



Shaping the Good Society *in* Australia

Papers read at the first Australia's Christian Heritage National Forum

Parliament House, Canberra,

6th - 7th August 2006

E dited by Stuart Piggin

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Australia's Christian Heritage: Its Importance in
our Past and its Relevance to our Future

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Preface:

The Christian Contribution to Shaping Australia As a Good Society

Stuart Piggin

What has Christianity contributed to Australia in the past? What does it have to offer Australians for the future? What does it have to do in order to maximise its contribution to the health, happiness and security of all Australians and our neighbours in this unstable world? Has the impact of Jesus on the Australian psyche and values been chronically underestimated by our 'Fourth Estate', the coterie of academics, social commentators and journalists who have taken it on themselves to tell our national story and who have so insisted on our secularity? Is this secularity starting to look old-fashioned and unlikely to serve our national interest best through its failure to identify and harness Christianity's capacity for building our social capital?

A Broad-based Christian Conversation

In an attempt to answer these questions, nearly 400 Christians gathered at Parliament House, Canberra, on 6 and 7 August 2006 for the first National Forum on Australia's Christian Heritage.

The delegates were there by invitation. The organisers wanted this Forum to represent a broad-based Christian coalition:

§ Representatives of many denominations were present with none dominating. Denominationalism was not an issue. Christianity needs to say goodbye to its sectarian past if Australians are to hear the voice of the Lord. At the Forum, unity was more easily attained than delegates could have envisaged by the simple decision to focus on Jesus rather than the Church. Jesus is the one thing all Christians have in common, and indeed, as numerous stories about the role of Jesus in Australian history reveals, Jesus is not the preserve of Christians, but has been as constantly revered by most Australians as the churches have been criticised.

§ The decision was made to hear from lay rather than clerical members of the Church. Indeed, the Forum was not

about Church, theology and doctrine. It was about the world of work, the marketplace of ideas, the role of the human family, and the civic responsibilities of citizens to the polis. The Forum was more for Christian professionals than professional Christians. Delegates as well as speakers were drawn from a wide range of professions: parliamentarians, academics, lawyers, teachers, social researchers, business men and women, architects, and entertainers.

§ **Speakers were chosen rather for their capacity to ask questions than to give answers and to report on research rather than propagate orthodoxy.** So most were not those with reputations as spokespersons for the Christian Church in Australia. The organisers wanted new ideas which were not necessarily what delegates expected to hear or wanted to hear. The presence of academics brought a measure of balance and rationality not always experienced in church gatherings. This seemed to be appreciated rather than a problem. As one academic observed the 'the rah-rah factor' was not absent, but 'there was more than enough solid fare'.

§ **Indigenous leaders were well represented at the Forum, their stories commanding interest and respect** on the Forum website before the Forum even began. With the recent accounts of disastrous community experiences fresh in the minds of all, it was cause for hope to hear of Indigenous communities which are strongly led and prospering. Michael Connolly, from the Yarrabah community, declared: 'It would be a *complete eye-opener* for policy makers to understand *the positive impact* the gospel has on the lives of Indigenous peoples of Australia. This should be researched.' Not surprisingly, then, the Forum warmed to the idea that, if there is to be any blessing from identifying and strengthening the nation's Christian heritage, it will only be in fellowship with the first Australians.

§ **We chose to have a 'Christian' rather than a multi-faith Forum because Christianity is still the preferred option of the great majority of Australians.** At the 2001 census only 6 per cent of Australians identified with a non-Christian religion and 15 % with no religion, but an overwhelming 68% identified with a Christian church. Of them only a minority attend church regularly, but the point is that their religious tradition is Christian and nothing else, and Australia is better identified as 'Christianised' than as a 'secular' or 'multi-faith' nation.

Past Importance and Future Relevance

The unique blend of delegates, with creative mystics eager to learn from rational academics, and politicians happy to be directed by professional leaders, gave a sense of occasion and expectancy to the Forum. 'We are at the crossroads', said Forum Chairman, Mal Garvin. 'We are at a tipping point' said Labor politician, Anthony Byrne. This was a 'landmark' event, observed the Prime Minister in his welcome. There was a happy feeling that this event was planting seeds and sparking new fires of hope. This was a new and hopeful way of being a Christian in Australia.

A Creative, Strategic Conversation

The Forum was designed to synergise the interaction of three different ways of thinking: that typified by the academic, the professional leader and the politician. The 'architecture' of this discourse was based on the suggestion from Tim Costello that if change is desired, it requires the creative interaction of experts, salespersons, and networkers. So, plenary addresses and seminars were given mainly by academics, with professional leaders and politicians invited to respond in an effort to engage delegates in a strategic conversation.

The academic historians on the program, Geoffrey Bolton, Graeme Davison, Robert D Linder and Stuart Piggin and Powerhouse Museum curator, Brad Baker, analysed the impact of Christianity on Australian history. They illustrated the proposition that Australian values and culture, institutions and professions have been far more 'Christianised' than is typically recognised by 'secular' historians. In his opening plenary address, Bolton, said that Christian concepts and imagery are enmeshed in much of what we regard as the Australian self-concept and Australian myth: egalitarianism, sacrifice, innocence betrayed, and the ideal of a good society. Between them the historians told many stories of individuals who are ornaments of Australia's Christian heritage. To identify and propagate such stories was one of the principal purposes of the Forum.

Politicians who identified with the Forum's aims included not only those on the Right: John Anderson, Guy Barnett, Grant Chapman, Danna Vale and Bronwyn Bishop, but also those on the left: Anthony Byrne, Helen Polley, Kevin Rudd, Harry Quick, and Wayne Swan. Both Rudd and Barnett were at pains to point out that Right and Left are not religious categories and that no political party has a lien on Christian values. Tim Costello warned that our parliamentarians need to encounter Christians who are not only pastors to power, but also prophets to power.

Professional leaders included the Fair Pay Commissioner, Ian Harper, and Woolworths CEO, Roger Corbett, who fielded questions on business ethics from Shadow Treasurer, Wayne Swan. When

Swan's involvement was questioned by a journalist in the *Australian Financial Review*, Swan refused to bow the knee to the secularist Baal. He expressed disappointment that the journalist found it difficult 'to understand the role Christian values can play in the business of retailing or the setting of wages and working conditions'. He concluded his robust rebuke with the observation that the journalist 'may feel awkward when people have the confidence to draw on their religious beliefs to discuss their life and their times, but he should have the professional integrity to exclude that delicacy from his reporting'. Members of the 'Fourth Estate', like all the rest of us, need to hear such plain speaking!

Delegates were invited to air their concerns on the Forum website before the conference began (www.australiaschristianheritageforum.org.au/ 'Attendee stories'). A good percentage of these are about families, and children, and schooling. Helen McCabe, research fellow with the Plunkett Ethics Centre, attached to the Australian Catholic University, gave a paper on the family which is rich in Catholic family lore for the edification of Protestants. She made the striking observation that we now look to governments to do for us what family life used to provide. Heaven help us. Elizabeth Ward's paper on education suggested that heaven is indeed helping parents, through the alignment of the aspirations of schools with those of parents, to give their children the values they espouse. In going with the flow on family first, the Forum was seeking to foster Christian family dynasties which has characterised our past and will strengthen our national future as one generation succeeds another.

Justice Keith Mason, head of the NSW Court of Appeal, addressed another major concern, the Law. He argued that Australian politicians have actually not found it necessary to build a Berlin wall between Church and State precisely because the churches have not been overly aggressive in their demands and because they have not welcomed or promoted the culture wars which in America have made such a wall a necessity. In fact, such walls and bills of rights are more productive of culture wars than they are the means of settling them.

The strongest case for the impact of the Christian heritage on Australian life was made in the joint paper by Stephen Judd, CEO of Hammond Care, and Anne Judd, lawyer, with an expertise in not-for-profit organisations. They showed that, unlike the USA and Great Britain, the great majority of social welfare and charitable organisations in Australia are Christian foundations. Judd and Robinson demonstrated that such bodies do better for the country if they remain true to their founding Christian ideals and not allow themselves to be emasculated by interference from government regulators.

A Candid Conversation

If we got a few things right at the National Forum, we fell short in enough departments to make us feel that we should try again! The most helpful review of these shortcomings was made by Professor Graeme Davison, who as an historian of heritage, made an invaluable contribution to the Forum. After cataloguing some of the strengths of the Forum, he wrote in his review:

- § I think you were conscious yourself, in retrospect, that indigenous people should have had greater prominence in the program.
- § There were almost no Asian, African or Middle Eastern faces and few younger people.
- § I feel that Catholic intellectuals have often given more sustained thought to some of the key issues about culture and education, and I would have liked to have seen more of them among the speakers.
- § The Radio National program detected a defensiveness in the conference that I noticed too. I think this is perhaps the hardest thing to negotiate. There is some truth in the point that Christians feel under attack and that other religions can count on more sympathy from a society ostensibly dedicated to pluralism than can the still dominant one. We are living in the shadow of a Christian triumphalism that has passed, but still present in the minds of many people, and with evidence of abuses, sexual and racial, that we simply have to confront before we can move beyond them. In the meantime, I think we have to resist the temptation to complain, . . . to look back to the 'good old days' or to appeal to some sense that, because our institutions are built, in part, on Christian foundations, Christianity is entitled to a respect beyond what it can command on the basis of what it offers to us here and now. When we meet under the auspices of the national parliament, it is especially tempting to seek some kind of official imprimatur. I think Tim Costello put his finger on that issue.

Graeme's observations highlight the chief challenge of the Forum: to give Christians the resources and confidence to question the Fourth Estate without lapsing into triumphalism, and to maintain, for the benefit of our nation, rather than our own benefit, the reality of living in a Christianised country, rather than conceding that our country is either primarily secular or 'multifaith' when, statistically, as we saw above, it is far from either.

An Ongoing Conversation

By holding the Forum in the national Parliament, the organisers hoped to make Christians concentrate on what they have to think and do in order to make a greater contribution to the welfare of our nation. They need to be more engaged, not less, but they need to earn the right to be heard and not just assume that they have a divine right to be heard. Christians need to be 'disciplined by democracy', as Tim Costello argued, and this requires debate, not dogma.

The identification and telling of stories which communicate the values of Jesus at work in our society seem well designed to achieve the Forum's aim of bringing the nation's values more into line with those of Jesus. Since the youngest generation in Australia is currently in danger of losing all knowledge of the Christian story, the need for more effective ways of communicating the Bible's message was also identified as a priority. Both the Bible story and the Australian Christian story need to find their way into the school curriculum, and this will continue to be a conscious aspiration of the Forum organisers.

The Forum's purpose is ambitious and probably unrealistic, humanly-speaking, namely the reversal of the process of secularisation. If many Australian institutions had their originating inspiration in Christian values – the free press, public education, feminism, the Labor Party, the welfare state, commercial successes such as the AMP – the argument of the Forum is that reconnecting to these roots will bring refreshment and growth. Our democracy and our way of life are strengthened through the explicit identification and application of Christian values and examples.

It is surely significant that the 'Fourth Estate' is currently having so much trouble identifying 'Australian values', and in the absence of clarity, is resorting to mockery. Australian values are largely Christian values. If you do not know the latter, you cannot see the former. To make the Christian story better known, the Forum organisers are now exploring ways of making research on Australian Christianity more accessible through publications suited to popular and school readerships, the development of a national Christian Heritage Centre, and co-operation with the many politicians of good-will to further the influence of Christian values on public policy.

The 'Solid Fare' of the Forum

This volume contains the papers prepared for and given at the National Forum. Those papers have not been edited for content or ideas. I did not always agree with the historical judgements or ideological orientation of speakers, but it was considered essential to allow them the freedom to express their own understanding. Here is to

be found most of the 'solid fare' of the Forum, but by no means all. The remarkable 'attendee stories', put on the website before the Forum began (and still there), have not been reproduced here. To save space, the valuable responses to the plenary addresses have not been printed here, either. The one exception is that Margaret Reeson's response to Bob Linder's address has been included because it contains a lot of valuable historical material. The other responses, together with the superb observations of chairman, Mal Garvin, the testimonies of singer, Marina Prior, and photographer, Ken Duncan, the *cri de coeur* of John Smith of God Squad fame (who is as much a part of our national heritage as a student of it), and the questions and answers following seminar papers, are preserved on the recorded version of the sessions, and are available from the ACHNF on CD.

It is probably only through listening to the CDs that the remarkable atmosphere of the Forum may be accessed. The Forum's first evening, for example, ended with a striking call from Labor MP Anthony Byrne to deepen our understanding of the power of Christianity to shape our nation and to work hard at finding our national narrative ('if you look at the cultural narrative, the religious narrative is not there'), and the second day ended with the heart-breaking confession of Indigenous leader, Shayne Blackman, that the spirit of his people is almost broken. The Forum was designed to be 'primarily educational', but there were those sacred moments when we glimpsed a deeper truth and felt a deeper need.

A full list of speakers and programme participants is found at the end of this volume. This volume goes out with their prayer, and probably yours, that we will find here the resources to renew our efforts towards, as Professor Geoffrey Bolton put it, 'shaping Australia as a good society'.

National Forum: Parliamentary Hosts

Senator Guy Barnett (Liberal, Tasmania)	The Hon Kevin Rudd MP (Labor, Queensland)
Senator Helen Polley (Labor, Tasmania)	The Hon Danna Vale MP (Liberal, NSW)
Senator Grant Chapman (Liberal, South Australia)	The Hon Bruce Baird MP (Liberal, NSW)
Senator Steve Fielding (Family First, Victoria)	Mr Anthony Byrne MP (Labor, NSW)
Senator Barnaby Joyce (National, Queensland)	Mr Harry Quick MP (Labor, Tasmania)
The Hon John Anderson MP (National, NSW)	The Hon Alan Cadman MP (Liberal, NSW)
	Mr John Murphy MP (Labor, NSW)

Forum Board of Management

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Graham McDonald - Co-ordinator
Rod West - Treasurer
John Howell
John Luttrell
Earl Roberts
Sharon West
Daniel Willis

Australia's Christian Heritage: Conference Introduction

Stuart Piggin

It is fitting that such an historical occasion as this should commence with a dramatic announcement. I am therefore happy to announce that our National Forum, through the amazing attendee stories on our website, has already revolutionised the nation's understanding of its history.

We Ozzies are accustomed to despising Samuel Marsden as the 'flogging parson', but, in his attendee story, Peter Robinson argues that Marsden should rather be revered as the founder of the beer industry in Australia: he introduced hops to make beer to displace rum. I have a vision of pubs popping up all over the nation called the 'Flogging Parson'. And, when the Pope seeks advice on whom to canonise next after Mary McKillop, Ozzie Catholics, especially those who like beer more than they dislike Protestants, will suggest that, since there are already 20 beer saints on the register, it will not hurt if he adds another: St Samuel Marsden, the Australian saint of brewers.

But, there's more. Training for the ministry will be revolutionised as a result of these attendee stories. Bruce Moore tells us of an experience he had which he tells us is excellent training both for the Christian ministry and for negotiating with the government. The experience? Wrestling with crocodiles. I have another vision: the core curriculum of *Moore* College has been theology; the core curriculum of *Bruce Moore* College will be crocodile wrestling.

1. Australia's Christian Heritage: Why Heritage?

Heritage is useful history. Professor Graeme Davison, in the paper he will give tomorrow morning on Christianity and Australian culture, points out that heritage is that part of our history which we assess will have value and usefulness for our future. So part of our task will be to identify what is useful in our Christian experience as a nation so that we can work to make it part of our national future.

An example might be the value which we as Christians attach to family life. Your attendee stories, according to my analysis, reveal

that you have 34 major concerns. But a good percentage of them are about families, and children, and schooling, and Helen McCabe's paper which she is giving tomorrow on the family makes the striking observation that we now look to governments to do for us what family life used to provide. Heaven help us.

Elizabeth Ward's paper on education suggests that heaven is indeed helping us. There are lots of hopeful signs there. We wish to bequeath to our children a godly heritage so that godliness will be passed down through the generations. A strong nation will have godly dynasties.

There is dynastic depth in the attendee stories. To give you just a sample: Margaret Rush, we learn from her story, is related to Dunmore Lang; Ken Weslake to the Bounty Mutineers; Trish Orton-Douglas is the great, great granddaughter of the Rev Joseph Orton who was the Wesleyan Methodist's most dynamic leader in NSW before 1850; Gordon Griffiths is a descendant of the Griffiths of Griffiths Bros Teas fame in Melbourne in the 1880s - they tried to replace Samuel Marsden's hops with tea, and Geoffrey White is married into the Fairfax family, whose Australian patriarch, John Fairfax, put the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the map, and Geoffrey's father-in-law, Vincent Fairfax, through his family foundation, has funded an activity which has made this Forum possible.

The *SMH* recently published the Prime Minister's 'Road Map for Australia: Working Together to Make a Great Country Better'.¹ Our greatest challenge, he says, is not national security or economic prosperity, but maintaining 'our national unity, social cohesion and egalitarian spirit'. This 'demands', he says, 'that our children have clear guidance on the values which underpin Australian society and a good grasp of our history.' Those values, that history, is our heritage - which this Forum suggests is *largely Christian* in content - which we will want to see our children imbibe in our homes and schools.

In his road map the Prime Minister did not speak of godly dynasties. Instead he spoke of 'virtuous cycles', which is an interesting way of communicating a similar truth to a nation which is tentative about the use of the word 'godly'. He said:

We need to find innovative ways to break the vicious cycles - of family breakdown, low levels of education, unemployment and health problems - that can afflict some individuals and communities and to reinforce the virtuous cycles - of caring families, strong learning environments, good jobs and healthy lifestyles - that allow others to succeed in a competitive world.

Past Importance and Future Relevance

So we want to identify a heritage useful in strengthening Australian family life, so that through godly dynasties, Australia will generate virtuous cycles as one generation succeeds another.

2. Australia's Christian Heritage: Why Christian Heritage?

Primarily because we don't really know what it is, and we want to find out. That is why the Forum has taken on such a strong educational component. We are beginning our Forum tonight with a paper in which Professor Geoffrey Bolton will give us a professional historian's overview of the role of Christianity in Australian history. It is actually a very tough assignment to come up with valid generalisations about Christianity's impact on Australia. But it will give us a framework, a reference point, with which to compare our own understanding of the Christian heritage.

What you will have in Geoffrey's address is a view on this subject that would command the respect of most Australian historians, but most of them will also think that Geoffrey has tackled an unusual subject tonight. Most of them have not tackled it – it is not in our history books and it is not in our school books, and therefore we do not know nearly as much about it as we should.

It is not that we knew it once and have forgotten it. We never knew it. Nobody has ever told us. Our Christian heritage has never been identified as such and therefore it is in danger of being totally lost before it has ever been found. In this Forum we are searching for that which has never been found.

Now it is important to understand why we Christians in Australia have never really found our Australian identity because that explains this curious fact that the dominant story in Australia has been a secular one while the major heritage is a Christian one.

In her attendee story, Dr Vivienne Watts asks,

'How does Christianity avoid being rendered invisible or insignificant by atheistic, or secular and other overtly and covertly anti-Christian movements?' Behind that question, I sense, is the uneasy feeling that we don't really know what our Christian heritage is because it has already been rendered invisible.

2.1 The Christian contribution has been lost in the polarisation of secular politics.

In his attendee story, Mark Hutchinson makes two very shrewd observations on how that has happened. Mark observes that our best achievements, by which he means the best achievements of Chris-

tians in our land, are lost (that is, rendered invisible) in the polarisation of secular politics.

Australian history seems to be a constant struggle between conservatives and progressives, liberal and labour, haves and have-nots, men against women, whites against blacks, bosses against workers.² This seems to be the main game, and indeed most Christians most of the time participate in the struggle, identifying with one side or the other.

But God's way is another way. As I heard Tim Costello say recently 'left and right are not religious categories', and Christianity has often been a third way between the two struggling poles, and will at least seek to affirm what is right in each pole, for neither left nor right has a monopoly on Christian values.

Christianity's achievements within this struggle have been major, if largely invisible:

§ **A free press** – our greatest newspapers were often Christian enterprises – eg. the SMH, the Melbourne Age, and the Launceston Examiner, which its foundation editor, John West, declared was 'not to be a religious newspaper, but what is more necessary, the paper of a religious man'.

§ **The welfare state** is a second, largely invisible Christian achievement. Some claims for the contribution of Christianity may be drawing a long bow, but, not this one. In the nineteenth century, at the height of the Victorian Age, British Christians were engaged in an amazing variety of welfare organisations. They might have gone on to the major social engineering of creating a welfare state, but they did not have the resources to cover the whole land. So the State stepped in. What *would* have happened if the State, instead of taking over, gave the Christian welfare organisations the resources to do most of the job?

What would have happened, argue Anne Robinson and Stephen Judd in their paper tomorrow morning, is what *did* happen in Australia, where the bulk of social services are supplied by the churches. That is a truly extraordinary part of our heritage.

§ A third now almost impossible to see Christian achievement, is our public education system. Canon Len Abbott is with us at the Forum, and he claims, persuasively, that our public education system as it operated between 1880 and 1965, was one of the finest achievements of Protestant Christianity.

§ Fourth, a case can also be made for the claim, which I have never heard before, but I make it here tonight for the first time, that one of the finest fruits of nineteenth century Methodism was the Australian Labor Party. The stereotype is that the Labor Party had Marxist and Catholic roots, but it numbered very few of either among its founders. A far greater number of its founders were Methodists and they did not hide the fact, so it is strange that their Christian identity has been so totally buried since.

John Verran, for example, a Primitive Methodist local preacher, was Labor Premier of South Australia from 1910 to 1912. On becoming premier, he travelled to Moonta, and to a crowd of 2000 famously announced that he was an MP because he was a PM (Primitive Methodist). Admittedly, he shared this with the Catholics, that he had a good sense of humour.

In his first speech as premier he said, 'I hope, Mr Speaker, that members will excuse me reading my speech, but now I have become a Minister I've got to stick to the truth.'³ It was a quip which reveals the closeness of Christianity and politics in those pre-secular days.

2.2 Our own Christian historians have not studied the impact of Christianity on the Market Place

That we do not know our Christian heritage cannot be put solely at the door of our secular historians. Church historians have not seen it either – they have confined their attention largely to clergy and priests and churches, not laypeople and their contribution to the marketplace.

Christians have even sometimes disowned their Christian heritage, such as when the Wesleyan Methodists, being middle class, on coming to dominate the Methodist Church after union in 1901, ignored the ministry of PMs to the *working classes* and let it die. But, given the legacy of Christian ministry to the labouring poor, we should not be surprised that the churches have, with some vigour, sided with the unions over the new industrial relations legislation. Christianity has had a long commitment to civilising capitalism as well as to contributing vigorously to its development in the first place.

Christians have also commonly disowned their own contribution to the development of *feminism*, so that it is increasingly thought of as an anti-Christian movement. The first feminist movement was the missionary movement, where women found an outlet for gifts and capacities which they were not allowed to express on the home front. The second was the movement for temperance and female suffrage

consequent upon it. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was the first mass organisation among women devoted to social reform. World-wide, at its peak in 1927 the WCTU had 766,000 dues-paying members. Its history is one of remarkable women of strong Christian faith.⁴ In SA alone, these included Serena Thorne, Lady Mary Colton, Rosetta Birks, Elizabeth Nicholls, Mary Lee, and Catherine Helen Spence.

If we are not proud of them, seeing them as part of our heritage, we cannot expect the secularists to be. Typically today, female historians feel that to achieve their feminist goals, the last thing they need is the church, and so they have played down or ignored the achievement of these Christian feminists. One such historian concludes that this feminism produced 'no compelling organizations', and she dismisses their work as a deflection into morality and education instead of into a concern for equal rights.⁵

Surely, the reverse is true.⁶ The attaining of equal rights was the first and most stunning achievement of the WCTU. It gathered 7,000 of the 11,000 signatures on the petition to the SA House of Assembly for female enfranchisement. Soon after in 1894, the Bill was passed: one of Christianity's most conspicuous victories. Feminism would have been inconceivable without Christianity.

2.3 The Fourth Estate has rendered Christianity invisible

Our reluctance as Christians to acknowledge and celebrate our working class efforts or our own pioneering feminism is partly because we Christians have accepted the non-religious values of those who determine what is acceptable and unacceptable in our society.

Who are these people? Who is it who tells this dominant story which leaves religion out? Mark Hutchinson (again) calls them the fourth estate. This has come to be identified with the media, but it would be unfair to saddle all media personnel with anti-religious bias. Mark is probably referring to those secular fundamentalists, who admittedly are well represented in the media and in the ranks of our social commentators and academics, and who set the standards of thought in our society.

They die laughing if anyone should deviate from their dictates. Secular fundamentalism is a dogmatic, unexplored, received conviction that all religion is irrational, unhelpful and harmful, or that it has just has no right to speak into the marketplace of ideas.

Well, Mark speaks of this fourth estate as oppressive, as controlling the values even of Christian communities through shaming, and manipulation of public truth. This is why the Christian voice in Australia has been so muted, so tame, so lacking in prophetic power.

Of course, there are some Christians who refuse to bow the knee to this cultural Baal, but the rest of us very often find them embarrassing, sometimes because they are embarrassing, and sometimes because we have adopted the secular values of the Fourth Estate.

So, if we have come to this Forum to find our voice on our Christian heritage, we must first do the hard yards of finding out what our Christian heritage is. We will find that it is a heritage which takes us into all aspects of Australian life and culture. Our speakers will give lots of examples to illustrate that claim: we even have in Ian Harper's paper an economic history of Australia written from a Christian perspective. Economic history has never been so interesting.

But do not miss the point. There is a chronic tendency for these aspects of Australian life to sever themselves from their Christian roots, to cut themselves off from their Christian heritage: the press, education, the welfare state and welfare services, the Labor Party, social justice, feminism, the law, government.

This Forum is directed to understanding that, with a view to working out how we might regraft them back into the vine, so that the life of Christ will flow through them again.

So that's the question, the ACHNF OBQ: ⁷ *how do we reconnect every aspect of Australian life to its Christian heritage and bring the values of every activity into alignment with Jesus' values?*

3. Finally, why Australian?

We have come here to study not our Christian heritage, but our Australian Christian heritage. Now the so-called Religious Right, about which the Fourth Estate in Australia, is so worked up at the moment, is not part of our *Australian* Christian heritage. It is part of our American Christian heritage. That is OK. As Christians we inherit the lot.

But what a minority of Australian Christians are beginning to wonder, with the help of attitudes adopted from the Religious Right, is this: if Australia becomes the righteous nation God intends it to be, what role might it play in bringing in God's Kingdom to a needy world?

Such a concern explains the recent considerable interest in the 400th anniversary of the proclamation of the Great South Land of the Holy Spirit by de Quiros. If Australia has been marked out by God's Spirit and by prophecy for some special role, what might that role be?

There is little point in dismissing this question as a little crazy just because we cannot answer it by rational means. What the

question ultimately boils down to is perfectly legitimate, 'what is the point of being an Australian Christian? What do we, as Australian Christians, have to offer to our needy world?'

Now the Fourth Estate can only see that the Religious Right's tendencies are towards fascism; that it has all the instincts of the National Front in Europe.

A more mature understanding of right-wing conservatism has come from Presidential Aspirant in France, Ségolène Royal. She suggests that

'the nostalgia for 'traditional values' is less a harbinger of protofascism than a rejection of value-neutral politics. The answer, she claims, is a new kind of politics, respectful of public opinion, modest in its claims, transparent, accountable, and, above all, 'concrete' rather than abstract.'⁸

But if we are respectful of public opinion and pay heed to the 'traditional values' of our Christian heritage, we are in for a surprise if we consider how this heritage has worked itself out in our Australian context. Keith Mason in his paper on 'Religion and the Law in Australia' argues that our politicians have actually not found it necessary to build a Berlin wall between Church and State precisely because the churches have not been overly aggressive in their demands and because they have not welcomed or promoted the culture wars which in America have made such a wall a necessity. In fact, such walls and bills of rights are more productive of culture wars than they are the means of settling them.

We Australian Christians can afford, when we find our voice, to speak a lot more than we have, especially if we are at pains to make sense and to speak sensitively into our distinctive Australian context. If we don't know how to do that, let us do our homework. I was struck by the number of attendee stories which called us to do research.

One of our indigenous brothers, Michael Connolly, was most eloquent in his appeal for research. He says in his attendee story:

It would be a complete eye-opener for policy makers to understand the positive impact the gospel has on the lives of Indigenous peoples of Australia. This should be researched.'

Maybe there is someone here who might like to pay for that research to be done.

Conclusion: Our Indigenous People

Talk of our Aboriginal brothers and sisters leads me to my concluding remarks. We did not plan to have a session on Aboriginal issues at this forum. There are lots of things we have had to decide not to deal with this time round. When Guy Barnett has said 'what about this or that?', I have responded wearily, 'next time'. But the fact that we have not planned to address Aboriginal issues makes the strong presence of our Indigenous people at this conference the more remarkable. And their attendee stories I would judge to be amongst the most exciting we received. I notice that a surprising number of our speakers refer to Indigenous issues.

From this I conclude that, if we are to hope for any blessing for our nation from what we as Christians want to do, we will not receive or give that blessing unless we do it in fellowship with the first Australians.

We are all very hopeful under God for a wonderful future for our wonderful land, and we believe that the more we identify our Christian heritage, that is, our useful history, the more our nation will give godly leadership in our world, but, and this is the message I have already received from this Forum, 'Without the first Australians, Australia will never be first'.

Notes

1. John Howard, 'A road map to guide the nation into a bright future,' *SMH*, 21 April 2006
2. These are the recurring themes of Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, *Making a Life: A People's History of Australia since 1788*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin Books, 1988.
3. O. Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, Adelaide, 1962, 127.
4. For the names following, except C H Spence, see ADEB.
5. Beverley Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia*, volume 3, 1860-1900: *Glad, Confident Morning* (Melbourne: OUP, 1988), 104.
6. A study by Peter Kaldor demonstrates that churchgoers are far more likely to belong to welfare and community service organisations than non-churchgoers: three times as likely to belong to welfare and youth organisations, twice as likely to belong to community-service groups, and three and a half times more likely to belong to human rights groups
8. The Australia's Christian Heritage National Forum One Big Question.
9. *SMH*, *Good Weekend*, 1 July 2006, 34.

Official Welcome:
Christianity
'an enormous force for good'

John Anderson, President of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship, in the following speech, welcomed Forum delegates and brought a message from the Prime Minister.

I know that all my colleagues who work in this place, and who regard it as their home in more or less endearing terms, welcome you to this place. How appropriate that you have this great National Forum here in an age when, as we have just heard, there is a tendency to look to the State to provide the things that once we assumed the family, in the context of faith, would provide. I am often struck as I approach this building how it was that, in the cultures that preceded ours, and which perhaps ours is built on, it was normal for the local church or cathedral spire to dominate the village or town skyline. That is not so in Canberra. This place does, and that flag pole up the top does, and we need to be very careful not to become too presumptuous in believing that we are, if you like, at the top of the dung hill, and I can only say that I think that the work here of the Forum is potentially extraordinarily important.

I do have a brief message for you from the Prime Minister who hopes to be able to join you for a little while tomorrow. But, given the uncertainty of that hope, he did want me to say something to you, and he says this:

It gives me great pleasure to provide this message on the occasion of the presentation of the Australia's Christian Heritage National Forum 2006 at Parliament House, Canberra.

This Forum has attracted high profile speakers and participants from all walks of life who are representative of a range of Christian traditions and perspectives. The Forum programme provides excellent opportunities for Australians to join together to discuss and debate the historical contribution of Christianity to our national

character, values and institutions, and to consider its resonance and influence in contemporary society.

As I have said before, Judeo-Christian ethics, the progressive spirit of the Enlightenment, and the institutions and values of British political culture, have been central to the development of Australian values. Notwithstanding the many rich and complex historical and more recent factors that have influenced Australia, Christianity has been an enormous force for good, and it has shaped not only the individual lives of people, but also the character of our nation.

I look forward to hearing about the outcomes of the Forum, and trust that it will contribute to establishing a greater understanding and appreciation of the influence of Christianity across many areas of Australian life. I send my best wishes to all attending this landmark Forum.

John Howard

(Prime Minister).

Speech on the Forum's Purpose

Senator Guy Barnett

At an Easter Friday Church service last year I received confirmation of a vision. The vision involved the Australian Christian community being more proactive in discussing and promoting the benefits and contribution to our community of upholding the values of Jesus.

A vision of people boldly saying the Christian Community has, and is contributing positively to our nation, and of me playing my part in making this happen in the Federal Parliamentary arena.

It was stimulated in part by the consistent attack on, and denigration of Australia's Christian heritage – whether it be the institution or marriage, the push for a valueless education system, or the removal of Christmas carols and the nativity scene in schools and public places. It seems that at every juncture the Christian community and its leaders were defending. Of course the grass roots response in defence of marriage being between a man and a woman received overwhelming community support, and ultimately bipartisan parliamentary support. An excellent result.

Strategically it is important, indeed vital, to defend our core values and beliefs when threatened. But, it is difficult to advance the cause and progress without a more proactive, forward looking approach. Hence, this forum, and the espousing of the belief that Australia's Christian heritage has helped shape the character of this nation in a most positive way.

Yes it is true that the Australian Church and people within it have made mistakes, including in recent times on child sex abuse cases. But these acts of indecency and other injustices should not diminish the overwhelming positive contributions to the lives of our fellow Australians, and most notably in the area of social welfare and community service, health and education. For example, the brilliant Australian spirit of volunteerism is underpinned by the values of caring for one another, along with compassion and giving – 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' The Anzac spirit I believe espouses the values of mateship, bravery and sacrifice - all values espoused by Jesus.

We are all honoured to be here to listen, and learn from the various experts in their field and indeed to contribute as appropriate.

As a parliamentary host I have enjoyed working with the organisers, Stuart Piggin and Graham MacDonald, and others in the team in advance of this forum.

Finally, I stand here tonight in solidarity with colleague parliamentary hosts to declare that I am proud of Australia's Christian heritage; that the values and views of Jesus, His faith and belief have positively contributed to the character of our nation, and offered hope to the lives of our people; and indeed, that they remain as relevant today and to our future as they have been in the history of our great nation, Australia.

“Our Christian Past and our Children’s Future”

Speech on the Forum’s Purpose by the Forum instigator, Graham McDonald

First, I would want to say “thank you” for taking the time and effort to attend what is undoubtedly a significant historical event.

It is a delight to give a special welcome to those from New Zealand. I am sure the trip will be well worth it; like Australia, New Zealand has benefited from its Christian Heritage and perhaps your presence here will encourage the development of such a forum in New Zealand

I have spent the last twenty-five years teaching children scripture in our public schools. And when I listen to the issues these children face, it seems to me it is very hard being a kid today.

We often hear parents lament about how difficult it is raising children these days. We hear social commentators, politicians and educators making recommendations about what is wrong with our children as well as what we should do. There seems no shortage of people saying what ought to be done for our kids.

Yet the situation seems only to be deteriorating; for all the suggestions of what ought to be done, some of our children demonstrate concerning, even disturbing behaviours; lack of respect seems wide spread, immorality is exhibited among children at an ever increasingly young age. What do we make of five and six year old children sent to clinics because of sexually deviant behaviour? What can we do about increased drug or alcohol abuse? Maybe we need to examine what we are doing for our children.

Yet among all the problems and possible solutions, among all the voices we seem not so much to hear the children. Children do not have a significant or sizeable voice. They have no voice in legislation regarding what is on television, radio or education or for that matter often in family affairs. We adults set the agenda and they inherit and experience whatever we provide for them.

What then has this to do with our Christian Heritage?

My conviction is that our children are in desperate need of positive and Godly role models. If they are only exposed to popular, and often ungodly, values and ideas portrayed in TV movies magazines and music then surely these values and ideas are highly likely to be the most influential determinants of their behaviour. If this is where they are looking for those positive role models they will be surely disappointed.

How thankful we can be, though, that in our Christian heritage we have a multitude of positive, Christian role models who have helped mould this great nation. Sadly, too few of our children know about it. Dare I say too few of our fellow Australian citizens know about it; perhaps this is the case for our New Zealand brothers and sisters also. It seems to me it has been largely written out of our History books and certainly written out of our school curriculum.

We often learn about the achievements of these great Australians but are rarely taught about "What motivated" or "What inspired them" to do such deeds.

In many cases their motivation was their belief in God as their Creator and a fervent desire to live out the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ in their personal and public lives. Because of this motivation and inspiration and their commitment to live by these standards Australia is all the better for it. They were inspired and inspiring; they ought to be inspirations to our children

We cannot neglect our responsibility to ensure that we reclaim and reinstate these values for the benefit of our children, their children, and their children's children and for the benefit of our nation. I am confident we can educate our children to the historical reality of our Christian heritage so that they may live inspired and inspiring lives to the glory of Jesus and to the benefit of Australia.

