnerable that’s what they have to deal with!

Meditation builds community, and real community involves a sympathetic imagining of each other’s lives. Do those



who send these hurtful messages ever pause to imagine what it must feel like to receive them?

This listening in Adelaide followed earlier days of listening to Hindu and Sikh leaders in Melbourne. After some recent issues, they too had faced a deluge of hateful social media regarding people with an Indian background. There are many strategies, programs and legislation to deal with racism. Perhaps there is progress but these dear folk aren't seeing it.

Will a culture with a more sympathetic imagination evolve if more people meditate? Forms of reductionism are never very attractive. Life's complexities don't reduce to single solutions. However, encouraging people to meditate is seldom regretted by those who then 'find the time' to do it. [The Dalai Lama puts it evocatively](#)¹ saying that if the whole human family were meditating there'd soon be world peace.

On Fridays I join a Christian Meditation group. Via Zoom, we meditate together in our different global time zones. Before our twenty minutes of silent mantric meditation there is a short talk. Most are by business people. Their talks are very illuminating about the difference meditation has made to their personal, family and vocational life. Always the movement is towards being better global citizens.

There are many such beautiful movements and groups even as the global family struggles to apply what we should have learned from the sufferings of the twentieth century. One other example, now on the ACC&C website, comes from the [Peace Department](#)² of interreligious co-operation. Another comes via the [Rotary Peace Foundation](#)³. We can but persist.

Our dear friend, the Rev'd Dr Graeme Garrett introduced me to the geological term 'avulsion' as we conversed on matters like the symmetry between climate action and peacebuilding. Graeme picked this term up from Kathleen Dean Moore's book *Take Heart: Encouragement for Earth's Weary Lovers*.

'Avulsion' refers especially to river science and how a number of little incidents can slow the river's flow and, over time, cause the river to go in a different direction - a fallen tree, for example, that slows down the river's flow, causing further deposits until the resistance to flow leads to change.

Kathleen Moore and Graeme are saying that if enough of us resist the roaring river of violence by dropping our little deposits of prayers, meditations, songs, conferences and public advocacy, we might help the river of life to flow in a healthier direction.

Embedding more meditation in our liturgical and wider public life is one way to help. The choice must be to heal, never to harm. Meditation can equip more of us to make that better choices. The whole human family is a little like Elijah at a troubled time (1Kings 19.9-18). We just need to listen together to the still, small voice, the 'silent music of God' in the evocative phrase of St. John of the Cross.

Links

1. <https://www.google.com.au/imgres?imgurl=https://pbs.twimg.com/media/EDHkcMHXYAAMBG6.jpg&imgrefurl=https://twitter.com/NassimHaramain/status/1166964952416116738&tbnid=6P8AyINTlcBLpM&vet=1&docid=CkaTDu78puLQVM&w=663&h=610&hl=en-au&source=sh/x/im>
2. <https://about.csu.edu.au/community/acc/about/latest-news-assets/2023/peace-department-oath-for-humanity-earth-day-2023>
3. https://cdn.csu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/4172645/Together-for-Peace-1-2-3.pdf

Celebrating the Commonwealth – diversity and inclusion

Terry Walls

In 2001/02 the Australian Government hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). Planned initially for Brisbane in 2001, it was postponed following the attacks on the USA in September (9/11) and finally convened on the Sunshine Coast (Coolumb) in Queensland in March 2002.

The planning and implementation organisation, the CHOGM Task Force, was set up in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, with Dr Hugh Craft as its Head. I was fortunate to be part of the Taskforce media team over this period.

On return to Canberra a number of members of the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) in Canberra, inspired by the energy which came out of CHOGM, decided to establish what became known as the Commonwealth Round Table in Australia (CRTA). These included Professor Anthony Low AO a prominent academic and Commonwealth history scholar, and Mr Tony Eggleton AO who, apart from serving a long line of prime ministers as media adviser, had also served, like Dr Craft, in the Commonwealth Secretariat based in London. The CRTA focuses on hosting events and discussions which take an academic perspective on matters of particular interest to Commonwealth nations.

The modern Commonwealth came into being in 1949 at the instigation of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and largely on the initiative of India. The modern Commonwealth has a number of aims but by far the most important are the support of democracy, the furtherance of human rights and support for the rule of law. It currently consists of 56 nations comprised mainly of independent republics and a smaller number of realms where

the British monarch is also head of state. The Commonwealth is celebrated around the world annually on the second Monday in March.

During 2006 the CRTA discussed, among other things, how it could encourage people to focus on the role of the Commonwealth in the contemporary world.

Out of these discussions emerged the proposal to conduct the first Canberra Commonwealth Celebration in 2007 based broadly on the traditional multi-faith and multi-cultural celebration conducted annually in London at Westminster Abbey.

To facilitate this the Commonwealth Day Celebration Committee (CDCC) was formed in an alliance between the Royal Commonwealth Society (ACT) and the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C), with the participation of faith organisations including Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Jain, Buddhist, Sikh, and Baha'i.

The first celebration took place on Monday 12 March 2007 in the ACC&C chapel chaired by the then Executive Director Professor James Haire. He was followed by Professor Stephen Pickard and from 2023 by Professor Anthony Maher. The Celebration has been held every year with the exception of 2013, because it clashed with the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Canberra and 2021 and 2022 due to Covid restrictions.

Government House has always provided a great deal of support and Governors-General have often participated by reading the monarch's Commonwealth Day

message - Major-General Michael Jeffery, Dame Quentin Bryce, General Sir Peter Cosgrove and most recently General David Hurley. The Celebration itself combines the readings of sacred texts of the world's major religions and a cultural program involving a wide and diverse range of performances representing the various regions of the world – Europe, South Asia, Pacific, Africa and the Caribbean.

The objective of the Celebration is to demonstrate the Commonwealth as an inherently diverse and inclusive international institution and to promote it as active and relevant, working at the cutting edge of many of the world's major issues. The Commonwealth can contribute to global peace and order through its unique attributes and capacities to bridge political, cultural, developmental and religious differences. The Celebration is also an opportunity to acknowledge in Canberra the Commonwealth in all its diversity – multi-racial, multi-religious and representing all of the world's regions.

The CDCC is now actively seeking to engage a younger cohort in both planning and implementation and it certainly welcomes the long-standing support it has received from Charles Sturt University through the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture.

NB. Terry Walls was a member of the CHOGM 2001/02 Media Team and has been an active member of the CDCC since its inception in 2006.



March 2012 Governor General Her Excellency Quentin Bryce meets Pacific island dancers, dancers, photo by Tony Wells

St Patrick's Day Service

Maire O'Callaghan

President, Friends of Ireland

Friends of Ireland (Fol) Canberra (Cairde na hÉireann) holds an annual ecumenical and interfaith service in honour of Saint Patrick, one of Ireland's Patron Saints, at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in Barton ACT.

We invite representatives of different denominations to participate in the service;

Mervyn Roulston travels from Wollongong to play bagpipes; we have a welcome to country from Shane Mortimer, Ngambri elder; music during the ceremony is provided on harp and piano by Madeleine Johnson; we invite a keynote speaker to address the attendees and a donation is collected to support the Corrymeela community in Northern Ireland and the charity of choice of the keynote speaker. We also have prayers of intercession from representatives of Irish community organisations.

In true Irish fashion, we provide a homemade Irish-themed afternoon tea

and traditional Irish music after the service, where attendees are invited to join us for an opportunity to chat, enjoy the ceol (music) and camaraderie and have a bite to eat.

In 2023, Emeritus Professor John Warhurst was our keynote speaker and we had readings from representatives of the Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican, Uniting and Muslim communities.

It was a beautiful day of inclusion, celebration and community at the ACC&C.

The Embassy of Ireland in Canberra is very supportive of all our Irish cultural events, and Fol greatly appreciate this ongoing support. Our committee was very fortunate to have been invited to the St Patrick's Day function at the Embassy of Ireland, along with many members of the Canberra Irish community, and others.

This event is a wonderful opportunity to have an Irish celebration and to catch up with friends, old and new. We were greeted at the Embassy by His Excellency Tim Mawe, his wife Patricia McCarthy, Deputy Head of Mission Daniel Lowe, 2nd Secretary Cellena Connolly-Moynihan and Embassy staff.

The Ambassador welcomed us all.

There was a welcome to country, a rendition of Ireland's national anthem and the Australian anthem. This year, Patrick Solomon sang, in his rich baritone.

There were traditional Irish musicians to entertain us, traditional Irish dancers from local Irish dance schools. Often, visiting Irish government ministers talk to us about issues of Irish interest - this year Minister Simon Coveney spoke at the event. Also, there was mention of Mack Hansen, a rugby player from the Canberra region who is playing great rugby for Ireland (his Mum's from Ireland). We're very proud of our Irish heritage!

Food and drinks were freely available and it was an opportunity to feel at home, surrounded by Irish and other friends



Minister Simon Coveney, Irish Minister for Trade and Deputy Leader *Fine Gael* with Professor Anthony Maher, photo supplied

Vale Geoffrey Brennan

Clive Rodger

ACC&C Board Member

A presentation to the HG Brennan Workshop on Economics and Theology

Geoffrey Brennan died on 29 July 2022 from complications from acute leukemia. I have known Geoffrey for almost 40 years and greatly valued his friendship, stimulating and vigorous conversation, intellectual rigour, generosity, Christian commitment, love of music and wine.

Geoff and I served for a long period on the Council of St Mark's National Theological Centre. In that context Geoff demonstrated a passionate interest in theology and how it related to other disciplines, particularly economics and philosophy. Geoff was also a key member of the Zadok Economists Group that operated for over a decade. Many leading economists in academia, government, finance and banking sectors were participants in that group, which met every 5 to 6 weeks in our consultancy office. Geoff was always encouraging, stimulating, supportive and enthusiastic.

I remember one evening at a St Mark's Council meeting, when we needed to make a decision about engaging a new staff member, Geoff made the following observation: there are teachers who are energy givers and those who are energy takers. How right he was about that staff member.

Lynlea (my wife) and I were in Broken Hill last June, where Geoff completed his Leaving Certificate with outstanding results. We reflected while there on the barrenness, harshness and remoteness of the land. It was in sharp contrast to the intellectual creativity, cosmopolitan and aesthetic nature of Geoff.

Geoff had a stellar academic career straddling the disciplines of Economics, Philosophy and Political Science. He conterminously held Professorial positions at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in Philosophy, at Duke

University in Political Science and at ANU in Economics. He pioneered a number of Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE) programs which have been the training ground for so many political leaders.

He collaborated early in his career with Nobel Prize winner James Buchanan. He became the first non-American President of the Public Choice Society in 2002. He published widely on rational actor and public choice theory, philosophy and economics. He received many, many awards including the Distinguished Fellow Award of the Economics Society of Australia in 2013.



Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Brennan, photo by Robert Arthur

Geoffrey was always enthusiastic, ebullient, generous, full of energy and encouragement. A true energy giver. He had many passions, at the forefront of which was Margaret and his family, and included his church, singing, golf, quality red wine, hospitality and table conversation, and their getaway property at Milton. He had a passionate love of music, particularly Musica Viva, and encouraged Lynlea and me to become Virtuosi supporters.

Geoffrey was in fact a consummate intellectual bridge builder. Many of his works are joint enterprises. He was

extraordinarily energetic. He loved singing and whether at church, in the corridors of academia, in concerts or following an evening of fine dining, Geoff could be heard singing.

One of the reasons Geoff was attracted to Anglicanism was because of his deep aesthetic sensibilities. He was associated with the English Cathedral tradition. That aesthetic was integral to his religious and spiritual expression.

A few months before he died Geoff wrote to me and particular others as follows:

In fact as I look back on my life over the last pretty much 60 years (not incidentally the years that Margaret and I have been together) I am impressed by how much how routinely the relevant people have fallen in with my somewhat wayward schemes—have been prepared to engage with my whims and passions with enthusiasm and total generosity of spirit. And this has been true across the whole range of my activities and interests—music (with say the University Consort and Oriana Chorale); my family (with the Milton Hilton project which has become for the entire extended family a location of magic-making for pretty much all of them); and of course academia (in which I include the Economics and Theology Colloquium and the PPE and Literature Colloquium that we have run at Duke/UNC pretty much for the last decade, as well as much more conventional mainstream activities.) Included in the face of all this, NOT to feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude would surely be outrageously 'ungracious'. To say at the close of such a life, "Oh But couldn't I have a few years more"—even to wish it rather than ask for it—seems to me a small and greedy and indeed what the psalmist would entirely call "vanity"! And I am spared that feeling entirely.

I have lost a friend, an intellectual mentor, a generous companion. My life has been greatly enhanced by knowing Geoff. It is wonderful that the HG Brennan Workshop on Economics and Theology is named in his honour.

Environmental stewardship – vision for the future

Maree Wright

Communications Officer - Landcare ACT

It was a glorious late summer evening in February when we gathered at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture to tour the stunning remnant grasslands and attend the launch of the “Biodiversity Network” paper. Hosted by the Conservation Council and Friends of Grasslands, we came together because of our shared interest in being responsible stewards of the irreplaceable natural landscape we are so lucky to have.

Co-authored by Friends of Grasslands and the Conservation Council, the “Biodiversity Network” paper seeks to establish a tenure-blind, coordinated approach to conservation land management in the ACT, to better combat increasing biodiversity loss. The paper recognises that we must work together and form new partnerships to protect and restore our ecosystems, while also balancing the many competing needs of a growing capital city. In order to remain the “Bush Capital”, we must collaborate to take better care of the “Bush”.

The “Biodiversity Network” paper does not call for an end to building new homes, roads and infrastructure. It instead advocates for legislative changes to ensure that the environment is viewed holistically, and environmental priorities are a primary consideration when land is developed. It asks that we place conservation on an equal footing with development. While much of the ACT is designated Nature Reserve, some of our most threatened ecosystems are outside the Reserves, including 67% of the ACT’s critically endangered natural temperate grassland and 80% of our Box Gum Woodlands. These often fragmented remnants are on rural land, by the roadside, or urban open areas. They are not currently managed for their conservation value, but to do so would not conflict with their current purposes. Urban Open Area can provide community amenity and recreation, aesthetic value,

and also essential connectivity and habitat for native species.

Partnerships are crucial for environmental stewardship. No single entity can effectively tackle the complex and interconnected environmental issues facing our planet today. The challenges we face require a collaborative effort from governments, businesses, community organisations and individuals to address them comprehensively and sustainably.

We must work together to build trust and foster cooperation between different stakeholders. By involving all relevant parties in the decision-making process, partnerships create a shared sense of ownership and accountability for environmental outcomes.

The Landcare movement was born over 30 years ago through just such a partnership, with farmers and conservationists recognising that agriculture and environmental stewardship can be

complementary rather than competing priorities. In the ACT, many of our farming families prioritise environmental stewardship and conservation alongside their economic and agricultural objectives. The challenge we face as a rapidly growing city - the nation’s capital, no less - is to extend such a collaborative relationship to include a much broader range of land users, and land uses.

We must imagine a Canberra that sees our natural grasslands as a treasured feature to be cared for, not a site for greenfield development. We must see the value not just in selling off land, but also in conserving it in its natural state. We can, and must, find a sustainable balance between growing our city and destroying the increasingly rare ecosystem we are a part of. And we must work together to achieve this vision for the future.