I trust you will be inspired through what is presented at the Forum. May it be the commencement of a most valuable and important development for our nation.

Why and How Do We Preserve Australia's Christian Heritage?

Brad Baker

When I was first invited by Professor Stuart Piggin to contribute to this conference on Australia's Christian heritage, I couldn't wait to get back home and tell my usually enthusiastic local Pastor. However his reaction was not what I expected, instead of a 'Hey that's great, what a wonderful opportunity', a blank look of stark horror flashed across his face, hands flew to the sides of his head and he said "Oh no Christianity has now been relegated to a museum!!"

Now as the Head of Exhibition Development for one of Australia's leading museum's I could have been mortally offended by his remark. However, as a Christian, I began to wonder if I too should have had such a response. On reflection, I soon realised that as a professional in the field, I need to set the record straight about the role of preserving and presenting cultural heritage

When most people think of museums they think of dimly lit corridors, with a musty odour wafting through the gallery and dusty glass cases crammed full of 'dead' things, usually with a type written label now hopelessly faded and curling up at the edges, something like this. Certainly most of us carry vivid childhood memories of just such a school excursion, which was usually mixed with as much fear and apprehension over what we would see in the next showcase, as we were with the threat by the head teacher to lock us in overnight if we continued to misbehave.

Sadly there are sufficient examples of this remnant of the Victorian era of museums, still around. Yet that is not what cultural heritage is about. Contemporary museums are alive, active and dynamic institutions filled with the state-of-the-art technology, hair-raising interactivity and fascinating narratives about the past, present and future, all with an aim to help us to comprehend this wonderful thing called *life* that we are living.

Our cultural heritage helps us to understand who we are. What better reason for preserving Christian heritage could you ask for?

Most Australians have little or no knowledge of the role that Christianity has played in the shaping of this nation and it is our opportunity, if not our responsibility, to raise their awareness and hopefully in the process their respect, for what has been a very complex struggle that continues today and will continue well into our future.

As the Spanish philosopher Santayana once said 'those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it'. The role of heritage preservation is to assist those of us still on this life's journey, to learn from those who have trod the path before us, and from whom we can draw knowledge if not inspiration in our struggles. The value that we place on historical objects or artefacts, is based on our understanding of the effort and cost involved in how they were created, or more often in how they were used.

Let me give you an example, I have here a simple piece of cloth, died green and shaped in the form of a hat. The total material cost is about \$4, plus the labour cost necessary to cut out and sew together the material. This object retails for less than \$20, and that is the value we as a society place on this item.

However, if I was to be holding this piece of cloth, I would be holding an artefact worth many hundreds of thousands of dollars. You see this is the famous 'baggy green' cap worn by Sir Donald Bradman at the peak of his illustrious career during which time he established himself through his dedication, courage and skill as the greatest cricketer who ever lived.

Both objects are the same weight, size and colour. Yet we as a society have placed an exceptionally different value on them, why? It is because we can draw from this object and its unique provenance, a degree of inspiration, admiration and absolute awe at what it has witnessed, and the stories that it could tell.

Now imagine just for a moment that you had never heard of Sir Donald Bradman or cared nothing for cricket. As well as clearly not being an Australian, you would struggle to understand why such a high value had been placed on this somewhat battered and worn piece of cloth. But all is not lost, simply walk into the local pub and ask the first Aussie you meet and we will quickly bend your ear about the exploits of our favourite son, to the point that before the end of the conversation you too would be struck with intense feelings of envy and desire to be the lucky owner of the 'baggy green'.

Yet in the Christian heritage of this nation there are countless examples of artefacts that are being undervalued or worse destroyed, simply because we do not appreciate their stories. So what are the objects of Australia's Christian heritage?

Past Importance and Future Relevance

Well we have a few big things. Since the arrival of the First Fleet the most spectacular and significant building in every village, town or city was the church. Not just for their impressive size, but as examples of extraordinary craftsmanship and the intense dedication of their makers, these were truly awesome buildings.

Whilst their architectural styles were initially borrowed from the very best that Europe had to offer, these magnificent structures were now being made from sandstone, the very bedrock of this land, and it didn't take long for them to develop a distinctly Australian character from the mining towns, to the far outback, from Hamilton Island to the Hunter Valley. The Church has always been seen as a place of community, a place for reflection, and when times grew tough a place of refuge and hope.

But we have many other objects that represent our Christian heritage, such as musical instruments there are many beautiful decorative arts, crafts and spectacular works of art. Even the word of God contains for many of us our family's history and is always present at the most significant times of our lives be-it christenings, weddings or funerals. There are also countless personal objects such as this simple demonstration of a young girl's first attempt at needlepoint, praising God with the words 'Parent of good thy works of might, I trace with wonder and delight' signed Isabel Buist Aged 9, Van Dieman's Land April 16, 1839.

This simple cross, stamped with a convict arrow was made from copper sheet on board the First Fleet vessel HMS Sirius. Christianity arrived in Australia with the words of the great commission being lived out in earnest, to 'preach the good news to all the nations of the world, even to the ends of the Earth'. I can't help wondering if the poor soul who held this object, as they set foot in the new land, didn't feel they had finally reached that very place. Imagine what stories it could tell?

As I have said earlier, we preserve cultural heritage to better understand who we are. You only have to look at the explosion of reality programs, soapies and dramas on television to realise that we are desperately trying to find out how other people cope with this thing called life, and by observing them we reflect on how we are handling the same struggle. People agonise over wanting assurance such as 'am I OK?' or alternatively 'what's wrong with me?', and so we look to the lives of others for answers.

Now it should come as no surprise that the author of the Bible is clearly aware of this innate human desire. The Bible is simply the greatest book ever written in demonstrating with brilliant diamond clarity how to learn from the lives of others. If you think *Neighbours*

and *Home and Away* have some shady goings on, then you should read about David and Bathsheba or Abraham's family life to really see how badly wrong we can get it. But in the same context the inspirational stories of David and Goliath, the courage and faith of Moses or the almost inhuman perseverance of Job, make us proud to be a part of the same species.

In the same way, that by preserving the *objects* of Australian Christian cultural heritage, we can inspire future generations, so too in the *lives* of our fellow Australian Christians is an immense treasure of wisdom and courage. Let me take you on a short journey with a couple of Australian Christian characters.

The first is mystery, one that fascinated the people of Sydney for more than 30 years. Let me take you back to 1939, it was a freezing cold and windy July morning and chiming like the bells of doom, the eerie echoes of the Sydney Town Hall clock-tower have just confirmed it is 5:00am. Amongst the cold and bleak, man-made canyons of steel and glass, a shadowy figure in a Grey felt hat and dark blue suit is driven by an insatiable desire. As he moves with practised stealth from shadow to shadow, he reflects on his pitiful childhood.

Born in Balmain in 1884, both parents drunkards, his two sisters and two brothers lived much of their time either in jail, or was spent running the brothels that they had illegally established amongst the narrow alleyways of a bustling young city. Living from scraps of food found in garbage cans, stealing milk from unsuspecting doorsteps and being jailed himself for living in a fog of alcohol at the tender age of 15, were vivid reminders of a past which haunted him and fuelled his need for retribution.

Miraculously he had survived to adulthood and now at the age of fifty seven, the same city that had been his only schoolyard, had barely emerged from the depths of the Great Depression and was about to enter into a war in Europe that would soon claim the lives of millions.

He was of a slight build and only just over five feet tall, but as he trod the empty and barren footpaths he was undaunted by the potential threats to his life or limbs that could emerge from every alley or darkened doorway, past which he silently drifted. The urge to achieve his mission far outweighed the possibly gruesome fate that could befall him at every turn.

Finally he had arrived, he stopped, and with quick and furtive glances to ensure he was truly alone he bent to the ground, reached into his pocket and removed a sharpened object. Then with a much practised and fluid motion he struck out at the concrete and in an

instant his mission was accomplished. Rising in triumph, he hastily retreated into the shadows from which he had come, anxious that his anonymity was preserved.

Some hours later as the city emerged from its slumber and the citizens as yet unaware of what drama the remainder of this day would bring, began to arrive to attend to their daily duties, a constable was stopped by a young lady at the entrance to the train station. She pointed to the concrete and stated 'look there it is again', the constable moved in for a closer inspection and he saw a single word in perfect copperplate script, 'Eternity' a word that would become synonymous with this city as it continued to mysteriously reappear for the next 30 years, created and maintained by the slight figure of a man in the grey felt hat.

Arthur Stace was this one word missionary, and his story is far more intriguing and complex than the brief glimpse that I have given you tonight, however it all began when Arthur was enticed, at the thought of a free cup of tea and a rock cake, to attend a Baptist Church hall meeting in Darlinghurst in 1937, where he listened to the evangelist Rev. John Ridley, a Military Cross winner in the First World War.

Rev. Ridley so inspired Arthur with his passion for the lost that when the Reverend cried out 'I wish I could shout ETERNITY through all the streets of Sydney', Arthur knew then and there, that he had been given a mission by God, and until he died at the age of eighty four Arthur continued to faithfully carry out and live for this mission.

This single minded one word missionary, was immortalised sixty years later in glowing letters made of steel and neon, letters that were many times greater than his own height, these letters were splashed across the very bridge which symbolised this great city, in the year it hosted the world with the Olympic Games. The word then seen by almost 2 billion people, was simply ETERNITY.

We will never know how many people who read Arthur's elegant flowing script or who subsequently heard his dramatic life story, actually stopped to consider his message and to what extent it changed their lives, but Arthur Stace is certainly a unique part of Australia's Christian heritage that is worth preserving.

Let me now take you as far away from the city as you can get in this great country, across the endless plains and deserts of the interior of outback Australia. There lives a hardy breed of individual, who manage to sustain a tough livelihood far from the comforts and security afforded by city amenities.

The year is 1928 and a wonderful dream was about to become a reality, a dream that would literally save the lives of many Australians, it was a dream so visionary that no-one else in the world had yet attempted anything like it.

But before I tell you the dream, let me again take you back to another man born in the 1880's, this man was born in the madness of the hustle and flow that was the Victorian goldfields. His mother died in childbirth, when he was only two year of age, so he was raised by his strict and lonely father. A quiet and sensitive young man who after giving his soul to God, made up his mind to become a Presbyterian church Minister.

In the year 1912 as a young recent graduate from Melbourne University, he was surprisingly offered his own Parish, however this generous offer was made on one condition, that he pack up and move some 1,200 miles away, into the baking hot dust and desert of the far Northern corner of South Australia. Undaunted he set out on a life time adventure and yet on his arrival, he became immediately and painfully aware of the deprivations and dangers of the outback. The great Australian author Fred McKay said about him, "He had a deep practical concern about the needs of bush people and the graves of inland people who should never have died".

Fired with a passion bordering on obsession he set out to encourage the Church to provide medical help for both aboriginal and white Australians living in the outback. His reports and regular newsletters rocked the church and galvanised such support that by the year of the great dream in 1928, he had established no less than 15 regional hospitals and driven so many miles in his old battered ute that he would have travelled more than ten circumferences around the world. But that was not the great dream.

The great dream did not take place on the steps of Parliament House, nor on the streets of any of our great cities. Instead it happened on a small remote airstrip in Cloncurry in North-West Queensland on the 17th May 1928. On that day this De Havilland aircraft, took off on the inaugural flight of what was to become the extraordinary Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia. The dream of Reverend John Flynn had now become a reality. This extraordinary man of god so profoundly changed the Australian culture, that tonight in this room most of you are carrying his image.

John Flynn's story, is also one that would take many fascinating hours to tell and includes the crucial business partnership with a brilliant young Adelaide inventor named Alfred Traeger, who invented the pedal wireless set, which for the next half century, provided the critical missing link in the combination of both transport and

communication to outback Australia. It is however worth reflecting that today there are some 13 RFDS bases around Australia and they service an area of 7million (YES million!) square kilometres, representing 80% of mainland Australia, and it is the largest and most comprehensive aero-medical health care service in the world. Clearly John Flynn dreamed on a grand scale.

These are just two of the amazing and challenging stories of Australia's Christian heritage and I am sure that over the next day or so you will no doubt hear many more, but that will still be the barest hint of what is out there to be told. The big question is what are you going to do about it?

Some of us have began a discussion on developing a dedicated Australian Christian Heritage centre, a contemporary, interactive, experiential facility that could be both a research and collection facility to galvanise into action the process of recording Australia's Christian heritage, and become a foundation for all Australians to discover and reflect on our achievements, AND on our failures. If you would like to know more about the aims of this proposed centre, just contact OJ Rushton at the stand over here or contact this conference's organiser, Professor Stuart Piggin, who I have no doubt will be keen to talk to you about it.

I am once again looking forward to meeting up with my local Pastor, to tell him of the great opportunities that I am sure this conference will generate. However, I believe it is up to all of us as to whether we do eventually relegate Christianity in this country to simply being a forgotten memory in an old museum, or whether we believe in the preservation and enlightenment of the Australian people to a dynamic and colourful past, that guides this nation in the present, and gives us hope in the future.

Australia's Christian Heritage: A Historian's Overview

Geoffrey Bolton

I come to praise Manning Clark and not to bury him. Manning Clark was the first significant historian who sought to explain Australian history since 1788 in terms of faith and belief. Where historians usually told the Australian story in terms of economic or political development, Manning Clark set out to construct and interpret Australian society as the meeting-place of three great faiths, Catholicism, Protestantism and the Enlightenment – his concept of the Enlightenment being somewhat of a grab-bag of belief systems ranging from agnostic intellectualism to Marxist certainty. All three faiths, so Clark argued, were to lose force in the indifferent Australian environment, leaving modern Australians a people 'stripped bare of all faith'. It was, as Clark himself acknowledged, a mighty theme, and one can only regret that in the later volumes of his history of Australia he allowed himself to be sidetracked into the romantic republicanism and nationalist stereotypes which eventually provided a basis for Paul Keating's rhetoric.

Nevertheless Manning Clark touched on issues that possess a powerful resonance for modern Australians. It is often argued that modern Australia is a secular society, lacking the strong focus on religion discernible in the politics of other settler societies, notably and egregiously the United States. It is further asserted by some that non-Aboriginal Australians have yet to feel at home in their environment, that they cling to the coast and lack the instinctive empathy with their surroundings imbued in Australians whose ancestors have lived here for fifty thousand years, give or take a few centuries. Without that sense of belonging it could be considered hard to nurture a sustained religious faith. I don't wish to be seen as endorsing either of these positions, but they are both sufficiently common to deserve serious consideration.

The contrast with the United States can be instructive. After the War of Independence the Christian churches in Australia were cast adrift from their Old World origins and thrust into self-reliance. In its new guise as the Episcopal Church Anglicanism never recovered its old salience, and other varieties of Christianity burgeoned and

flourished. New variants sprang from the American soil: the Latter Day Saints, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses and many more. To this day American church attendance is large. The reason, according to Rodney Stark and Roger Finke:

...is that Americans enjoy a free market in religion. While we have more than a thousand denominations, Europeans often have centrally planned state religions that put barriers in the way of competition and provide little in the way of diverse religious products. The American religious economy surpasses Adam Smith's wildest dreams about the creative forces of a free market.¹

This way of putting it strikes me as overlooking the experience of other settler societies of British origin – Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand – but in each of the others there was some stimulus to challenge the religious assumptions that settlers brought from the British Isles. In Canada there were the Catholic French of Quebec, in South Africa the Afrikaners with their various Dutch Reformed congregations, in New Zealand the necessity of coming to terms with the Maori. Only in Australia, where the Aboriginal people were too readily marginalised, was there a lack of challenge to the religious practices and assumptions we brought with our cultural baggage. Consequently we were slow to explore the problems and opportunities posed by the distinctive Australian culture and environment to the practice of Christianity. There has been a tendency to see the job of the Churches as the preservation of heritage, and this may have been achieved at the expense of a responsiveness to the needs of the here and now.

My brief is to talk about Australia's Christian heritage, but it would be more accurate to talk about heritages. The Australian colonies were established at different times by different cross-sections of a British population who had not yet been brought together by the 19th century wonders of the railway and the telegraph. The urban poor who made up the bulk of the convicts who settled New South Wales and Van Diemens Land were different from the respectable protestant middle-class founders of Western Australia and South Australia, and different again from the enterprising artisans and tradesmen and their families who swarmed into south-eastern Australia during the goldrushes of the 1850s. Even the Irish were not the poorest of the poor, as they could at least afford the passage to Australia, whereas the destitute Irish found the shorter route to North America as backloading on timber and grain ships.

Each of these groups brought their own religious attitudes with them. Even at that time, of course, there were many who did not go to church. Ken Inglis in his analysis of the 1851 British census has shown that this was already the case even in the Old Country; the churches were losing many of the urban working class. In Australia, as has been the case throughout Australian history, recent migrants who were in the habit of churchgoing often continued to support their church, but they wanted their church to be familiar, to uphold the ethnic and cultural loyalties that they had shared back home in the British Isles. There is a legend among historians that an early census return in New South Wales distinguished Anglicans, Catholics and Presbyterians as 'Church of England', 'Church of Ireland' and 'Church of Scotland'. It may not be true, but it is certainly the case that for several generations the main churches in Australia continued to bear the mark of their ethnic origins. If the Englishness of the Anglicans and Methodists drew less comment than the Irishness of the Catholics and the Scottishness of the Presbyterians it was no less real. Even the second and third generations of Australian churchgoers wanted what was familiar. Only one attempt was made in the late 19th century to establish something that called itself the Australian Church, and this was the creation of a single Melbourne congregation whose pastor, Charles Strong, found himself theologically at odds with his Presbyterian origins. The Australian Church faded away at the end of Strong's long life.

Religion tended to be a tie that bound Australians to their ancestral homes, and unfortunately to their ancestral sectarian antagonisms. This may have been reinforced by the continuing need to import clergy from the British Isles. The first Australian born and bred bishops were not appointed until the decade of Federation, the 1890s: the Anglican Barlow in North Queensland in 1891, the Catholic Dwyer in New South Wales in 1897. Meanwhile Australia's colonial governments had failed to find a formula by which government schools and church-controlled schools could be equitably funded. The result was that Catholic taxpayers found themselves at the added expense of supporting their own separate educational system, and this became an ongoing source of grievance and difference in Australia. Also, as Catholic schools were largely staffed by members of teaching orders imported from Ireland, this intensified the Irish character of Australian Catholicism.

Cardinal Moran, Catholic archbishop of Sydney from 1884 to 1911, the era of Federation, saw that Irish mistrust of England might be sublimated into a new Australian nationalism. This was a concept that had its appeal, although some Protestants feared that Moran's vision would eventually lead to a Catholic and republican Australia alienated from its British origins. But at the popular level

in the 1880s and the 1890s there were too many outbreaks of petty sectarianism. Orangemen and Catholics clashed from Kyogle to Coolgardie. (I mention Coolgardie because for many years during the 19th century in Western Australia there was a comparatively low level of sectarian feeling. This was perhaps partly due to a felt need to avoid divisions in a small, poor and isolated community, but also to the accident that the Catholic community was led by Spanish Benedictines who did not carry an Irish chip on their shoulders. Things changed once the goldminers arrived from the Eastern colonies). In 1902, just after the Australian Commonwealth was inaugurated, the first prime minister, Sir Edmund Barton and his colleague, Sir John Forrest provoked widespread public protest in Sydney when they paid a courtesy call on the aged Pope Leo XIII in Rome. Suspicion was inflamed because the Pope and Barton conversed in the only language they had in common, which was Latin.

Of course there were many examples of practical co-operation between denominations. I could quote Albert Maclaren, appointed as Anglican rector in the notoriously difficult parish of Mackay in Queensland, whose first sermon began:

You have starved out one man, you broke another man's heart, and you drove another man away. Now the Roman priest will always give me an old coat, the Methodist minister will give me a meal, so you can't starve me out, you can't break my heart, and you can't drive me away.²

Or I could recall the story prevalent in Perth in my youth of the Anglican rector who allowed the Catholic priest to borrow his piano for a fete, only to find during the afternoon that the piano was being raffled. 'Never mind that', said the priest, 'You'll get your piano back tonight'. But for each of these stories there were too many examples of an imported sectarianism at odds with the growing sense of Australian nationalism. Henry Lawson might write:

They tramp in mateship side by side
The Protestant and "Roman".
They call no biped lord or "sir",
And touch their hats to no man.³

But even before 1900 in the eyes of many Australians the churches played but a marginal role, useful for weddings, christenings, and funerals, but otherwise, as the Charters Towers *Northern Miner* put it: 'We look upon all Christian ministers as a kind of moral police to keep the kids straight and palaver the women into being good.'⁴

Use was made of the churches to provide social services such as orphanages and missions to the Aborigines, and this was the way in which the Salvation Army, originally scorned and belittled on its arrival in Australia, gained eventually acceptance and even respectability; but too often, by supporting causes dear to the emerging feminist movement such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the clergy were further marginalised as wowserish if not effeminate. Some of the churches' scars were self-inflicted, showing an odd sense of priorities. Can it really have mattered to the progress of Christianity in Australia whether or not the rector of St James in Sydney wore a chasuble? All this accepted, it remains that the habit of family churchgoing was still strong in Australia, at least in many country and suburban communities. Even those who drifted away in adult life, even the most radical of socialist agitators, took with them a knowledge of the Bible and its stories that would astonish their great-grandchildren. It is no coincidence that most of the songs the Diggers sang in the First World War were based on the tunes of hymns learned at Sunday School, though the words were often very different.

The 1914-18 war was a turning point in many ways. Of a total Australian population of not much more than 5 million – perhaps two and three-quarter million males of all ages from infancy to senility – 420 000 enlisted, 60 000 were killed in action, and many more physically or psychologically wounded. The experience of wartime disillusioned many servicemen. They came to find an alternative set of symbols for commemoration in war memorials and the Anzac Day ceremonies. These commemorations often drew on Christian symbolism, most of all the text 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends', but they may have competed with the churches. In many country towns during the 1920s and 1930s it seems that the churches fell behind the RSL or its predecessors as the leading organization in town, with the Countrywomen's Association following. It did not help that the conscription referenda of 1916 and 1917 sharpened antagonism between Protestants and Catholics to a new acerbity. The early 1920s saw hysterical media campaigns about escaped nuns, an attempt by the New South Wales government to overturn Catholic teaching on mixed marriages, a tacit policy by some businesses not to employ Catholics, and the Catholic reaction that produced the Knights of the Southern Cross as a counterweight. Islamic Australians feeling the brunt of hostility in our own day may take the wry consolation that life was no better for Archbishop Mannix and the Catholic community in 1920.

During the 1920s and 1930s some attempts were made to enhance the Australian character of the churches. The building of a national capital at Canberra suggested an appropriate home for the

headquarters of national churches. The Catholics provided Canberra—Goulburn with an archbishop and a pro-Cathedral, and the Anglicans initiated St Mark's Library as a first step towards greater things. But although attempts were made in 1926 and 1932 to draw up a constitution for the Anglican church in Australia, the dioceses were already divided by differing emphases in churchmanship, and agreement was not reached. It was only after a rather headmasterly visit in 1950 from the archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Geoffrey Fisher, that eventually, and twelve years later, the Anglican Church of Australia came into being.

After the Second World War support for the churches seemed to revive. One doubts if the churches were ever more crowded than they were on the day that the war with Japan ended in August 1945. Perhaps that sense of thankfulness persisted into the postwar period. Australians had felt a much greater sense of threat in 1942 than they experienced in the 1914-18 war, yet at the same time fewer servicemen lost their lives in the Second World War. Those who returned often looked to the normality of suburban family life after the insecurity of fifteen years of Depression and war. The 1950s and 1960s were good years for the churches. Some have suggested that the visit of Billy Graham in 1959 marked a peak, but many Australian church congregations were already thriving. Their numbers were boosted by the arrival of two million migrants between 1947 and 1972, many of them drawn as in the past to the churches as a help towards settling into Australian society. But since the 1960s there has been a widespread perception of decline. Attendances dwindle. Church buildings become surplus to requirements and are sold to become restaurants or apartments. Each census shows an increase in the number of Australians describing themselves as observing no religion. So it becomes a central question for this conference, and indeed for Australian society as a whole: Have Australia's Christian heritages been eroded, and if so what should be done about it?

Several features dating from the 1960s are commonly blamed for the decline in Christian observance. Sunday sport provides what is for many an alternative religion. Television is a counter-attraction at night. Cars enable young people to go surfing. The contraceptive pill has re-shaped sexual morality. Perhaps the churches have been slow to respond to the changing aspirations of women. All these explanations no doubt play their part, but they are no less applicable in the United States where the Christian presence is still prominent on the social and political scene. I have no simple diagnosis for the Australian experience, but a number of factors seem worth discussing.

First: As links with England, Ireland and continental Europe weaken over the generations the churches have had only partial success in re-identifying themselves with a modern sense of Australian national identity. At the level of leadership we may note that, with the exception of Cardinal Norman Gilroy in Sydney, it was well into the 1960s before the Catholic and Anglican communions appointed Australian-born archbishops (but then it took that time for the *Sydney Morning Herald* to appoint an Australian-born editor). No further progress has been made in identifying Canberra as a potential national centre for church leadership. Perhaps the federal character of the churches makes it more difficult to agree on establishing their leadership in Canberra. It may be that in translating Cardinal George Pell from Melbourne to Sydney the Catholic Church was reflecting a view that during the Keating and Howard years Sydney has definitely become the administrative and commercial capital of Australia.

Second, and hugely important, comes the issue of how the Christian churches have identified with Aboriginal Australians. Many of the first clergy in Australia gave up baffled by the differentness of Aboriginal culture. But there was always an honourable minority prepared to work among the Aborigines. Outstandingly, Bishop Salvado of New Norcia, coming from a Spanish tradition that saw all races as equal under Christianity, did not reject the Aborigines as invincibly ignorant. Under his regime young Aboriginal women ran the New Norcia telegraph and post office in an age when young non-Aboriginal women were seldom entrusted with such responsibilities. Young Aboriginal men were sent to Rome for training in the priesthood, but unfortunately died in the alien climate, and the experiment was discontinued. Other denominations could also tell encouraging stories. By the 20th century, however, most Australians came to accept the convenient platitude that the Aborigines were a dying race requiring no more than a minimum of welfare, though even in this context there were Christian missions who earned lasting Aboriginal respect. However for the most part we can accept the authority of John Harris, who wrote in 1990:

By the 1930s the proportion of Aboriginal people who were Christians was much higher than the proportion of white Australians who were Christians, yet their total numbers were too small for most churches to notice their need for acceptance. Unthreatened by large numbers of coloured people, white Australians reacted with apathy rather than active racism. By the 1950s there had not been a great deal of change in the settled parts of Australia. Aboriginal people were still largely absent from the mainline churches, still mainly expected to

worship on the reserves, their Christian development still mainly the work of UAM and AIM missionaries. The challenge remains.⁵

Third: the mainstream churches are under challenge from new competitors. During the last forty years there has been an increase in the number of independent Christian groups and 'house churches', a phenomenon hardly known before the 1960s. Perhaps this reflects an increasing influence of American practices in Australian society, especially if, as the return of a Family First senator in Victoria in 2004 might suggest, they succeed in mobilising voters in ways from which the mainstream churches feel inhibited by past controversies. It may also be that for between five and ten per cent of the Australian population the environmental movement provides an alternative source of faith in action. Although it is a long time since I heard the comment 'I can worship God just as well out in the bush as I can at church', it remains a statistical fact supported by census data that some of the parts of Australia containing the largest number who claim to be of no religion are regions such as the Northern rivers of new South Wales and the south-west of Western Australia, with a high concentration of greenies.

I have mentioned the influence of Christian groups in politics, and this brings me to a crucial point. In recent years the churches have become less identified with the beliefs of the comfortable classes, and are more ready to speak out on matters of social conscience. There always has been a minority of clergy – Protestants involved with the peace movement, Catholics and Anglicans seeking a better deal for the working classes – but in recent years more issues have come out into the open, notably the treatment of unauthorised refugees, the 'boat people'. In secular Australia the common concept holds that the business of government is to provide sound economic administration and security against hostile alien forces. Cicero's motto, 'salus populi suprema lex' (the safety of the people is the overriding law) would justify Australia's practice of incarcerating 'boat people' for long periods. But as that wise old scholar John Selden wrote nearly four hundred years ago, 'No proverb may be more misused than 'Salus populi suprema lex'. Many conscientious Australians find it hard to square the policy of incarceration with the Christian message about reaching out to destitute strangers, yet the backbenchers who have expressed disquiet about government policies are bitterly criticised and sometimes seen as in danger of losing pre-selection. Here in Australia politics have suffered because of over-tight party discipline.

I believe that the churches should be pressing, not for a more direct intervention in the political process, but for the greater ac-

ceptance of 'conscience votes' in parliament. When members of the federal parliament have been allowed to exercise a conscience vote on the contentious issue of abortion law, the quality of debate on all sides of the question has been notably higher – more thoughtful and less given to petty point-scoring – than the general run of parliamentary proceedings. I hope that a conscience vote will be held on stem-cell research, and that on the refugee issue members will not be penalised for speaking or acting from conscience. In this way our representatives will be more accessible to Christian perspectives. At the same time I hope our smart-alec newspaper columnists will stop treating those who speak up on behalf of the churches either as impractical do-gooders or as a would-be moral police. When as measured a prelate as Cardinal Pell voices concern about the impact of industrial relations legislation he may or may not be mistaken, but it is impertinent and superficial to respond that he has no right to comment because Church and State are separate. The reality is a good deal more complex than that and has not been sufficiently explored in modern Australia.

I suppose I should touch on the subject of Islam, but it does not strike me that- so far – Christian practice has been much affected by recent controversies. At the time of the Bali bombing it was noteworthy that many of the obituaries for the victims described them as fun-loving people who enjoyed partying. Now it is more than a hundred and twenty years since a visiting English historian wrote of Australians: 'it is hard to quarrel with men [and women, he might have added] whose only wish is to be innocently happy',⁶ but it is probably the hedonism of Australians that gives offence to Muslims rather than the Christian faith. The same hedonism has accompanied the decline in overt Christian observance in the last forty years. I am far from recommending a bonfire of the vanities, but I suspect that in the eyes of some of our Asian neighbours Australia may have an image problem here. No country is seen at its best through its tourists.

Finally, I wonder if reports of the demise of Australia's Christian heritage may not be exaggerated. It is not an original thought, but aren't many of the values that we commend as characteristically Australian a reflection of some of the core values of Christianity? The concepts of 'mateship' and the 'fair go' that so nearly got written into our Constitution owe a lot to the Christian concept of the equality of all people before God and the command to love one's neighbour. The Gallipoli story carries resonances of sacrifice and innocence betrayed. The environmental movement almost demands the concept of a lost Eden. But at least three things are necessary if this legacy is to be appreciated. We must educate a generation of young people who are ignorant, not simply of Christian belief, but

even of the narratives on which Christian belief is based. We must give more attention to the most effective ways in which Christians can contribute to the shaping of Australia as a good society. And we must never forget the Aboriginal Australians.

Notes

1. R Stark and R Finke, quoted in *New Yorker*
2. G C Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920* (Brisbane 1963) p 167
3. Henry Lawson, 'The Shearers'
4. Bolton, op cit, p 166
5. John Harris, *One Blood* (Sutherland 1991), p 659
6. J A Froude, *Oceania* (London 1905) p 166.

Christianity and the Australian Character

Robert D. Linder

Over the past few months there has been a spirited debate in the newspapers and other media and among politicians and pundits over the distinctive values that provide the foundation of the Australian character. There have been numerous suggestions, for example, concerning how to determine if new migrants are likely to embrace “the Australian way.” Perhaps one of the most pragmatic and astute appeared in the letters-to-editor column of *The Australian* last May 5: “In defining Australian values wouldn’t it be simpler to offer prospective migrants a Vegemite sandwich and rate them according to their reaction?”¹

Historically speaking, Christianity has supplied the main ideological foundation for the values that have moulded the Australian character. However, there have been challenges along the way, mostly arising from the various “isms” growing out of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The most serious challenge recently has come from hedonism, the philosophy that one should pursue pleasure and avoid pain. In some ways a self-evident truth, hedonism is dangerous when it becomes a commitment to a way of life that is intensely self-centred with little or no consideration for the needs of others. The hedonistic lifestyle is especially attractive to people who live in a rich and prosperous society with golden beaches. Therefore, the values of many Australians today are expressed by the phrase “the good life,” defined in terms of food, sex and leisure.

Hedonism and Christianity are not compatible because Christianity balances the human need for pleasure with the often painful realities of human existence. Moreover, the teachings of Jesus, the foundation of Christian thought, emphasize the needs of others before self-needs. Most of all, Jesus stressed compassion for those suffering and in need, an attitude contrary to hedonistic belief.

The fact is, however, that most human beings do not think deeply about anything, never mind ideology, but only follow the lead of others. In turn, the leaders who do think about the meaning of life are themselves frequently conflicted and often try to cobble together the best from several ways of life. Nothing better reflects this con-

flicted mind-set than a column that appeared in the 11-12 March 2006 weekend edition of *The Sydney Morning Herald*.²

In that thoughtful essay, Jenny Brockie reflected on her teenage daughter's decision to pursue a hallowed Australian tradition: a walkabout before she settled down to life as a university student. The daughter decided to backpack through South East Asia. The proud mother noted that she departed "...with a beaming smile, boy friend by her side, waved away by a posse of loved ones." Her first e-mails home indicated that she was having a pleasant experience, filled with sun and fun. With revealing candor, the elder Brockie wrote: "She seemed set for the carefree holiday befitting any 19-year-old. On Thailand's islands, her early experiences were just as they should be – hedonistic and exhilarating."

Eleven days later, the daughter and boyfriend were in Cambodia where they encountered not beauty and a cocktail hour at sunset but the grim reminders of that country's recent war-torn history. The daughter wrote home concerning the life in the raw that she saw all around her. There were landmine victims, beggars, waifs and strays, and con artists everywhere. It was the small children who begged along the road, often driven away by storeowners with whips, that made her consider the gulf between her life of privilege and the life of deprivation of most Cambodians.

Later, in Phnom Penh, the daughter discovered an orphanage for disabled children where she and her boyfriend began helping out as volunteers. It was a transforming experience. The daughter fell in love with the little Cambodian orphans, many of them infected with HIV. She later wrote home indicating that she planned to take the younger HIV kids out for a day away from the orphanage because most of them had never been outside the walls of their abode. She and other volunteers paid for a banquet for the children at a local eatery. She recorded that it was a rare day of shared pleasure, "one of the greatest days of my life." The children were all dressed up in their best clothes as their benefactors took them on a ride around the city so they could see where they lived. According to the daughter, "They were absolutely stunned, their little eyes all wide and their mouths open.... I've never seen kids looking so happy."

Brockie closed her column with these words: "Just days later my daughter's precious journey was cut short unexpectedly. She insisted on returning home, her boyfriend following. She is an extraordinary young woman with a fine, true heart. She is honest, brave, deeply connected. She knows it is the integrity of our actions that ultimately defines us all." In short, she had discovered the emptiness of the hedonistic life lifestyle when compared with the

needs of the world. It was better to give than to receive. Greater happiness was found in serving the poor than in keeping up with the rich. Christian values had overwhelmed her. Was this an authentic expression of the Australian character?

Of course, many today would argue that one can be “a good person” and not be a Christian, or even religious. That may be true, but the values that mould character do not descend from heaven on the wings of a galah or simply spring to mind in response to certain sensory perceptions. They are based, either directly or indirectly, on some kind of ideology. In the case of Australia, Christianity remains the foundation of the country’s cultural heritage. Its moral values are not just things it would be nice to embrace but rather things that must be possessed in order to be fully human.

Today, I would like to share with you as a professional historian and as a friendly and frequent visitor to your country some insights I have developed into Australian religious history over the past twenty years. I would like to discuss four individuals whom I believe personify the confluence of Christian and Australian values and in so doing exemplify the best in the Australian character. I will begin with one of Australia’s greatest champions of economic and social justice, W. G. Spence.

Labor’s Forgotten Champion: William Guthrie Spence (1846-1926)

When I first came to Australia in the mid-1980s, economic and trade union historians dominated the teaching and writing of history in this country. At the universities, religious history was marginalized and often degraded. Moreover, there seemed to be little or no awareness of the connection between Christianity and Australia’s historical development. This was especially true among the economic and trade union historians who would have us believe that this area of Australian life was essentially without religious influence. A good historian is a good detective, and as I began my detective work, I discovered that these economic and trade union historians, as fine as many of them were, often read over the religious history right before their eyes.

For example, there is the fact that Christians historically have been among the most vocal supporters of the Labor Party and the trade unions in their fight for economic justice in Australia. In fact, Christians were the leaders of the formation of the Labor Party in this country and have continued to be active in the labour movement right down to the present day. Most of the party’s first leaders were devout Protestants, especially Methodists and Presbyterians. Later, many Roman Catholics became leaders in the labor movement.³ In other words, contrary to the stereotype, the founders and support-

ers of trade unionism in this country were not atheistic Marxists but practicing Christians! W. G. Spence is a prime example.⁴

I noted in his *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB) entry that as a young man Spence had been Sunday School Superintendent of the Creswick Presbyterian Church in rural Victoria and later preached in Methodist churches across eastern Australia. But there was no further mention of religious influences in his life. The remainder of that article and almost all other published sources paid little or no heed to his Christian commitment.⁵ I smelled a devout Christian. First, I confirmed my suspicions that Spence was, indeed, a practicing Christian by consulting historian Coral Lansbury, Malcolm Turnbull's mother, who had done research on Spence prior to her death in 1991.⁶ Then I made three trips to Creswick, each time adding bit by bit to my understanding of this godly labour leader. I also discovered new materials on Spence in the Melbourne University archives and the Mitchell Library in Sydney, and interviewed one of his surviving granddaughters who vividly recalled her Grandfather Spence's last years.⁷ From this emerged a portrait of a man who was not only Australia's greatest union organizer but also a devoted follower of Jesus Christ. The labor movement would have been very different without Spence's Christian heritage.

William Guthrie Spence was born in 1846 in Scotland and came to Australia with his family in 1852. The family immediately headed for the gold fields and joined thousands of others in seeking economic betterment in their new country. Like the majority, they did not find gold at the end of their Australian rainbow, and settled down to a life of marginal existence in a ramshackle house in Jackass Gully near the boomtown of Creswick.⁸ In spite of their impoverished condition, Spence's cultured and caring Presbyterian mother taught her children to read from the Bible before they were six. This became the key to young Willie Spence's future. He read the Bible many times and took its precepts to heart. Moreover, learning to read opened up a whole new world to him as he continued to peruse many other books, including Shakespeare, the classics and current works on politics and economics.

In his youth Spence worked as a shepherd, a butcher-boy, a shearer and a miner. In 1874, he founded a trade union in the Clunes District that was part of the process of the formation at Bendigo in the same year of the Amalgamated Miners' Association of Victoria. From 1882 to 1891, Spence was General Secretary of the AMA and under his leadership the union was, according to historian Geoffrey Serle, "moderate and conciliatory but firm on fundamentals."⁹ A genius in his organizing and negotiating skills, he wanted one grand union that would cover miners of every stripe in Australia

and New Zealand. From 1884, under Spence's leadership, several interstate unions affiliated to become the AMA of Australasia. His growing reputation as an industrial organizer led to his election in 1886 as foundation president of the Amalgamated Shearers' Union of Australasia. Spence is best known among labour historians for his failed leadership in the Maritime Strike in New South Wales in 1890. However, the failed strike is of immense importance in the history of the labour movement because it convinced the trades unions of the need for a parliamentary labor party if they were ever to compete on equal terms with the country's moneyed interests.

Spence continued to be active in the labour movement and increasingly in labour politics following the 1890 strike. He was General Secretary of the Australian Workers Union from 1894 to 1917. He was also elected as a Labor member of the NSW Legislative Assembly from 1898-1901, and later served in the federal House of Representatives from 1901 to 1919. Further, he was a member of the first Federal Labor Caucus in 1901, and of the cabinet in Andrew Fisher's third Labor government of 1914-1915 and again under Billy Hughes in 1916-1917. All of the foregoing is widely known among labour historians and most educated people in Australia.

What is not widely known is that Spence was as devoted to his Christian faith as he was to his work as a union organizer. In fact, his Christian faith drove his concern for achieving a fair go for working people. Achieving a fair go for others is a Christian ministry based on a Christian value. In the years before his union organizing took him on the road for much of the time, he served as an elder and worked energetically in his local Presbyterian church. While he was achieving fame as a union organizer in the 1880s, he joined the Primitive Methodists and became a lay preacher in the Creswick Circuit, speaking regularly and often in the churches of the circuit and throughout the region. He was also a teetotaler and a leader in the temperance movement.

In his deep concern for the working people of Australia, Spence always maintained that he was doing what Jesus would have him do for the downtrodden of society. Presbyterians and Methodists of the period stressed that the Gospel should be applied to the whole of life, and that redemption through Jesus Christ brought with it a changed life, which worked itself out in both personal piety and social action.

Spence argued that the labour movement must be based on the values of Jesus. He wrote in 1892: "New Unionism was simply the teachings of that greatest of all social reformers, Him of Nazareth, whom all must revere."¹⁰ On 12 June 1892, in a speech titled "The Ethics of New Unionism," Spence sparked laughter and cheers

among a roaring crowd of several thousand labor supports in Sydney when he declared: "In taking up this new unionism, we must see if we cannot get back to the level of the founder of Christianity, imbibe some of His spirit and get rid of musty theology, for some of it is very musty."¹¹

W. G. Spence was a Christian socialist. On the one hand, he strongly believed that working people had the right and the responsibility to organize or else the capitalists would exploit them. On the other, he was a gradualist, essentially non-violent, who always preferred negotiations and conciliation to confrontation, class conflict and strikes. This, he believed, was the best way to achieve progress. However, neither did he back down when he was convinced that he and his workers were in the right. Pushing for justice often disturbs the peace. The primacy of justice is a Christian value. In any event, Spence is unintelligible without an understanding of his Christian values and Christian character. In his union work, he attempted to exemplify his Saviour, Jesus Christ. It was Jesus who preached "good news to the poor" and declared that he had been sent "to proclaim freedom for the prisoners" and release to "the oppressed," that is, social justice.¹² And social justice is basic to the Australian character and the belief in a fair go for all.

In July of 1992, as a final act in my Spence research, I decided to look up the old champion of workers' rights and pay him my respects. My investigation led me to Melbourne's Coburg Cemetery where I discovered the gravesite of W. G. Spence and his beloved spouse, Ann Savage Spence. There was no tombstone but only a small iron marker, with the identification DD12 inscribed on it. Seeing this was an inexpressibly sad experience! I hope that the Trade Union Movement will not allow this neglect of its founding saint to continue.

The Chaplain and the Corporal: The Rev. Andrew Gillison (1868-1915) and Corporal Robert Pittendrigh (1883-1915)

Just as labor and trade union historians often have overlooked the contributions of Christians to the growth of the Labor Party in this country, so social and military historians have frequently failed to note the contributions of dedicated Christians in time of war. Moreover, during wartime, the best and the worst traits of the national character are often accentuated. In Australian history, some of the very best of the national character was highlighted during World War I. Perhaps the most poignant example among other similar acts of self-sacrifice and heroism occurred on 22 August 1915 following the Australian attack on Hill 60 at Gallipoli. The main actors in this drama were Padre Andrew Gillison, a Presbyterian, and Corporal

Past Importance and Future Relevance

Robert R. H. Pittendrigh, an Australian Imperial Force (AIF) medical corpsman and ordained Methodist minister.¹³

Gillison was the first Presbyterian AIF chaplain appointed by his denomination. Born in Scotland in 1868 and educated at the University of Edinburgh and New College, he had served in the military as a private in the Queen's Edinburgh Rifle Volunteer Corps for two years while a teenager. After ordination, he ministered to churches in Scotland and the United States before migrating to Australia in 1905. He was pastor of the important St. George's Presbyterian Church in East St. Kilda, Melbourne, before the war. There in St. Kilda he gained a widespread reputation as a man of Christ-like compassion for the lost and needy. He joined the AIF in October 1915, and, at age 46, sailed for Egypt the following December. He was attached to the 14th Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade, and accompanied it to Gallipoli in April 1915.

Pittendrigh, a thirty-two-year-old stretcher-bearer in the Australian Army Medical Corps, had been ordained a minister at the Stanmore Methodist Church, Sydney, on 5 November 1914, shortly before volunteering for the AIF. He had hoped to become a chaplain but there were no more openings for Methodists, so he enlisted in the ranks. Pittendrigh told friends that he had joined the Australian forces, "...not only to serve his King as a soldier but also to serve his Divine Master by such testimony and service in the ranks as comradeship with men in camp and on the battlefield would afford opportunity."¹⁴ As an older, more mature man, he was a natural leader and quickly advanced to the rank of corporal. Like Gillison, he soon found himself in the Gallipoli theatre of war.

On Sunday, 22 August 1915, Gillison had been ministering to the dead and dying on the battlefield in the northern sector of the Anzac position. He already had demonstrated his courage under fire in previous battles by creeping onto the fields of carnage in order to recover the bodies of fallen mates. In any case, on this Sunday afternoon, Gillison bumped into Pittendrigh patrolling the area for the wounded. The Diggers on Gallipoli were a fairly intimate community, and Gillison immediately recognized the younger man because they had shared their common spiritual concerns on a number of previous occasions. They met on the crest of a knoll at a place called Aghi Dere, near the scene of the recent fiercely fought engagement for Hill 60. As they passed a shallow point in the trenches, they heard the plaintive cries of a wounded Allied soldier about 50 meters in front of their position. The British Tommy had been badly wounded by Turkish machine gun fire earlier that day and was now being attacked by ants. A medical officer crouching nearby advised Gillison and Pittendrigh: "Don't go out there, the Turks have it covered

with rifles and machine guns.” Indeed, the Turks upon evacuating the knoll had taken up positions on the opposite side of the gully. There on the side of the slope opposite the trench now occupied by the Australians lay the bodies of numerous fallen English and Australian troops. Among them was the wounded man, calling out in agony for help.

Gillison and Pittendrigh conferred about making an effort to rescue the suffering trooper. Then, in spite of warnings, they crawled out into no man's land. They reached the trooper and had dragged him for about a meter when the Turks opened up with a hail of machine gun fire, hitting both of the would-be rescuers. They arose, carrying the other wounded man with them, and staggered to the Australian trench. Upon reaching it, the chaplain collapsed, but lingered for nearly two hours. He was shot between the shoulders, and the bullet came out near his heart. Pittendrigh was hit in several places, but apparently not as seriously as Gillison. In any case, despite the best efforts of the medical personnel present, Gillison's life gradually slipped from him. With last words for his wife and children in Melbourne, he died shortly thereafter. It appeared that Pittendrigh, although suffering multiple wounds, was not in mortal danger. However, after evacuation to a hospital ship, he died of his injuries eight days later.

Theirs was an effort worthy of the Anzac Legend. Two comrades in khaki, yet neither of them armed combatants, both ministers and both believers in and followers of Jesus Christ, together gave their lives in an attempt to save a third individual whom they presumably did not even know. It was a noble act carried out with no concern for personal gain or safety in the midst of human madness. Theirs was the ultimate act of human self-sacrifice and redemption for a solitary fellow human being that emulated the example of Jesus' ultimate act of divine self-sacrifice and redemption for the entire human race. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”¹⁵

Christians who are keen to preserve the uniqueness of the death of Christ sometimes categorize the deaths of Australian soldiers on the battlefield as “non-redemptive.” But such deaths easily become redemptive when they point to the one whose example has inspired their own death. Gillison's and Pittendrigh's deaths pointed to the redeemer. Moreover, in giving their lives for others, Gillison and Pittendrigh demonstrated one of the strongest positive traits of the Australian character: self-sacrifice for the good of the community.

The Lord's Singing Sister: Florence Trotter Syer (1915-2002)

Florence Trotter Syer was an Australian Christian who exemplified mateship, one of the most prominently acclaimed traits of the Australian character that rests on and is accentuated by Christian values. Yes, women can be mates, too, even if not all men are prepared to accept this fact. How do I know that women can be mates? Because John Williamson told me so in his 1981 hit "True Blue." Florence Trotter's experiences in World War II presaged and confirm John Williamson's declaration.

Flo Trotter, as she was known during her army days, was a sister in the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) during World War II, a Prisoner of War (POW) of the Japanese for more than three years, and one of the nurses whose story was told in the 1997 Australian-made movie "Paradise Road." I was privileged to interview Flo Trotter in her suburban Brisbane home on 16 August 1998.¹⁶ Born in Sydney on 4 October 1915, Florence Trotter grew up in a devout Presbyterian family in Eastwood, NSW. She trained for the nursing profession at Brisbane General Hospital, enlisted in the AANS in 1940, and was ordered to active service in January 1941. Her motive for volunteering for the military was simple: She was a patriotic Christian who saw it as her duty to help defend the British Empire. She was assigned to the 2/10 Army General Hospital attached to the newly formed 8th Division destined for Singapore in 1941-1942. By 8 December 1941, Flo and her unit were, as Betty Jeffrey, another nurse in Trotter's unit, wrote in *White Coolies*, her classic book based on her war diaries, "right in the thick of it."¹⁷ Against their strenuous protests, the Australian Army nursing sisters in Malaya were evacuated in two groups just days before the fall of Singapore. One ship, the "Empire Star," left Singapore on 11 February 1942 with the first group of sisters and, after being subjected to repeated air attacks by Japanese bombers, reached Batavia and finally Australia. The second group of sixty-five sisters, including Trotter and her unit, left Singapore at 6:00 p. m. on 12 February on board the "Vyner Brooke." Their ship was bombed and sunk by the Japanese two days later. Of the fifty-three sisters who survived the air attacks and swam ashore on Bangka Island, the Japanese murdered twenty-one and the remainder were taken prisoner.

Flo Trotter jumped overboard into the sea where she was machine gunned by Japanese aircraft. Miraculously, she was not hit, and the currents guided her and several others into a cove where they were helped ashore by natives. All of the surviving nurses were still in uniform, including their Red Cross armbands, signifying that they were medical personnel and thus non-combatants. When the Japanese came, they ignored their Red Cross markings, and pre-

pared to shoot them all. For some reason unknown to this day, they then decided not to kill them but to lock them in an abandoned customs house with several other captured nurses. Thus began Trotter's more than three years of captivity at the hands of the Japanese.¹⁸

Of the sixty-five nurses who left Singapore on 12 February, twelve were lost at sea, twenty-one were killed at Radji Beach on Bangka Island by Japanese soldiers, eight died while in Japanese POW camps, and Flo Trotter and twenty-three others survived and returned to Australia after the war. Considering the appalling conditions in which they lived for three and a half years, it is a wonder that anybody survived. Shuffled from place to place on Sumatra, the nurses existed on decreasing amounts of food amid degrading physical and psychological conditions. Red Cross parcels sent from Australia by relatives who were convinced that the nurses were still alive were either lost or stolen by the guards, with the connivance of Colonel Yamasaki, the main camp commander. He also withheld medicine from the prisoners, especially quinine for the malaria that plagued them all. The guards despised their prisoners. Most historians explain this by referring to the ancient Japanese culture of Bushido, the militaristic samurai warrior code that stressed unquestioning obedience to the Emperor and fearlessness in battle. It honored only those who fought to the death or committed suicide rather than surrender. In any case, one of the more refined methods of torture the guards enjoyed most was simply withholding food.

The most brutal torture occurred in mid-1942 when the Japanese tried to force the sisters to become "comfort women," that is, sex slaves of the Japanese officers. By using their wits and, in the end, by the selfless sacrifice of four of the older sisters, most escaped this unsavory option. At first, the sisters put off their tormentors by making themselves as unattractive as possible. They rubbed dirt on their faces, wore men's boots, kept their hair closely cropped, with a few of them even sprinkling their hair with their own urine. The final showdown came when the Japanese demanded that they hand over four nurses to be comfort women in their club or face the loss of their already small rice ration. Four younger nurses were selected, but four older women agreed to replace them in order to spare the rest of the group from being starved to death. The other nurses swore on a Bible that the names of "the four volunteers" would never be revealed in order to spare pain to them and to their relatives, and no one ever broke that promise.¹⁹

Many of the nurses wrote letters home to their loved ones, lying to them that they were all right. After they were freed at the end of the war, they found most of these letters unposted and stored in a

box in the guardroom. The latrines of the Bangka Island POW camp were especially dangerous. The narrow deep pits often overflowed and using them was hazardous. If someone fell into the pit, her screams alerted the next hut. Although the unfortunate person was hauled out and buckets of water thrown over her by the nurses, each woman died from swallowing excrement.

When the Australian Army finally found the surviving nurses following the Japanese surrender, they resembled scarecrows in their tattered rags and homemade straw hats. Their faces were gaunt, yellowed skin stretched over bones, their hollow eye sockets and sunken cheeks bearing witness to starvation and malnutrition. Black holes marked the gaps where teeth either had been knocked out or had fallen out through lack of vitamins. Some of the women lost great globs of hair and bald patches showed through lank locks. Australian authorities provided the army rescue team with photographs but the men could not recognize these walking skeletons as the carefree, jaunty girls in smart uniforms who had landed in Singapore shortly before the outbreak of the war.

In the midst of all of this horror, Flo Trotter, along with the other sisters, used her nursing skills to alleviate the suffering of the other prisoners as best she could in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. A shortage of medical supplies made this a matter of creative medicine. A number of camp survivors indicated after the war that they owed their lives to Flo and the other nurses. Flo also became the focal point of the making and repair of clothing in the camp because she had a pair of scissors. During the hurried exit from Singapore, she used her wits to stuff the scissors into her handbag as the authorities hurried the nurses out the door and into the waiting transportation to the dockyard. The scissors became precious instruments of survival in the camps.²⁰

How did Flo Trotter stay alive in these wretched circumstances? She indicated to me that in her case it was music, enduring friendships and her personal faith in Christ. The music was especially important, and organized by Margaret Dryburgh, an interned Presbyterian missionary to Malaya from England, and Norah Chambers, another English Christian woman imprisoned by the Japanese. Dryburgh was an accomplished pianist and choir director, and Chambers was a professional violinist with an enormous knowledge of music.

Dryburgh especially was a driving force in the prison camp, not only through her display of spiritual strength but also by constantly organizing activities, writing poems, plays and songs and, together with Chambers, supplying music for the camp choir and voice orchestra.²¹ Flo Trotter was a dedicated member of the sixty-voice

camp choir, and testified that singing hymns was crucial to building and maintaining her morale. Most important for Flo and the other prisoners, Dryburgh wrote both the words and music for a beautiful song, "the Captive's Hymn," that became the anthem for Japanese-held POWs on Sumatra. It was first heard in the camp in July 1942, when a trio sang it during a Sunday church service. It quickly spread through the camp in which Trotter was an inmate and to other parts of the island, and was sung at all church services, concerts and on all special occasions for the remainder of the nurses' captivity. These are the words:

Father, in captivity
 We would lift our prayer to Thee,
 Keep us ever in Thy love,
 Grant that daily we may prove
 Those who place their trust in thee,
 More than conquerors may be.

Give us patience to endure,
 Keep our hearts serene and pure,
 Grant us courage, charity,
 Greater faith, humility,
 Readiness to own Thy will,
 Be we free or captive still.

For our country we would pray,
 In this hour be Thou her stay,
 Pride and selfishness forgive,
 Teach her by Thy law to live,
 By Thy grace may all men see
 That true greatness comes from Thee.

For our loved ones we would pray,
 Be their guardian night and day,
 From all dangers keep them free,
 Banish all anxiety,
 May they trust us to Thy care,
 Know that Thou our pains doth share.

May the day of freedom dawn,
 Peace and justice be reborn.
 Grant that nations loving Thee
 O'er the world may brothers be,
 Cleansed by suffering, know rebirth,
 See Thy kingdom come on earth.²²

Sadly, Margaret Dryburgh did not survive the camps.

Flo Trotter's closest friends in the camps were other Christian nurses, especially the devout Sylvia Muir, Pearl Mittelheuser, Joyce Tweddell, and Ada "Mickey" Syer, who was to become Flo's sister-in-law after the war when Flo married Mickey's brother Frank. In fact, almost all of the imprisoned nurses were Christian believers. As far as her own Christian experience was concerned, Flo Trotter declared: "My faith in Christ was a major part of my survival."²³ In conjunction with this statement, she noted that Margaret Dryburgh and the other missionary women in the camps led a full-fledged church service every Sunday throughout their ordeal and that almost everybody in the camps attended.

The aftermath of Flo Trotter's story is almost too sad for words. After spending a half a day with her, I felt as if I could ask her about her attitude toward the Japanese. "I can forgive them, but I cannot forget," she asserted. She indicated that she certainly did not hate the Japanese people following the war. However, she explained that although the war ended on 15 August, the camp commander did not inform the prisoners of this until two weeks later. Therefore, even though she as a Christian woman could forgive the Japanese for what they had done to her, she could never forget this supreme cruelty perpetrated at war's end. When Colonel Yamasaki, the camp commander, finally assembled the prisoners to tell them that the war had ended, he stood before them and said: "The war is over, sisters." He did not say who won, although it was easily inferred. Then, as if past events had never happened, he announced: "Now we can all be friends."²⁴ What had happened to the code of Bushido?

And with that Flo Trotter's war came to an end. After a happy and productive post-war nursing career during which time two daughters were born, she retired in 1976. There followed a long twilight during which time she and her former POW mates kept in close touch. Florence Trotter Syer finally died in August 2002.

Flo Trotter attributed her survival in the camps to the music, her Christian faith and her friends. All three were ensconced in Christian values: love for music, love for Jesus, and love for and by her mates.²⁵ The fact that almost all of her mates were, like herself, Christian believers heightened the goodwill and bonding implied by the Australian ideal of mateship. This ideal is but another way of saying "neighbour love," a concept that is the basis for all true communities. This is the kind of love that Jesus indicated is the second of the two greatest commandments. "Love your neighbor as yourself, mate!" There is no greater commandment than this, he said.²⁶ And mateship is one of the highest ideals undergirding the Australian character.

Conclusion

In light of my three stories of four Australians, what can be said about the contributions of Christianity to the shaping of the Australian character? Spence represents the Christian principle of justice, that is, of a fair go. Gillison and Pittendrigh exemplify the Christian philosophy of self-sacrifice for the good of the community. Flo Trotter and her Christian friends in the POW camps abundantly display Jesus' teaching of mateship based on selflessness and neighbour love. It seems to me that these three stories illustrate that many of the best features of the Australian character rest on the teachings of Jesus.

This relationship between the teachings of Jesus and the Australian character in the past has been natural and symbiotic. As Christianity flourished in Australia, it molded the national character to the benefit of both faith and nation. Since Christian values include most of the other desirable features that make for a positive national character, and which people must possess to be fully human, Christianity has contributed heavily to making Australia a great nation and a desirable place to live.²⁷

Contrast the foregoing Christian values based on Jesus' teachings with nihilistic hedonism and its values, now competing with Jesus to shape the Australian character. Hedonism now reigns supreme in many quarters. As a recent evaluator of the 'Big Brother' TV phenomenon concluded: "The thing that really terrifies us about 'Big Brother' is that the exhibitionism, the self-obsession and the eroticism as a substitute religion run so deep in our culture."²⁸ Compare Spence, Gillison, Pittendrigh and Trotter with the inmates of the Big Brother House and draw your own conclusions.

Notes

1. *The Australian*, 5 May 2006, 17.
2. Jenny Brockie, "Raw Exposure and an Epiphany in Paradise," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, weekend edition, March 11-12, 2006, 40.
3. Robert D. Linder, "The Methodist Love Affair with the Australian Labor Party, 1891-1929," *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review*, nos. 23-24 (June & December 1997-1998), 35-61; and Stuart Macintyre, "The First Caucus," in John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre, eds., *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2001), 17-29. The first Federal Labor Party Caucus, for example, included eighteen Protestants, three Roman Catholics, and one Unitarian, the overwhelming majority of whom were regular churchgoers. Macintyre, "The First Caucus," 24.

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4. Most of the material for this discussion of Spence comes from Robert D. Linder, "Australian Evangelicals in Politics in the Victorian Age: The Cases of J. D. Lang, W. G. Spence, and J. S. T. McGowen," *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review*, no. 13 (June 1992), 34-60.
5. Coral Lansbury and Bede Nairn, "William Guthrie Spence," in Geoffrey Serle and Russel Ward, eds., *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, R-Z, vol. 6: 1851-1890 (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 1976), 168-170.
6. Coral Lansbury, "William Guthrie Spence," *Labour History*, 13 (1967), 3-10; and Coral Lansbury to Robert D. Linder, 14 August 1990. Letter in possession of the author.
7. Interview with Gwyn Knowles, granddaughter of W. G. Spence, by Robert D. Linder, Lane Cove, NSW, 22 October 1990.
8. The population of Creswick peaked at around 30,000 people in 1855. John A. Graham, *Early Creswick* (Melbourne: Arbuckle, Waddell PTY, 1942), 59.
9. Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 1971), 112.
10. *The Australian Worker*, 4 June 1892, 1.
11. W. G. Spence, *The Ethics of Unionism* (Creswick, VIC: Martin and Grose, 1892), 8.
12. Luke 4:18-19. Cf. Isaiah 61:1-4.
13. Their story is found in Robert D. Linder, *The Long Tragedy: Australian Evangelical Christians and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 2000), 128-130.
14. *The Methodist*, 26 June 1915, 8; and 14 August 1915, 10.
15. John 15:13. NIV
16. Interview with Florence Trotter Syer, by Robert D. Linder, Kenmore, QLD, 16 August 1998.
17. Betty Jeffrey, *White Coolies* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1954), 1.
18. This account and what follows is based on an Interview with Florence Trotter Syer; Graeme Leech, "Morale-Lifting Voice in POW Camp Choir," Obituary of Florence Trotter Syer, *The Australian*, 19 August 2002, 8; Susanna De Vries, *Heroic Australian Women in War* (London: HarperCollins, 2004), 200-253; and Pat Gunther Darling, *Portrait of a Nurse* (Mona Vale, NSW: Don Wall, 2001).
19. There is another version of this incident that claims none of the sisters became involved as comfort women. See Barbara Angell, *A Woman's War: The Exceptional Life of Wilma Oram Young* (Frenchs Forest, NSW: New Holland Publishers, 2003), 88-92. Fortunately for all concerned, the club lasted for only two weeks, during which

time only a few of the other women in the camp cooperated with the Japanese.

20. Interview with Florence Trotter Syer; and De Vries, *Heroic Australian Women in War*, 208-209.
21. The voice orchestra was, as the term implies, an orchestra of voices that performed classical music written for four parts to be hummed or “ah-ed” which gave the effect of an orchestra. Jeffrey, *White Coolies*, 86-87; and De Vries, *Heroic Australian Women in War*, 231-232.
22. Florence Trotter Syer provided a copy of these words for the author of this lecture. The hymn was based on chapter 8 of Romans in the New Testament.
23. Interview with Florence Trotter Syer.
24. *Ibid.*; and De Vries, *Heroic Australian Women in War*, 236-237.
25. Did Flo Trotter think of her close nursing friends in the POW camps as “mates”? She certainly did after the war and in her 1998 interview with me.
26. Mark 12:28-31. NIV
27. The other teachings of Jesus that could be included here are order, freedom, integrity, temperance, love for enemies and charity toward strangers.
28. Peter Craven, “The Truth Is Out There,” *The Weekend Australian*, 17-18 June 2006, “Inquirer,” 27.

Response to Robert Linder: 'The Australian Character'

Margaret Reeson

In the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial, there are fifteen fine stained glass windows each identifying a quality of Australian character. The fifteen qualities are such things as independence, endurance, control, audacity, chivalry, devotion and loyalty, but there is little to suggest that Christian faith has had any influence. The only slight reference is in the window marked 'Ancestry'. In the background are symbols of some of our traditions, with the image of a church spire along with images of a book and cricket stumps and a ball!

However, it is true that, as Robert Linder has suggested, 'Christianity remains the foundation of the country's cultural heritage' and the values that mould our character are based on a Christian understanding of the world. I would argue that the presence and influence of Christian individuals and institutions is so tightly woven into the mesh of Australian society that it can be difficult to separate. Far from being a remote memory, Christian belief and practice is a most significant part of who we are as Australians and any attempt to dismiss the Christian contribution – to unpick the Christian threads from the social fabric – would leave what remained in tatters.

From many possibilities, Robert Linder has focused on some of the traits often associated with the Australian character. These are generosity to those in need, a desire that everyone should have a fair go, a willingness to act in self-sacrifice for the good of others, and in valuing what we know as 'mateship'.

Of course these aspects of the Australian character are not only true of Christian Australians. However they are certainly true of Christians, who have formed their character in the light of their understanding of the Christian gospel. Sadly, we do not always live what we believe, but at our best we are not simply responding to a good moral code. We are who we are, and act as we do, because we are followers of Jesus Christ, and have committed ourselves to respond to his call on our lives. It is interesting how many people in

leadership roles in this country today who, although some may no longer identify themselves as Christian believers, even so, attribute their moral and ethical attitudes to early training in a Christian church.

Robert Linder's presentation suggests many strands that it would be good to explore further. His reference to the young woman traveller in Cambodia, who discovered the intense delight of offering generosity to children in need, links us to many generations of Australians who have seen needs and responded with generous compassion. We are very good at this in times of disaster and crisis but not only then.

In the early years of the colony, particularly during the era of Governor Macquarie, there was a small community of Christian lay people, former missionaries in Tahiti, who lived among the convicts and soldiers of the penal colony at Parramatta. Along with Anglican and Methodist clergy, these people initiated most of the earliest attempts at offering compassion and care to their fragile community. Meeting in each other's homes, they developed the first schools and Sunday Schools, the first Benevolent Society, the first library service. The Hassall family was particularly active. Rowland Hassall provided books and equipment for several little schools in the district, his son Thomas established a Sunday School with the purpose of providing a basic general and religious education to disadvantaged children. In 1817, Thomas Hassall's seventeen year old sister Mary wrote of the Parramatta school and her motivation to teach in it, of 'the dear children that are much neglected by their parents... we hope to go forward with all our might, leaning and depending on the Giver of all gifts, who put it in our hearts to begin them...'

Those early colonial Christians, trying to make a difference in their needy society, are the forebears of many who have followed. If we explore the origins of many of the key institutions in our Australian society today that offer generous compassion, we find that a great many of them grew from the vision of Christian people. There are the vast networks of aged care and children's services sponsored by the Christian Churches, services for homeless people, Life Line, Frontier Services to the outback, Flying Doctor Service, and many organizations caring for the most marginalized and needy in our nation and world. Add to these the countless Christian people who give many hours of their time as volunteers to support many of these enterprises. Most of these acts of compassion have become part of the fabric of our society because someone believed and acted upon the words of Christ who said 'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

It would be interesting to calculate the impact on our society if one day all the Christian volunteers withdrew their services and all the networks of care in the community that have been initiated because of Christian compassion were suddenly to disappear.

The next character trait that Robert Linder has offered is our desire for a fair go, both for ourselves and others. His example of the influence of the Bible and his Christian faith on W.G. Spence and his career in union organization leads to the memory of some of the earliest union men linked with our history. Six farm labourers from the village of Tolpuddle in Dorset, England, were arrested in 1834. Their crime was that they had formed a Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers, in order to protest against unfair wages in a time of rural unrest and change. They were sentenced to transportation to Australia. However the public outcry resulted in their sentences being remitted and they left Australia again. Some years ago, I happened to arrive, by chance, in the village of Tolpuddle and found it crowded with visitors for the annual Trades Union gathering to honour the six men known as the Tolpuddle Martyrs. We joined others in a tiny Methodist chapel and heard a senior British parliamentary preach about the Christian background of the six, how their sense of injustice was formed and they found the strength to act through their Christian community. From the same difficult rural context and period of the 1830s, other British farm labourers, often Christians, migrated to Australia seeking a fair go in a new land.

Another group of Christians urging the fair go has been women of the Womens Christian Temperance Union with their strong lobbying at the end of the 19th century for women's suffrage as well as inclusion in decision-making processes in their churches. Their equally strong action to try to put limits on the availability of alcohol was an appeal for a fair go for women and their families who were subjected to poverty and family violence as a result of the influence of alcohol.

There have been many occasions when Christian leaders have felt the need to speak out against injustices. Often such leaders speak together, to strengthen their voice in the public arena. Such public statements often cause them to be criticized and told to keep to their business of encouraging personal piety and to keep out of Politics.

There was, for example, a time in 1978 when leaders of the Anglican, Presbyterian and Uniting Churches, with Action for World Development, which included the Roman Catholic Church with the Australian Council of Churches, were all speaking out in the debate on Aboriginal land rights, self-determination and the mining indus-

try in North Queensland. The recently formed Uniting Church was singled out for attack by the Queensland Premier's Department as being 'manipulated into supporting left-wing causes...the Communist Party, atheists and humanists'. The UCA Moderator of Queensland, Rev Rollie Busch responded. He wrote: 'We who are nourished in the brilliant insights of the Bible, who are the inheritors of Calvin, Knox, Cromwell and Wesley, need no political parties, socialist or otherwise, to form our minds on the proper liberties of Christian subjects'. In 1983, when under attack again, Busch said 'Mainline churches around the world, while respectful of the theological diversity within their membership, increasingly see issues of peace, social justice and support of marginalized peoples as transcending party differences, and as an integral part of any vital expression of the Christian gospel.'

Then there is the character trait of self-sacrifice. The story of the chaplain and the corporal, Christian ministers who made the ultimate sacrifice to rescue a stranger in desperate need, is inspiring. Others have acted selflessly in dangerous and frightening situations, and we honour them. There are still others whose courage and self-sacrifice has taken other forms and they are also part of our Christian heritage. A contemporary story from World War 1 is representative. Early in 1917, when the war was going badly and the supply of Australian recruits for the armed forces was dwindling, national church leaders from the Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist Churches sent out a joint appeal for recruits. One man who responded was my grandfather, JRC Higman. He was a farmer in the Riverina, a devout Methodist layman and lay preacher and active in many community organizations. By 1917 he was 45 years old with a large family of young children, and had already been rejected for military service on health grounds. Nonetheless he believed that he could no longer bear to urge other people's sons to make the sacrifice of going to war if he were not prepared to go himself. Some of his neighbours thought he was mad. He wrote to his local newspaper: 'I am certain that every man is wanted. Every indication shows that the war, though very likely not ended, will be won or lost during this year... Liberty, justice and our beloved Australia are in extreme jeopardy. No matter how important our work may seem to us, weighed in the scales with these things it is nothing...' Like many other men from the Christian churches of the day, he weighed up the hazards of war and the call of duty. There was none of the blind enthusiasm of some of the young men who had enlisted earlier. He served with the 12th Light Horse in Palestine until the end of the war and survived, but I believe that ordinary men like him, whose names are engraved on war memorials around the

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country, are fine examples of those whose sense of Christian duty took them far from home at great personal cost.

Finally that famous Australian quality, 'Mateship' The deeply moving story of Florence Trotter Syer and her friends touches us. There is a parallel, though less well known story of another group of mates, also women and nurses. Just weeks before Flo Trotter and the other nurses were captured by the Japanese, in January 1942 the Japanese invaded Rabaul in what is now Papua New Guinea. A group of eighteen Australian women, all nurses, some military, some civilian and some missionaries, were captured. Many of the group were Christians. For the next three and a half years, the rest of the world did not know where they were. In the early months they found themselves under guard with a community of Catholic nuns. In an era of bigotry between Catholics and Protestants, this was a very illuminating time for all of them and they discovered in each other dear friends and fellow-believers. Then the nurses were transported to Japan. Through the years of deprivation, isolation, fear and hunger, like those other women on Java, they had only each other to rely on and deep, lifelong friendships were formed. Like the others, they too shared what little resources they had – a New Testament, hand written memories of hymns – and kept the discipline of Christian worship as a small community until they were discovered and rescued.

Though they probably did not use the word 'mate', the value placed on close comradeship and mutual support was also true for early groups of settlers. Often families with shared Christian beliefs migrated as a group, relying on each other through the hazards of settling in a strange land. Common beliefs as well as deep religious divisions were carried into new regions as likeminded people chose to pioneer new districts together.

If there were more time, we could also explore other aspects of the Australian character that have grown out of our Christian heritage.

- § We prefer an egalitarian attitude, recognizing the worth of all.
- § We prefer some humility in our leaders – before the idea of 'tall poppies' came the One who spoke of the Master who was also the servant of all.
- § We value people of integrity.

People who were and are committed Christians have contributed their Christian values into every area of the civic sphere, through industry, politics, Shire Councils, health services, education, philanthropy and business affairs.

The Australian character has indeed been shaped by our Christian foundations.

Australia's Jesus and Australian Values

Stuart Piggin

On Sunday, 25 March 1906, a world record was set in Australia. Three people every second passed through the turnstiles of a certain building to have a look at a certain object. Everybody wanted to see it. 302,183 saw it in Sydney when the population was just over half a million. In Melbourne between 150,000 and 200,000 had already seen it. They were not certain how many. They are never certain of anything in Melbourne. And before that 18,168 had seen it in Adelaide. Its popularity had caused 'a public frenzy', amounting to near hysteria. Nothing like the excitement had been witnessed in Australia since the early days of the gold rushes. What was it that had caused such a public clamour?