Landcare ACT is the peak body for community Landcare in the ACT.



Dr Sarah Sharp explaining the St Mark’s Grassland, photo by Maree Wright



The People's Chorus, Marble Foyer, Australian Parliament House 2023, photo by Andrew Scarano

The bond between love and lament, grief and gratitude. A Chorus of Women reunite at Federal Parliament, 20 years after the US-led invasion in Iraq

Toni Hassan

Journalist and Visual Artist & Adjunct Scholar ACC&C

Canberra's Chorus of Women has had a long apprenticeship with sorrow. Twenty years ago this March a group of women - mothers and grandmothers, daughters and sisters - gathered in the white and eucalypt-marble foyer of the federal parliament and broke into song in response to Prime Minister John Howard's decision to take Australia to war in Iraq, despite an overwhelming majority of Australians opposing it.

Anticipating what became a very long and foolish war with disproportionate and far-reaching impacts on Iraq's people, the Middle East and the unborn, the women sang:

*Open the doors of the chambers
of your hearts
Open your minds to our song
We sing for peace through the
power of love
Hear the wisdom of women
Hear our song*

Mid-song, the chief of security spoke quietly with one of the women. This was not an organised protest (which is not allowed in the building) but a lament, she said. The Lament was allowed to go on.

From then on formalised as A Chorus of Women – with key contributors Glenda Cloughley, Johanna McBride and Judith Clingan – the group has been invited to sing in many corners of Canberra, growing its repertoire and generating conversations that reflect unsettling decades and giving voice to grief over the impacts of global warming and a lack of serious action to reduce emissions.

Singing laments has never seemed more important. The Chorus' songs, typically laden by the themes of anguish, love and its partner "loss", take those themes, reassemble them and stir them with hope. Voices rise to remind us of the temporary gifts we all have, our duty to sustainably share the planet and to savour the precious few sweet breaths we call life. Grief can bring on tears but also pull us back into the world to do good.

I have reflected for some time now on how grief about the state of the world, is not something 'out there' but held in the body, in the heart. Sung lament, like all music, poetry and art, can take darkness that can make us feel small and re-envision it. Lament in song thins the distinction between the sacred and the secular.

On Tuesday 21 March 2023, Harmony Day, the Chorus gathered in the lobby again, to sing once more, this time with permission

and against the backdrop of an announcement about the AUKUS defence pact, hawkish talk of conflict with China, Russia's mad war against Ukraine and the ever-present threats and realities of extreme weather events and climate change.

It was a reunion for the older members of the Chorus who were there in 2003. Their concern about the future for their grandchildren was no less acute.

Musicians and supporters, me included, were there as well. The few members of parliament who took up the invitation and made the time on what was a frenetic sitting day said they felt shivers as women wearing hues of purple sang words that had been sung 20 years before:

*Weep for our sisters in danger
Weep for our brothers and children
Sound the cries of grief and despair
Sound the lament for the dead*

Then men joined the women to sing the new words and music of the 2023 Lament:

*We give our voice to the Song of Life
We give our promise to children and Earth
We sing for peace through the power of love
So lament will turn to renewal*

Together they also sang an acknowledgement of country – timely given that it was delivered in the same week a teary Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced details of the referendum to enshrine a First Nations Voice to the parliament – and an original composition, “The Promise” that challenged us to keep the future in the front of our minds:

*Gaia! We are the voice of our children's hope
We are the trust of creatures and plants
We the dreamers
We the singers
Will never tire of telling you your gifts*

The event was a moment to highlight hard facts and the problem of unattended grief, but did not call that out as such. The facts are these: the Australian parliament does not need to debate going to war before declaring troops to overseas conflict and it has repeatedly rejected pleas for a public inquiry into the Iraq War.

Choruser and one of the Chorus organisers, Janet Salisbury, was polite in opening the performance, conscious of the invitation to be there.

There was a repeat performance – all three songs again – as the audience and energy in the high ceiling vestibule seemed to call forth more, nourished and fortified for the work ahead. I went away being reminded again that the soulful work of longing and effecting change is made lighter together.



Some of the original 2003 Chorus women, Marble Foyer, Australian Parliament House 2023, photo by Andrew Scarano

Cardinal George Pell's Funeral in Rome

Dr Virginia Miller

**Adjunct Research Fellow,
ACC&C**

It would be remiss of me to write as an Australian Christian in Rome without reporting on the funeral of Cardinal George Pell. After all, many people in Rome viewed Pell as the face of the Catholic Church in Australia. Moreover, in doing so they assumed that the Catholic Church in Australia is, as Pell was, conservative in character. Personally, I don't think it is so conservative. However, people in Rome hold this view because there are not many Australian Catholics working or studying in Rome to show the diversity of the Catholic Church in Australia. It is an indication of the small scale of the Australian Catholic community in Rome that I am, more often than not, called "the Australian" in place of my name. Hence, notwithstanding that I didn't know George Pell well, I believed it was important to attend his funeral as an Australian Catholic in Rome.

However, this was not my only reason for attending the funeral. I also wanted to make a public display of support for Pell. I researched the child sexual abuse case brought against him extensively. Indeed, I wrote about the case¹, and can confidently state that the allegations of sexual abuse that were made against him in the highly publicised trial were false. There was a fatal flaw in the allegations in that they placed Pell at two places at the same time. Clearly, this is an impossibility. I was pleased to hear Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re boldly elaborate on the injustice of Pell's wrongful imprisonment at the funeral in Rome, a theme that was also expressed by Archbishop Anthony Fisher at Pell's Sydney funeral. Pell was entitled to this vindication. No matter what anybody might think of Pell, as Christians we must have compassion for any person who at an advanced age spends a year in prison, mostly in maximum security for a crime he/she did not commit, and could not have committed.

It was my impression, notwithstanding the fact that the High Court of Australia overturned his conviction, that the allegations did do some damage to Pell's reputation in Rome and there were indications that certain people, who were otherwise supportive of Pell, were reluctant to be seen with him lest their reputations were tainted by virtue of association. Of course, others didn't want to be associated with Pell because they didn't agree with his conservative views. Indeed, many of the attendees I spoke to at the funeral were as interested to see who didn't turn up to the funeral as those who did. He was, after all, a cardinal whose funeral should have been well-attended, not only by virtue of his high office in the Church but also by way of acknowledging the gross miscarriage of justice that he suffered, whatever his views.

Most people were pleased with the considerable turnout, no doubt helped in part by the fact that many Catholics had travelled to Rome just a week or so earlier to attend Emeritus Pope Benedict's funeral. Unlike in Sydney, there were no protesters at Pell's funeral here in Rome. Indeed, many Australians are surprised to discover that Pell had a solid fan-base in the Italian press. In general terms the Italian press had a favorable view of Pell in light of his success in fighting financial crime and corruption. For instance, both the mainstream Milanese newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, and the left-wing magazine, *L'Espresso*, praised his work in this area. Whether you liked him or not, it cannot be denied that he was a fighter who did a praiseworthy job in his role as prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy. Pope Francis certainly believed he did, and supported him in this position. For some guests at the funeral there was a sadness that Pope Francis' attendance at Pell's funeral occurred at the same time that the journalist, Sandro Magister declared that Pell wrote an anonymous memo describing the current papacy as a "catastrophe" only days after Pell's death. Yet we may ask, is this another baseless allegation against George Pell? As one of his colleagues said, Pell was more likely to tackle something head-on. Furthermore, this kind of behavior

demonstrates a disobedience that was not consistent with Pell's own traditional beliefs about the Church. I would find it somewhat incongruent and certainly disappointing to discover that he had written the letter.