Let me give you a clue or two. The building, where the world record for an attendance rate of 3 per second was set, was the still-unfinished Sydney Art Gallery, and the object of all the attention was a painting. Which painting? Clue no.2: it reversed the pandemonium at the turnstiles into hushed silence, men removed their hats, and a poorly dressed working woman, unheeding of the crowd, knelt before it, and encircling her two small boys with her arms, drew them to herself, and told the story of the painting in an enthralling, if 'aitchless and g-less narrative'. Yes, it was a painting of a religious subject. Have you worked it out yet? It moved many to poetry, including this effort from the Rector of St Luke's Anglican Church in Burwood in Sydney – and this will be my final clue:

Light of the World, come in – come in!
Chase from our souls the night of sin,
No longer wrapt in slumber deep
Shall we Thy footsteps waiting keep.
Enter our hearts, O welcome Guest,
And ever dwell within our breast!
Light of the World we would be Thine,
Within our hearts for every shine!¹

That's right. The painting was 'The Light of the World', by the pre-Raphaelite artist, William Holman Hunt. It is based on Revelation 3.20, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come to him and will sup with him, and he with me'. Hunt was haunted by the figure of Jesus standing at the door and he painted it, he believed, by divine command. ² It depicts King Jesus, crucified and crowned. He is holding a lantern, and his face is encircled by a halo of divine light, that is, he both shows the way and he is the way. He is knocking on the door of the human heart.

Why in Australia was there such fervent interest in a painting on this subject? Could it be that when Jesus described himself as the light of the world, he meant to include Australia? Has he been the way and shown the way to Australians as well as to everybody else? Have Australians opened their hearts to Jesus? And has Jesus, the bread of life, satisfied the heart hunger of Australians?

This paper will explore how a number of Australians, including those who were not traditional church-goers, have looked to Jesus to satisfy their hunger for:

- § A fair go with justice in an inequitable world (Joseph Furphy)
- § Moral courage in a tough world (R M Williams)
- § Forgiveness and compassion in a harsh world (Manning Clark)
- § Durable Values in an unstable world (Edwin Judge)
- § Strength and hope in a suffering world (our Indigenous people)

1. A fair go with justice in an inequitable world (Joseph Furphy)

Joseph Furphy was the author of *Such is Life*, which just might be Australia's greatest classic. It is not our most-read classic. But it is ideal for our purpose because it says a lot about Jesus and strong values, and unfailingly assesses the latter by the former. Jesus is the measure of all things. He was a working man and a carpenter, and his is the square by which we test for true alignment. Jesus is the moral compass. ³ One of the reasons why no-one reads Furphy is that you have to keep your dictionary open at all times. Jesus, Furphy tells us, is the 'nonpareil'.⁴ Your open dictionary will tell you that this means he is without rival, he is unique. Furphy esteemed the Bible as 'the noblest compilation on earth' and he tried very hard to apply its teachings to society and economics, an enterprise most of his clerical contemporaries failed to do.

Furphy was born in 1843 near Melbourne. He was taught to read through the use of the Bible and Shakespeare, and he learnt by rote great slabs of both. Forty years later, when school teacher, Kate Baker, visited the home of his parents, she observed of the parents' library that 'works of theology predominated – and one understood the nature of the inhabitants at once'.⁵ Religion and education were the staple diet. The Furphys saw to it that their children had a school to go to and religious services to attend.

In 1873 Joseph became a carter or bullock-driver in the Riverina. In the same year his brother John, a mechanical genius, moved to Shepparton, a newly surveyed town in northern Victoria, and set up his own engineering business. His most celebrated piece of machinery was the furphy water cart. It carries an exhortation to stick to water and avoid strong drink, and also the famous proverb: 'good, better, best, never let it rest, till your good is better, and your better, best.' The first religious service in Shepparton was held in John Furphy's home by the United Free Methodists. For 35 years John served that church in every capacity and was considered an effective preacher. Joseph referred to him as 'my Right Rev. elder brother'.⁶

In 1884 Joseph started to work in his brother's business, and settled down to write *Such is Life*. He was also writing at the same time for the *Bulletin* magazine, but he had little in common with the Bohemians who were attracted to it. For their part, they found him naïve, and one of them wrote of him:

Tom Collins

Who never drinks, and never bets

And loves his wife and pays his debts,

And feels content with what he gets.

Nevertheless, it was the *Bulletin*, with its slogan of 'Australia for the Australians', which gave him a new hope, a vision of an egalitarian Australia with a socialistic government. But his was no secular vision. He insisted that 'State Socialism must be built on a foundation of religion rightly so-called. There is no other foundation possible.'⁷ Nor was his vision utopian. The charter of the Kingdom of God, the Sermon on the Mount, he preached, is 'no fanciful conception of an intangible order of things, but a practical, workable code of daily life.'⁸

Like all true prophets, Furphy never courted popularity and he never received any. For their part churchgoers were upset with him for mixing politics and religion, while the secularists, who considered him far too religious, dismissed him, as they dismissed all the religious, as a 'sanctimonious . . . canting, blanky hypocrite'. But

like all true prophets, unafraid he urged his critics to 'bring it on', or to use his words: 'Pour on; I will endure. But I will not swim with the stream – with any stream. Partly because Pessimism and Scepticism are the correct capers just now, I am an Optimist and a Christian'.⁹

His values were unrelentingly Christian. He loved the working man, but he did not love his drinking habits. He was not work-shy, but he was shy about making too much money. He hated it when the churches spoke of the blessings of poverty,¹⁰ but he also condemned the churches for tolerating too much materialism among its members, and said that he only wanted to belong to a church which would excommunicate him if he insisted on keeping two coats when a brother had none.¹¹

In a famous scene in *Such is Life* Tom Collins spots a swagman on the horizon, and sees in him a type of Christ:

Heaven help him! That nameless flotsam of humanity .
. . . Few and feeble are his friends on earth; and the One
who like him, was wearied with his journey, and, like
him, had not where to lay his head, is gone, according
to His own parable, into a far country. The swagman we
have always with us – [and it is] the grave truth, that
the Light of the world, the God-in-Man, the only God we
can ever know, is by His own authority represented for
all time by the poorest of the poor.¹²

For all his florid vocabulary, convoluted syntax, and endless side-tracks, Furphy's message was very simple. Jesus is the standard-setter. His standard was to be applied to everyday life and to the building of a nation where the poor and the needy are cared for. Furphy believed that 'every impartial and intelligent man' ranks Jesus 'as the Nonpareil', but 'the purpose of His life' was to help us learn how to live in harmony with one another, sharing the fruits of the earth.¹³

2. Moral courage in a tough world (R M Williams, 1908-2003)

When he died in 2003, Reginald Murray Williams (1908-November 2003), was given a state funeral in Queensland. Premier Peter Beattie, who also made capital out of Joh Bjelke Petersen's Funeral, said of the nation's greatest leather worker: "When you pull on a pair of RM Williams boots everyone knows you walk taller. It's not just the size of the heel, it's the spirit of the man who made them in the first place." The spirit of the man was a recognisably Australian spirit. It could be argued that they don't come more Australian than R M Williams. What it means to be an Australian obsessed his imagination. And Jesus was part of the obsession.

RM's autobiography reveals a man deeply concerned over religious issues. Its title, *Beneath Whose Hand*, is taken from Kipling's *Recessional*. He knew his Bible: his mother had packed it in his swag, and he read it in filial obedience to her. He knew the words of Jesus, but he refused 'to accept the dictatorship of a church in such important matters as my private life'.¹⁴ His private life did not always run smoothly. Williams suffered not only physically in the material deprivation of the Great Depression, but in the mental pain of spiritual depression.

Interestingly, he contrasted his own struggles for peace of mind with the apparent serenity of the Aboriginal people whom he had met in the outback. He considered them not as pitiable in religious matters because they were not as tentative. They knew and accepted the fact, observed Williams, that 'we cannot outwit the laws that govern the human spirit'.¹⁵

As one of the few white men who could not only survive, but actually thrive, in the outback, Williams was invited to help a number of missionaries in their work amongst the most isolated of Aboriginal tribes. Rod Schenk asked him to burn lime and build a large concrete tank for the Mount Margaret Mission at Laverton in WA. Sixty years later he received a cassette message from Schenk's widow, Mysie, thanking him for constructing the water tank which was still in service, and ending with the exhortation: 'Dear Reg, we did miss your fellowship when you left and we long to see you back in that fellowship with the Lord Jesus . . . Trust Him and learn to lean on Him. He is the water of life and the water of life means more to our native people than anything else.'¹⁶ Williams wept. He saw Jesus in Mysie, the one who stretched wide his arms and said 'How often would I have gathered you in but you would not hear'.¹⁷

Then Williams joined a team headed up by missionary Bill Wade to make a census count of the Aboriginal population in the area of about a million square miles between Laverton to the west and Oodnadatta in SA to the east. Williams admitted frankly to hating this uncompromising zealot, but there were few whom he respected more, and none who influenced him more. Wade, an ex-sailor, had been thoroughly converted from a thoroughly reprobate life. He testified constantly to all people about being 'saved by Grace'. Williams was embarrassed and he was sceptical, but he had to concede that Wade could be totally trusted with women – in this RM thought him unique – and he did leave a trail of men behind him seriously 'wondering if they might perhaps need religion'.¹⁸

The thing that most impressed RM about Wade was his courage. RM admired strength, and Wade, 'strengthened by belief',¹⁹ was indomitable. Because he was totally convinced that he was called by

a sovereign God to this ministry, Wade would take his camel train beyond the point of no return, trusting or gambling that water would be found, and he threw his arms around some warring Aboriginal people who threatened to spear his party, protesting that he was their friend, an act which worked and which left Williams 'almost convinced'.²⁰ Neither would RM ever doubt Wade's achievement: this vast area was made over to the custody of the Aboriginal people, and no white can enter it without a permit. Wade went on to establish a mission in the Warburton Ranges and gave his life to the work. 'He was impossible,' concluded RM, 'but truly great'.²¹ Fifty years later, RM saw a television programme which featured an Aboriginal evangelist who was having a 'marked impact on his people', and who was raised in Wade's mission. There could be no doubting the efficacy of Wade's work, RM reflected, when he saw 'this black John the Baptist, born in wilderness and carrying the banner that Bill must have put in his hands.'²²

Then, in 1935, a surgeon, Charles Duguid, who was the first lay Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, and President of the Aborigines Protection League, invited RM to accompany him on a trip into the Musgrave Ranges in north-west SA. They stayed at a station called 'Ernabella' while they explored the area, and Duguid planned the establishment of a mission where the Aboriginal people would be left free to follow their own way of life. He asked RM to convene a committee to establish the mission, and RM took considerable satisfaction in Ernabella's success as 'a bastion against white intrusion'.²³

Furphy, you will recall was a socialist, and he was confident that Jesus approved. Williams, by contrast, was a capitalist, and he doubted if Jesus approved. After making lots of money, he wrote: "When I had done this, my conscience bothered me. 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' 'How hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God.'"²⁴ Jesus discomfited Williams. But Williams would not or could not give up on Him: 'Although I can never claim to have standing with either rich or poor, still I believe that the Man who flogged the money-changers from the temple still calls all men to the heights of moral courage and spiritual peace. I should like to feel that there lies my allegiance.'²⁵ He found in another saying of Jesus, clear guidance for action in this area: 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's'. On this, RM reflects: 'A humble recipe for life, perhaps, but one that offers something better than a scramble for wealth. I cannot claim to render in either category willingly, nor do I feel satisfied that I have been a good steward.'²⁶ Jesus must have loved this humble, honest rich young ruler.²⁷

There was a sense in which Jesus was for Williams what expatriate Australian poet, Peter Porter, called the 'Master Haunter'. 'Jesus', says Williams, 'has cast a long shadow on history, and I suspect that He is badly represented.' Ouch. At the end of his autobiography, Williams asks:

. . . if the Man Jesus were to step inside my door or come knocking, would I know Him? A man of the road, with straw, perhaps, from some lonely haystack still clinging to His uncut hair, garments creased and road-stained. Would I welcome Him? I might. What would He say to me, looking through my façade of respectability into my soul? If it were what He said to the rich young man: 'Sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven; and come, follow Me,' I would not recognize Him or abide by His words. Remember that He was a man of the road, poor and hunted by the police. I am torn by the tragedy of it all. How do I follow Him? How would I know God if I saw Him? I shall look for Him among the uncouth, the sorrowful, the have-nots. Maybe He will be there. And will He know me?²⁸

3. *Forgiveness and Compassion in a harsh world (Manning Clark, 1915-1991)*

John Henry Newman once observed that England's greatest church historian was not a Christian, but a Deist, Edward Gibbon, author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Similarly, Australia's greatest church historian, was Manning Clark, author of *A History of Australia*. I don't think we can put a label on his religious position. He did not know himself. Perhaps 'seeker' would be best. In his written works, as with those of Furphy and Williams, one figure is always present, whether as inspirer, hunter, guide or friend: Jesus.

At Melbourne University, he studied history, but the lectures of the best-known historian of his day, a pillar of the Establishment, failed to move young Manning. He doubted if this great man had 'any real interest in the Galilean fisherman' and wondered if that was why he 'always felt like a stranger in his classes'.²⁹ He consorted for a time with the Communists, but again he was 'ill at ease with their rejection of Christ'.³⁰ He always felt estranged from those who are uninterested in the question, 'Whom say ye that I am?' I recall a moment of intimacy with the great man when I made my Christological orientation plain, when he patted me on the knee and remarked, 'You will have gathered that I am not altogether offside'. Clark claims his attachment to Christ was lifelong. He wrote:

[I was] never willing to abandon Christ . . . In later years this passion, this adoration, this love, was to cause many problems . . . The secular humanists had no time for Christ. I . . . seemed to be one of them, but was really like a foreigner in their country.³¹

For Manning Clark the two great hopes for humanity were 'human brotherhood' and 'the image of Christ'. The image of Christ was a phrase Clark used regularly throughout his narrative history of Australia: its presence the measure of hope; its absence the measure of despair.

What was the image of Christ? To Clark, Jesus personified forgiveness and compassion. He was tender and gentle, never the bully. He was one who warned us not to judge — his most difficult command.³² At Geelong Grammar, Clark taught divinity to a class containing a gentle and helpful boy called Rupert Murdoch:

He seemed fascinated by my talks to them based on Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus* — a prose poem of praise not to man-God, or to the God-man, but to the man who spoke of love, compassion, and forgiveness, the man who loved women, the fisherman, the man . . . angered by . . . the letter-of-the-law men, and all the heart-dimmers amongst the Pharisees.³³

He did not teach divinity at Geelong Grammar for long.

The phrase the 'image of Christ' is best understood by seeing how Clark used it. Richard Southern, the Oxford historian, had it: like 'all true believers he was not a bully in things spiritual'.³⁴ Noel Ebbels had it: a would-be Presbyterian minister who lost his faith and turned to Marxism. 'Noel was a gentle spirit', who knew the man of Galilee, and sought the manifestation of Christ in human society.³⁵ Archbishop Daniel Mannix had it: 'Like Christ he was more at ease with sinners than with the self-righteous'.³⁶ John Curtin had it:

He had his faith. Where a man was from did not matter: what mattered was what he was. Christ was born in a manger. Christ did not wear military boots. Australians must now be Christ-like in a secular age.³⁷

Jimmy Scullin had it. He was a 'gentle spirit' and 'so a man with the image of Christ in his heart became the Labor member for Corangamite in April 1910'.³⁸ David Unaipon, the Leonardo da Vinci of the Aboriginal people, was 'sustained by the image of Christ in his heart' as he worked to forge a synthesis among his people of the best things European and Aboriginal.³⁹ Bert Evatt, amidst all his frustrations, had it because he believed in the Kingdom of God on earth,

whereas it may have eluded Menzies precisely because he reserved the Kingdom for the world to come.⁴⁰

Jesus was generous and gave people the freedom and opportunity to think and question life. Clark's Jesus was a projection of his own need, but it shows the nature of the heart hunger of at least one prominent Australian academic: the hunger for freedom to develop opinions and ideas with real integrity, the hunger for a compassionate, generous, and forgiving human society. Manning Clark looked to Jesus, more than to anyone else, as the bread of life to satisfy that hunger.

4. Durable Values in an unstable world (Edwin Judge)

In August last year, my eye was caught by a letter in a newspaper under the heading 'Still a Christian nation'. It contained this paragraph:

Some time ago E. A. Judge, emeritus professor of Macquarie University wrote: 'People in the churches should not accept that our age is post-Christian. It is profoundly Christianised in its basic attitudes. The place of the churches is not to disabuse people of this, but to reintroduce them to the Master whom they ignorantly worship.'⁴¹

These words are the reason why we have said in the foundation document for the National Forum that Australia is well understood as 'a Christianised country'. Edwin Judge was saying here we have imbibed Christian attitudes and values with our DNA. Rather than getting uptight about whether or not we are a Christian country, we ought to appreciate that we are highly Christianised and act accordingly, and that it would in our national interest if people were made explicitly aware of the source of their values and attitudes which they unconsciously follow, namely Jesus.

Edwin Judge is the now retired foundation professor of the Ancient History Department at Macquarie University. I have often wondered if he might be the most influential Anglican evangelical Christian in Australia in the second half of the twentieth century. In his own non-aggressive way he has been the strongest apologist for biblical Christianity of whom I am aware: training a score of top scholars in the study of the lives of Jesus and Paul and in the history of the early Church.

Western civilisation, Judge argues, came to be built on biblical morality together with some classical virtues which Christianity endorsed rather than replaced. The so-called seven cardinal or

heavenly virtues are made up of three biblical moral values and four classical virtues. The biblical values are faith, hope and care (practical love or charity). The classical virtues are fortitude, justice, temperance, prudence. Notice that the Graeco-Roman virtues are concerned with the inherent qualities of the individual; Biblical morality is concerned with our response towards others. Classical values are individualistic and self-referential; Biblical values are relational and personal.

There is currently a movement away from biblical morality back to the classical virtues which are considered more appropriate to a secular, rational world. But, if the essential difference between the two is that classical ethics (such as courage and moderation) are individualistic and self-regarding, whereas Christian morality is relational and personal, then it should not surprise us that any move away from Christian values towards classical values will result in a less caring society. If we move away from biblical morality, we undermine our common sense of moral obligation to another person. So, for example, the philosopher, Peter Singer, has argued that the sense of moral obligation to another is not justifiable philosophically. It becomes much easier for us to become aggressive in pursuit of our own rights than sensitive to our own responsibilities.

In practice, Judge argues, when the three biblical values were added to the four classical virtues, the virtues lion did not lie down tamely with the biblical lamb. The two have not been synthesised. They have left us with an unreconciled, bi-polar culture. The tension between them is the source of our creativity, our energy, and our instability. We hear and internalise two voices. One, the classical, tells us to excel in merit. The other, the biblical, exhorts us to personal obedience in a life of social righteousness. There have been times in our history where the voice of Jesus has been more clearly heard. In obedience to it we put the welfare state in place. Together with New Zealand we were the first countries to do so. Brian Harris, Principal of the Baptist College of Western Australia, may be right to suggest that if New Zealand and Australia are indeed non-Christian countries as some want to argue, then they are 'the two most Christian non-Christian countries in the world'.⁴² At other times, classical virtues get the upper hand, and then insistence on human rights and economic rationalism are in the ascendancy.

Among the Australian values which Judge contends are fundamentally Christian are:

- § taking responsibility for the problems of others and insisting that someone be accountable;
- § freedom to seek new possibilities, exercise our talents, and realise our potential;

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- § keeping our heads down and not being ‘tall poppies’ since we value humility and do not admire the parading of virtue;
- § our admiration for passion in all walks of life and our compassion for the weak (both based on Christ’s passion – ‘Jesus wept’);
- § our allegiance to something higher than the State.

Judge is convinced of the massive impact of Christian thought on Australian culture and indeed progressively on the world, through the medium of the English language and the twin fruits of the gospel, science and technology. Here is a movement of great power: ‘all of us on earth now stand potential heirs to biblical innovation’.⁴³

Big picture stuff. Let me share with you a local application. Having taught for many years at Wollongong University, I became interested in coal mining and I wrote a history of Australia’s worst mine disaster, that at Mt Kembla on 31 July 1902. I did a lot of reading on the culture of safety in dangerous industries and I saw how very difficult it was to change the culture of safety in these places.

Imagine my astonishment, therefore, when I read about a mine where a dramatic increase in safety was achieved and it had everything to do with the application of the personal and relational values of Jesus. Bob Mellows, a Christian mine manager, at the Cornwall coal mine in the Fingal Valley of Tasmania, saw that safety was best regulated not by the law of the land, but by the law of Love. He made a study of the practical meaning of the word ‘love’ in the New Testament and lived out his findings in his relationship with the miners. He came to see that if he cared for his men, they would start to care for each other. In a report to the ’98 Coal Operator’s Conference, he said: ‘It is not because of legalism that Jesus Christ told us to love God and love one another. It was because he knew it was essential to our well being in all aspects of life’. He went on to say that ‘The Foundation of Safety is loving one another (and ourselves). This is not merely an emotional condition. It is a choice of behaviour and the only basis for a satisfactory relationship.’ The Cornwall Mine’s safety improved when a breakthrough in relationships occurred, through the removal of barriers, the development of trust, and concern for the welfare of the other. The result? At the Cornwall coal mine between 1980 and 1990 there had been about 200 accidents reported each year, and the company had paid between \$50,000 and \$250,000 per annum in compensation. Then in 1991/92 Bob Mellows’ biblical values were embraced and the accident rate dipped dramatically, so that by 1993 it was practically zero and it has re-

mained near zero. The cost of compensation fell to almost zero. ⁴⁴
Jesus' values work.

Bob Mellows has an appendix to his talk to the coal owners which lists what love is in the Bible, what it is not (I Cors 13), and what love responds to. In these lists, a number of the 9 values which Brendan Nelson has called on our schools to embrace ⁴⁵ are mentioned: compassion, freedom, respect, understanding. But there are other words which are not on Brendan's list which one suspects are the things which make all the difference. They are characteristics of the Lord Jesus: forgiveness, humility, trust, mercy, accepting weakness, hope, faithfulness, long-suffering. Those are the values which would make our mines and our world safer.

5. Strength and Hope in a suffering world (our Indigenous people)

In his spiritual state of the nation paper,⁴⁶ which you will find under 'articles' on the Forum website, Tom Slater, National Director of the Australian Evangelical Alliance, hoped that we are now at 'the beginning of a new era in which Indigenous people find a united voice into the rest of the church, and into the public arena'.

What will that voice – that united voice, that voice speaking into the public arena – what will it say?

One of the things I loved about the books written by John Blacket and Max Hart on the Aboriginal Revival which began at Galiwinku on 28 March 1979 is that they let the Aboriginal people speak for themselves. Those books are based on extensive interviews with Aboriginal people and in them we hear their voice. It is the voice which speaks repeatedly of Jesus. This revival, like all genuine revivals, has Jesus as its literal, present hero. Indigenous leaders read what Jesus and his Spirit did in the gospels and the Book of Acts and they believed that Jesus was doing it all over again in Australia, walking in their midst, healing the sick, delivering the possessed and the addicted, and even raising the dead.

Visions of Jesus are the most reported of all the visions in a revival characterised by scores of visions. In 1983 a small Aboriginal boy in kindergarten at Yarrabah, south of Cairns in Queensland, did a butterfly painting, putting paint on a piece of paper and folding it in half. When he opened it, he gazed on a remarkable likeness of Christ with crown of thorns. Revival came to Yarrabah, John Harris tells us, immediately.⁴⁷ Two members of the Yarrabah Community, Valma and Michael Connolly, are with us at this conference.

Aboriginal Christians thus affirmed that it was Christ himself who was helping them to redeem a world which had been death to them. Bob Williams, a tribal leader from Carnarvon, spoke of Jesus

as ‘the in-between one’ or the one who stands between the races, discerning the truth in Aboriginal law by interpreting it in the light of the law which the Lord Jesus came not to destroy, but to fulfil.⁴⁸

The role of Jesus in the fulfilment of Aboriginal law was remarkably demonstrated in a vision experienced by Djiniyini Gondarra, the leading Aboriginal theologian of the revival. His vision was of crows and flying foxes (which are totems of himself and his wife) and of a beautiful girl wearing lots of bangles, namely Queen Jezebel. Gondarra called out to his wife, ‘Go to Jerusalem, get the blood and wash the cross’. She did so and, when she washed the cross with the blood, it turned into a flaming two-edged sword, and she thrust it through Jezebel who turned back into a flying fox and exploded. Then God said to Gondarra:

You lay down every totem and ceremony. In each of them there is good and bad. All of them must come under my Lordship, be washed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and then you will see a new Aboriginal culture. I don’t want to destroy and leave you empty. I will restore and renew what is good.⁴⁹

Djiniyini’s vision gave him the clear cultural message that Christianity comes not to destroy but to fulfil the aspirations of traditional aboriginal law. The Jesus of the Aboriginal revival thus empowers the Aboriginal people in their desperate search for identity. Once — during the two centuries of subjugation — they were no people; now they are a people, God’s people, with the incarnate God in their midst. The revival is the power by which the Aboriginal people are moving away from subjugation towards autonomy and a genuinely independent Aboriginal Church.

Revival is often associated with the political empowerment of a social group, leading to economic progress and cultural integration.⁵⁰ It was one of the means by which Aboriginal people were able to persevere in their campaign for land rights and for a just recompense for the land from which they had been dispossessed, the wages they have not been paid, and the family life of which they have been deprived.

The indigenous voice, then, speaks of the role of Jesus in helping Aboriginal people re-discover their true identity, and, in the process achieve political empowerment. The voices of two of the Indigenous people present in our conference say the same thing.

Shayne Blackman is in the thick of the struggle for the social and political empowerment of his people. For him the voice of Jesus is of truth and justice. Shayne was the architect of the agreement, made in October 2005, to set up the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Christian Alliance. He is the national coordinator for the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). He is head of Shalom Christian College in Townsville, a school nationally recognized for improvements in literacy levels among its Aboriginal students. Shayne has also been a leader in indigenous employment programs, in community justice groups which now have statutory powers to regulate the possession and consumption of alcohol in their communities, and in programs to make indigenous poverty history. Here is a prophetic voice for Aboriginal empowerment. At last month's National Assembly of the Uniting Church, he bluntly called for radically changed service delivery to redress the enormous problems in indigenous communities. It is interesting that one who is so politically savvy and pragmatic, should use the Church of Jesus Christ and the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the chief instrumentalities for what he is trying to achieve for Aboriginal people.

It is with the voice of a second Indigenous conferee that I will conclude this paper. If we hear the voice of Florence Grant, we will hear the Indigenous perspective on the Christian Heritage of Australia. One day that perspective will become part of all of us who are followers of Jesus in this land:

The late Pastor Cecil Grant, Wongamar, his wife Laurel also deceased, and I left Wiradjuri Yal-balinga-da (learning place) in Wagga Wagga early one winter morning for Canberra via the Oura road to Gundagai. Climbing a very high hill the hilltop panorama of the rising sun cloaked in vivid crimson sent brilliant color dancing over the thick white fog blanketing the valley below.

We sat looking at the beauty and greatness of God's creation spread before us. Wongamar quoted Romans 1:18,20; 'the creation declares the glory of God and no man can say: "I never knew you".' I remembered challenging God regarding His reality. I grew up with Christianity, graduated from Bible College, but struggled with theology and paternalism. God met my challenge through the beauty of His creation, saying: 'This was your people's Bible and I am still here'.

Pastor Cec Wongamar, my brother, taught 'Christ in Culture' as a course and I looked at the Lord Jesus Christ through our culture and the Genesis Creation story. This confirmed for me that God gave us our language, land, law and lore. The Wiradjuri language reflects the people's relationship with Baayami, God the Great Spirit, the designer and cutter-outer of their world. Also their inter-relationship with other tribes

and Traditional Nations show their knowledge of God's values – well before British colonization.

I thank God for the men and women who came as missionaries and brought us the Word of God, the Bible, and the story of Jesus. . .

The sovereign God knew His Word would bring many Aboriginal people to Himself. I fortunately grew up with my initiated Grandfather and understand the cultural and spiritual strength of my people. I also grew up with top Aboriginal Bible teachers and preachers. Australia's Christian Heritage is not 218 years of colonization. The Lord planted key Biblical principals in the Wiradjuri culture. I'm now His disciple and Australia is my mission field, as the story of Jesus and God's love gives us hope for the future.

Notes

1. Jeremy Maas, *Holman Hunt and 'The Light of the World'* (London: Scolar, 1984), 161.
2. Ibid 15.
3. 'I believe Jesus . . . to have given us a Square [for] when we wish to gauge the Absolute Morality . . . of this or that action.' Quoted by M. Zaunbrecher, 'Religious Attitudes in Australian Literature in the 1890s', MA, History (Wollongong: University of Wollongong 1979), 37.
4. *Rigby's Romance*, Sydney 1946, 115.
5. John Barnes, *The Order of Things* (Melbourne: OUP, 1990) 56
6. *Joseph Furphy: The Legend of a Man and his Book* (Rushcutter's Bay, Sydney: Halstead Classics, 1944) 65.
7. Miles Franklin, *Joseph Furphy: The Legend of a Man and his Book* (Rushcutter's Bay, Sydney: Halstead Classics, 1944) 143.
8. *Such is Life*, 1980 edition, 111f.
9. Miles Franklin, *Joseph Furphy*, 82
10. SIL, 87.
11. He gave up on the Churches of Christ, he explained to Miles Franklin, because he wanted a church that 'would expel me with contumely for having two coats while another bloak [sic] had none.' John Barnes, *The Order of Things*, 149.

12. SIL, 1980, 107f.
13. T. Suttor, 'The Criticism of Religious Certitude in Australia, 1875-1900,' *JRH*, 1,1, June 1960, 28.
14. R M Williams, *Beneath Whose Hand: The Autobiography* (South Melbourne, Macmillan, 1984), 91.
15. Ibid 6
16. Ibid 15.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid 25.
19. Ibid. 33.
20. Ibid. 31.
21. Ibid. 36.
22. Ibid. 66.
23. Ibid.66
24. Ibid.124
25. Ibid.124f.
26. Ibid.125
27. Ibid. 92
28. Ibid.193
29. Manning Clark, *The Quest for Grace* (Ringwood: Viking, 1990) 3.
30. Ibid. 16.
31. Manning Clark, *The Puzzles of Childhood* (Melbourne, Viking, 1989) 129.
32. *Quest*, 209.
33. *Quest*,126.
34. *Quest*, 61.
35. *Quest*, 169
36. C.M.H. Clark, *A History of Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1987), vol. 6, 33
37. *History*, 6, 104.
38. *History*, 6, 200.
39. *History*, 6, 278f.
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42. Brian Harris, 'Of Tall Poppies, Mateship and Pragmatism: Spirituality in the Australasian Context,' BWA Conference, Mexico City, July 2006, 15
43. Ibid.
44. Bob Mellows, 'Foundations of Safe Environment', Tasmanian Minerals Council 1997 Occupational Health & Safety Seminar: "Safety – Competent Hands".
45. Values for Australian Schooling
 1. Care and Compassion
 2. Doing your best
 3. Fair Go
 4. Freedom
 5. Honesty and Trustworthiness
 6. Integrity
 7. Respect
 8. Responsibility
 9. Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion
46. Tom Slater, *The State of the Christian Cause in Australia*, Australian Evangelical Alliance, June 2006
47. John Harris, *One Blood* (Sydney: Albatross, 1990), facing page 783 and p.850
48. Blakett, *Fire in the Outback*, 188.
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50. Richard Carwardine, 'The Second Great Awakening in Comparative Perspective: Revivals and Culture in the United States and Britain,' in Edith L. Blumhofer and Randall Balmer, *Modern Christian Revivals* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 84.

Christianity and Education

Elizabeth Ward

Synopsis

Over the past two hundred years, Australia's Christian heritage has not only been a major imperative in shaping our institutions, laws, culture and society, but has also been crucial to the development of our schools and other educational institutions. With the declining influence of the local parish church, together with major societal and economic changes over the last fifty years, schools must assume greater significance and focus in the process of reclaiming Australia's Christian heritage for the Australian community.

As I sat high up in the MCG awaiting the opening ceremony of the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games, I wondered what icons from Melbourne's heritage would be selected to articulate the culture and history of one of the world's most liveable cities.

A great roar and chuckle of recognition resounded around the stadium as a Melbourne tram hovered high in the air, flapped its wings and flew down on the sacred AFL turf and immediately, with the help of an ingenious underground chamber, disgorged a string of colourfully dressed citizens representing every part of the Melbourne community. The cartoonist Leunig's white duck was also there, perhaps as a symbol of creativity and hope for the future. In the closing ceremony, Dame Edna Everidge appeared on screen to read a poem which had great appeal for Melburnians but not for Sydneysiders.

If you were asked to select the iconic images and heroes to represent Australia's Christian heritage and culture, particularly in education, for the final march past through the pearly gates, who and what would you choose? What symbols of hope for the future would you define?

Perhaps you would select the Apostles to lead the procession followed by the teachers referred to by Paul in Ephesians 4, a group of monks and nuns from the Middle Ages, or Augustine, Patrick, Benedict, the teaching bishop from Winchester, Swithun. Maybe you would choose Ulrich Zwingli, Jan Hus, Martin Luther, Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, William Tyndale, John Knox,

Ignatius Loyola, Mary Ward of the Loreto Schools, Charles Wesley, John Wesley, William Carey, Hudson Taylor, Henry Stanley, David Livingstone, Richard Johnson, Samuel Marsden, Frederic Barker, Charles Pearson, Daniel Mannix, Howard Mowll, Marcus Loane, Billy Graham, Mother Theresa, Pope John Paul 2, George Pell, Peter Jensen and many other great figures from the grand panoply of Australia's Christian heritage.

Perhaps they could carry banners emblazoned with some of our schools' mottos (I will use the English translations) 'Praise God' (Sydney Grammar); 'The Love of Christ urges us' (St Vincent's, Potts Point); 'While I breath I am inspired by the Cross' (Loreto, Normanhurst); 'The Law of God is the Lamp of Life' (PLC Melbourne).

Perhaps they could sing as they hold high their iconic hymnals: Wesley's Collection of Psalms and Hymns; Hymns Ancient and Modern; the Westminster Hymnal; the English Hymnal; the Presbyterian Church Hymnary; the Baptist Church Hymn Book; a Methodist and Ecumenical Hymn Book; Golden Bells; the Australian Hymn Book; Rejoice; Songs of Fellowship or maybe a laptop loaded with Geoff Bullock and Hillsong songs. And they would sing, perhaps the 'Te Deum', 'A Safe stronghold our God is still', 'Onward Christian Soldiers', 'Rejoice the Lord is King', 'How Great Thou Art', 'Great Southland of the Holy Spirit' and 'Shout to the Lord'.

These then are only a few of the giant figures, modes of worship and thinking which have helped shape our Christian history, tradition, culture and beliefs. There is so much more we could add. In turn, our Christian heritage has been the major imperative in crafting our Australian culture and society, its laws, institutions, our values and beliefs, our public institutions, universities and schools.

We hear much of the need to create a sustainable future for our environment. Applied in the widest sense, the preservation of our belief systems, values and ethical and moral heritage, our sense of fair play and social justice, is the urgent business of all Australians including, most importantly, our schools and tertiary institutions.

Traditionally, the parish church had been crucial to the development and maintenance of personal beliefs and community standards. So many factors, including the motor car, mass entertainment, sport, fragmented families, Sunday shopping, have seen the parish structure diminished in its impact and influence on society. Several generations have now grown up unchurched. The community and individuals look elsewhere for the forces which give familial and societal cultural cohesion. Thousands are attracted to the new mega churches. The Federal Government has issued a values statement to be posted in all schools. Indeed, overall schools are asked to solve

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the problems and are challenged to reclaim the politically correct elements of our Christian heritage and reshape them in secular, syncretistic, and post-modern terms. Surely a house built on sand!

We must return to the fundamentals which underpin our society, our Christian heritage. The question is how? There is one clear fact which must guide our thinking: all young people go to school. The schools are the obvious first point in shaping the revolutionary reclamation movement which in turn must involve all Christians and, in due time, the entire community.

It is my view that we must as a matter of great urgency look to the schools to ensure the strength of the Christian mission in our society, culture and our future.

The Student Challenge

The students in our schools today, wittingly or unwittingly, knowingly or unknowingly, are the recipients of a great Christian heritage, they are tomorrow's leaders, teachers, preachers and citizens. They also live and study in a confused environment of frenetic change, overwhelming global issues sifted through a lens distorted by post modernism, relativism, technological wizardry, fundamentalism, and terrorism.