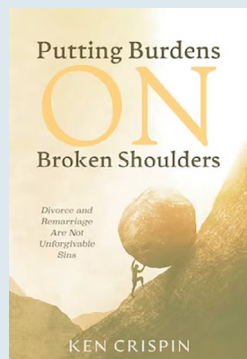
The only thing that struck me as discordant about Pell's funeral was the presence of Cardinal Becciu. Knowing as I do that at the time of Pell's death Pell was very much focused on Becciu's criminal trial, and with proving or disproving the speculation that Becciu had paid money to influence Pell's own trial, I couldn't help but think that Pell would be quite angry at the presence of Becciu at his funeral. I certainly was, until I discovered that it was a requirement for any cardinal who was present in Rome to attend.

Seeing Becciu there reminded me of the conversation I had had with Pell in a lengthy one-to-one meeting in his Vatican apartment at his invitation only a few months before Pell passed away. Cardinal Becciu was one of the topics of conversation. Pell had requested to meet me, undoubtedly on account of the book I wrote about child sexual abuse which has a case-study on Pell's conviction, appeal and subsequent acquittal. Meeting him in person I was struck by the fight in him notwithstanding his frailties, including physical limitations and health concerns. However, it was also impressed on me that he was not a hard man untouched by his ordeal, but instead had frailties. Like the rest of us, he was a vulnerable human being. Significantly, his sister had died shortly before our meeting and he mentioned how much he missed her. I suggested to him he had had an incredibly rough couple of years to which he agreed without complaining.

During the period immediately prior to his death we were trying to organise a dinner together. I was hoping that Pell might counsel me in the ways of the Vatican. On his part, I think he found it consoling to talk to people like me, who are familiar with all of the details of his case. It seemed to be very much on his mind when we talked, and I think it would be fair to say it was on his mind until the day he died.

NB: Virginia Miller, *Child Sexual Abuse Inquiries and the Catholic Church: Reassessing the Evidence*, (Florence: Florence University Press, 2021).

Recent Publications



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Frank Brennan



“Love, that most crucial, counter-intuitive act of all”, Nick Cave in *Faith, Hope and Carnage*

Jack Jacobs

Yindyamarra Research Fellow

“You sitting at the kitchen table listening to the radio.”

Early in *Faith, Hope and Carnage* (2022), Australian songwriter Nick Cave unpacks the spiritual significance of this otherwise ordinary lyric from his song, ‘Spinning Song’.

The lyric, we are told, captures Cave’s “last unbroken memory” of his wife Susie before the phone rang with news of their son Arthur’s death. Aged 15.

Arthur’s loss – and how this hurled Cave into religious experience – is the subject of *Faith, Hope and Carnage*. Emerging from a series of conversations between Cave and journalist Séan O’Hagan, the book explores essential religious themes of grief, defeat, doubt, and love through the ancient art of dialogue. (Dialogue is the “highest spiritual respect that one soul can pay to another in the social sphere” according to Nigerian-British writer, Ben Okri.)

This dialogue arrives at a moment in our culture when people are increasingly sceptical of faith and its association with the institutions that govern religious life. Yet, in the face of suffering and aloneness, many yearn for another way of talking about matters of the heart that is freed from cynicism and control.

Nick Cave – the rocker with a newfound sincerity that breaks with his history of hating the world – might offer us another way of talking about God.

Jesus Christ has always been at the heart of Cave’s song writing. “As far back as I

can remember,” Cave recently told Rowan Williams, “I’ve had a fascination with the figure of Jesus, way before any notion of whether God exists.”

Cave’s Jesus is the wandering Galilean with a “flame-like imagination” who suffers so that he may love. In an introduction to the Gospel of Mark written in 1998, Cave said that: “Christ spoke to me through His isolation, through the burden of His death, through His rage at the mundane, through His sorrow. Christ, it seemed to me, was the victim of humanity’s lack of imagination, was hammered to the cross with the nails of creative vapidty.”

For Cave, as for many mystic poets before him – including St. John of the Cross, Simone Weil and Leonard Cohen – Christ is an artist for whom grief, suffering, and longing are the raw materials into which he fashions an awe-compassionate, all-affirming love for humanity in their broken world.

How did this love sustain Cave through the death of his children? (Another of Cave’s sons, Jethro, died in Melbourne in 2022.) “Nothing happened immediately, except the worst,” Cave told Elizabeth Oldfield on *The Sacred Podcast*. The death of his children cracked the world open for Cave. Pressure was put on his words to make them break. But then something else happened. “I found for the first time,” Cave said to Rowan Williams, “that I started to become a more complete, fully realised person, as opposed to a personality that was partially formed and fragmented.”

Through grief, Cave found a solidarity with all others in the human predicament.

In *Faith, Hope and Carnage* Cave admits to a frustration with his own inability to give up on rational scepticism and surrender to the idea of God completely. In conversation and in song one hears Cave doubting. He asks questions, not of God, but of himself: “I think of late I’ve grown increasingly impatient with my own scepticism; it feels obtuse and counter-productive, something that’s simply standing in the way of a

better-lived life. I feel it would be good for me to get beyond it.”

Between scepticism and surrender, Cave has found a place for the imaginative Christ:

“Rational truth may not be the only game in town. I am more inclined to accept the idea of poetic truth, or the idea that something can be ‘true enough’. To me that’s such a beautiful humane expression.”

In late 2022, I saw Cave live at Hanging Rock outside Melbourne. As the sun drew down and the fire in the sky chilled to black, Cave came down on the waiting crowd like a deranged, yet peaceful, preacher. Soft in his song. It was clear that Cave had become a conduit for our suffering. Seeing him hold on to the hands of audience members as he sang of grief and hope, I was reminded of Simone Weil’s precious words in *Waiting for God*: “The love of our neighbour in all its fullness simply means being able to say to him: ‘What are you going through?’”

For Cave, inspired by the imaginative Christ, God is not a proposition to be believed in but a love to be invoked.