They face the complex post-Soviet world. They have little understanding of the sense longing for the period of the Cold War, when it was so easy, so clear cut, black and white, everyone knew their enemy and knew their place in the scheme of things. Now we have moved from the bipolar world to the multi polar context. In the students' world nothing is predictable. The apparent victor of the Cold War, democracy, seems to hold few answers for a world wracked with disparate problems such as the aging nuclear arsenal, emergent extreme nationalism, terrifying political and military upheavals, appalling examples of ethnic cleansing, violent acts of terrorism. Suicide bombers nightly paint their TV and computer screens red.

The complex issue of increased world industrial and consumer competition confronts them. The profit motive is ever ascendant. They are challenged by the ever increasing power of the multi-nationals whose policies and practices are often at variance with established moral and ethical value systems and set no bounds on personal wealth, ambition and the mega consumer lifestyle. HIH! ENRON!

Our students agonise over their helplessness in face of the inequalities and injustices of world poverty and disease – AIDS, slavery, child labour, sexual abuse of women and children, and world-wide unemployment and the difficulties faced by our indigenous people.

Again, within our own society exists the issue of the inequalities in society. Poverty is a lifetime experience for many in our local communities. Tim Costello's work was entitled "Streets of Hope". But are they?

Technology continues to drive the pace and complexity of change in our lives, including that of our youngest pupils. Google presents a deluge of offerings which necessarily need to be treated with thoughtful selection, discretion, mature judgement and wisdom, i.e. a level of sophistication still beyond many students.

The demographic of the society around students is rapidly changing and presents them with new challenges, apprehensions and fear. The Baby Boom 'echo' having passed with its subsequent impact on to the profile of society, greying and costly, asks the questions: who will care for the huge new class of senior citizens?

Our students confront the issue of the wide range background of cultures in all Australian cities – exciting diversity and great cultural richness but with attendant challenges. How do we generate a sense of cohesion and community where people may hold citizenship documents from not just one but often two or three nations?

To help students respond to this complex of change and challenge, Christian compassion and intercultural literacy, we must provide a strong framework within which learning takes place in our schools.

We must create an educational environment in each school, in all systems, which is balanced, developing intellectual, mental, physical, emotional and spiritual learning and the health of the total person. It is about learning programs which comprehensively meet the deepest needs of individual students. Schools must not only provide the context in which active learning takes place, where higher cognitive skills are engaged, where service learning is experienced, where communication skills are practised, where diversity is valued, where life long learning is a goal but also where Biblical knowledge is available to all students, together with an understanding of the history and heritage of the Christian Church and its mission. Matters of and understanding of faith, ethics, morals, values, laws and democracy flow readily from a sound Biblical knowledge. It is part of each student's entitlement given Australia's Christian foundation and heritage.

Children ask questions about God and we must answer them consistently and honestly. Children are very curious about God. We must provide understanding.

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From *Children's Letter to God* (1991):

- § How did you know you were God?
- § Dear God, Its OK that you made all those different religions but don't you get mixed up sometimes?
- § Dear God, What does it mean that you are a jealous God I thought you had everything?
- § Dear God, Is Reverend Coe a friend of yours or do you just know him through business?
- § Dear God, When you made the first man, did he work as good as we do now?

It is my view that in our Christian education programs there must also be the opportunity for students to grow in knowledge of and faith in Jesus Christ. I believe we are seeing a growing openness to the Gospel in our schools. In this regard, I thought you would be interested in this evidence.

Some of our girls in Years 10, 11 and 12 were given a survey by the PLC Melbourne Chaplain, the Rev Charles Green. They were asked: 'Is there any connection for you between the school culture and the religious values held by the school community?' These were a cross section of their answers:

- § I am strengthened every day in my beliefs because of the encouragement of the school and my Christian friends.
- § Respect is given by both teachers and students and coincides with the Christian values held by the school community.
- § In general the PLC community is warm and kind because of the Christian values.
- § I value the Bible readings every morning at Assembly and saying Grace before dinner every night and attending Boarders' Chapel ... Although I'm not a Christian, I believe and highly respect this religion and every since coming her to PLC I've actually understood more about the religion.
- § I don't have a particular religion but the focus on religion at PLC makes it feel so special.
- § I think the religious values of the school community are not practised enough by the students. There should be

greater emphasis on religious values. All my values are made from my religion.

- § (There is) Acceptance of all people from all religions ...
- § The religious values held by the school are loving and loving others the way you love yourself. This is a very friendly and warm school and the students are very close.
- § The culture generated by the staff seem to be connected to Christian values.
- § All my life I have been Anglican and Presbyterianism is pretty similar.
- § The religious values are always there, but I like how the school doesn't force these beliefs on their students. I'm still discovering who I am and what I believe in.
- § I am a mix of Australian, Chinese, teenage and Christianity.
- § The hymns we sing become enjoyable as they become well known. This (helping us fit) into the community.
- § I think PLC has actually done quite well in terms of religion and being an agnostic I feel quite able to express by individuality in terms of my religious beliefs.
- § I think having a Christian school is important because it dictates even better morals and values to students and teachers.
- § I don't like the emphasis on Christianity here. I wish we could often have a Buddhist assembly.
- § Basically our mission statements and the values held by the school are very Christ-like.
- § Being at this school I've learnt so much more about God and it has enhanced my faith in miracles.
- § Assembly held each morning adds into my Christian belief.
- § This school being Presbyterian has a lot of rituals e.g. morning mass singing which leads towards religion. But what surprised me was no one seemed to mind. It was just a daily occurrence.
- § (I have a strong sense of connection) through the Scripture Union and Powerhouse groups, Chapel Band and Year 10 prayer meetings on Wednesday in Room X.

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Parents and staff were asked what religious values or aspects of faith they value most at PLC.

From a parent

§ Proclaiming Christ is the centre of our school via newsletters, Christian fellowship evenings, camps, assemblies, ceremonies. Scripture Union in Schools, Powerhouse and Rejoice (groups). An opportunity for our children to grow in a Christ centred environment

From a member of staff

§ (I value most at PLC) the clear presentation of the Christian Gospel; the recognition that the Bible is the Word of God and contains all things necessary for Christian salvation; the sense of and loving Christian community. The opportunity to work out God's call in my life.

The Teacher Challenge

If schools are the spearhead, the teacher is the key to reclaiming the great Australian Christian heritage for their students.

Teachers are the capital which helps build the future of the nation. Christian teachers are empowered through the Australian Christian heritage and by their own faith, by the Holy Spirit, by the Word of God, by their call to world mission to strengthen and sustain the Christian heritage and commission in the 21st Century and beyond.

One UK Anglican diocese made this point strongly in its evidence for the *Dearing Report*, 'The Way Ahead' (2000), for the re-Christianization of Anglican schools.

The Church needs to promote teaching as a vocation of equal status to the priesthood ... It is a ministry in, of, and to the body of Christ. For a Christian, a vocation to teach should be the context in which he or she understands himself and herself to act and speak for God. In that sense, it is something wonderful that stands alongside a vocation to the priesthood.

Teachers at all levels must be in the front line and to reclaim the Christian heritage and foundations of our society and culture. Many are unaware of the history and cultural outworkings of our Christian heritage, fail to recognise its importance and have no interest in sustaining its main tenets.

Sadly, many Christian teachers also find it difficult to lead the charge. They are encumbered by the dualism practised in the wider marketplace. The integration of their Christian faith is not an easy and evident practice in the daily work place, over the water cooler, at the union meeting, in the staff forum or social occasion. I was saddened and dismayed when I heard a Christian teacher put it like this 'I am first a professional and second a Christian'.

All teachers need a sound knowledge of the Bible and the history of the church to better understand the history, culture and aspirations of our society today.

Christian teachers urgently need the opportunity to develop their skills base as Christian teachers, both at the chalkface and beyond. Such skills have traditionally been encouraged through valuable voluntary work in youth groups, Sunday schools, Christian camps, programs and so on. I hold the view that it is essential that Christian teachers also have access to courses which will provide them with a systematic knowledge and understanding of the Bible, Christian doctrine, all matters involved in the acquisition and maintenance of faith in Jesus Christ and the nature and practice of prayer. That the Theological Colleges and universities are properly responsive to this desperate need is crucial for both the sustaining of the traditional foundation and heritage of our culture and also for the wider mission of the Church, with a message of peace, love and salvation for our sad world.

Currently the Australian Catholic University is in the vanguard of such work and provides a very good resource for Christian teachers and I understand the Anglican School Commission is also moving in this direction.

The *Dearing Report* (2000) proposed that there should be an additional qualification for those moving into teaching positions in church schools. The report promoted the potential of the Church Colleges Certificate in Church School Studies for teachers in Anglican Schools.

I believe many teachers would welcome such support as they seek manage the great diversity in our Australian schools and universities.

Teachers work in schools is no longer framed by a monocultural structure of society and the church. Each must develop management techniques to address a vast complex of diverse factors which involve class, gender, ethnicity, place, history language, religious beliefs, cultural behaviour, educational systems, learning styles, developmental stages, needs of students, family requirements, the school's mission and its community. They must manage diversity

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shaped by adventure or mission, or trauma, or hope or the stability of generations of suburban continuity, or the latest hip hop party in Kew or Killara or Kaleen.

They must be provided with the knowledge and skills base, historical, cultural and spiritual, to empower their students of the 21st century to not only learn to appreciate the ideals of citizenship, responsibility and compassion but also to develop a sense of social justice, social service, resilience and faith.

The Parish Church Challenge

It is of greatest importance that church hierarchies, congregations and the wider community affirm Christian teachers in every possible way including invitations to speak in churches, at community events such as Education Sunday, The National Day of Thanksgiving, ANZAC Day, and schools' foundation days. Parishioners could be encouraged to be aware, get to know and affirm teachers in their neighbourhood schools. The school chaplain or Christian group leader may well be the first point of contact. Maybe a church plant in the school would be possible. Teachers and Principals are the key to preservation and sustainability of our Christian heritage and culture.

The Governors' Challenge

The role of School Councils is also crucial to maintaining a school's Christian foundation and practice. The School Councils in church schools and some private schools have long enjoyed various forms of linkage to the church, ranging from the perfunctory to very direct links to the local diocese, parish and Christian parent group. Councils have no more important task than the appointment of the Principal of the school. A Christian Chairman of Council with a majority of Christians on the Board will seek to appoint a Christian Principal who in turn will shape the Christian culture of a school. In terms of Australia's Christian heritage and culture the point cannot be underestimated. Clergy, missionaries, teachers, lawyers, parliamentarians, Prime Ministers, Governors General whose education has been shaped by the Christian values and belief system at school are critical determinants of our cultural strength as a nation.

The Challenge for the Christian Community

I believe effective Christian learning communities enthusiastically take hold of our Christian heritage which strengthens our culture and gives great hope for the future. Many of you rejoice in being part of a community where Christ's name is honoured and celebrated. My prayer is that there is a great openness to the Christian gospel in our schools and universities. It is at the foot of the Cross our

Australian Christian heritage is reclaimed. I hope you will join me in that prayer for our schools and universities and ultimately for the future of our culture and nation.

At the Victorian Branch Church Missionary Society Conference in 2000, Bishop Josiah Fearon presented a series of inspirational talks. Bishop Fearon trained in Durham and Birmingham Universities and Hartford Connecticut Seminary. He is a Bishop in Nigeria where 12 million Anglicans worship each Sunday. He is Bishop of Kaduna. The city of Kaduna has been wracked by bloody social and political upheavals in the last years. Bishop Fearon offered us all a very simple but profound challenge of hope for our culture and our future:

In your church, in your school, in your community is the program and teaching such that your people can "Hear Jesus"?"

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Christianity and Australian Culture

Graeme Davison

We are here to consider Australia's Christian heritage. That word 'heritage' is one the richest in our vocabulary. Literally, it means a legacy, the estate handed down by one generation to the next. It evokes the gratitude felt by each generation towards its forebears, and a sense of responsibility towards its descendants.

Some of you, I am sure, have had the experience of being an executor, as I was recently for my mother after she died at the age of 94. My work was made easier, in some ways, by the fact that she had made some decisions herself. Her piano was to go to one of her granddaughters, a fine pianist, and favourite pieces of jewellery were allocated to her daughter and daughter-in-law and to each of her grandchildren. There were many items, however, including her prized collection of English china that no-one really seemed to want, while other items for which she had little regard herself, like a set of 1950s laminex and chrome kitchen furniture, were now seen by her grandchildren as masterpieces of retro design. Most precious of all were my mother's large collection of family photographs, the tangible repository of a century or more of family memories. As her eldest son, and the historian of the family I took the responsibility not only of keeping them but of making digital copies so that everyone could share them.

In sorting out Mum's estate, deciding what to keep and what to throw out, and who should take the responsibility for keeping the most precious things, we were participating in a process akin to this conference as we retrieve, sift and appraise our heritage of Christian traditions, beliefs and values. Not everything that our forbears sought to pass on to us will be serviceable in our own time, but we will not lightly discard things that we know were precious to them.

Heritage is not quite the same thing as history. As a historian, I recognise many things in our past for which we might feel more regret or shame than pride; they are part of our history, but, because we do not value them highly or seek to pass them on, they are not part of our heritage.¹ The same may be true of our past as

Christians. Upholding our heritage does not require us to defend everything that our Christian forebears may have done or stood for. Part of the Christian message of redemption, after all, is that not everything in our past necessarily belongs to our future. We should not be ashamed of our Christian heritage but we should be wary, I believe, of anything that smacks of boastfulness, defensiveness or militancy towards our non-Christian sisters and brothers. The world is too small and Christ's love is too wide for chauvinism whether it is Christian, Muslim, Jewish or Hindu.

I have been asked to speak about the heritage of Christianity in Australian Culture, especially in our national literature. (I am sorry that time does not allow me to say much about Australian art and music, although I think some of the patterns I detect in Australian writing may be paralleled in other fields of art). I will have little to say about the legacy of Christian poets, painter and musicians to their own distinctive church or denominational sub-cultures, in hymns and religious art for example, but will speak mostly about the contribution of Christianity to the broader national culture. Has Christianity left a discernable or distinctive imprint upon the way we Australians have seen our country and represented it in our national literature?

Colonial Australia, of course, was heir to the broad European cultural tradition. We not only sang the hymns of Watts and Wesley, but were familiar with a rich English literary and musical heritage steeped in Christian tradition. We read the poetry of Donne and Herbert, Blake, Hopkins, and T. S. Eliot and listened, as we still do, to the music of Purcell, Handel, Stainer and Vaughan Williams. Australian Christians, especially Protestants, long regarded themselves as members of trans-national communities of Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists and Congregationalists and until relatively recently felt little tension between their Australianness and their Britishness.² (For Australian Catholics, especially those of Irish ancestry, loyalties to faith and country were more complex). Some colonial Christians felt closer to God in an English cathedral than in the Australian Outback, a place they often characterised, literally, as a god-forsaken wilderness. The strain of 'weird melancholy' that Marcus Clarke had detected in the Australian Bush seemed inhospitable to the religious spirit of Europe.

Yet beneath the surface, Christianity remained the often-unacknowledged matrix of Australian culture. It was not acknowledged because, to a large extent, its influence was taken for granted. It is only in a post-Christian Australia that its foundational importance needs to be stressed. Two components of the Christian, or Judaeo-Christian, tradition – the literature of the Bible, and the belief in

divine providence— pervaded western culture, including that of colonial Australia.

A hundred years ago, most Australians, even those who were not practising Christians, were nevertheless familiar with the stories of the Bible. The historian Margaret Kiddle observes of the Scottish settlers of Victoria's Western District:

One book at least they knew. The Bible, and particularly the Old Testament, was with them every day of the week, and not only at Sunday homestead prayer. Most of them had little need to refer to it, for they could recite chapter after chapter by heart. Biblical rhythms are often heard in the phrases of the most literate.³

These Scots had fled their homeland in the wake of the Great Disruption of the early 1840s, when biblical controversy split the Church of Scotland, and thus were perhaps more familiar with the Bible than most colonial Australians. As shepherds and pilgrims in a new land they had a natural affinity with the experience of the people of Israel.

A century ago the stories of the Bible, taught in both day and Sunday schools, read by mothers to their children, invoked by popular orators as well as the famous preachers who Sunday sermons filled column after column of the Monday newspapers, were part of a common culture. Probably about half the children of New South Wales attended Sunday School in the 1890s and the proportion remained high until at least the 1950s.

Secular as well as Christian writers could rely upon their readers recognising allusions to the great biblical stories: to Adam and Eve, Abraham and Isaac, the Tower of Babel, Noah and the Ark, Moses and the Crossing of the Red Sea, the Burning Bush and the Ten Commandments, Joshua and the Battle of Jericho, Jacob and Esau, David and Goliath, the sufferings of Job and the trials of Daniel, the birth narratives of Jesus, the Crucifixion and Resurrection. These, along with the Greek Classics, Shakespeare and the Book of Common Prayer were part of a common culture that oriented people to the great questions of life.

Militant unbelievers ransacked the Bible in search of moral and historical contradictions as zealously as Christians looked for divine inspiration. In his youth the poet Bernard O'Dowd, an avowed atheist, worked as a law clerk for a barrister who once defended a man on a charge of murder. The accused had been found bending over the victim and the learned King's Counsel proposed to argue that his innocent client had been simply rendering assistance to the already wounded man, rather like the Good Samaritan. The barrister,

a devout Catholic, called for a Bible to read the story for himself but couldn't find it. 'Where's the bloody index?', he demanded. In the end, it was O'Dowd, the self-educated unbeliever who was able to locate the key passage.⁴

Biblical literacy, of at least a basic kind, probably remained a feature of the culture until at least the 1980s. Readers of Manning Clark's *A History of Australia*, published between 1962 and 1987, was addressed to such a readership. Ten or twenty years ago I found that a good percentage of my students either recognised his frequent allusions to the Bible and the Classics or were sufficiently intrigued to want to track them down. Now, I find, they are simply baffled by them. It is not as though the themes of the Bible – the conflict of good and evil, the search for personal redemption, the building of the Kingdom, the problem of suffering – are lost to our culture. But fewer and fewer Australians, I suspect, now recognise their source in the stories and world-view of the Old and New Testaments.

Underlying the Bible and permeating Australian culture was a belief in divine providence. When the Australian colonies federated into a Commonwealth in 1901, they believed that they were doing so in obedience to a kind of divine command. John Hirst begins his perceptive recent history of the federal movement, *Sentimental Nation*, with the arresting sentence: 'God wanted Australia to be a nation.' Among the founders of the Commonwealth, he goes on to argue, there was a deep conviction that their cause was inspired and guided by God. Many of them, like Alfred Deakin, were not orthodox Christians, but they nevertheless shared the belief that history was a process guided by providence and that, in fighting the federal cause, they were aligning themselves with the divine will. The Christian churches fought a strong campaign to ensure that Australia's Constitution should acknowledge Almighty God and that parliamentary business should begin with prayer.⁵

While the Bible and the idea of divine providence were part of the hidden substructure of Australian culture, on the surface it was notoriously more sceptical, sardonic and irreverent. Compared with the United States, where the expression of Christian piety comes naturally to the lips of people, high and low, Australia seemed a thoroughly secular society.⁶ In 1899 A. G. Stephens, the most influential cultural critic of his time, pondered the relationship between religion and Australian culture. 'Every year' he observed, 'religion and religious observances have less hold upon Australia, and exercise less influence upon the development of national character.'

Our fathers [he continued] brought with them the religious habit as they brought other habits of elder nations in older lands. And upon religion, as upon everything

else, the spirit of Australia— that undefined, indefinable resultant of earth, and air, and conditions of climate and life— has seized; modifying, altering, increasing, or altogether destroying. In the case of religious belief the tendency is to decay of faith in outworn creeds; but partly also, it seems, because the Australian environment is unfavourable to the growth of religion, and because there is in the developing Australian character a sceptical and utilitarian spirit, which values the present hour and refuses to sacrifice the present for any visionary future incapable of rational guarantee.⁷

Religion, Stephens implied, was an almost spent force, a vestige of the Old World that would simply be shed, like an old coat, in the drier, sunnier climate of the New.

Stephens was not just an acute observer of Australian culture; he also sought to shape it according to his own secular beliefs. As the mentor of young Australian writers, like Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson, Steele Rudd, Joseph Furphy and Miles Franklin, he helped to create a self-consciously Australian literary tradition. ‘*The Bulletin* School’, as these writers became known, envisaged the future Australia as a secular, socialist republic. The most famous of them, the poet and short-story-writer Henry Lawson even thought that trades unionism would become a kind of religion— ‘Trades unionism is a new and grand religion; it recognises no creed, sect, language or nationality; it is a universal religion’ — although, as he admitted, not so universal as to include women and Asians!⁸

The *Bulletin* writers believed that Australia would become a modern, independent nation by throwing off the shackles, not only of the British Crown and Empire, but of what Stephens called the ‘outworn creeds’ of Europe. Christianity, according to his view, was a relic of the Old World, its forms and precepts ill-adapted to the physical and social environment of the New. Eventually, by a kind of Darwinian law of natural selection, it would become extinct.

As a prophet of Australian religious development A. G. Stephens was at best half-right. Over the past century, the level of Christian observance has indeed steadily fallen in Australia, as it has in almost all western countries. In 1899 when Stephens wrote almost all Australians professed a belief in God and one in three regularly attended church. Today about 80 percent still profess belief in God, but only about one in six Australians attend worship once a week. The decline is significant but much less dramatic than Stephens and his fellow sceptics anticipated. Stephens would surely have been surprised, had he revisited today’s Australia, to find that, with the important exception of Ireland, religious observance and belief

have fallen faster in the Old World of Europe than in the New World of America and Australia.⁹

As an observer and shaper of Australian literature, on the other hand, Stephens was more far-sighted. The mainstream of Australian writing, through much of the twentieth century, was largely secular or rational in tone, and realist or modernist in style. The leading novelists— Henry Handel Richardson, Miles Franklin, Vance Palmer, Xavier Herbert,— and the main literary journals such as *Meanjin* and *Australian Quarterly* shared this secular ethos. The standard reference work, the *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*, contains entries on Convicts and Bushrangers, Aboriginality and Feminism but nothing on Christianity, Catholicism or Religion in general. I do not suggest that religion was never a subject of Australian fiction or autobiography, but it was a theme more often tackled from outside than within, as something to be escaped rather than embraced.

By the late twentieth century, however, a growing number of Australian writers began to chafe against the aesthetic and emotional strictures of secular humanism. They were in revolt, not only against what they saw as the soulless conformity of Australian suburbia, but against a literary orthodoxy that seemed to have no room for the miraculous and the transcendent. In his 1961 novel *Riders in the Chariot* the most famous of Australia's novelists, Patrick White, recounts the spiritual odyssey of four suburban eccentrics — an old spinster, a Jewish refugee, a housewife and a part-Aborigine— and their mysterious encounters with the divine. With its mysticism and its themes of sacrificial death and transfiguration, White's novel was a disconcerting arrival in a literary landscape previously inhabited only by laconic bushmen and sentimental balladeers. Like several of his contemporaries — the poet A. D. Hope and the historian Manning Clark—White had been drawn towards Catholicism, and his entire life can be seen as a search for a religious vision of life. 'I am always hoping for the miracle', he writes in his autobiography after a 'pilgrimage' to visit monasteries in Greece. It was a hope that seems sadly to have eluded him. 'You reach a point where you have had everything, and everything amounts to nothing', he concluded. 'Only love redeems.' By love, however, he meant only the love of one human for another: divine love, a love lavished on all of humankind, was something he neither dared to believe, or even to desire.¹⁰

Christianity, especially Catholicism, had a stronger appeal to some poets, especially to those, like James McAuley, for example, who rejected modernism and wanted to ground Australian literature firmly in the European classical tradition. In his poem entitled 'In the Twentieth Century' McAuley confessed a lurking fear that the spirit of the twentieth century was somehow at odds with the spirit of Christ:

Christ, you walked on a sea
But you cannot walk in a poem,
Not in our century.

There's something deeply wrong
Either with us or with you.¹¹

Poetry, McAuley suggested elsewhere, was like a shaft of light into a spiritual realm seemingly inaccessible to many modern writers.

And poems are prophecy
Of a new heaven and earth,
A rumour of resurrection.¹²

It's an idea confirmed by other writers recoiling from the strictures of Modernism, 'I found modernism not good enough. . . not satisfying to the spirit', Australia's greatest living poet, Les Murray, confessed in a recent interview. Human beings, he decided, are not just rational but poetic. 'They form their views of the world out of a mixture of dreaming and feeling and passion and gesture and thought and wishes, and this is exactly like the way you form poems. And they don't call them poems though, they call them philosophies or religions, or ideologies or marriages or hobbies or whatever.'¹³ Murray, had been reared as a Free Church Presbyterian but in his twenties, after a period of intellectual turmoil, he converted to Catholicism, a faith that he came to feel offered more scope for poetry than the more prosaic faith of his fathers

Prose is Protestant-agnostic,
story, discussion, significance,
but poetry is catholic;
poetry is presence.¹⁴

There is more than a little truth in Murray's aphorism: consider how many Australian historians and novelists, and how few significant poets, are Protestants; and how many poets, in addition to Murray himself, are Catholics or Anglo-Catholics. Murray is unabashed about his Christian faith: the most recent edition of his *Collected Verse* is dedicated 'To the Glory of God'. I can think of no other Australian poet who has been able to express religious faith so convincingly in an Australian idiom and within an almost sacramental vision of Australian rural life.

Fiction, by comparison, may be a less congenial medium to express religious truth. 'Faith will always be a more comfortable fit with poetry,' the Western Australian novelist Tim Winton concedes. 'The novel creaks a bit and in a post-Enlightenment culture, hostile to notions broader than the narrow materialism we've inherited, it's a bigger challenge still.'¹⁵ Winton's early novel *That Eye, the Sky*

draws heavily on early memories of his own family's experience. His father is reduced to a cripple in a car accident and in the tragic aftermath, he and eventually the entire family are converted to Christianity, Combining pathos and humour, down-to-earth realism and an almost ethereal sense of the sacred, it is perhaps the most sympathetic evocation of religious experience in recent Australian fiction.

At the threshold of the twenty-first century Australian culture is in many ways more hospitable to the spirit of religion, including Christianity, than it was when A. G. Stephens wrote of its 'sceptical, utilitarian' temper and prophesied the inevitable decay of orthodox religion. Paradoxically, as orthodox religious observance declines, the broader culture has seemingly become more open to the transcendent. In the space vacated by Modernism and the retreat from Enlightenment values, writers and painters seek to reclaim a sense of the miraculous and the supernatural. In the last quarter-century we have witnessed a profound shift in western societies away from the rational, universal values of the Enlightenment, a new openness to 'the spiritual' in all its forms. 'I'm spiritual, but not religious' is one of the catchcries of our times. Within Christianity we have seen the spectacular growth of Pentecostalism and greater acknowledgement within all the churches to the experiential, emotional and aesthetic dimensions of belief. Meanwhile many Australians now seek a sense of the sacred in Buddhism, Jungian psychiatry, the New Age, witchcraft, or in an imaginative appropriation of Aboriginality. In 1968 the Melbourne University poet and critic Vincent Buckley published a book, *Poetry and the Sacred*, exploring the relationship between Christianity and literature in the work of seven English, Irish and American poets. Thirty years later two other Melbourne University academics, Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs published *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postmodern Nation*, a study of the ways in which Aboriginal ideas of the sacred now permeate the culture of modern Australia. ¹⁶ The sacred does not displace modernity, but now seems to dwell within, or alongside, it, inviting the previously sceptical to contemplate dimensions of personal experience hitherto ruled out of consideration.

How do these recent shifts in Australian culture connect with our Christian heritage? I began, you will recall, by suggesting that our heritage is something that we constantly reappraise, a rich stock of previous experience on which we draw as we meet new challenges and circumstances. In searching for an Australian Christian heritage there is perhaps an assumption in some minds that, having recovered it, we can somehow return to a golden age of faith. There is little in Australian experience to confirm such a belief. Christianity, for good or ill, is not something that has been part of the idiom of Australian public culture in the way it is in the United States.

But America, as I suggested earlier, may be atypical of western experience and the kind of merging of Christian and national cultures that we have witnessed under the Bush presidency may carry dangers as well as benefits. In Australia Christian writers, painters and musicians have generally occupied a position outside the secular, sceptical mainstream of Australian culture. This may have been no bad thing, either spiritually or artistically. Artists, after all, are the prophets of our society, often finding words or images for insights and feelings that others only glimpse.

From the vantage point of many Christians, some of the tendencies in contemporary Australian culture – New Age spirituality, for example, or the imaginative embrace of Aboriginality– look misguided. The New Age lacks the deep roots, the ethical and spiritual richness, the communal depth and redemptive hope of Christianity. These movements sometimes speak, however, to questions that Australian Christians have not always answered well – our relationship to the Australian environment or to the Aboriginal people, for example. We may yet learn something from Aboriginal Christians about how much of our Christian and Aboriginal spirituality can become a common heritage. We have much to learn too from contemporary Christian writers, like Les Murray and Tim Winton, for example, who have shown how faith can speak anew to questions of Australian identity and of our relationship to the land, as well as the eternal questions of suffering and death. Like Jesus himself, these poets and novelists often speak in parables, appropriating everyday stories and images that reach below the laconic, crack-hardy surface of Australian life and point towards the divine. They show how Christians can live within the culture, while never quite being of it. To my mind, it is the most attractive, though not the only model, of Christian discipleship in an age where the secular and the sacred are now perhaps more open to each other than at any previous time in the past century.

Notes

1. For ideas of heritage see David Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, New York 1996, and Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, Sydney 2000, pp. 110-130.
2. K. S Inglis, *The Australian Colonists*, Melbourne 1974, pp. 83-4.
3. Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria 1837-1890*, Melbourne 1961, p. 502.
4. Victor Kennedy and Nettie Palmer, *Bernard O'Dowd*, Melbourne 1954, p. 89.

5. John Hirst, *Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth*, Melbourne 2000, pp. 3-7.
6. See for example K. S. Inglis, *The Australian Colonists*, Melbourne 1974, p. 82 but compare Richard Ely, 'Secularisation and the Sacred in Australian History', *Historical Studies*, vol. 19, no. 77, October 1981, pp. 553-566.
7. A. G. Stephens, 'For Australians', *Bulletin* 9 December 1899 as in Leon Cantrell (ed.), *A. G. Stephens: Selected Writings*, Angus and Robertson 1977, pp. 393-399.
8. Henry Lawson, 'The New Religion' (1890) in his *Autobiographical and other Writings 1887-1922*, edited by Colin Roderick, Sydney 1972, pp. 16-17.
9. Richard Broome, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels: Protestant Christianity in New South Wales Society 1900-1914*, UQP, St Lucia 1980. p. 19; compare with Rodney Tiffen and Ross Gittins, *How Australia Compares*, CUP, Melbourne 2000, pp. 240-241.
10. Patrick White, *Flaws in the Glass: A Self-Portrait*, Melbourne 1981, pp. 197, 251.
11. James McAuley, 'In the Twentieth Century' (1969), in James McAuley, *Collected Poems*, Sydney 1994, pp. 242-243.
12. McAuley, 'Credo' in his *Collected Poems*, p. 235.
13. Les Murray interview with Peter Thompson, date 27 March 2005 <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/bigidea/stories/s1328163.htm> and compare with his poem, 'Poetry and Religion' in his *Collected Poems*, p. 267.
14. Les Murray, 'Distinguo' in his *Collected Poems*, Manchester 1998., p. 348.
15. Tim Winton, Interviews with Sarah Barnett, at http://www.sydney-anglicans.net/indepth/a_beautiful_mind_an_interview_with_tim_winton/ and Rachel Kohn, 2004 at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/spirit/stories/s1198547.htm>
16. Vincent Buckley, *Poetry and the Sacred*, London, 1968; Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs, *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postmodern Nation*, Melbourne 1998.

Christianity and the Social Services in Australia: A Conversation

Stephen Judd and Anne Robinson

Anne

This forum is about Australia's Christian heritage and we have been asked in this paper to focus upon social services in this context. For the purposes of this short paper we are taking social services to mean human services both within Australia and overseas that assist the welfare of individuals and families: it includes, but is not limited to, emergency relief, housing and supports, assistance for the poor and the homeless, child care, youth services, aged care and health care.

Stephen

In many ways, this must be the easiest paper to deliver at this Forum. Prior to the Second World War, social services were almost entirely delivered by charities and most of them were started by Christians: for example in NSW, the Benevolent Society was established in 1813 and was the first charity in Australia. While it is now no longer a Christian organisation its original name was the "NSW Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Benevolence in these Territories and the Neighbouring Islands". The men who founded it had mainly served as missionaries of the London Missionary Society. The founders were keen on evangelism as much as relief of poverty and distress, but Governor Macquarie leant on them to focus on the latter object – and on the colony rather than the South Pacific.

In fairly quick succession district nursing services started (1820), asylums opened for the poor, blind, aged and infirm (1821), maternity hospitals (1866) and the first Women's Hospital in Australia commenced (1901). In 1862, Sydney City Mission, "an unsectarian Christian organisation" began to address poverty, and soon similar missions were in Brisbane (1859) and Adelaide (1867). Vincent de Paul started its services in Sydney in 1881. Homes of Peace were established to provide palliative care by charities such as the Little

Company of Mary and Homes of Peace Hospitals (now Hope Health Care).

The organisation of which I am Chief Executive had its origins from the social services provided by the Anglican Church at St Barnabas Broadway where RBS Hammond was minister at the start of the 20th Century: during the Depression years his Hammond's Social Services was the largest social service outfit in Sydney.

Around the country, the distribution to the poor of food and clothing, of housing relief or district nursing support or asylums for destitute children or the aged or the dying - social services - prior to the Second World War were overwhelmingly provided by Christians. Our largest overseas aid and development organisation, World Vision Australia, began 40 years ago this year - in 1966.

Anne

Why? Why was this so? What was their imperative? Were they just Christian do-gooders? Well, their clearly articulated and understood motivation for this activity was Christian compassion with a religious imperative in the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome, naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me... whenever you did this to one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me.¹

But society generally, and in particular government's role, has changed since these organisations began. After the Second World War and, indeed, throughout the second half of the 20th Century, the State throughout the Western World took an increasing interest in the provision of social services. Jonathan Sachs (who until recently was the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth) refers to this as the "nationalisation of compassion". The increasing expectation was that it was up to the State, not the individual or the community group, to be responsible for social services. Charity - once needs-based now became universal entitlement. The result was that in Western countries, Compassion was nationalised.²

Stephen

The interesting thing is, however, that this trend to increased State involvement in social service provision differed markedly in Australia compared to the United Kingdom (and indeed Europe and Scandinavia generally) as well as the United States. In Europe these social services were viewed as "public services" delivered by the bureauc-

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racy or government-run departments or local authorities. In the UK there was huge growth in the provision of social services through the local government authority or through local health Trusts.

That is not what happened in Australia. In Australia, government took the view – in the main – that there already were charities delivering these services. It would be more effective and efficient if the increased government funding of these areas occurred through government subsidy of those existing services rather than by a replication of them through the creation or growth of government departments.

The effects of this decision has had a profound impact on the character and nature and size of charities and non-profit organisations in Australia compared to the UK or, indeed, in the US.

Top 25 Non Profit Organizations: US – 2001

		Income \$m	% Public Support
1	Lutheran Services in America	7,655	23
2	The National Council of YMCA's	4,123	19
3	American Red Cross	2,712	24
4	Catholic Charities USA	2,621	15
5	United Jewish Communities	2,231	94
6	Goodwill Industries International	1,941	15
7	Salvation Army	1,915	74
8	Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund	1,251	84
9	Boys & Girls Club of America	998	43
10	American Cancer Society, Inc	923	83
11	The Metropolitan Museum of Art	763	65
12	The Nature Conservancy	732	63
13	Boy Scouts of America	727	40
14	Habitat for Humanity International	690	61
15	Gifts in Kind International	681	99
16	Girl Scouts in the USA	680	20
17	Planned Parenthood Federation of America	661	29
18	America's Second Harvest	652	99
19	YWCA of the USA	646	25
20	Volunteers of America	592	14

21	Easter Seals	583	23
22	Public Broadcasting Service	537	48
23	World Vision	529	75
24	American Heart Association	503	81
25	Smithsonian Institution	499	31

If you look at a list of the top US charities by income you will notice that there are organisations like Boy Scouts, Goodwill Industries, Cancer and Heart foundations, arts charities and the like.

You can see here that 5 of the top 25 non-profits in the US are Christian and another 2 (the YMCA and the YWCA) had Christian roots. There is another faith-based non-profit in the league table – the United Jewish communities. So, at most you could suggest that 25% of the top US charities were Christian.