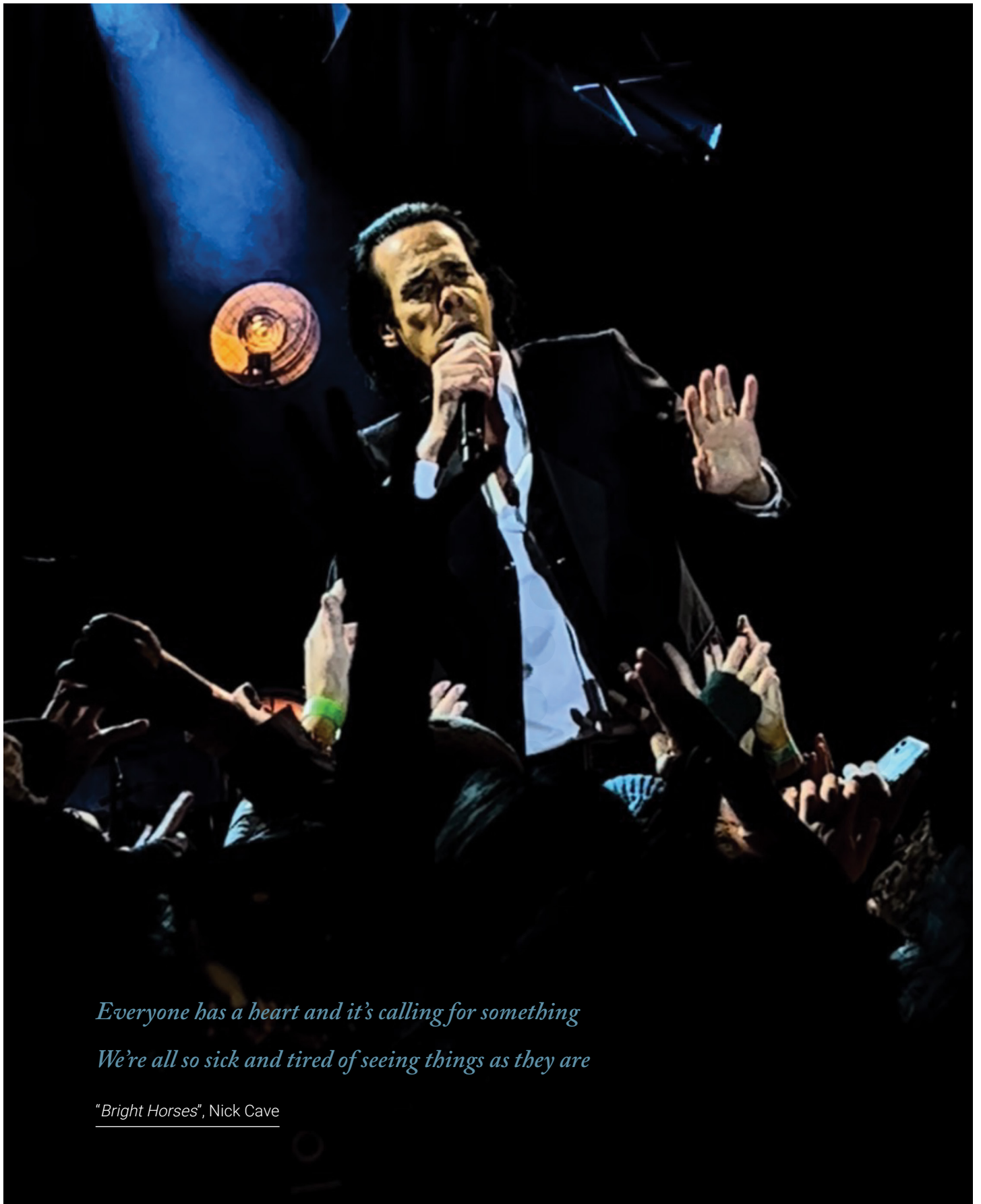
The world is a broken place, where we live with broken hearts. But we must resist the allure of cynicism and despair to affirm the world through love. To see the world as worth living in – with loving eyes – is our first task.

Through Cave, listeners and readers might find a way to the Sacred that lies outside institutions on the cracked and beaten path of the wounded heart.

This is another way of speaking about God in a world that remains forever in need of compassion, imagination, justice, and mercy.

One in which, “Love, that most crucial, counter-intuitive act of all, is the responsibility of each of us.”





*Everyone has a heart and it's calling for something
We're all so sick and tired of seeing things as they are*

"Bright Horses", Nick Cave

Nick Cave at Hanging Rock, photo by Jack Jacobs



On the “Meaning” of Politics

Dr Jonathan Cole

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

With unexpected research time on my hands during the first national lockdown in Covid Year Zero, otherwise known as 2020, I set about translating a short, recent book by the eminent Greek philosopher-theologian Christos Yannaras, *On the “Meaning” of Politics*. I discovered Yannaras’ work in 2015 while in the midst of my doctoral work on another, and very different, thinker, Oliver O’Donovan. I wrote to Yannaras that year and received a lovely hand-written letter in response, which sparked a wonderful, if very unlikely, correspondence and friendship with this Greek thinker, now in his 87th year at the time of writing here.

I had already completed a Yannaras translation in the form of *The Effable and the Ineffable: The Linguistic Boundaries of Metaphysical Freedom* (completed in 2018 and published by Winchester University Press in 2021) prior to embarking on this second translation. A highlight of that project was spending a week in Athens with Christos working through some of the difficulties of what proved to be in hindsight an incredibly challenging work to translate, as the title might suggest. Christos has faithfully posted a copy of each of his books published since we forged our unlikely friendship, all containing personal dedications (see photo). After receiving and reading a copy of *On the “Meaning” of Politics* in 2019, I decided to translate this book “sometime.” Little did I know that I would find the time under extraordinary circumstances less than a year later. I wanted to translate this little work to address a gap in the translation of Yannaras’ oeuvre, namely the lack of translations of his recent works and his works in political thought Yannaras’ large corpus only began to be translated into English relatively recently, meaning that his most recent work has had to take a back seat to the slow translation of his older, seminal works.

Once the translation had been completed and revised sufficiently, I approached Rowan Williams with a request to write a foreword for the book, which he kindly accepted. I first met Rowan at a private dinner held at Peterhouse College in Cambridge with Christos, John Milbank and several others, in which the three great thinkers embarked on a wide-ranging conversation about theology and philosophy (Yannaras via an interpreter, as he does not speak English fluently). The dinner was held during a conference engaging the thought of Christos Yannaras, at which I gave a paper and met Yannaras in person for the first time after corresponding for some time. I was able to meet Rowan a second time in his office at Magdalene College in Cambridge a few years later while on a research trip to work on my first translation of Yannaras, in which we talked about the project to translate Yannaras’ corpus.

Rowan delivered a superb foreword that perfectly and succinctly captured the essence of the “intensely illuminating and challenging little essay,” as he described it. As he put it at the conclusion to his foreword,

if it is at times a difficult work, the difficulty is not with abstruse language or abstract concepts but with the sheer scale of the imaginative change of heart required to make sense of it. It is a wonderfully concentrated digest of some of the most innovative thinking from one of Europe’s most original, passionate, and visionary theologians...

I was conscious that the size of the work—23,000 words—might present a challenge for finding a publisher (publishers do not like very short works). However, after a few false starts in which the size of the book was indeed the obstacle, I happily secured a contract with Routledge to publish the book in a series called *Transforming Political*

Theologies edited by Vincent Lloyd, David True and Judith Gruber. Several early readers of the manuscript had suggested that I ought to write an introduction to help orient the reader who may be unfamiliar with Yannaras’ work and/or who might find it difficult to know how to read this particular specimen. I had resisted the idea because I had since moved on to other research and writing commitments. However, once it came time to sign the contract with Routledge, I was informed by my editor that a “substantial” introduction would be required, not to orient the reader, as recommended by my colleagues, but to bump the word length up in order to meet their sales needs (not the first time I have been asked to extend the length of a manuscript by a publisher for commercial purposes).

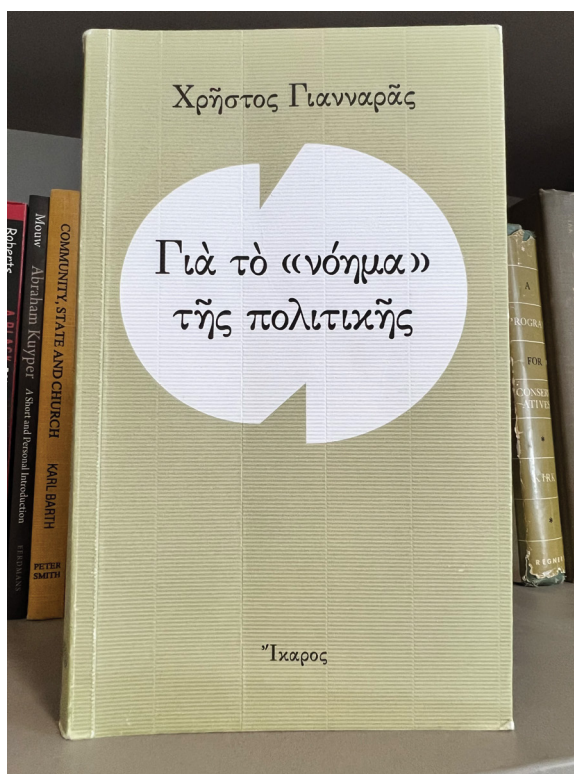
So, I set about the task of writing a “substantial” introduction, which turned out to be a real blessing in disguise. It afforded me the opportunity to write, in effect, an original essay introducing and discussing Yannaras’ political thought, including its influences and animating ideas, in a way that has not been done in print yet and which will hopefully constitute a significant contribution to the secondary literature on Yannaras in English. To provide a taste of what the book is about, I offer the following excerpt from my introduction:

Yannaras’ insight, an ancient one found in the classical Greek tradition of political philosophy, is that our organizational ideas and political concepts come from somewhere, and that somewhere is our deepest perceptions about the reality we collectively inhabit as human beings. It is these deep perceptions, or indeed misperceptions, of reality that determine the telos that we accord our collective (political) life, along with normative proposals for reform

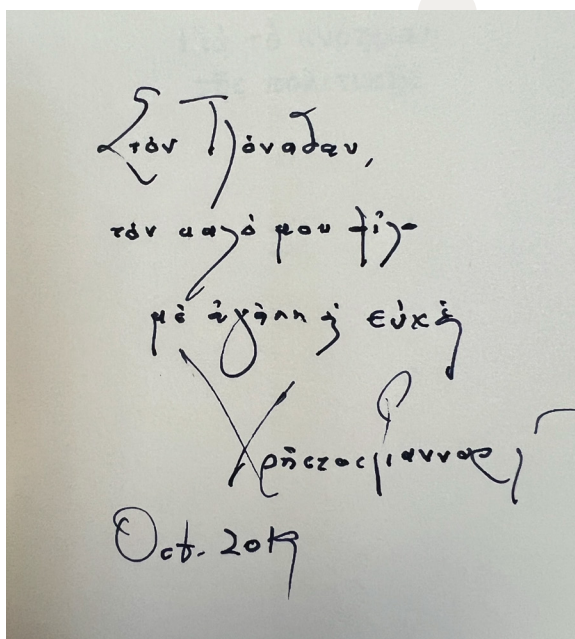
and improvement in our political organization. All politics, as far as Yannaras is concerned, whether actual or theoretical, is fundamentally an expression of ontology, or perhaps an expression of ontological longing and desire, if not fear and insecurity. As such, *On the "Meaning" of Politics* is best understood as a meditation on political ontology. Indeed, one of the book's contributions is to direct our attention to the deeply embedded, yet often hidden, and rarely discussed, ontological presuppositions that shape so much of our political discourse and political action today in the West. Yannaras wants us to understand that Western political problems are existential problems, not technical or scientific problems.

The book is currently in production and should be in print before the end of the year.

I wanted to translate this little work to address a gap in the translation of Yannaras' oeuvre, namely the lack of translations of his recent works and his works in political thought. Yannaras' large corpus only began to be translated into English relatively recently, meaning that his most recent work has had to take a back seat to the slow translation of his older, seminal works.



Christos Yannaras book in Greek, *On the 'Meaning' of Politics*, photo supplied



To Jonathan, my good friend, with love and best wishes, Christos Yannaras, Oct 2019.

Multimedia palimpsest

Are you ready to unravel the layers of your reality and travel from Stone to Ether?

Anatoly Golobokov

My name is Anatoly, and I am delighted to have the opportunity to bring my exhibition 'From Stone to Ether: the journey within' back to the ACC&C in April 2023 and to share my ideas and vision with the world.

I am a Florentine Mosaic and Roman Micro-mosaic master and have devoted over 30 years of my professional life to learning, perfecting, and preserving these techniques. The unique art of Florentine Mosaic is almost 500 years old and is by far one of the hardest that still exists today. My creations may appear to be painted, yet they are crafted from small pieces of precious and semi-precious stones. Through my mosaics I aim to demonstrate how incredibly broad the stone colour palette is, highlight the intricacies of stone textures and structures, and reveal how versatile stones can be despite having a very hard and cold facade. I aim to create timeless art and thanks to these materials my mosaics will never fade and will forever preserve their beautiful colours and textures exactly as they were found in nature.

In my mosaics I explore a range of topics that are very close to my heart: from classic iconography, sacred topics of religion and divine theories to mathematical and scientific theories, philosophy, and metaphysics. These are not ordinary concepts, nor do you often see science and religion combined as one. Although these topics may seem worlds apart, and even opposing at times, they are both very prevalent and form the basis for my philosophical work.

My art examines both science and religion individually and delves into their relationship with one another to show how closely intertwined they really are. I look at our three-dimensional world as a temple that was gifted to us by God and explore the endless realms of our Universe,

three-dimensional and multi-dimensional worlds, time, space, beginning and purpose of our being, superior consciousness, and limitless faith.

The exhibition I am bringing back is called 'From Stone to Ether: the journey within'. It gives a unique opportunity to experience the mosaics themselves and presents a semi-immersive digital experience, which invites the audience to completely immerse themselves in my art philosophies and experience the transition between the physical reality and what may hide within. This digital portion builds a bridge connecting my physical art and its digital counterpart. It is through digital animation that I am able to transform my two-dimensional mosaics into living, breathing worlds and share my vision to explain the essence of each of my mosaics. In other words, in this exhibition I take my audience on a journey within the mosaics and challenge them to explore and unveil the potential of our being.

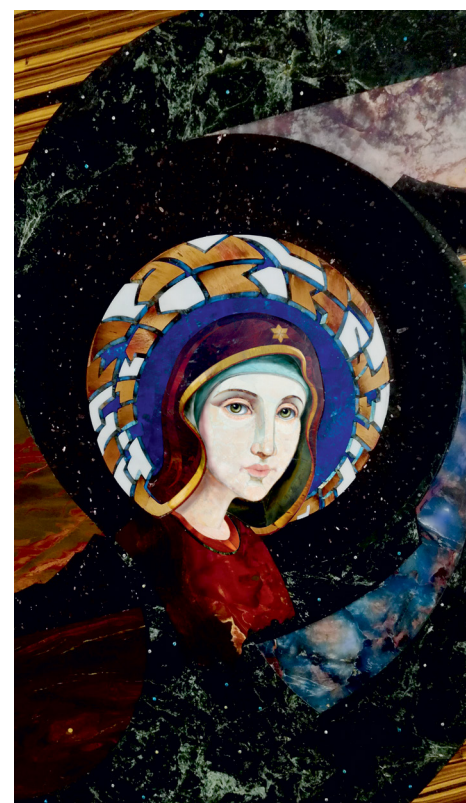
The semi-immersive digital portion of my exhibition is what I would like to call a multimedia palimpsest. Like in an ordinary palimpsest, being a 'multi-layered record', in a multimedia palimpsest the messaging is revealed through layering a combination of traditional and new media. 'From Stone to Ether: the journey within' presents a hybrid animated video reel that unravels a multilayered alternate space, within which mosaics come alive and an array of symbolisms, quotes, associations, ideas, and hints reveal themselves through and between one another. It is through these multimedia layers, activating your multiple senses all at once, you can discover meanings and interpretations for the art presented before you.

If you would like to explore how the divine and the sacred are intertwined with the metaphysical space and the essence of

our creation and being, then I would love to see you at my upcoming exhibition of a multi-layered reality and a semi-immersive digital journey.

When you see my mosaics, I encourage you to look at them not just as two-dimensional art but look within and beyond their surface to explore what they may hold within. Let the concept of the multimedia palimpsest guide you. I invite you to go on a journey within and open your mind to the endless layers of the unknown and mysterious, the divine and the powerful, and the limitless possibilities of meanings and interpretations that exist within each of my pieces.

See you there!