But the top 25 are not predominantly Christian, nor are they predominantly focussed on human social services.

Top 25 Charities: UK - 2005

		Income £m
1	British Council (The)	473.35
2	Nuffield Hospitals	456.21
3	Cancer Research UK	384.23
4	Arts Council England (The)	378.66
5	Allchurches Trust Ltd	344.15
6	Disasters Emergency Committee	343.36
7	Wellcome Trust (The)	301.30
8	Charities Aid Foundation	262.88
9	Oxfam	253.30
10	National Trust (The)	252.08
11	Anchor Trust	227.39
12	CITB-ConstructionSkills	216.34
13	NCH	207.20
14	Barnardo's	177.37
15	British Red Cross Society (The)	160.30
16	Royal Mencap Society	157.61
17	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance	151.13
18	British Heart Foundation	144.98

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19	Centre for British Teachers (The)	143.77
20	Leonard Cheshire Foundation (The)	135.13
21	Save the Children (UK)	131.01
22	British Library (The)	121.01
23	UFI Charitable Trust	118.88
24	Royal National Lifeboat Institution	117.30
25	Church Commissioners for England	116.10

If you look at the UK, once again you have arts, advocacy groups like Cancer and Heart and research organisations like Wellcome Trust but there are about 40% that are providers of social service like Oxfam or emergency relief or Mencap which advocates for people with disabilities. But, and here's the interesting thing, you can see here that there are only 3 of 25 of these Top UK charities or non-profits that are Christian – and one other – Barnardo's – that has had a Christian heritage. And one of those three is the Trust that runs insurance companies like EIG-Ansvar! So, the Christian presence at the top of what they call in the UK "The Third Sector" is almost entirely absent! Even if you go to the Top 50 by income it is still less than 20%.

Anne

The situation is completely different if you look at Australian charities. You can see here that 23 of the 25 Top Australian charities based on income are Christian.

Top 25 Charities: Australia – 2004,5

			2005 \$m	2004 \$m
1	Catholic Education NSW	Catholic	1,983.7*	1,836.8*
2	Anglican Schools (national)	Anglican	1,558.2*	1,442.8*
3	Catholic Education Victoria	Catholic	1,479.0*	1,369.4*
4	Catholic Education Queensland	Catholic	905.7*	863.6.*
5	Sisters of Charity Health Service	Catholic	875.9	808
6	Uniting Care Queensland	Uniting	731.6	710
7	RSL Care	None	648.0*	600.0*
8	Salvation Army Australia	Salvation Army	642.0*	625.4
9	Uniting Care NSW & ACT	Uniting	578	500
10	Uniting Church Schools	Uniting	561.4*	545.0*

11	Australian Red Cross (national)	None	527.7	374.5
12	Catholic Education Western Australia	Catholic	525.2*	472.1*
13	Non-denominational schools	Christian	512.2*	474.3*
14	St John of God Health Care	Catholic	510.2	439.4
15	Catholic Education South Australia	Catholic	396.7*	367.3
16	Cabrini Hospital	Catholic	378.0*	350.0*
17	World Vision of Australia	Christian	364	234.4
18	Little Company of Mary Health Care	Catholic	356	318.2
19	Christian Schools	Christian	324.6*	315.1*
20	Lutheran Schools (national)	Lutheran	293.5*	271.8*
21	Sanitarium Health Foods	Adventist	275.0*	330.0*
22	Catholic Church Insurances	Catholic	273.7	270.9
23	Uniting Care South Australia	Uniting	250	220
24	Mercy Health & Aged Care Victoria.	Catholic	215	210
25	Mission Australia	Christian	211.8	182.6

*estimates

If you then exclude those that are focussed on education, they are almost all focussed upon social services. The number that is Christian is still very high - 19 out of the top 25 (and one of the non-Christian six – the YMCA) had a Christian heritage.

Top 25 Charities: Australia, excluding educational – 2004,5

			2005 \$m	2004 \$m
1	Sisters of Charity Health Service	Catholic	875.9	808
2	Uniting Care Queensland	Uniting	731.6	710
3	RSL Care	None	648.0*	600.0*
4	Salvation Army Australia	Salvation Army	642.0*	625.4
5	Uniting Care NSW & ACT	Uniting	578	500
6	Australian Red Cross (national)	None	527.7	374.5
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10	Little Company of Mary Health Care	Catholic	356	318.2
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12	Catholic Church Insurances	Catholic	273.7	270.9
13	Uniting Care South Australia	Uniting	250	220
14	Mercy Health & Aged Care Victoria.	Catholic	215	210
15	Mission Australia	Christian	211.8	182.6
16	Epworth Group	None	200	187
17	Uniting Care Victoria & Tasmania	Uniting	195.5	190
18	Sydney Adventist Hospital	Adventist	166	149.5
19	YMCA Australia	None	157	133
20	Baptist Community Services NSW & ACT	Baptist	142.4	118
21	St Vincent de Paul Society NSW and ACT	Catholic	126.4*	109.0*
22	Catholic Healthcare Services	Catholic	122.0*	98.0*
23	Diabetes Australia'	None	108.5	97.7
24	Endeavour Foundation	None	104	94.4
25	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	Mormon	103.0*	100.0*

Interestingly, the picture is similar if you look at overseas aid. World Vision Australia, a Christian organisation, is the largest charity focussed on this sector in Australia (Australian Red Cross is nearly as large until you take out their local blood services), while the largest in the UK is Oxfam which is not Christian.

The largest two in the US (again excluding American Red Cross) are Christian – Habitat for Humanity and World Vision UK.

However I think it is necessary to distinguish here the position of domestic social welfare service organisations and those engaged in overseas aid and development. In overseas aid and development the State has a relatively poor record in funding. The Australian government's contribution has been steadily declining as a % of GNP over the past 30 years from about 0.5% to less than 0.3% GNP, while the country has been getting richer. Another difference is that the Australian government has also over the past few years been increasingly delivering its aid and development funding through for-profit organisations, and allocating significant amounts in recent years to our own "border protection" instead of the neediest situations in the

world. So it is interesting - in Australia, UK and US the ratio of public donations to government support of World Vision (as an example) is much the same: very high – between 75-84% from the public.³

But notwithstanding this, the Australian government does regulate overseas aid and development organisations to a very considerable extent – all organisations receiving tax deductible donations for work overseas must have AusAID accreditation, and they are – quite appropriately - restricted in the application of these funds for “Christian witness”.

So, these comparisons show that the involvement of Christians in the provision of social services in Australia has been profound – indeed striking. But, more than that, they have been unusual. I do not for an instant think that Christians in other countries are not philanthropic, so why has the Christian influence in the provision of social services been so pronounced here in Australia and far more modest in, say, the UK?

Stephen

The reasons, I think, are clear:

§ First, in the pre-WW 2 years, when there was little involvement of government in these services, it was the church and Christian charities who were doing it.

§ Second, when the State became involved in the latter part of the 20th Century in this area of service provision, it decided in Australia (at least for domestic social welfare services) to work THROUGH the existing service providers rather than, as in the UK, establish their own infrastructure.

The result is that there is not only a Christian heritage in social service provision in Australia – there is an overwhelming Christian presence today in the provision of social services – and these institutions are arguably some of the most efficient and effective to be found internationally.

Anne

So, can this relationship in Australia between Christian charities and the State continue? What are the dangers and likely impediments to an effective, continuing relationship?

Stephen

The relationship in Australia is **not intentional and has not been thought through - it has just happened**. In the past, it suited both parties – Christian charity and the government – for this relation-

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ship to develop. But not a lot of thought has been given to the nature of the relationship. In the United Kingdom, government contracting of services to the private sector occurred in the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher through the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering and, interestingly, the involvement of the Third Sector – non-profit organisations – has only occurred in the last 10 years or so. Over this time the local authority has had less responsibility for the delivery of social services as government has concluded that the NGOs can do it better.

The result for the British is that, because the change has been more intentional, the relationship has been more considered. In 1998, there was a COMPACT, an agreement between the charities and government on how they would work together – importantly, it recognises two things: the right to advocate, and the right of independence irrespective of funding.

On the part of Government in Australia there has been a lot of focus on the WHAT and the HOW of service delivery, but there has not been much consideration of the WHO and the WHY. They have forgotten the benefits of having the NGOs undertake these services. Arguably there is a practical benefit. There had been, at least in the past, less bureaucracy and, consequently, greater flexibility. Now, rules and regulations threaten to stifle the very reason that the NGOs were involved in the first place: which is their ability to quickly **identify and address unmet need** and then be **innovative in the services** that are delivered.

Anne

On the part of the Christian charities themselves, there is a risk that they too have forgotten the WHO and the WHY and have become overly focussed on the WHAT and the HOW - that they don't know who they are: that they have lost their organisational identity.

There is, in short, a risk that the relationship will founder because each party does not know – or respect – who the other party is and why they are working together.

There are four areas in which these tensions are starting to emerge: employment, Christian witness, over-prescriptive regulation and finally advocacy.

Stephen

First in relation to EMPLOYMENT then, let us take a real life example. A State government department wants a “service provider” to run a program for socially disadvantaged women in a regional setting. The contract provides that that the government department will have a representative on the interviewing panel for the senior

manager for this program. A Christian charity wins the contract. The forceful person from the Department decides that the person for the job is an openly non-Christian person. The Chief Executive of the Charity disagrees and says this is not acceptable. Its policy of employing Christians in key positions is non-negotiable. There is a stand-off. The stand-off can only be resolved in one of three ways: either the Christian charity dilutes its organisational integrity and gives in; or the charity – which presumably won the contract because it was the best organisation to run it - withdraws from providing the service; or the Department backs off.

Now, what's wrong here?

Anne

There are a number of issues: one is that there is pressure on religious charitable institutions to think that it is unlawful for them to discriminate on the grounds of religious belief when employing people. Under Australian anti-discrimination legislation (which is based on the UN Human Rights instruments) ⁴ employing a person who is actively supportive of the organisation's ethos and values is generally not unlawful. ⁵ It is unlawful for the organisation which is not intentional and up-front about its ethos and religious foundations and this is reflected in its job descriptions.

However religious charitable institutions must also be vigilant and not forget who they are. In the current climate they will need to jealously guard their religious freedoms – there has been a notable failure in some State legislatures (I am thinking particularly of Victoria) adequately to uphold the right of religious expression through the establishment and maintenance of charitable institutions.

It is usually the case, at least in my experience, that the actual regulatory or contractual obligations that apply in such situations are not as restrictive as we are sometimes told. It is very important to check these regulations and contracts carefully to see what they actually say.

Stephen

From my perspective as a Chief Executive of a Christian charity, we hire our people, not anyone else, and those people must be aligned to WHO we are and WHY we do things. That does not mean we only hire Christians, but we do insist that all staff understand and respect the Christian motivation of the organisation and work to support it.

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Anne

Some organisations do operate on the basis that all their employees must be faith aligned: others on the basis that there are key positions which must be filled with appropriately aligned employees or their mission will be compromised. All organisations fit somewhere on that continuum.

Stephen

The second area of tension is CHRISTIAN WITNESS AND HOW IT RELATES TO SOCIAL SERVICE.

Anne

There are a number of instances where this is an issue – but one that I am aware of is overseas aid and development. Our international human rights instruments, in particular the Religion Declaration, say that the right of religious freedom includes the right of religious expression – including the right: “To establish and maintain appropriate charitable or humanitarian institutions.”

While no reputable Christian humanitarian organisation would find proselytism acceptable (that is, a linking of aid to evangelism or evangelistic outcomes), just how Christian witness (that is: faith in action in life, deed, word and sign) – how Christian witness finds an acceptable place in humanitarian programmes is a complex and sometimes controversial issue – Christian witness can be at odds with AusAID accreditation and the ACFID Code of Conduct. While there seems to be greater acceptance in some quarters of the value of holistic development, including a spiritual component in well-being in communities which are themselves religious, it is still generally the case that governments want the work that Christian organisations do, but they are not always comfortable with their “religion”. This has been the case not only in humanitarian aid and development, but also more broadly in social welfare activities.

Stephen

The third area of tension is over REGULATION. The issue of over-prescriptive regulation is not un-related to Christian witness. It comes from a funder – the Government – increasingly telling the Christian charity what to do and how to do it and what not to do. Now, I am not talking about quality standards here. One former Minister for Ageing is present at this Forum and I want to make it clear that quality standards is one area that have improved in the area of health and aged care: having for example minimum standards for buildings or ensuring operators of health services have good systems and the like. I am not talking about that: that, in a sense,

is the funder saying that the community expects these minimums if we are going to fund the programs.

But let's take the example of health care in the hospital system. Both community and the State have benefited from the long involvement of Christian charities in the establishment and running of hospitals. Today, for example, the Little Company of Mary is the 18th largest charity in Australia and runs hospitals, palliative care and aged care facilities throughout Australia. One of the strongest symbols for this Order is the image of Mary the mother of Jesus standing by the Cross: it is a symbol that is saying, "Be comfortable in the presence of death". The Little Company of Mary is not a precious organisation and it is also a very inclusive organisation as to whom it hires and whom it works with.

But there are some things that the Little Company of Mary WILL NOT DO. The Order will not countenance the performance of abortions or sterilisations in its hospitals. And, I understand, these clearly-stated proscriptions have led in one or two areas for extremely tense relationships between the Company of Mary and the State or Territory government with threats about cutting funding and the like. Now, I don't speak for the Little Company of Mary but I think it will be a very cold day in the nation's capital before they agree to subvert their beliefs about abortion. In fact, they are more likely to withdraw from the sector or the locality before they do that. Governments need to think very carefully: they might wind up having to pay hundreds of millions of dollars for infrastructure such as hospitals to provide services that are currently owned and provided by Christian charities.

Anne

Another example is the danger of government assuming that because they fund a project, the Christian charity providing it is merely an adjunct of government: little more than a government contractor. In the health and aged care sector there are a number of program contracts issued by the Australian Government which suggest that at the end of the contract the service provider is to hand over all their systems and employees to a new service provider. Can you imagine IBM being told that it had lost the mainframe maintenance contract to Fujitsu and they were to hand over all their systems and people to Fujitsu? There would be great hilarity at the suggestion.

Stephen

However, government at both the bureaucracy and the political level, think that should be tried on at the social service level. Christian charities as providers of social services that are subsidised by government should resist becoming mere government contractors. For

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its part, government should recognise that there are huge benefits in them not being intrusive in this way and retain an arms length approach and be a regulator of outcomes rather than a director of inputs and processes.

The other issue here is that Governments need to recognise why they have funded charities – whether Christian or non-Christian – in the first place. Charities are in the business, I believe, of taking risks for people whose lives are at risk. Government departments are not, in the main, populated by people who are risk-takers. So, Governments can stand apart from the charities and may even provide pilot or seed funding for social service innovations run by Christian charities with minimal damage to the Government.

Anne

The final area of tension – and the most contentious at the moment – is ADVOCACY. In Australia government would prefer, naturally enough, not to be embarrassed by credible charities which are involved in the delivery of social services. The result is that many government contracts have Non-advocacy clauses in them. In other words, you can do the social service OR you can advocate but you can't do both. These are the “Mind what you say or you'll lose your funding” approach by government to the charitable sector. It is an erosion of independence which I think benefits neither the charities nor the government.

Stephen

Lord Victor Adebawale is the only dreadlocked member of the British House of Lords that I have met. In fact, I am pretty confident he is the only one. He pours scorn on the idea that one sector should be prevented from ‘advocacy’.

“The private sector also campaigns...If you want to look at campaigning look at the private sector. There is massive lobbying by the private sector: at the Houses of Parliament you go there around lunchtime and you see who's lunching with whom – why are they there? They're not talking about the weather! The crass naivety of the suggestion! There is massive lobbying by the private sector!”

“You only have to see the growth of lobbyists and the lobbying industry”. “There is a false separation between advocate and non-advocate. The claim that Third Sector should not be advocates amounts to nothing less than saying that the Third Sector should be discriminated against.”

Anne

So, if advocacy - the influencing of government policy by various means - is alive and well why is government trying to muzzle charities, particularly in the social services?

Stephen

Well, I think it is all a question of who the general public believes. The general public DOES believe what top charities say more than what politicians say. Lord Adebawale says that in his experience: "Most Ministers fear the Third Sector...and particularly high profile charities because the public will believe what they say!" That's why they want to muzzle them. He says:

Politicians want to control any sector that embarrasses them...and the Third Sector will embarrass more than the private sector.

The private sector is smarter in its advocacy. It understands stakeholder diversity and they understand that they have to communicate to different stakeholders differently. They understand differentiation. They might do lunching - but much of their lobbying is called "advertising!"

To attempt to muzzle charities for political comfort might have some short-term benefits but there are few long-term ones. NGOs recognise that advocacy is necessary to bring about the structural and long-term change that is the only way to achieve lasting relief for the recipients of their services. NGOs are often the only voice to advocate for the poor and vulnerable: they are very often the most likely to know what their clients want and what solutions are going to work

Anne

In the interests of a healthy social welfare sector, Christian charities need to hold their ground on this one: good quality advocacy will only enrich the relationship between government and social service providers. If we all become mute in order not to upset funders, it will not be long before no-one is doing any thinking on social and programme improvement.

However, having said that, Christian charities need to learn from others in how best to advocate. Putting out a media release, embarrassing your local member or simply grandstanding to the cameras before talking to government, is very poor advocacy for and on behalf of your constituents. If someone has a complaint about one of our services, I like someone to talk to us first before going off to an external Complaints Commissioner.

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Stephen

An exemplar of effective advocacy is the Brotherhood of St Laurence in Melbourne. Its advocacy is research-based. It will tell you that research demonstrates that every dollar spent on say, childhood literacy in one of its programs saves \$3-\$7 in later life. (More examples from its annual report) I can tell you, when BSL speaks about the issues of the poor in Melbourne, the public and the government there listen. Advocacy cannot be simply bleating and creating media events.

All charities including Christian charities must be allowed, should be encouraged to advocate on behalf the needy. However, they need to do it smarter.

Stephen

So what are we recommending?

§ I think we need in this country a COMPACT between government and charities defining the relationship, and that compact or agreement should affirm or define the following:

§ The independence of charities

§ The nature of contracts between government and charities

§ The right – nay the duty – of charities to engage in advocacy without fear of being ‘sin-binned’ and charities agreeing on the appropriate way to advocate

Anne

§ And we need acknowledgment from governments of the WHO and WHY of charitable institutions, not just the WHAT and HOW – meaning:

§ In EMPLOYMENT – a re-affirmation and balancing of both parts of the human rights instruments – the right of religious belief and expression, as well as the right not to be discriminated against in employment

§ And in PROGRAMMING - an acceptance of the appropriate place of CHRISTIAN WITNESS

Stephen

The danger, if we don't address these, is either

a) Christian charities will simply become little more than government contractors who don't know who they are

or why they exist OR

- b) Christian charities will assert their independence and withdraw from social services that are overly dictated to by Government. The result would be catastrophic for Government. Charities will sell up their hospitals, withdraw from the aged care sector and from adolescent programs, from fostering and adoptions, resulting in massive dislocations.

Anne

There are some who might say that the charities would not do that.

Stephen

Want a bet?

Notes

1. Matthew 25:35.
2. Jonathan Sachs, *The Politics of Hope*, New York, 2001
3. World Vision Australia is 84%, while public support of WVUK is 88% and WV UK is 75%.
4. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) ("UDHR"); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ("ICCPR") (ratified by Australia on 13 August, 1980, also acceded to the First Optional Protocol with effect 25 December, 1991 – this resulted in the passing of Federal Racial Discrimination Act 1975); Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination based on Religion or Belief ("Religion Declaration") (this Declaration declared to be a "relevant international instrument" for the purposes of the Human Rights Equal Opportunity Commission ("HREOC") Act 1986). The Religion Declaration importantly provides that "Freedom to manifest one's religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others." It also provides that freedom of religion includes the right: "To establish and maintain appropriate charitable or humanitarian institutions." (Article 6(b)) In relation to discrimination in employment: International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 111 which provides that any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, is "discrimination" and ratifying states undertake to take measures to eliminate it. However, such distinctions in respect of a particular job based on the inherent requirements of such job are not considered to

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be “discrimination”. (ILO 111 was ratified by the Australian government on 15 June, 1973).

5. For example, discrimination on the grounds of religion in employment is not unlawful in NSW at all; probably not unlawful in Victoria if you are upfront about the inherent requirements of the job and come under the exemptions in ss.75 and 77; likewise in Queensland under the exemption in s.109.

Christianity's Contribution to the Understanding of the Role of the Family in Australian Society

Helen McCabe

I am neither an historian, nor a theologian. So, I shall be speaking today from the experience of a life lived under the influence of an Irish Catholic family, a Roman Catholic Church, the nursing profession with its ethical foundations in the Christian notion of vocation, and the transition from a pre- to a post-Vatican II Catholic worldview (or, that is, a Catholic version of the Reformation). It is also a life currently immersed in the study of health care ethics which includes the study of developments in medical science and public health policy the implications of which often go to the heart of Catholicism, particularly in relation to Catholic conceptions of both human life and the family.

As a Catholic Christian, born in the mid-1950s and nurtured within one of those large, Irish Catholic families that have attracted the attention of comedians and the incredulity of our more reproductively-temperate Protestant neighbours, my actual experience of growing up in a family is very different from what is the case today. I recall, for instance, our kindly neighbours exclaiming: 'Oh! You are having *another* baby, Mrs McCabe! However do you manage? ...' and other such well-meaning comments uttered at the sight of my mother in her well-worn maternity wardrobe. My mother was seen wearing maternity dresses during twelve pregnancies in all, a matter which was a great source of pride to her older children, especially myself who had accepted the idea, imparted by both my mother and the nuns who taught me, that the Holy Spirit must have been suitably impressed with the kind of family we were to have given us so many babies! As the second eldest, I recall being fascinated by the new babies, each of which was a source of pride and joy to us all; indeed, we children would have been baffled, had we entertained the thought at all, by the desire of some to limit the size of their families. But we were only children after all.

For the most part, we were schooled and socialised with other Catholic children from big families: my best friend was the seventh

of fourteen children, and other close friends boasted 6, 8 and 9 siblings. I expect that, at the time, many Catholic parents sometimes wished that the Holy Spirit had not been quite so generous. Nonetheless, prior to the late 1960s, Catholics were famous for raising large families. (Writing about her Catholic upbringing, the Irish journalist and author, Nuala O'Faillon, once wrote that the Irish reproduced as if they were an endangered species!). Those were, of course, materially (and in other ways) simpler times.

Following Vatican II, the newfound availability of the contraceptive pill and, importantly, rising affluence along with greater material expectations, the large Catholic family started to shrink, notwithstanding the promulgation of the papal encyclical, *Humane Vitae*, with its continued prohibition on the use of artificial contraception. In time, Catholics came to find themselves in a society which makes the having of large families exceptionally difficult; social changes begun in the 1960s act (albeit unintentionally) to discourage the large pre-Vatican II family. As a relatively trivial or non-serious example of these changes, I will just mention one at this point: the introduction of compulsory seat belt legislation.

Prior to the legal requirement to wear a seat belt, my family could squeeze up to 9 children and two adults into one Holden car, a feat at which our Protestant neighbours marvelled. This was before the family was numerically complete. As children, we were content to nurse the younger ones, sit on the floor of the car or lie on the back 'shelf' of the old FJ Holden while our parents encouraged peaceful relations between their offspring by conducting singing contests. Our neighbours could hear us returning home to the tune of 'Ten Green Bottles' sung in rounds or Christmas carols in three part harmony, depending upon the season. Of course, this was in Adelaide in the 1950s and '60s where traffic was considerably less dense than it is today. However, once seat belts were imposed upon car travellers, our family outings were seriously curtailed. And that was just the beginning of a range of changes to a society which had, up until that point, been arranged such that it could accommodate even an Irish Catholic expression of family.

The problem of the seat belt legislation is a non-serious example of factors affecting the Catholic family of the time; the decline in the size of the family was due, perhaps, to more socially significant developments within western society. I'll talk more about these later.

What I would like to say at the beginning, however, is that these reminiscences allow me to draw out three themes which I will address today, the first being that social arrangements in Australia were, prior to the 1970s, ordered around the idea that the family is (what the Catholic Church understands to be) the 'basic unit' of

society. Secondly, those arrangements reflected the ideal that the family is the basic provider of social services, particularly of education. And, thirdly, prior to the 1970s, those same social arrangements reflected the ideal that children are properly raised by their biological parents within the context of marriage.

At the outset, I must stress that I am not offering a history of the family, not even a history of the Christian family; instead, in discussing these themes, I am going to refer, simply, to two 'moments' in Australian history: the era prior to the 1960s and the present time. In focusing on these two 'moments', I hope to demonstrate that, firstly, up until the 1960s, Australia's social structures were influenced, primarily, by the tenets of Christianity (including a Christian conception of the family) in ways that many secular commentators overlook, and that, secondly, those structures have been undergoing, since the 1970s, considerable upheaval in relation to a decline in the influence of Christianity.

Some historians and theologians have claimed that the 1960s marked the start of post-Christian Australia. If that is the case then it must be true to say that prior to the 1960s the influence of Christianity on Australian society was, at least, discernible if not, indeed, of primary significance. Of course, that is not to say that Christianity was Australia's national religion; that would be too tall a claim. Yet, Australia was never entirely godless either; even today, most people report believing in a god even if they do not join, or live within, any established religious tradition. Perhaps, what was evident prior to the 1960s was that the majority of Australians *agreed* with the Christian Churches on a range of issues, such as the kind of social arrangements that would be best for us as a society.

It is true that Australian society, as elsewhere in the western world, changed radically following the 1960s. A post-modern world, notwithstanding its claims to tolerance, tends, increasingly, to take a derisory view of the Church. Moreover, whenever those who speak on behalf of the Christian churches enter public debate, there are cries of protest against what some commentators interpret as a lack of respect for the distinction between Church and state that is fundamental to a secular, liberal society. To be sure, it is no simple matter maintaining that distinction given that Australian citizens are also members of other social groups which sometimes include one or other of the Christian churches.

I do not wish to lament the rise of a society which is open, at least in principle, to a greater tolerance of those whose conscientious views differ from those of, for instance, most Christians; indeed, a secular liberal society has much to offer that is helpful in the way of informing relations within a multicultural society, including

relations between the various Christian denominations. If I have any objections at all to the modern, secular, liberal society it is to point out the ways in which the philosophical basis of such a society is, in itself, undermined in cases where the tolerance it professes to uphold is breached in relation to the views of Christians (among others).

Christianity's stamp on the character of the Australian family

The social revolution that was the 1960s gave rise to a number of changes in Australian society, one of which was to move the family from its prior place of significance so that society became a more dichotomous arrangement. Social activity is now thought to occur within one or another of two spheres: either the market or the political realm. Intermediate institutions, including the family, are being overlooked in various, subtle ways. This development has been fostered in a number of respects; along with popular culture, tertiary institutions have become (arguably) the most influential proponents of this dichotomous worldview, as a brief glance at some undergraduate curricula will attest.

As well, prior to the 1970s, the word family had an agreed meaning and structure: a married couple consisting of a man and a woman and the children they created together. The idea that a family could be reconstructed in alternative ways had not been seriously entertained or, at least, had not found any formal acceptance prior to this point in time. Indeed, even the notion of single motherhood was not only dismissed as (what we might call today) 'an option', it was positively discouraged in socially powerful ways. For instance, there were institutions dotted around Australian cities, providing shelter to single women who had conceived out of wedlock. Prior to the 1970s at least, the babies born to these women were adopted; regrettably, the social stigma attached to single motherhood, along with a lack of material support, served to dissuade single women from keeping their babies at the time.

The traditional conception of family holds a place of importance in all societies; even Plato failed to convince the world otherwise. The English philosopher, Roger Scruton, writes that the family plays a vital role in handing on the work of one generation to the next. It also protects and nurtures children, serves as a form of social and economic cooperation, and regulates sexual activity. At least this is so in an ideal sense. Stories of post-war migrants to Australia generally have an economically happy-ever-after ending which would not have eventuated nearly so often in the absence of a stable and secure family structure. Harold James, a professor of history at Princeton, reports that more than three-quarters of registered companies in the industrialised world are family businesses and, in Europe, some of

these include some very large enterprises. I do not know how many Australian businesses are family-owned, but I do know they exist and that they promote themselves accordingly as a marketing strategy.

The Church has always viewed the family as pre-political or prior to the state. It also views the purposes of the market as serving the family. In turn, the flourishing of the family contributes to the common good in ways that are increasingly overlooked in debates about the merits of alternative arrangements. Christian voices have never been silent on this matter and Christian influences have stymied attempts to denigrate the family in a range of respects. So, while various arrangements for co-habitation and parenting now proliferate in ways that would have been unthinkable prior to the 1960s, the Christian conception of family still hovers, sometimes acting as a brake on further experimentation and, at other times, serving as a benchmark against which to measure the success, or otherwise, of 'post-Christian' configurations of family arrangements.

What I would like to do now is to mention some events in Australian Catholic history which have influenced the broader social arrangements of this nation.

Some historical events

I will focus on two matters which are germane, one being the story of gaining state aid to independent schools. I have elected to mention this issue because it represents a very clear and obvious example of the influence of Christianity on Australia's social arrangements. The second story is that of the Catholic social justice tradition and the various encyclicals and statements contained therein which find a remarkable degree of coherence with the social arrangements instituted in Australia prior to the 1970s. It is most likely that these statements were a necessary condition of those arrangements. I will address this matter now before returning to the story of state aid to independent schools.

While the Church has never canonised any particular philosophical theory, it draws upon the natural law to explain its conception of family. Accordingly, it has argued that arrangements for providing for social need ought to be structured around the family. In his 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII conceived of the family as a 'true society' 'anterior to every kind of state or nation, with rights and duties of its own ...'. This view, long-held, is reiterated in the 1944 Social Justice Statement of the Australian Catholic Bishops; in their summary, the Bishops write: 'Australia will be a great and prosperous nation to the extent that its family life is made strong and secure'.¹ The bishops state that it is 'an undisputed fact of history'

that 'a nation grows or declines according as its family life grows or declines'. The bishops go on to suggest that society is conceived, first and foremost, as a collection of families rather than a mass of individuals: '[God] might have drawn other designs [the Bishops write] – but He has decided that human life should begin and be carried on and be passed within family walls ... and has made men and women co-partners with Him in the vital work of creation, ...'²

The Bishops write that, as the 'fundamental unit' of the Christian state (at the time of writing, the Australian bishops did not question the legitimacy of the description of the state as Christian), the family ought to be protected and nurtured under the post-war rebuilding of that state; in particular, the Bishops recommended that measures be taken to address the dwindling birth rate. The post-war baby boom followed the promulgation of the Bishops' Social Justice Statement; even if it was a mere coincidence, it was certainly a development in keeping with the Church's aspirations. Other features explored in the Statement were also realised at the time, such as the payment of 'an adequate family wage' and the provision of unemployment benefits should the need arise (the taxation requirements of each citizen lending legitimacy to claims on social resources). The Bishops also recommended that, in our housing policies, buildings be erected that will be 'true homes' – plenty of space to allow for many children, including space for gardens and for play. Hence, they saw a solution in developing housing estates in country towns or, at least, on the outskirts of large cities according to a general plan of regional development (consider the size of the average Australian home and the growth of suburbia). Hence, we find a range of social arrangements that are supportive of the Bishops' demands, whether they responded directly to them, or not. While other explanations may be forthcoming, it is difficult to see why or how those arrangements would have materialised in the way they did in a complete absence of the Christian influence.

Overall, the bishops' Statement held the family in highest esteem, charging parents with responsibility for educating their children in the virtues and other moral and spiritual bases for ensuring not only the safekeeping of their eternal souls but, also, the necessary moral credentials for good citizenship. In order to fulfil their responsibility, Catholic parents were instructed to enrol their children in Catholic schools. At this point, Catholic families ran into some difficulties, as the state at the time was unwilling to provide public funds to independent schools. A solution to the problem was eventually forthcoming and the telling of the story can serve as a clear and direct example of the influence of Catholic Christianity on Australian society.

The promulgation of particular views in papal encyclicals and Bishops' statements are not given practical expression in the absence of political activity, a task generally left to lay citizens. Bob Santamaria was one such citizen who took up the problem of state aid to independent schools and lobbied, successfully, for its realisation. Following the election of 1961, Santamaria met with Harold Holt. The Liberal Party had won government in this election only because, as Santamaria reminded Holt, of the preferences granted by the DLP. Holt listened and then took the matter to Menzies who, prior to the 1963 election, announced that the Federal government would make capital gains grants to independent schools to build science blocks. Following that announcement, and contrary to its near-defeat of 1961, the Liberal Party won the election with relative ease, increasing the vote from 42.1% to 46%. The Labor vote declined accordingly. Ultimately, the principle of state aid to independent schools was accepted at the federal level in 1963 and at the state level in 1967, solving the problem which had afflicted Catholic parents for a long time in attempting to meet their religious requirements in the absence of economic support. When Santamaria went in to lobby for state aid to independent schools he did so as a matter of justice: he saw that children attending state schools were educated by public monies to which all tax payers contributed. However, children attending independent schools were denied altogether any funding of their education by the State.

The issue of state aid to independent schools has not gone away. I will return to it in a minute. For now I will attempt to show that, since the 1970s, forces have arisen to undermine the Christian conception of family, particularly as it is understood theologically and metaphysically within the Catholic Church. For instance, the rise of individualism which followed World War II has been most influential. As well, the material success enjoyed by Australians has been accompanied, for reasons that are unclear, with a very different view of standards of morality. As well, the advent of artificial reproductive technology, no-fault divorce laws, and de-facto relationships represent arrangements and activities that are at odds with the Church's conception of marriage and family, a conception which has little intelligibility in the public domain where the influence of preference utilitarianism, rights-talk, and a post-modern outlook now dominate. Proponents of 'whateverism' are genuinely puzzled by the objections of the Church to a range of developments that undermine the institution of the family and that puzzlement represents the gulf that has opened up between (at least) Catholic Christianity and the secular world, a gulf so large that attempts to erect a bridge of understanding between the two have largely failed.

The family in a so-called post-Christian world

I began this talk by drawing attention to three themes: firstly, the idea that the family is the 'basic unit' of society; secondly, that the family is, properly, the final arbiter of social services, particularly of those involving children and, thirdly, children are properly raised by their biological parents within the context of marriage. Post the 1960s, however, those arrangements which were reflective of these ideological commitments have been undermined to a considerable degree.

For this reason, the underpinnings and, therefore, intelligibility of the Catholic Christian message often escapes secular society; certain wrongful assumptions are made by commentators who fail to see the deeper understandings of what is being done in the name of Christianity. If you will bear with me while I consider the example of state aid to independent schools again, it is possible to see how this works.

Recently, in her Quarterly Essay on Christianity and Politics in Australia, Amanda Lohrey takes what she admits to be a more cynical view of state aid to Christian schools. She does this by suggesting that, in seeking state aid for their schools, Christian parents are more concerned about their 'hip pocket' than with the social justice issues they promote in public debate. Religious groups, she suggests, are merely self-serving, special interest groups. To understand her point, it is best, I think, to read Lohrey's own words. She writes:

[i]t's here, in the area of public subsidy to church operations that the contribution of the religious lobbies to manifest social inequity is most evident, especially in regard to the privileging of wealthy church schools. All the rhetorical fire-and-brimstone may be about abortion and homosexuality and to a lesser degree euthanasia and stem-cell research, but the real deal is who gets what from the public purse. If this seems an unduly cynical position, look at the outcomes to date. Despite the fact that the ALP espoused policies that were closer to the publicly stated positions of the churches on almost every position – Iraq, refugees, industrial relations, social welfare – this was not enough of a moral incentive to override the perceived threat to church finances, and in the 2004 election the bishops spoke out against Labor on the basis of Latham's policy of reducing state subsidy to the wealthiest of church schools.³

What Lohrey here identifies are the inconsistencies in Christian action in the public domain; to be sure, those who do, *in principle*, concur with the Church line on social justice issues may fail to be true to their convictions when they cast their votes. This creates a credibility problem for the Church, no doubt. Yet, the problem raised by Lohrey is, perhaps, not straightforwardly one of selfish self-interest-*edness* (even if it is not altogether devoid of it). What is evident is the serious misunderstanding of the *religious* motivations which prompt some parents to send their children to Catholic schools.

Of course, the greater affluence generally enjoyed by Christian families in recent decades has acted to obscure those reasons so that private schooling *appears* to be a choice of the more economically and socially privileged, chosen for the sake of preserving those privileges. At the same time, funding of public social services, such as education, has declined under the Howard government so that the disparities between the wealthiest independent schools and the poorest state schools are so wide that it is no wonder that Latham wanted to rescind on the provision of state aid to the wealthiest private schools: to do so would have given, at least, the *appearance* of addressing inequities in our society.