Annunciation: The Heavens, Florentine Mosaic, mixed unique and semi precious stones - Ural jasper, Australian tiger iron, jasper and prasem, tourmaline and citrine faceting, by Anatoly Golobokov (68x53cm)



Long silenced, now awakened

Roland Peelman AM

Director, Canberra International Music Festival

Around the year 2000, Ossi Wolkenstein, born Oswald von Wolkenstein in Vienna, at the age of 76 passed on a number of old music manuscripts to James Forsyth in Sydney. The package contained various pieces, signed Peter Meyer, written on the HMT Dunera and in the camps in Hay and Tura during 1940/41. The collection gathered more dust until Forsyth passed them on to his daughter Nicole several years later. Over lunch one day on Macquarie Street Nicole showed me the envelope and its precious content. Here was a long-lost part of Australian music history waiting to be revealed again. Some of the manuscripts were barely legible, but it was clear that a trained professional musician was behind these scores, and that he had a name: Max-Peter Meyer.

We now know that Meyer was born in Munich, 1898, originally Jewish but married a Catholic and converted. He seems to have worked as a banker but once married, his occupation was listed as 'composer'. After Kristallnacht, he was thrown into Dachau concentration camp for about six weeks but was released in December 1938 which allowed him to escape to London. His compositions while in Germany had been largely for the Catholic liturgy, working in Oberammergau where the famous Passion Play is performed. On arriving in London, he taught music at the London College of Music to which he returned after the war. He died in 1950 and is buried in Oberammergau.

Only limited study has taken place into the music that stems from the Dunera episode but as a musician I have personally been captivated by this story. The Dunera Boys were hardly 'boys', but grown men designated 'enemy aliens' because of their name and provenance. In the absence of any other means on the boat, they sang!

The Dunera association website tells us that: "On 10 July 1940, 2,546 men, ranging in age from 16 to 66, were herded aboard the Hired Military Transport *Dunera* at Liverpool and transported, under abject conditions, to Australia. Most were German or Austrian, and most were Jewish. Many had fled to Britain in the 1930s to escape Hitler's Reich. Churchill later described the arrest and internment of these men, now commonly known as the 'Dunera boys', as 'a deplorable mistake'."

Australian social history counts many uplifting stories about the men who ended up staying in Australia, such as the economist Fred Gruen, the physicist Hans Buchdahl, or the composer Felix Werder.

Among the men were Max-Peter Meyer, the German/English Jewish rabbi Boaz Bischofswerder and his son Felix, as well as two brothers, Oswald and Christoph Von Wolkenstein, students in England, and originally from Vienna, at sixteen and eighteen, two of the youngest. Along with the majority Jewish men from Germany and Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia and further east, the Wolkenstein boys, and Meyer, were amongst Roman Catholics, Quakers, other pacifists, and political resisters to the Nazi regime to be mistakenly deported to Australia, by the wartime British government.

Australian social history counts many uplifting stories about the men who ended up staying in Australia, such as the economist Fred Gruen, the physicist Hans Buchdahl, or the composer Felix Werder. His father Boaz Bischofswerder, a respected composer and Jewish Cantor, who had moved his family to safety in London, found himself designated an 'enemy alien' on the boat, and under abject conditions, proceeded to write a *Phantasia Judaica*, wordlessly performed aboard the ship by four unaccompanied voices. Unable to deal with the isolation of the camps and the separation from his family, his mental health steadily declined. He died in a private hospital in Melbourne in 1946. His son Felix Werder who had begrudgingly served as his father's amanuensis for many years, became a successful and prolific composer in Melbourne.



CIMF Director Roland Peelman, photo by Anthony Browell

(continued next page)

The concert on 6 May in the Chapel at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture will consist of Bischofswerder's *Phantasia* as well as the re-discovered works by Peter Meyer: the *Dunera Mass* written for all male voices, a setting of the Psalm 'De Profundis', and movements from a *Piano Quartet*, written in the camps of Hay and Tatura when more contact with the local community had been established. The choice of the Psalm could not have been more apt for internees of both Christian and Jewish faiths 'Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord'. The slow movement of the Quartet uses the German children's lullaby *Der Mond ist aufgegangen*. Here is a musical expression of what the men saw in the Australian night sky from the camp.

*The moon has risen,
the golden stars shine
bright and clear in the sky;
the forest stands black and silent,
and the white mist rises
wonderfully from the meadows.*

*How quiet is the world
and in the twilight cloak
so cozy and so lovely,
like a quiet chamber
where you should sleep away and forget
the misery of the day.*

In the preface to their marvellous book *Dunera Lives - Profiles*, Spark, Inglis, Gammage, Winter and Bunyan write: "The story we tell offers a warning too, since as you read these words, war and violence rage somewhere in the world, and there, someone is forcing men, women and children to leave their homes for an uncertain fate and future. Their story is ours as well."

And so it is that an ordinary lunch encounter on a rainy day in 2021 became the start of a curious re-discovery of music written under extreme duress in the most peculiar of circumstances. The enfolding story is part of one of the most fascinating chapters in Australia's social history. The visual artwork of the Dunera Boys, often painted or drawn on the equivalent of toilet tissue, was the subject of a recent expertly curated exhibition in Orange, NSW. The music of the Dunera now is the subject of one of the concerts at this year's Canberra International Music Festival - after more than 80 years of silence.

The Dunera Mass and other music from the Dunera story will be performed at the Canberra International Music Festival on Saturday May 6, 2.30pm at the Australian Centre of Christianity and Culture, Canberra.

Full details available at www.cimf.org.au

The performers include Oriana Chorale, Luminescence Chamber Singers, four young instrumentalists resident at the Festival. The performance is narrated by Nicole Forsyth and directed by Roland Peelman AM.

"The story we tell offers a warning too, since as you read these words, war and violence rage somewhere in the world, and there, someone is forcing men, women and children to leave their homes for an uncertain fate and future. Their story is ours as well."

The CIMF would like to acknowledge the cultural and venue partnership with the ACC&C.



HMT Dunera arrives in Australia, 1940, photo supplied

Viewing of *Spiritus* Short Film Prize open winner

Sarah Stitt

Corporate Services and Events Officer, ACC&C

Dear ACC&C friends and *Engage* readers,

In this issue of *Engage* we were hoping you would be able to view the three films awarded the 2022 *Spiritus* Short Film Prize. We have the open winners' film, *The Sanctuary* for you to view and enjoy. We hope to bring the other two films to you in later issues. They will be *Mourning Country* by Andrew Kainerd, and *The Rock Pool Waltz* by Marlon Denning.

These three films address our human connection to nature following traumatic or life changing experiences. *Mourning Country* expresses the First Nation's connection to nature following the Black Summer bushfires. *The Rock Pool Waltz* is the story of an

adolescent boy's connection with an octopus in the rock pools near his home during the Covid lockdown. Both stories are about healing spiritually and psychologically, about connection and resilience.

The Sanctuary, in the words of the film's directors, Tim Brown and Michael Portway, recounts Ray Lewis's, OAM, 'love of the water, as he snorkels among the vibrant sea life of a marine sanctuary near the heart of Melbourne - a city of 5 million people. For Ray, this is not only a place of recreation but one he has worked tirelessly to protect'. The audience is drawn into a palpable sense of wellbeing.

We hope that you enjoy the film.



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.



**Charles Sturt
University**

www.acc-c.org.au

<https://www.facebook.com/acccfourpillars/>



THEOLOGICAL DISPUTES

— *Public Lectures* —

Lunchtime public lectures – 12.30pm to 1.30pm

PUBLIC LECTURES BY ACCC&C SCHOLARS AND AFFILIATES

Based on academic research, but accessible to the general public, particularly anyone interested in theology or religion, or looking for intellectual stimulation and debate.



2023

- 18 APR Dr Peter Hooton – Embodying the transcendent: on the way to a global ethic
- 23 MAY Dr John Painter – No-one has ever seen God: revisiting John's prologue
- 20 JUN Prof Wayne Hudson – Australian history and the future of the church
- 18 JUL Dr Nikolai David Blaskow – Nietzsche the religious man: artist, philosopher, saint
- 22 AUG Dr Peter Grundy – Wittgensteinian grammar and theological limits
- 19 SEP Dr Amy Erickson – Church discipline
- 24 OCT Dr Jonathan Cole – The necessity and danger of political providentialism
- 21 NOV Dr Scott Cowdell – Tbc

2024

- 20 FEB Dr Bernard Doherty – *Disputatio Diaboli*: the removal, survival and revival of demonology in post-conciliar Roman Catholic theology
- 19 MAR Prof Anthony Maher – Post-foundational ecclesiology and refounding the Church



AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR
CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE



INTERFAITH DIALOGUES

6pm – 7.30pm Wednesday evenings in the Chapel, ACC&C

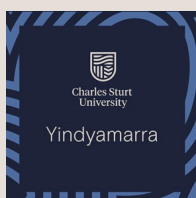


Bluestar Institute, Yindyamarra Nguluway, and the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture are presenting four public Interfaith Dialogues, hosted by Professors Anthony Maher and Stan Grant. The discussions will include a panel of six faith leaders from different religions. Each panelist will briefly engage with introductory remarks addressing the questions below followed by a Q&A hosted by Stan Grant between the panel and the audience.



- 17 MAY** The Voice and Reconciliation: Is it possible to speak authentically of love and justice in an unjust world?
- 12 JUL** Faith and the Democratic: Should faith-based traditions engage in politics?
- 13 SEP** God in a post-secular world: Can we speak meaningfully about God today?
- 15 NOV** Religion and the Good Life: Is religion a force for good in the world and does religion help people lead a good life?

Presented by:



► Upcoming Events

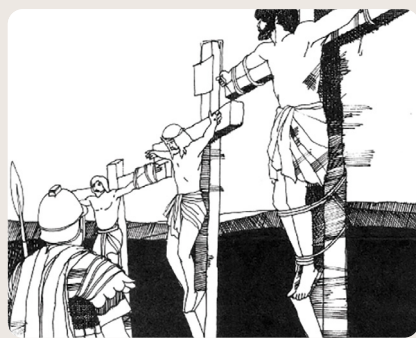
Spiritus Short Film Prize

Receiving submissions now

[Click here for more info](#)

Ecumenical Way of the Cross

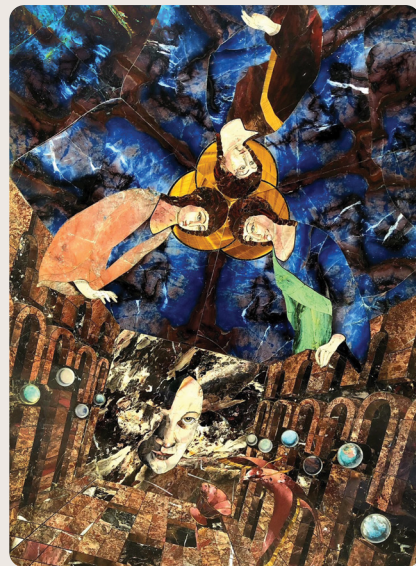
11am – 1pm, The Chapel



EXHIBITION

*From Stone to Ether:
the journey within Anatoly
Golobokov, Florentine mosaics*

10.30am – 3.30pm daily, The Chapel



THEOLOGICAL DISPUTES

Dr Peter Hooton,
'Embodying the
transcendent: on the
way to a global ethic'

12.30pm – 1.30pm,
The Chambers Pavilion



CES FORUM

Dr Amy Erickson,
'Practicing Christian
discourse: addressing
ethics in divisive times'

7pm – 9pm, The Chambers Pavilion
ces.org.au



CAPS WORKSHOP

'Meeting the spiritual
needs of older people
with secular and
other beliefs'

9am – 12pm, The Chambers Pavilion
Registration required

[Click here to register](#)



Canberra International Music Festival performances

[Click here for more info](#)



B4 French Breakfast #4 with Golden Gate Brass

8.30am – 10am, The Chapel
Ticketed



Dunera Mass

2.30pm – 3.45pm,
The Chapel
Ticketed



BOOK LAUNCH

Stan Grant,
The Queen is Dead

5.30pm – 7pm, The Meeting Place
(inclement weather, The Chapel)
[Click here to book](#)



INAUGURAL TALK

Wisdom for the Common
Good: 'The State of the
Church: back to the future'
Professor Anthony Maher,
response from Professor
Stan Grant

6pm – 7.30pm, Venue TBA



BOOK LAUNCH

*Putting Burdens on
Broken Shoulders,*
by Ken Crispin

6pm, The Chambers Pavilion



ACC&C Ambassadors' Gathering

10am, The Chambers Pavilion



INTERFAITH DIALOGUES

The Voice and Reconciliation: Is it possible to speak authentically of love and justice in an unjust world?

6pm – 7.30pm, The Chapel

17
MAY

National Reconciliation Day Service, ACT Churches Council

Times and venue TBC

28
MAY

INTERFAITH DIALOGUES

Faith and the Democratic: Should faith-based traditions engage in politics?

6pm – 7.30pm, The Chapel

12
JUL

QUIET DAY Australian Network for Spiritual Direction (ANSD)

8am – 4.30pm,
The Chambers Pavilion

20
MAY

'A New Postsecularism' Profs Anthony Maher and Wayne Hudson

TBC

THEOLOGICAL DISPUTES

Dr John Painter, 'No-one has ever seen God: revisiting John's prologue'

12.30pm – 1.30pm,
The Chambers Pavilion

23
MAY

THEOLOGICAL DISPUTES

Prof Wayne Hudson, 'Australian history and the future of the church'

12.30 – 1.30pm,
The Chambers Pavilion

20
JUN

CAPS WORKSHOP

'Spiritual reminiscence for people with dementia'

9am – 4pm,
The Chambers Pavilion
Registration required

25-26
MAY

CAPS WEBINAR

Highlights from the International conference on ageing

3pm – 5pm PM AEST

21
JUN

CAPS WEBINAR

Technology in spiritual care

3pm – 5pm PM AEST

19
JUL

THEOLOGICAL DISPUTES

Dr Nikolai Blaskow, 'Nietzsche the religious man: artist, philosopher, saint'

12.30pm – 1.30pm,
The Chambers Pavilion

18
JUL

Visit acc-c.org.au/events for more details

Hire the Centre's facilities for your next event

The Centre's facilities include The Chapel, which can host up to 200 people seated, and The Chambers Pavilion which can seat 50 people. There is free onsite parking for event attendees. We welcome inquiries from groups that run events that are consistent with the vision of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. Contact Sarah Stitt and Lauren Bartley for more information email acc-c@csu.edu.au

THE CHAPEL



THE CHAMBERS PAVILION



Prayer for the Centre

*God, powerful and gentle,
You love this southern land
And all its peoples, old and new.*

*As the cross shines in the heavens
So may Christ bring light to our nation,
As the waves encircle our shores
So may your mercy enfold us.*

*May the God who formed our southern land
Be for us a rock and strength.
May the God who rules our southern seas
Keep us safe from every storm.
May the God who made the southern skies turn
Our darkness into light.*

*As Canberra is a meeting place
Central to the Government of Australia,
So may this Centre be a true meeting place
Where all God's people may gather in a spirit of prayer,
A spirit of unity of minds and hearts; and
Where we may share in the very Communion of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Archbishop Francis Carroll



The Trinity, by Anatoly Golobokov, Florentine mosaic, photo supplied



AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR
CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE
WISDOM FOR THE COMMON GOOD