Lohry objects to what she sees as the outcomes of religious lobbying: (on her view) 'manifest social inequity'. To be sure, some Christian parents may be blinkered, screening out the fate of those children who are not their own. However, is the 'manifest social inequity' really an outcome of religious lobbying? Surely this is too swift a conclusion. Could it not be more to the point to say that manifest social inequity exists in society as a function of such arrangements as the present taxation system and other arrangements that act to reserve, for the market, the most privileged of places in society? While it might be understandable that Latham wanted to withdraw funding from the wealthiest of schools (and even some members of the Liberal Party concurred with his view), doing that would not have made a great deal of difference to the lot of the poorest children. Rectifying that problem would require much greater social change, surely.

The pre-1960s Bishops would be puzzled if they read Lohrey's essay in which she describes all Christians who object to extending marriage and the family to arrangements involving homosexual partners as fundamentalists or Christian Right extremists. This seems as unhelpful an understanding of the world as are attempts to divide society, simply, into Left and Right, liberal or conservative, when it is evident that such divisions are too simplistic to be able to explain what is really going on. Yet, it is difficult, in a highly individualist and proprietarian world, to explain the Christian meaning

of marriage and the family in ways that are intelligible. So, when we object to a dismantling of these institutions, secular commentators simply assume bigotry and hatred or, at best, a lack of compassion for those who do not toe the Church line. They are unable to understand the values, principles and understandings that some Christians seek to protect and uphold. Perhaps, the telling of stories might help. I will contribute just two short tales here.

A few years ago, the ethicist Dr. Julian Savulescu, was interviewed on Radio National. The topic of the programme was artificial reproductive technology (ART) and 'designer babies' and Dr. Savulescu argued for greater access to this technology so that parents could have the children they wanted, when they wanted them, and under conditions that suited them (he indicated his preference for a boy with specific physical features who shared his own interests – surfing for example but not music - and a range of other features). After listening to the broadcast, I felt somewhat disturbed by the unbridgeable chasm between Savulescu's worldview and my own, even though we were engaged in the same field of study. In the same week, my hairdresser informed me that his parents, in search of a better life for their children, had migrated to Australia from Malta after their 17th child was born (no prizes for guessing which brand of Christianity they subscribed to). Only 16 of their children made the trip to Australia, however, as one had died at birth. He commented: 'My poor mother – she was grief-stricken for a long time over the little one who died'. The contrast between the two stories could not be plainer.

Social arrangements in a post-Christian world

Today, Catholics have fewer defining characteristics than what was once the case. And the influence of the Church in the public domain is less extensive; Cardinal Pell's AFL predictions aside, the Catholic Church is more often engaged in raising objections to various developments on both sides of politics than in setting, in any obvious sense, the terms for social arrangements. What is evident, however, is that the post-modern world has certainly arrived.

Of course, people still get married and have children. However, what we see is, perhaps, more a hollow semblance of the social institutions that Christianity gave rise to. For instance, in a recent article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Adele Horin remarked that contemporary weddings are often held to celebrate the success of a de facto relationship rather than to sanctify or mark the beginning of marital union: the couple, whose relationship has survived the test of time, the raising of children and other challenges is now celebrated, sometimes 15 years or so down the track of co-habitation, in a

wedding ceremony. So, the outward ritual of the wedding ceremony is what has remained, although its substance is largely changed.

And so has the place of the family. For instance, mothers of unborn babies suffering from abnormalities of one sort or another are often encouraged to have abortions on economic grounds. Similarly, changes to industrial relations legislation suggest that we are now ready to abandon the idea of ensuring a 'living wage' sufficient for supporting a family; the rise of the market, along with its individualistic logic, places that market not only prior to the state but, also, prior to the family.

And to the extent that it is accepted that homosexual couples have a 'right' to parent children, or that children born through ART will be loved better by their parents (in having designed them themselves), then we give up the natural law idea that marriage is a unitive and procreative institution, in which a couple share in the divinely-ordained work of pro-creation. If you ask the Irish how many children they have, they will sometimes preface their response with the phrase: '*we have been blessed with*' 4 or 6 or however many children they have. The idea that children are a blessing is reflected in the language that is used. It would make no sense to the speakers of such a language to talk of having *a right* to have children in the way that is increasingly the case in Australia.

Of course, our social structures are coming to reflect the post-1960s worldview, just as they once reflected the priorities of Christians. While there is much to appreciate in the secular, liberal state, it is, nonetheless, a mistake to leave little room for the fostering and protection of the family. History does teach us (if we allow it to teach us anything at all) that the well-being of society is largely determined by the well-being of the institution of the family. If a specifically Christian conception of family is to be given up, then we need to find an alternative source of support for this most vital of institutions. And we need, also, to bear in mind the plight of those who cannot create a family in a traditional sense so that we do not, as we may well have done in the past, violate *their* dignity in the process.

Notes

1. Australian Episcopal Conference, M. Hogan (ed.), *Justice Now! Social Justice Statements of the Australian Catholic Bishops 1940-1966*, University of Sydney, Sydney, 2006, p. 49.
2. Australian Episcopal Conference, *ibid.*
3. A. Lohrey, 'Voting for Jesus: Christianity and Politics in Australia', *Quarterly Essay*, Issue 22, 2006, p. 64.

Christian Foundations of Australia's Economic Development¹

Ian R. Harper

In May this year, our nation held its collective breath as two Tasmanian miners were rescued from the rubble of a collapsed mine-shaft. Their ordeal had lasted for the best part of a fortnight and received saturation coverage in our media.

I wonder how many people noticed the importance accorded by the secular media to the religious dimension of this event. Prayers across the nation for the miners' safety were a feature of the nightly bulletins. On that unforgettable morning of the rescue, we heard on ABC radio's *AM* program the town's Uniting Church minister, Frances Seen, ringing the church bell, which had last tolled out to signal the end of World War II. Being the Easter season, her words at the time were well chosen: "Today we ring it to herald out that life is coming up that's been confined for so many days." There was television footage of thanksgiving prayers issuing from the lips of the miners and their rescuers, their relatives and friends, and from the wider Australian community; prayers, too, in mourning for Larry Knight, the miner who didn't make it out alive, and for his grieving family.

We should not be surprised that, in the more intense moments of our lives, we human beings are wont to focus on matters of ultimate meaning. But what is interesting is the readiness with which we Australians fall into a Christian mode of response when the chips are down. It seems that, in spite of the seemingly relentless progress of secularism into the homes and lives of everyday Australians, Christianity is still a quietly bubbling spring not far below the surface of our culture. Occasionally—as at Beaconsfield—it breaks through to the surface.

In earlier times, Christianity was a more prominent feature of the Australian way of life. It has permeated and nourished the very roots of our social and cultural framework. It has affected our attitude

to this difficult but wonderful land. It has shaped the way we have grown into a flourishing and *prosperous* nation from inauspicious beginnings as a penal colony.

For—and let us make no mistake about it—compared to most nations in the world today, and compared to the experience of most people in human history, Australia is a remarkably prosperous nation. We rightly engage in heated debate about wages and conditions for employees, about the best way to improve the lot of our poor and marginalised, about bottlenecks in exports, shortages of skilled labour, the need to renew our infrastructure, and so on. But we should never forget that our disagreements are basically about fine-tuning our enormously bountiful engine of wealth-creation—the Australian economy—the envy of many of the world's rich nations, let alone its poor and downtrodden ones.

Our prosperous way of life is an achievement of which we can be proud. But even more, we must be grateful to our forebears—grateful for their enterprise and toil; grateful too, for the dynamic culture in which they themselves were nurtured and which they handed on to us. There is no finer way to demonstrate our gratitude than to value our culture, nurture it in turn, improve it where necessary, and hand it on to our children. A vital element of that process will be to tell the story of how Christianity played a role in shaping the economic development of our nation.

We might begin, in a way, before the beginning, by remembering that Christians had designs on the land of Australia well before British settlement—designs of which there are still traces today. In the early sixteenth century, there was intense rivalry between Spain and Portugal for possible riches that lay beyond the bountiful Spice Islands in the surmised 'Great South Land'. The then Pope—Alexander the Sixth—was petitioned to divide the earth into two hemispheres which these two Catholic nations could then explore, exploit and Christianise. His famous 'Pope's Line' now survives as the inland border of Western Australia.

Later, in 1606, the Portuguese explorer, Ferdinand de Quiros, landed on the largest island of the New Hebrides (today's Vanuatu) and thought he had discovered the great southern continent, which he dedicated to God with the name, 'Southern Land of the Holy Spirit'. The largest island of Vanuatu is still named 'Espiritu Santo'.

At this point, we may observe that, had history taken a different course, Australia might have been settled by Spain, Portugal, or France instead of Britain. But it is no accident that, following settlement by its first inhabitants—the Australian Aborigines—Australia was next discovered and settled by one of these Christian nations

from a far-off part of the planet, rather than by ancient and developed civilisations considerably closer to home such as India, China, Japan or Siam.

The religion of Christianity is distinguished from perhaps all others by its outward-looking imperative to “Go and Teach All Nations”, a teaching not shared by the cultures of Eastern civilisations. To be sure, there were also political and economic forces driving these kingdoms to colonise unknown lands in the southern seas. But it would be a mistake not to factor in as well the evangelistic mandate which has grounded the expansionist tendency of Christianity from its inception.

When Australia was eventually settled by the British in 1788, it turned out at first to be a bitter disappointment economically. New South Wales was far from being an extrapolation of the wealthy Spice Islands that the Portuguese and Spanish had dreamed of. It did not even match the modest expectations inspired by the reports of Captain Cook and his botanist, Sir Joseph Banks.

The plan for settlement devised by the British government had been for a self-sufficient penal colony. It would be of strategic benefit: capable of producing valuable naval stores, such as masts and sails, that would greatly aid the British navy in maintaining an active presence in the Antipodes.

But, in the first two years, the colony had great difficulty keeping itself from starvation. The soil around Port Jackson was found to be poor and much of the grain seed had deteriorated on the long voyage out from England. The livestock and poultry failed to flourish. Sheep were killed by dogs and the only two bulls and five cows ran off into the bush. Catches of fish were miserly. As there was no fresh fruit and few vegetables, scurvy soon set in.

As for the plan to produce masts and sails for the Royal Navy, this too ran aground. The flax and pine trees on Norfolk Island turned out to be unsuitable. So instead of being a generator of wealth and assets for the Crown, the colony turned out to be a considerable burden—indeed, its existence cost the British government one million pounds during the first twelve years of colonisation.

Dark as these early days seemed, the fledgling colony had one asset which would enable it to survive and prosper in the decades ahead. This was the intellectual and cultural capital it inherited as a scion of Western civilization. In common with other Christian countries, this rather odd community looked with openness and optimism onto the world at large. Thus, the Navigation Acts notwithstanding, it welcomed vessels in its ports from all nations as new trade routes and opportunities were discovered. Yankee ships trad-

ing with China, sandalwood merchants moving between the Pacific Islands and Asia, and increasingly in the early 1800s whalers—all began to regard Sydney and Hobart as vital staging posts of trade and refreshment. Australia would arguably not have survived the early hardships had it not been recognised as a trustworthy outpost of Christian civilisation—a welcome port of call.

For the first few decades, Australia consisted of a few ports dotted up and down the eastern seaboard. Sydney Town was largely hemmed in by the seemingly impassable Blue Mountains to the west. What lay beyond was only guessed at.

The next crucial phase in Australia's economic history resulted from the project to explore and map the continent. This paved the way for our greatest and enduring industries, chief among them, wool, gold and wheat.

In those epic achievements of exploration and discovery, we can easily point to the obvious strategic and pecuniary motives. But there is little doubt that the religious consciousness of the great explorers was an important factor which gave them the confidence to drive on into what was for Europeans a strange and dangerous wilderness. Their journals are replete with references to rituals such as prayers for dead comrades, appeals and thanks to Providence and Heaven in times of peril, and with hints of the missionary impulse that impelled them forward.

Thus John Oxley, in 1818, exploring the Castlereagh River, barely escapes a flash flood and writes:

It was most providential that Mr. Evans and his companions crossed the river when they did; a single day might have proved fatal to them. We would fain lessen to our own imaginations the dangers which surround us, and eagerly grasp at every circumstance that tends in any way to enliven our future prospects. That Providence, whose protection has hitherto been so beneficently extended to us, will, we confidently hope, continue that protection, and lead us in safety to our journey's end.

At the end of his life of intrepid exploration, a blind Charles Sturt wrote:

A wish to contribute to the public good led me to undertake those journeys which have cost me so much ... Something more powerful, than human foresight or human prudence, appeared to avert the calamities and dangers with which I and my companions were so fre-

quently threatened; and had it not been for the guidance and protection we received from the Providence of that good and all-wise Being to whose care we committed ourselves, we should, ere this, have ceased to rank among the number of His earthly creatures.

And here a classic instance of the evangelistic motivations of our early explorers: on Monday 23 April 1860, John MacDouall Stuart reached the centre of the continent and climbed the largest peak nearby—now known as Central Mount Stuart.

His journal entry for that day reads:

Built a large cone of stones, in the centre of which I placed a pole with the British flag nailed to it. Near the top of the cone I placed a small bottle, in which there is a slip of paper, with our signatures to it, stating by whom it was raised. We then gave three hearty cheers for the flag, the emblem of civil and religious liberty, and may it be a sign to the natives that the dawn of liberty, civilisation, and Christianity is about to break upon them.

It is important to realise from our contemporary perspective that these explorers were not atypical in their outlook on life, its meaning, and the role they knew Providence would play. These words about the place of God in their lives are written entirely unself-consciously and were not expected to provoke either controversy or derision. Many ordinary Australians of the time, going about their daily affairs, would have held identical sentiments. The world of Australia in the first two centuries was one steeped in a culture with deep roots in the Christian religion.

With the land barrier broken through, a burgeoning wool industry opened up settlement far into the interior. Then gold was discovered in the 1850s and for the next two decades it eclipsed wool as the chief export. The population began to increase substantially. Migrants poured into Australia from the 1840s onwards, with the introduction of assisted passage, further boosted by the gold rushes.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Australia had definitively shed its image as a convict colony, existing politically and economically at the behest of the British Crown. All but one of the colonies had achieved self-government by 1860. Australia commenced an era of economic expansion which would make it one of the world's richest nations in terms of GDP per capita by 1880.

Crucial to that development was the role of foreign investment. Investors back in Britain and Europe took advantage of the oppor-

tunities opening up around the world as the Industrial Revolution internationalised. Australia was caught up in the first great wave of globalisation. Capital and goods moved around the world with much greater ease than they do today. Urgently needed funds began to flow into the colonies as their economies grew and colonial governments saw the need to fund infrastructure, such as railways.

As we know, rational investors are risk averse. They would need to be assured that a young colony at the remote end of the world—one founded as a convict settlement at that—would constitute a venue in which their funds might reap a reliable reward. It was therefore of considerable relevance that Australia was an outpost of the British Empire, and that its political and economic culture was informed by the same principles and values.

The more historically aware would notice the contribution of Christianity in that inherited culture: the insistence on the rule of law and procedural justice; equality before the law of every individual regardless of status or race; the need for transparency in administration and government; the binding nature of promise-keeping and contracts; the limits and obligations of the state with respect to the rights of the individual; and in a wider, moral sense, the virtues of honesty and trustworthiness, of civic duty, of temperance, of the need to provide for one's family into the future.

If Christian principles lay at the heart of the Australian economic culture, they also lay behind efforts to ensure that the wealth thus created was shared with the lower orders of society. In the second half of the nineteenth century, what was known as the 'social question' began to occupy policy debate. Christian churches played a leading role in this discussion in Australia as elsewhere. Whether via the mechanism of a basic—or minimum—wage, introduced in Australia as early as 1907, through state-sponsored social security, through the efforts of our extraordinary network of faith-based and secular welfare organisations or indeed through various philanthropic initiatives, Australians of all stripes have responded to the injunction—immediately recognisable to Christians—that we should care for those less fortunate than ourselves.

Individual Australians have also taken this message to heart, reflecting in the character of their lives the Christian message of love for one's neighbour. This applies no less to Australia's business leaders over the decades than to any other parts of the community. G.J. Coles, a prominent Anglican and Warden of St John's, Toorak, gave liberally of himself and his means to numerous philanthropic causes. Sir Sidney Kidman, a Salvation Army supporter, had a reputation for hard-headedness but in fact proved a generous employer and benefactor to many institutions.

A tour of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* reveals that it was customary for the more successful merchants and businessmen of our first one hundred and fifty years—most of them believers—to dedicate their free time to the support of community causes and their funds to charity. Moreover, special mention is often made of their solicitousness for the well-being of their employees.

Christianity, as I've mentioned, is a universalist religion, which captures in its vision the whole human race. My neighbour is not only my fellow countryman but can be someone across the globe. This too has had its effect on the Australian economy, most notably in the form of the great post-war immigration. Heeding a call from the Vatican, Prime Minister Ben Chifley and his minister for immigration, Arthur Calwell, were Catholics who signed Australia up to the worldwide project of rescuing Eastern European war refugees from beneath the mantle of Communism. Calwell guessed that there would be cultural resistance from a largely Anglo-Australian population to the influx of thousands of Eastern Europeans—many of them Catholics and Jews. He skilfully managed a media campaign appealing to the needs of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electricity Scheme for labourers, and to this added the famous “populate or perish” slogan.

That post-war influx of migrants—which also extended to other Europeans—not only ensured the success of the Snowy project but also shaped corporate Australia in the succeeding fifty years. In virtually every sector of the economy, from real estate and property development to food, manufacturing, and textiles, clothing and footwear, migrants fleeing hardship and outright persecution in Europe have risen to become the dominant leaders. Many of the post-war immigrant business leaders are of Jewish background—one thinks of the Lowys, the Kornhausers, Peter Joss, Abe Goldberg, Joseph Brender, and Ervin Graf, among others.

Even as Christianity has receded from Australian public life, the fruits of Christian love for one's neighbour in distress are strongly evident in the Australian economic and business landscape. These values have, in turn, been complemented by the exemplary contributions of our post-war entrepreneurs, who are distinguished by their gratitude to Australia for giving them a second chance at a decent life.

But is Christianity still relevant to Australia's economic development? I think our reflection today enables us to conclude unequivocally in the affirmative.

No humane economy can succeed without a substrate of ethical and cultural values. Christians believe that their faith is in the

Truth, which will set them free, beginning but not ending with life in this world. This does not mean that economic hardship and suffering magically disappear with the establishment of a Christianised culture. It does mean, however, that decisions will tend to be made in the right order: putting first things first—the dignity of the individual, the importance of family and neighbour, of freedom and commitment, and so forth.

Australia's economic story shows that the billions of decisions, plans and experiments conducted over the past two centuries within the parameters of Christian values have by and large delivered substantial material benefits to most of our citizens. Economic liberty has been a vital element of the formula. So, too, has been a preparedness to exercise that liberty in a virtuous manner. Christianity has enabled us to intuit the proper relation between the two and will continue to do so.

Australia's economic development is very much a success story. Christian values have played a key role in that success, both as motivators of individual behaviour and as the guiding principles of the economic, social and political institutions which undergird our prosperity. Going forward, Christian values can continue to counterweigh the seductive appeal of materialism—indeed, must do so, since an economic system based on nothing but selfishness and greed (“the empty display and false values of the world”, as the Anglican prayer book has it) will eventually implode.

Moreover, in calling people to a life of service and humility, following the example of Christ himself, Christianity seeks to fill and re-fill our wells of virtue in community. No humanly devised ordering of society can survive long without a critical mass of virtuous citizens. Our prosperity must be moral as well as material or it is no prosperity at all.

Notes

1. The author gratefully acknowledges the extensive assistance of Mr Hugh Henry in preparing this paper.

Law and Religion in Australia

Keith Mason

At the time of white settlement in this country, the idea that Christianity was not embedded in the law would have been regarded as a heresy both of a legal and a religious nature. For example, when in 1797 Kenyon CJ effectively instructed a jury to convict the publisher of Paine's *Age of Reason* for blasphemy, he told them that "the Christian religion is part of the law of the land".¹ The Church of England was established by law in England and, to a degree, also in this country. It enjoyed several privileges in the early decades after New South Wales was first colonised. This tended to upset other Christian groups more than church outsiders.

Many rules of the common law, including its crime of blasphemy, were traceable to the Ten Commandments. But it was the law of man and not Scripture that defined the offences in detail, established procedures for trial and determined appropriate punishments. Not every Old Testament crime was punishable under inherited English statute or common law. And sometimes the law imposed different remedies to those prescribed in the Old Testament, as for example in regard to adultery. Australians would always have been uncomfortable with the Biblical penalty of death for that sin.

Furthermore, murder, theft and false swearing are crimes everywhere, not just in the cultures of Jews, Christians and Muslims, the "people of the Book". This suggests, if proof were needed, that guidance about right and wrong derived from Holy Scripture may indicate, not just that something is good for humanity if it is willed by God, but also that God wills that which is by its nature good. Non-Christian and pre-Christian societies have in many instances come to a similar understanding about matters the law should address, perceiving signposts to truth in what Catholic theology calls natural law. There is, of course, nothing wrong with a Biblical source for rules of right conduct. It is just that most people nowadays expect to be given additional justifications in which the values and policies are spelled out.

Claims that Christianity is part of our law are often associated with statements about Australia being a Christian nation. The latter

proposition may be true in terms of predominant religious orientation acknowledged in the Census. But the label tells us little about the nature or depth of religious conviction in this country, or its impact upon the public or private lives of our citizens. In any event, a claim to be a Christian nation should be an acknowledgement of a blessing received and not some badge of national merit. If we have a good system of law and a sound democracy, we should regard these benefits as products of divine grace not things the nation has achieved because many of its citizens have been Christians.

Some claims of biblical pedigree were quite false and only demonstrate our capacity for self-delusion.

Slavery was recognized by the English common law as part of the law of property until the late eighteenth century. Biblical defences of the institution were mounted well into the nineteenth century in the southern United States. In 1843 1200 Methodist clergy owned slaves in that country. It was a famous decision by Lord Chief Justice Mansfield in 1772 that proclaimed slavery within England to be incompatible with the common law. ² Mansfield would have been branded a judicial activist for this bold conclusion had that sloppy term of abuse been in vogue at the time. It would require legislation by the Parliament in the early nineteenth century to ban the overseas slave trade within the British Empire. This only came about through the political efforts of the radical Clapham Sect lasting more than a decade. They were stoutly opposed by traders concerned about loss of profits and bishops concerned about social stability.³ Slavery was not an issue in Australia because convicts provided the cheap labour necessary for our pre-industrial society.

The common law established that it was lawful for a husband to rape his wife and Biblical explanations were offered for this rule. This doctrine lasted until 1991 when it too was overturned through the proper exercise of the lawmaking powers of judges in Britain and Australia.⁴ The biblical principle that husband and wife are "one flesh" also created a strange common law doctrine that prevented one spouse from suing the other in tort. The doctrine, which survived well into the twentieth century, was a perversion of any scriptural principle because it interpreted the "one flesh" metaphor literally and then concluded that one person could not sue himself. The ultimate beneficiaries of this odd rule were insurers of motor vehicles who invoked spousal immunity to avoid having to pay up if a person injured his or her spouse through negligent driving. This so-called Christian legal principle was finally swept away in Australia by the Family Law Act of 1975.

Even sound Biblical authority for particular conduct being right or wrong does not mean that the law should necessarily intrude. Nor

does it indicate what legal response is appropriate.

Different times may also produce different attitudes about the wrongness of particular conduct and the proper sanctions for curbing it. Approaches to child discipline based upon a literal interpretation of the Biblical Proverb about “*sparing the rod*”⁵ are no longer acceptable. Indeed, an Australian parent who caused injury through beating a child would expect to be in trouble with the law.

Societal attitudes may swing from particular conduct being permitted and even morally obligatory, to it being frowned upon morally, then to it being prohibited by law. For example, attitudes to smoking cigarettes in restaurants and burning off leaves in the backyard have changed profoundly in the lifetimes of many people attending this Forum. In times past, each activity would have been strongly encouraged in particular contexts. The moral worm later turned, but when the sanction of public disapproval proved inadequate we resorted to the criminal law. Sometimes things move in the opposite direction: for example, consensual homosexual conduct involving adults is no longer criminal.

We take child sexual abuse much more seriously nowadays than in the past. This has thrown up a fascinating jurisprudential debate in sentencing law. Should a person convicted today of having committed such a crime 30 years ago be punished according to today’s sentencing tariff or the tariff when the offence was committed?⁶ The question raises issues of consistency as well as exposing the tension between the deterrent and denunciatory functions of sentencing law and practice.

The Old Testament distinguishes clearly between crime and sin. Law and morality have always been separate spheres. They generally reinforce each other, but not always. “Not always,” for at least two reasons: because not every human law is just, and because even just laws may be self-defeating.

As to the first reason, Christianity teaches that, while we must respect those put in authority, some laws may be so unjust that a believer’s higher duty to God requires martyrdom unless and until the unjust law can be lawfully overturned.

As to the second reason, we must never forget that law is not an end in itself. Some types of law may lack a sufficiently high level of support to be appropriate for the mere majority to force through Parliament. Other laws may be counterproductive if only because they provoke disobedience rather than compliance. Some laws may simply be too costly to police and enforce. Some good ideas are too nuanced for law and lawyers. No laws are self - executing.

We cannot therefore always look to “the law” to achieve what is good or prevent what is bad. Law and government have limited roles in promoting public welfare and even more limited roles in promoting the Gospel, however we view it.

Sometimes sound laws produce unintended outcomes that are unjust. Sometimes legal rules are invoked inappropriately. Human limitations prevent us from seeing all the consequences of our actions, even those stemming from good intentions. Contracts can become tools of oppression. Statutory schemes designed to confer benefits to the needy can be rorted. Law has its limits and we do not necessarily overcome them by passing more detailed or onerous laws. Sometimes we should be questioning whether our readiness to resort to law is the problem, not the answer.

Law doubtless has an ethical dimension, but, in the words of Cardinal Clancy:⁷

[That ethical dimension] is limited by the law's primary function of maintaining right order in society. While it is of great importance to preserve and respond to the moral dimension, it is even more important to recognize that civil law does not say the final word on morality. Unfortunately, a society that wishes to preserve traditional Christian morality while abandoning the Christian faith on which such morality is founded, more and more looks to the law to be a substitute foundation. Hence, a law to decriminalize a proscribed practice is interpreted by many as a law sanctioning that practice. “Legal” and “illegal” become “moral” and “immoral” respectively. When a society then finds that it cannot preserve a traditional morality without its proper foundation, it takes the easy way out and adopts the current practice – whatever it is – as the new morality, but still looks to the law for its sanction.

Law's greatest limitation is that it depends on human actors for its enforcement. Yet police can overstep the mark, witnesses can be dishonest, confused or biased, judges and juries can make mistakes in forming decisions. The highly improbable happens sometimes. Both the Bible and human experience teach us that terrible miscarriages of justice occur from time to time and that they are not always remedied in the lifetime of the actors. Over the last hundred years or so we have responded by adding extra layers of appeal and judicial review, royal commissions and every manner of inquiry. We have come to believe in Lord Atkins' famous aphorism that “*finality is a good thing but justice is a better*”⁸ as if a choice between finality and justice is always clearly presented. Christians at least should

know that justice and truth are attributes of God, and beyond the complete grasp of sinful humankind no matter how much we aspire towards them.

Australians have always been unhappy with the State assuming the role of moral guardian or religious nanny. Remnants of establishment of the Church of England were swept away by the mid nineteenth century. Since then, courts have bent over backwards to avoid becoming embroiled in religious doctrinal disputes. Indeed, judges have had to remind warring Christians of St Paul's injunction against "*go[ing] to law before the unjust*" (1 Corinthians 6:1-7 (KJV)).⁹

Hostility to any form of theocracy is definitely an aspect of our Australian legal heritage. I also like to think of it as part of our Christian heritage, because it reflects my understanding of scriptural principles about not using the institutions of the State to resolve religious disagreements. Australian law's unwillingness to get involved in theological disputes also stems from our pragmatic spirit and distrust of authority. It is part of the reason why we have not needed to erect a strong wall of constitutional separation between Church and State.

I believe that we are fortunate to have been spared the worst excesses of the legal culture wars we see taking place in North America. In my view, constitutional law is not the place to be having profound debates about sexuality, the nature of marriage, when it is right to have an abortion and who decides, the proper separation of Church and State, or the circumstances in which discrimination is a good or bad thing.

Please understand what I am saying. Individuals have many important rights, human rights, which neither the Government nor Parliament should transgress. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes rights such as:

- § the rights of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion (Article 2);
- § the right to life, liberty and security of the person (Article 3);
and
- § the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 5).

My point is that courts are not the best place to work out and define the content of these rights. If we hand this task over to our judges there are also costs and consequences that must be taken into account.

Topics such as sexuality, the nature of marriage, when it is right to discriminate and when it is not, abortion and the proper separation of Church and State are too important to be sidelined by channelling them into the debating chambers of our constitutional courts. Yet this is what happens if we pass high-sounding Bills of Rights or open-textured anti-discrimination statutes. I do not want decisions about such issues to be set in concrete by a cabal of seven legal scholars in the High Court, no matter how eminent. Legal precedents on constitutional issues become very hard to recall and American experience shows that the stacking of constitutional courts is not a desirable way to address the problem.

Judges are skilled and experienced in the matters of the law and (to a degree) in the way that law intersects with ethics, psychology, politics, public health, economics etc. But judges are not ethicists, psychologists etc and they have no special skills or present mandate to be making society's decisions for it. It is a delusion to think that a few motherhood words in a Constitution or a Bill of Rights can define, let alone resolve, the nuanced issues involved in a proper assessment of such profoundly divisive matters. It is also crazy to think that law's adversarial system is the best place to be thrashing them out. If laws are to be involved in these areas, they require prolonged debate, accurate cost assessment, sharp definition, and a good deal of trial and error. Changes may need to be phased in. Remedies and sanctions may need to be ratcheted up or down over time. Courts lack the means or the expertise of doing these things. Adversarial litigation is not the best place to be attempting to do so.

Only the profoundly naive think that giving judges the role of defining our most contentious and sensitive rights will reduce the heat of debate. Judges have their own passions, even those who loudly proclaim the value-neutrality of the law. One consequence of constitutionalising any issue (ie removing it from the sphere of development through the common law or by Parliament) is that the highest judiciary itself becomes politicised. Candidates for office are vetted for their political correctness in hot political areas, sometimes at the cost of concentrating on their capacity to perform core judicial functions. American experience also shows that politicians may like to talk tough on litmus issues, while hoping (with fingers crossed) that the courts will neuter or strike down the very legislation they have promoted in order to placate single-issue constituents.

Our founding fathers made a deliberate choice to leave State and Federal Parliaments generally free in the matters about which they might legislate. Certain powers were assigned to the Commonwealth Parliament, but few matters were excluded from the reach of all leg-

Past Importance and Future Relevance

islators. We have no constitutional Bill of Rights. Nevertheless basic freedoms are widely enjoyed by those fortunate enough to live in or get to our shores.

One of the few exceptions to the policy of having no constitutionally embedded rights was s116 of the federal Constitution which provides:

The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth.

The provision was framed cautiously and has been interpreted narrowly. This is hardly surprising given that the Preamble to the same Constitution humbly relies on the blessing of Almighty God.¹⁰ Section 116's prohibition does not extend to State laws, it does not preclude government aid to religious institutions and it does not prevent religious displays in the public arena. In theory, Australian Parliaments have considerable scope to legislate in matters religious if they choose. In fact, they have kept away, only intervening to facilitate church governance if there is very high consensus among the adherents of a particular church for this to occur. Our constitutionally laid back polity is free to debate prayers in Parliament and Christmas trees in public schools and public places, but the debate does not take place in the High Court of Australia.

The practical consequence of keeping religious issues out of our Parliaments and Courts has been that, unlike our colleagues in the United States, judges in this country have not been embroiled in the often evanescent culture wars of the day. This has been to the good of our society and most fortunate for those who hold judicial office in this country. Judges have enough to do in the core areas of the law.

Men and women of goodwill who share a common Christian heritage may disagree strongly about what is or should be the law. Christian judges do not always agree about the outcome of a particular case. Christians are on all sides of politics and may tend to disagree on what Biblical values are important as well as the ways and means of giving effect to them. For example, Christians hold widely divergent views about the appropriate levels of punishment of crime and about whether we should allow a fresh start for certain categories of offender.

In public discourse in this country, including legal discourse, there is increasing reluctance to acknowledge the source of genuine

Biblical principles. Citing Scripture may be needlessly controversial or, as I have indicated, positively misleading. Sometimes a Scriptural badge of origin appears to detract from authenticity or at least persuasive appeal. Sometimes it is recognized that Biblical principles are not the monopoly of believers; or even that believers may be amongst the slowest to give them effect.

But at times believers have been silenced by a false argument, much in vogue nowadays. This is the idea that so-called secular policies have free passage into public discourse while faith-based policies must be suppressed on that account. How often have we heard it said that X should keep his religious ideas to himself or at least confine them to preaching to his own flock.

There is a false dichotomy at work here, because all policies have values, including secularly-derived policies. There is, of course, a more fundamental objection, in that free speech is both an important individual right and vital to the welfare of society. There should be no spurious barriers to entry into public debate. With this attempt of modern secular society to gag the religious voice it is hardly surprising that we find modern Christians restating classical free speech doctrines.¹¹ There is an irony here, because in times past it was the Christian mainstream that was unfair to non-Christians in the area of free speech.

Those proclaiming that our laws are value-free or should at least be purged of faith-based values are either deluded or dangerous. National security, self-reliance, the unhindered pursuit of profit, the good of the environment, individual healthiness, protection of the vulnerable, tolerance and privacy are all values. Of course, some of them derive from Biblical principles and have been given effect through law because they are widely supported by voters or embedded in authoritative legal precedents. Of course, some policies in statute and common law will be hostile to gospel values, although one might expect disagreement in identifying them. Those concerned with the law as it should be (ie the public and politicians) and as it is (ie the judges) should be allowed to debate the strengths of relevant values without having to keep silent merely because certain values are labelled as faith-based.

Lawmakers (including our judges, who are responsible for law's application and the development of the common law) bring a diverse range of attitudes to their task. A substantial number of them are practising Christians who hold to an increasingly unfashionable view among Christians (especially evangelical Christians) that the daily vocations of the laity are themselves gospel ministries when pursued with integrity.

From time to time appellate courts have to grapple with legal claims that force judges to confront large issues without the direct guidance of statute or judicial precedent. Two notable examples in recent times were ***Cattanach v Melchior***¹² and ***Harriton v Stephens***.¹³ ***Cattanach*** involved a parent's claim for damages for the cost of raising a healthy but unintended child born because a negligent doctor performed an inadequate sterilisation procedure. The High Court decided by four votes to three that damages were recoverable and were not to be offset by the benefits or blessings stemming to the parent from the birth of a healthy child.

Harriton involved a severely disabled child whose pregnant mother contracted rubella that was not detected through the negligence of her doctor. For the purpose of the case it was assumed that the mother would lawfully have terminated the pregnancy had the doctor diagnosed rubella. By six votes to one the High Court held that the child could not sue the doctor, in effect because she would not have come into existence were it not for the doctor's negligence. The Court held that it was impossible to estimate the damages suffered by the child because a judge has no means of comparing and placing a monetary value upon the difference between a severely disabled existence and non-existence altogether.

In each case the issues were agonised over by a trial judge, three judges in a State Court of Appeal and by all seven members of the High Court of Australia. A vast range of legal and other considerations were taken into account. Many of the judges were at pains to emphasise the law's agnosticism as to the value of life, death or profoundly disabled existence. But the questions to be decided, the legal obligation to spell out reasons, and the conscientious need to wrestle publicly with highly vexing questions ensured that the judgments are replete with a lot of metaphysical discussion. Some of it is thinly disguised under discussion of earlier legal precedents or sociological observations.

In ***Cattanach's*** case, the judges were inevitably drawn into discussing the relevance to the issue at hand of whether a healthy but unplanned child could be regarded by the law as both a "blessing" to the parents and a burden that could be laid at the feet of the negligent doctor. The judges also anxiously considered how the child in question might later react to the news that he was presented as a financial liability for the purposes of the litigation.

Cases such as these force judges to confront literally life and death issues. There were no direct legal precedents in Australian law and a wide range of conflicting overseas ones. Inevitably the judges drew upon personal experiences, values and belief systems. This was entirely proper in the circumstances where, unlike Parliament,

the judges did not have the option of doing nothing on the topic. They had to decide where the loss fell and to explain why.

Often legal policies can be sourced to earlier precedents that appear at first blush to represent a neutral root of title. But on closer analysis they may turn out to be the product of the beliefs and values of judges from an earlier generation. At times, judges quote encyclopaedias and learned works dealing with non-legal issues related to the case. At other times judges have, in Kirby J's words, "*attempted to objectify the foundation for their judgments*" by appealing to the supposed opinion of the fictional character known as the reasonable person.¹⁴ This character is known in England as the man on the Clapham omnibus or the London Underground.

At other times, when faced with cases like this, judges quote great works of literature or Holy Scripture itself to justify, explain or express the profound values they are seeking to capture. To cite Kirby J again¹⁵

Lying deep in many of the judicial opinions are perceptions of moral or ethical factors, illustrated by the recourse to Biblical citations.

Michael Kirby himself has often done this, although in *Cattanach* he chided judges who seek to enforce what he called "judicial interpretations of scripture".¹⁶ He expressly had in his sights Meagher JA who said in an earlier case:¹⁷

Every child is a cause of happiness to its parents. Every parent looks on his child as David did on Absalom, or Oedipus on Antigone. In St John's Gospel (16.21) it is said "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour has come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world."

This was hyperbole, but the basic message was clear. In Mr Justice Meagher's view, the law should endeavour to bring into account the positive side of having a healthy child in any assessment of the financial downside to parents with an unplanned extra mouth to feed.

Kirby J would have none of this reasoning. He said:¹⁸

The language of "blessings" ... is a distraction from the real subject matter of parental claims. Neither the invocation of Scripture nor the invention of a fictitious oracle on the Underground (not even its Australian equivalent) authorises a court of law to depart from the ordinary principles governing the recovery of damages

for the tort of negligence. If such recovery is to be denied, its rejection must find some other and different reasons or another and different law-maker. If there is any area where the law has no business in intruding, it is in the enforcement of judicial interpretations of Scripture and in giving legal effect to judicial assertions about “blessings”...

In my respectful view, citation of the Bible is not an attempt to enforce interpretations of Scripture, any more than a judge who quotes Shakespeare to explain his or her thought processes is trying to enforce the dramatic themes of that playwright. If we want transparency in our lawmakers and judges, then we surely want them to be up front with the ideas moving them to decision-making. A judge’s personal ideas and religious beliefs count for nothing if they conflict with statute or binding precedent. If the judge cannot abide by the judicial oath to do right according to law then he or she should resign. But there are sometimes situations where there is no clear precedent, where the very question to be asked is uncertain and where the answers are highly contestable. The two cases I have been referring to were of this nature.

Hopefully we have not reached the stage that an idea relevant to public or legal discourse is off limits if it is sourced to the Bible or because it forms part of a larger corpus of philosophy or theology. I am pleased to report that, in the New South Wales Court of Appeal decision in ***Harriton***, one Jewish judge cited the New Testament and one Christian judge cited the Old Testament.¹⁹

In modern times, the common law has turned its face against formalism and legal fictions. Judges are expected to explain and justify their actual thought processes and not to cloak them in a fog of legalese. This is a vital aspect of judicial accountability. Of course, it may expose the judge to criticism from legal brethren or outsiders. Such criticism goes with the turf and tenured judges have broad shoulders. The point I wish to emphasise is that the judge’s duty, both as a judge and a person, is to give an honest account of his or her true reasons. If they are unacceptable they may be corrected on appeal, ignored by judicial colleagues on the same appellate bench or overturned by Parliament (at least if the ruling does not involve a matter of constitutional law).

Our Australian legal system is replete with Biblical and Christian values. Its central role is to deliver justice and to settle disputes. It aspires to find out the truth, while recognizing that what is true is not always relevant to the particular legal dispute. The criminal law endeavours to suppress what the Book of Common Prayer describes as “*wickedness and vice*”, while realising that the divergent aims of

penology are hard to reconcile and even harder to achieve across the board.

The human fallibility of judges will ensure that these mighty (dare I say it Godly) goals of justice, peace, truth and goodness are not always attained. But the goals are important enough in themselves. Our legal heritage does not have to seek out dubious Biblical roots.

Notes

1. Williams' Case (1797) How St Tr 654 at 703.
2. Somerset v Stewart (1772) 1 Lofft, 98 ER 449.
3. See E M Howse, *Saints in Politics: The "Clapham Sect" and the Growth of Freedom* (1971).
4. Reg v R [1992] 1 AC 612, The Queen v L (1991) 174 CLR 379.
5. Proverbs 13:24.
6. See MJR (2002) 130 A Crim R 481.
7. Homily in 1989 Red Mass, Sydney.
8. Ras Behari Lal v The King Emperor (1934) 150 LT 3 at 5.
9. See my lecture, "Believers in Court: Sydney Anglican going to law", The Cable Lecture 2005.
10. See generally Tony Blackshield, "Religion and Australian constitutional law" in Peter Radan, Denise Meyerson and Rosalind F Croucher, *Law and Religion: God, the State and the Common Law*, Routledge, 2005.
11. See eg Bishop Robert Forsyth *Dangerous Protections, How Some Ways of Protecting Religious Freedom May Actually Diminish the Freedom of Religion*, Acton Lecture 2001.
12. (2003) 215 CLR 1.
13. [2006] HCA 15, 80 ALJR 791; 226 ALR 391.
14. Cattanach at 52 [135] per Kirby J.
15. Cattanach at 52[135].
16. At 58 [151].
17. CES v Superclinics (Australia) Pty Ltd (1995) 38 NSWLR 47 at 87.
18. Ibid.[19] Harriton v Stephens (2004) 59 NSWLR 694 at 700
17. (Spigelman CJ, referring to Matthew 19:19), 721[155] (Mason P, referring to Job 3:3).

Christianity, the Australian Labor Party, and Current Challenges in Australian Politics

Kevin Rudd

The debate about the impact of Christianity on Australian politics, society and culture is one small part of a much wider debate about the continuing impact of Christianity on contemporary Western civilisation. This debate rages, most particularly, in continental Europe today. It takes a number of different forms. Sometimes this is a debate between concepts of absolute truth as opposed to moral relativism; the debate between faith and science; or the debate between revelation and empiricism.

In many respects, it is a debate as old as the European Enlightenment itself – and arguably as old as the Reformation. It was certainly a preoccupation of Pope John Paul II in his later writings. Just as it has been a preoccupation of the Cardinal Ratzinger – now Pope Benedict XVI. Cardinal Ratzinger’s book, published just prior to his elevation to the Papacy, is entitled “Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures”. The book acknowledges the positive contribution of the Enlightenment to Western civilisation:

The rationality of the Enlightenment bore prodigious and precious fruit. Without this, the great scientific, technological, economic, civil and constitutional advances that have irrevocably changed the face of Europe and of all the West are inexplicable. The chain is long, but there is no break in it: after the scientific revolution came the technological revolution, the industrial revolution and then the revolutions in politics, in the life of society and in the rights of the individual.

But the book also laments the impact of these ‘advances’ on the soul of our civilisation. Having recounted the contributions of the Enlightenment, the book then proceeds with equal vigour to outline what it describes as its negative impact as well:

These advances carry a price that we are paying today above all: marginalisation, the triumph of subjectivity and the imprisonment of the divine, of the sacred, of God in the ghettos. In European culture, the price we pay is the banishment of Christianity, not only from the life of states, but also from the life of civic society. In the European Constitution, the price is the refusal even to recall that our continent was the Christian continent. In the life of Europe, the price is the confusion of people's consciences... Europe has developed a culture that, in a manner hitherto unknown to humanity, excludes God from public awareness.

Of course, the debate about the future of the collective West is not simply being conducted within the paradigm of the Christian tradition versus the Enlightenment tradition. It is also a debate occurring within the Enlightenment tradition itself as Western intellectuals begin to despair that the core 'idea' of what we have known for half a millennium or more as 'the West' may now be beginning to disappear. An influential book published in the United Kingdom earlier this year by Richard Koch and Christopher Smith confrontingly entitled "Suicide of the West" argues that:

Most Westerners no longer believe in the idea that made the West so successful. The collapse of Western self-confidence has little to do with enemies without and everything to do with the seismic shift in Western ideas and attitudes.

Koch and Smith go on to argue that:

The West has achieved its success very largely because of a number of fundamental ideas and the actions they inspired – to deeply ingrained and often subconscious patterns of thoughts and behaviours. A large degree of the West's success can be traced to 'six principle ideas' or 'success factors'– Christianity, optimism, science, economic growth, liberalism and individualism.

The interesting feature of this list, from this conference's perspective, is the inclusion of Christianity as one of the six essential success factors. Neither Koch nor Smith is in any way engaged in Christian apologetics in their dissection of the intellectual dilemma confronting the collective West today. But what is intriguing, however, in their analysis, is that Christianity, or at least certain Christian social norms, form an important part of the overall software of our civilisation – whether people happen to be believing or not.

Another significant aspect of their analysis of the deep underpinnings of Western civilisation is their argument that so many of these underpinnings are “subconscious patterns of thought and behaviour”. This is an important point because when we are dealing with changes in the deepest substructures of our society, these changes are often occurring below the radar screen of current political consciousness, discussion and debate.

A pale image of the discussion that is now underway about these deeper, underlying changes is what we blandly refer to as the ‘culture wars’. In Australia these are usually cast aridly in terms of the classical debates between left and right, tradition and modernity, monoculture and multiculturalism. But these debates often end up as exercises in political positioning rather than a more substantive analysis of the more foundational changes that are underway in the way in which we think, the values which we hold dear and the priorities we therefore have for our families, our community and our country.

My overall argument is that Christianity, both in its spiritual and its institutional forms, has had a profound and positive impact on what we call Western civilisation. We are all also aware of the negative impacts: the wars of religion, religious intolerance, and ambiguous positions on social justice. No one seeks lightly to brush these aside. But before people condemn Christianity with the benefit of 2000 years of hindsight, they should reflect carefully on the virtues of the civilisational alternatives on offer throughout history. Against that measure, we haven’t done that badly.

Western civilisation of course is a broader compact than just Christianity itself. Yet the connection between the two is not superficial, but profound – to the extent that today a number of non-Christians have begun to sound the alarm about the cumulative civilisational impact of the collapse of the Christian faith across the collective West. Alarms as simple as a loss of common biblical and literary frames of reference as a basis for a common discourse across the civilisation. Together with more significant alarms which go to the heart of the innermost values of the civilisation itself.

There is, therefore, a legitimate, important and urgent debate to be had about the future of our civilisation – irrespective of whether the perspective we bring to that debate is religious or secular.

Australia’s Christian Heritage

It is in this context that this conference is examining the historical contribution of Christianity to Australia’s political, social and cultural development.

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Past Importance and Future Relevance

corporations respond badly to criticism. We all do. But the church, together with other institutions beyond the control of the state, has a central role to play in continuing to apply an ethical yardstick to the practical decision making processes of the state.

Christianity and the Australian Labor Party

There have been profound Christian influences in the formation and evolution of the Australian Labor movement over the last 115 years. The Labor movement itself is an amalgam of many different traditions: a combination of Wesleyan Methodists; Irish Catholics together with agnostic social democrats and socialists.

Catholic Influence

The Irish Catholic tradition within the Australian Labor Party is perhaps the most documented and here I draw extensively from remarks I made to the Thomas More society in Canberra late last year. Irish Catholics in Australia, for more than one and a half centuries, continued to find themselves to be a minority in a country within an overwhelmingly Protestant (and primarily Anglican) majority. Just as Christianity during its first three centuries found itself to be the *religion of the oppressed*, Irish Catholics in Australia often felt themselves to be the *denomination of the oppressed*. It was only in 1820 that Governor Macquarie first gave formal permission for Catholic Fathers Therry and Connolly to come to the colony. They were given a stipend of 100 pounds per annum – insultingly determined at a rate one third of that paid to the Anglican chaplains. But even the generally benevolent and enlightened Governor Macquarie feared that if Catholic masses were celebrated with the masses, they could become centres of sedition. Macquarie issued a set of regulations for the Catholic chaplaincy. He warned the priests against acting as “itinerant, political demagogues, long practiced in the arts of faction, and right before anarchy and confusion...” which had made it necessary for the colonial government to tread in the steps of those of the mother country in enacting and enforcing certain laws against sedition. Macquarie went on to stipulate that: ‘no meeting or assemblage of the Roman Catholics, consisting of more than five persons, for the celebration of the rights or your service of your church, is to be convened or held at any other place or places than those approved...’

Irish Catholics’ legitimate sense of oppression in early colonial Australia corresponded in some ways with the sense of oppression of the nascent Labor movement. We see this, for example, in the life and career of Cardinal Patrick Moran – Cardinal Archbishop of Sydney between 1884 and 1911. Cardinal Moran’s episcopate coincided with the rise of the Labor Party – and the election of the first Labor candidates to the colonial and state Parliaments and then to

the Commonwealth Parliament following federation. Cardinal Moran became a great Labor interventionist. When the Holman Labor Government started to come apart in New South Wales in 1911, Moran intervened with individual Catholic Members of Parliament to ensure that none of them played 'Judas' by "betraying his party at such a crisis". At the federal level, Moran spectacularly intervened in strong public support for the 'yes' case in the 1911 referendum of the Fisher Labor Government. That referendum sought increased power to deal with commercial and financial corporations and specifically, the power to nationalise monopolies. The referendum failed equally spectacularly – being voted down 61 per cent to 39 per cent.

Moran's political intervention was challenged by a number of his fellow Cardinals in the United States who warned Moran about the socialistic nature of the referendum proposal. The American Cardinals also warned Moran of their concern regarding the Australian Labor Government's intervention in industrial relations – warning that such legislation would "create a wide breach between this country that is America] and your country [that is Australia]".

The American Catholic Cardinals appear to have spoken with a prophetic voice because until this year, the American and Australian industrial relations systems were in fact radically different for the last 100 years as a result of Fisher's legislation – something for which the Australian people have in the main been thankful.

Of course, the historical relationship between the Australian Catholic Church and the Australian Labor Party did not remain as politically intimate as it has been during Moran's time. The great conscription debates of World War One between Archbishop Mannix on the one hand and William Morris Hughes on the other have become the stuff of legend. They led the first of the three major splits that the Labor Party suffered during the course of the twentieth century. And we are all familiar with the history of the third of those great splits during the 1950s. Once again, Archbishop Mannix was a key player. Together with B.A. Santamaria and what became known as The Movement. The rise of the DLP in part kept Labor out of office for more than a generation. Nonetheless, the Catholic influence on the party remains significant – most particularly in the Church's expanding body of teachings on Catholic social justice.

Evangelical Influence

Less well known in the evolution of the Australian Labor movement is the impact of evangelical Christians – both in the Union movement and the party itself. And here I draw extensively on the work of Stuart Piggin who has done much important research in this area.

Past Importance and Future Relevance

Kier Hardie, the founder of the British Parliamentary Labour Party, was a committed evangelical Christian. Hardie, a Scottish coalminer who, with appalling childhood experiences of working in the pit, was converted to Christianity in one of evangelist Dwight Moody's crusades in Scotland in the 1870s. He became a Sunday school teacher, a lay preacher and founded the Ayreshire Miner's Union – the same union Andrew Fisher worked for before later migrating to Australia.

The Australia Labor movement was effectively formed following the great maritime strike of 1890 and the shearers strike of 1891. One of the leaders of the maritime strike, WG Spence, was an elder in the Presbyterian Church and Spence saw in the brotherhood of the emerging trade union movement the hallmarks of his spiritual search for the primitive Christianity of the New Testament. In a speech in June 1892, Spence said:

New unionism was simply the teachings of that greatest of all social movements, he of Nazareth whom we must all revere... In taking up this new unionism, we must see if we cannot get back to the level of the founder of Christianity, imbibe some of his spirit and get rid of musty theology, for some of it is very musty.

Spence became General Secretary of the Australian Workers' Union between 1894 and 1917, a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly between 1898 and 1901 and a Member of the House of Representatives between 1901 and 1919.

Among Labor's 35 new members of the NSW Colonial Parliament elected in 1891, JST McGowen, who later was to become the first Labor Premier of New South Wales, was an Anglican lay preacher and a Sunday school Superintendent at St Paul's Redfern. He was elected with John Fegen, a Wesleyan Methodist lay preacher; Alfred Eddin another Methodist lay preacher; Frank Coffin, another Methodist (who mediated in the shearers strike of 1891) who is reported to have drafted Labor's first NSW manifesto and who stated at the time: "his inspiration was derived from the 'Sea of Galilee', 1900 years ago, when the greatest of all social reformers had spoken".

These men were elected together with Thomas Bavister, G. D. Clark, and John Hindle – all evangelical Christians and the latter becoming the founder of the Christian Endeavour movement in Australia. Three years later they were joined in the Parliament by Reverend G. W. Smailes, a primitive Methodist Minister who became the Member for Granville.

Of the 24 Australian Labor Party members elected to the first Commonwealth Parliament in 1901, there were six Presbyterians,

five Anglicans, three Methodists and two Congregationalists, including Andrew Fisher from Queensland (the Methodist Sunday School Superintendent); Josiah Thomas from New South Wales (a miner and lay preacher who protested vociferously when the Parliament, then meeting in Melbourne, adjourned for the running of the Melbourne Cup); James Ronald, a Presbyterian clergyman and the controversial King O'Malley, an American evangelical preacher and temperance campaigner. The evangelical influence in general and the Wesleyan impact in particular on the early evolution of the Labor movement was pronounced and strong.

John Wesley himself, who, together with Whitefield, were the fathers of the English revival and what became English Methodism, had a practical approach to Christian social responsibility. In 1764, Wesley wrote: "...after providing for one's own household things and needs for life and godliness, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, relieve the sick, the prisoner, the stranger, with all thou hast".

It was in this tradition that Wesley, in 1746, established the People's Dispensary at the Foundry in London, to "give physick to the sick", that is, to provide for those who could not afford the doctors or medicines of the time. It was also in this tradition that George Whitefield built a school at Kingswood to educate the son's of coalminers. Wesley and Whitefield prayed together at Oxford as members of Oxford's Holy Club. But practical social action was an equal and automatic consequence of their personal spiritual awakening. This is the tradition of Wesleyan Christianity and has been alive in Australian Methodism for more than a century. It was this social action or social gospel tradition that intersected also with the rise of the Australian Labor movement.

W.G. Taylor, who was Superintendent of the Central Methodist Mission in Sydney in 1890, convened a conference of unionists with the object of reducing working hours to reasonable limits stating "the remedy of social misery was agitation for laws which would make sweating impossible". George Martin, a President of the Methodist Conference argued in 1894 that "if the church neglected the great social issues of the day it was no better than the priest and the Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan". In 1897 a miner's strike broke out in Lucknow, west of Sydney. W. W. Rutledge, of the Central Methodist Mission, attacked the low levels of wages in a variety of trades and as retiring president of the 1903 Methodist Conference declared himself to be a Christian Socialist.

These Christian influences on the formation and evolution of the Australian Labor movement, both Catholic and Protestant, have been profound. They were by no means the only influences at work in the shaping of the Australian Labor movement. But they were

significant and this is a matter of historical record. These influences continue today to shape the modern Labor movement which remains a classically broad church – incorporating tens of thousands of people from both the religious and secular traditions of the party. And that is as it should be in a secular, pluralist political party competing in a secular, pluralist, parliamentary democracy.

Forms of Christian Engagement today

That brings us to the present where I would like to reflect briefly on the various models of political engagement adopted by Christian politicians today – and in doing so, I draw extensively on remarks I made last year in my New College lecture on Christianity and Politics. In that lecture, I outlined five models of Christian engagement in our national political life.

Model number one is what I call the “vote for me because I’m a Christian”. This is the model that I find to be most repugnant. It is the model that says that simply on the basis of my external profession of the Christian faith, those of similar persuasions should vote for me. This is about as persuasive as saying that, because I am a Sydney Swans supporter, all other Sydney Swans supporters should vote for me as well because we ostensibly adhere to the same belief system. This model is alive and well in the United States. Thankfully it is much less alive and much less well here in Australia. Although there are some dangerous signs that for certain Christian constituencies within our country, this represents an increasingly appealing message. It is a model for which I can find no underpinning scriptural, doctrinal or theological authority.

Model number two says “vote for me because I’m Christian and because I have a defined set of views on a narrowly defined set of questions concerning sexual morality”. Regrettably this model has an increasing number of supporters within the broader Christian community. It is a community which tends to read down rather than read up the ethical teachings of the New Testament – producing a narrow “tick the box” approach to passing so-called Christian “morals” tests. I see very little evidence of that approach in the Gospels. I see much more evidence of it in 17th and 18th century European pietism. Once again it will come as no surprise to you here that I am not attracted to model number two either.

Model number three says something like this: take models number one and two above and add to them the additional tag of “family values”. That is “vote for me because I am a Christian; vote for me because I have a defined set of views on questions of private sexual morality; and vote for me also because I wrap myself in the garments of something called ‘family values’”. Regrettably it is my

view that the term “family values” has become one of the most used and abused terms in the Australian political lexicon. Once again, I beg to part company because this concept of “family values” is invariably a narrow one and invariably leaves to one side the ability of working families economically to survive.

Model number four is along the following lines: tick models one, two and three above but then add the following offensive play. Unleash a political fusillade against anyone who dares suggest that Christianity might have something concrete to say about the broader political, economic and social questions in life. And justify this fusillade with that hardy perennial: “religion should be kept out of politics”.

This is a view which says anyone who seeks to articulate from a Christian perspective a view on Iraq, a view on poverty in the world, a view on foreign policy more generally, a view on refugees and asylum seekers, a view on indigenous Australians, or a view, dare I say it, on workplace relations, then a pox on your houses, and may judgement be rained down upon you from the heavens above. That’s what I’d describe in a somewhat partisan note as the Gospel according to St. Peter – particularly if you were to look at what the Treasurer, Peter Costello had to say last year about Phillip Aspinall, the Primate of Australia, and head of the Anglican Church. When Aspinall raised some questions about the workplace relations debate, Mr Costello responded by saying the Archbishop hasn’t studied industrial relations, he’s only studied theology. Of course that’s code language for saying Christian leaders cannot have an informed and legitimate Christian view of matters beyond ‘I’m a Christian, I have a defined set of views on the life issues and I talk about family values’. That’s model number four. And I don’t like this model either.

Model number five is along these lines: it says that the Gospel is both a spiritual Gospel and a social Gospel. And if it is a social Gospel then it is in part a political Gospel because politics is the means by which society chooses to exercise its collective power. In other words the Gospel is as much about the decisions I make about my own life as it is about how I act in society and how in turn I should act, and react, in relation to the exercise of the coordinated power of society through the State.

This view derives from the simple principle that the Gospel which tells human kind that they must be born-again, is the same Gospel that says that at the time of the Great Judgement that Christians will be asked not how pious they have been but instead if they helped feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit the lonely. In this respect, the Gospel is an exhortation for social action.

Sometimes you encounter in the broader Christian community the view that a Christian view on policy should always prevail no matter what. I respond by saying that's terrific, but we don't live in a theocracy. We live in a democracy which by definition is secular. If you want a theocratic form of government then you're several centuries too late. But if you want to live in a secular democracy you are in a contestable polity where views will be distilled through the ballot box. And if Christians are of the view that their views are not being reflected sufficiently through the ballot box, then I would suggest that has more to do with the changing shape and architecture of Australian society than it does with the representativeness of Australia's political processes. That is, you end up electing the people that the society itself ultimately reflects.

If you look at the census data, the number of people who profess an active belief in God has gone down over time. The most recent census data says that about 69 per cent of Australia. It's somewhat less than that in Western Europe. Somewhat greater than that in the United States. But the trend line in recent times has been in one direction. So the secularity of the views reflected into the political process directly express what's happening in mainstream Australian society.

Whereas a Christian perspective on contemporary policy debates may not, therefore, prevail, it must nonetheless be argued. And if argued it must therefore be heard by those in authority. It should not be rejected contemptuously by secular politicians as if these views are an unwelcome intrusion into the political sphere. If the churches are not allowed to participate in the great debates about the values that ultimately underpin our society and our polity, then we have reached a very strange place indeed, both here in Australia and in Western Civilisation of which we remain a part.

Conclusion

Three questions deserving of Christian reflection right now in contemporary Australia are industrial relations, asylum seekers and global climate change. There are of course many others. But none can dispute that these three are significant.

On industrial relations, the changes to the workplace laws which have been passed by the Government will have a profound effect over time not just on wages, salaries and working conditions but also on the amount of time that families have to spend with one another. If employers now have a virtually untrammelled right to require any employee to work at any time on a Saturday or a Sunday, further pressures are placed on Australian family life. The key to family life is relationships and the key to relationships is the time

to nurture them. These industrial relations changes have a capacity to make our family life increasingly time-poor and therefore relationship-poor. We believe the family remains the building block on which our society is built. And if we are going to have a debate about family values at the next election, we would regard these industrial relations laws as a fundamental assault on the value of the family itself.

Second is the question of asylum seekers. The biblical injunction to care for the stranger in our midst is clear. The parable of the Good Samaritan is but one of many which deal with how we should respond to the stranger who is vulnerable. That is why the Government's current proposal to excise the entire Australian mainland from the entire Australian migration zone and to rely almost exclusively on the so-called Pacific Solution should be the cause of great ethical concern across the Christian churches. We should never forget that the reason we have a United Nations convention on the protection of refugees is in large part because of the horror of the Holocaust when the collective West (including Australia) turned its back on the Jewish people of Germany (and the other occupied countries of Europe) during the late-1930s when they sought asylum elsewhere. And we resolved back then: never again.

Finally, there is the challenge of global climate change. It is a fundamental ethical challenge of our age to protect the planet – or, in the language of the bible, to be proper stewards of creation. The scientific evidence is now clear. The ice caps are melting. The oceans are warming. The corals are bleaching. The summers are getting hotter and hotter. And the dams are drying up. The time for global, national and local action has well and truly come. In fact we fear that the time to act in some cases may have already passed. So is it ethical to engage in the deliberate sabotage of global cooperative efforts under the Kyoto Protocol to roll back global climate change? Or is it ethical instead to become an active, constructive part of the global solution? For me it is ethically indefensible for this Government to have spent the last decade not only refusing to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, but actively working with the Government of the United States to marginalise it.

These are just some of the great ethical challenges of our age – ethical challenges in which the Australian Labor Party has a firm view on the program of action that is needed to meet them. That is why we refuse to accept the implied proposition from our political opponents that God has somehow become the wholly-owned subsidiary of the political conservatives – Liberal, National or Family First. No political party owns God. Our challenge is to respond to the great ethical challenges of our age – consistent with the dictates of a properly informed human and Christian conscience.

Commonwealth of Australia

Senate

Hansard

Tuesday, 15 August 2006

Australian Christian Heritage Forum

Senator BARNETT (Tasmania) (8.18 pm)—I stand tonight to speak about the first Australian Christian Heritage Forum, held in Parliament House, Canberra on Sunday, 6 August and Monday, 7 August this year.

Nearly 400 Christian leaders, pastors, teachers, historians and others spent the two days listening to a series of plenary sessions and seminar addresses on the Christian contribution to the development of Australia, its culture, its professions and its institutions. It was about the importance of Australia's Christian heritage to our past and its relevance to our future. I had the honour of being one of the parliamentary hosts, and I will refer to that again shortly. I was invited to make some opening remarks and to provide the forum summary on the Monday evening. I would like to share some of those remarks and then pay tribute to the organizers of the forum—in particular, Professor Stuart Piggin and Graham McDonald and his team.

It was at an Easter Friday church service last year that I received confirmation of a vision. The vision involved the Australian Christian community being more proactive in discussing and promoting the benefits and contribution to our community of upholding the values of Jesus Christ—a vision of people boldly saying the Christian community has contributed and is contributing positively to our nation, and of me playing my part in making this happen in the federal parliamentary arena.

In my opening remarks to the forum, I also said that it was stimulated in part by the consistent attack on and denigration of Australia's Christian heritage, whether it be the institution of marriage, the push for a valueless education system or the removal of Christmas carols and the nativity scene from schools and public places. It

seems that, at every juncture, the Christian community and its leaders are on the defence. Of course, the grassroots response in defence of marriage being between a man and woman received overwhelming community support and, ultimately, bipartisan parliamentary support—an excellent result.

Strategically, it is important—indeed, vital—to defend our core values and beliefs when they are threatened, but it is difficult to advance the cause and progress without a more proactive, forward-looking approach—hence the forum and the espousing of the belief that Australia's Christian heritage has helped shape the character of this nation in a most positive way. Yes, it is true that the Australian Church, the institution of the Church and the people within it, have made mistakes, including in recent times child sex abuse matters. But these acts of indecency and other injustices should not diminish the overwhelmingly positive contributions to the lives of our fellow Australians, most notably in the areas of social welfare and community service, health and education. For example, the brilliant Australian spirit of volunteerism is underpinned by the value of caring for one another, along with compassion and giving and the biblical principle of 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. The Anzac spirit, I believe, espouses the values of mateship, bravery and sacrifice—all values espoused by Jesus.

Professor Stuart Piggis is an associate professor and director of the Centre for the History of Christian Thought and Experience at Macquarie University. Graham McDonald, the forum coordinator, is a team leader for Children of the World, a children's ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ. Graham has been involved in children's ministry for over 20 years here in Australia and overseas, and was very much at the forefront of getting the forum off the ground. Rod West is the forum treasurer. Rod was assistant coordinator and conference liaison for the International Christian Dance Fellowship. John Howell is the executive chairman of Transforming Leadership Inc., which is involved in renewing leaders, empowering learning and transforming people's lives in their communities. John Luttrell is a Marist brother from the Marist community in Randwick, Sydney. Sharon West has over 14 years experience as part of the Living Word Creative Ministry team travelling around Australia and internationally sharing and teaching creative programs in churches and schools. And there is Daniel Willis, who is the CEO of the Bible Society New South Wales. Daniel has worked in Bible and parish ministry for over 23 years. Each of these people, with a horde of volunteers to back them up, supported the organisation of this forum and made it a success.

In my opening remarks, I said that I stood in solidarity with colleague parliamentary hosts, and I would like to name each of them and thank them for their support and contribution. There was Senator Helen Polley, from Tasmania; Senator Grant Chapman; Senator Steve Fielding; Senator Barnaby Joyce; the Hon. John Anderson; Mr Kevin Rudd; Mr John Murphy; the Hon. Dana Vale; the Hon. Bruce Baird; Mr Anthony Byrne; Mr Harry Quick; and the Hon. Alan Cadman. Each played their part in advance of and during the forum. I said that I stood in solidarity with them to declare that I was proud of Australia's Christian heritage; that the values and views of Jesus, his faith and belief have positively contributed to the character of our nation and offered hope to the lives of our people; and that, indeed, they remain as relevant today and to our future as they have been in the history of our great nation, Australia.

In terms of the program, we had a tremendous range and a high calibre of speakers. During the forum, we heard from the Powerhouse Museum's Brad Baker, Professor Geoffrey Bolton, Tim Costello, Tony Byrne, James Haire, Elizabeth Ward, historian Graeme Davison, Barnaby Joyce, Anne Robinson and Stephen Judd, and Helen McCabe. We heard from Bernadette Quinn, and I must say it was a most refreshing and profound contribution from her on behalf of younger Australians. There was Marina Prior, a tremendous singer and a great Australian; Ken Duncan; Professor Robert Linder, who is a US professor and who flew from the US to be in Australia to present at our forum; Bronwyn Bshop; and Margaret Reeson, historian. Sing Australia rovided music for us at our forum. Wayne Swan haired the afternoon session with Roger Corbett of Woolworths. We had Ian Harper, the economist. And we had Harry Quick chairing the session with Keith Mason and Kevin Rudd. Geraldine Doogue appeared towards the afternoon session with Shayne Blackman and the Hon. John Anderson, and I summed up the forum. It was a tremendous couple of days and it was very much a proud moment to have been part of such a great event.

Professor Stuart Piggin summarised some of the outcomes when he said: Representatives of many denominations were present with none dominating. Denominationalism was not an issue. Christianity needs to say goodbye to its sectarian past if it is to maximise its contribution to any society. At the Forum, unity was more easily attained than delegates could have envisaged by the simple decision to focus on Jesus rather than the church. Jesus is the one thing all Christians have in common, and indeed, as numerous stories about the role of Jesus in Australian history reveals, Jesus is not the preserve of Christians, but has been as constantly revered by most Australians as the churches have been criticised.

Stuart Piggin went on to say: Clergy were outnumbered twenty to one by the laity, and only three clergymen had any role in the program, and none of them was a minister of a congregation. This was not about Church, theology and doctrine. This was about the world of work, the marketplace of ideas, the role of the human family, and the civic responsibilities of citizens to the polis. Delegates as well as speakers were drawn from a wide range of professions: parliamentarians, academics, lawyers, teachers, social researchers, business men and women, architects, and entertainers. Among those not well represented were medical doctors, sportspeople or the young. 'Next time,'— said Stuart Piggin— was the refrain of the organisers. Indigenous leaders were well represented at the Forum, their stories commending interest and respect on the Forum website

The website is: www.australiaschristianheritageforum.org.au/

I will conclude by saying that one of the related outcomes is the tremendous contribution in social welfare. Nearly three-quarters of the social welfare services provided in Australia are provided by Christian based and faith based organisations. That is a tremendous contribution to the Australian way of life. The success of the forum is a great tribute to the organisers, and I believe it is a wonderful foundation for the future.(Time expired)

Notes on Speakers & Program Participants

John Anderson (President, Parliamentary Christian Fellowship, Member for Gwydir)

Elected at a by-election in 1989, John Anderson became Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the National Party in 1999. On 6 July 2005 he returned to the back-bench. Born in 1956, Mr Anderson was educated at the Kings School and at the University of Sydney, graduating BA in 1977 and MA in 1979. He is married to Julia, and they have four children, Jessica, Nicholas, Georgina and Laura. He has been a farmer and grazier on family property, 'Newstead', Mulalely in north-western NSW. In 2005 following the resignation of Bruce Baird, he became the leader of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship. At the National Forum he will respond to the last plenary address, Australia's Jesus and Australia's values.

Brad Baker (Powerhouse Museum)

Brad Baker is the Manager of Exhibition Development and Design at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. Brad is an Industrial Design graduate from Sydney College of the Arts, and began his career as a design consultant in the retail industry. In the early 1980s Brad was employed as Project Coordinator for Design, by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, to undertake the task of converting the old technological museum in Ultimo, into the now internationally respected Powerhouse Museum, a \$32 million fitout project. Brad has been a lecturer in post graduate design at the University of Technology Sydney and has managed major international touring exhibitions from many nations. He is married with six children and has worked for more than twenty years as a youth group leader in local churches. Brad will be speaking at the conference on how to preserve and display cultural heritage.

Guy Barnett (Senator for Tasmania)

Guy Barnett was appointed to the Senate on February 26 2002 and then elected on October 9, 2004. Born in Launceston in 1962, he was raised on a farm and educated at Hagley Farm Primary School and then Launceston and Geelong Grammar Schools before studying law at the University of Tasmania, including a Masters of Law.

He is a member of the Australian Government's Health & Ageing Policy Committee, the Senate's Employment Workplace Relations and Education Committee and Community Affairs Committee, and Temporary Chair of Committees. He is also a founding and executive member of the Parliamentary Diabetes Support Group. He lives in Launceston with his wife Kate and their three children.

Bronwyn Bishop (Member for Mackellar)

Bronwyn Bishop was President of the Liberal Party (NSW) from 1985 to 1987, in which year she was elected to the Senate for New South Wales. She was then elected to the House of Representatives for Mackellar, New South Wales, at a by-election in 1994, and has been re-elected in 1996, 1998, 2001 and 2004. She has served as Minister for Defence, Industry, Science and Personnel and Minister for Aged Care. Her skills as a lawyer and company director have served her and the nation well in the broad range of parliamentary committees of which she has been a member. Bronwyn will respond to the plenary paper on the Australian character.

Shayne Blackman (National Administrator of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress)

The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) of the Uniting Church in Australia, of which Shayne is Administrator, has for more than 20 years been a leading Indigenous institution responsible for a broad range of social, economic and cultural programs. He is also the chairman of a score of ATSI programs aimed at practical assistance to Indigenous people. He is head of Shalom Christian College in Townsville, a school nationally recognized for improvements in literacy levels among its Aboriginal students. He is a graduate of Nungalinga College in Darwin and is from the Merooni Tribe, a clan of the Gurang Nations. He is an ordained minister of the Uniting Church in Australia. Married to Lurleen, he is father of four and grandfather of five. Shayne will be a respondent to the plenary paper on Australia's Jesus and Australian Values.

Geoffrey Bolton (Chancellor, Murdoch University)

The 2006 Western Australian of the Year, Professor Bolton was born in Perth in 1931 and educated at North Perth State School, Wesley College, University of Western Australia and Oxford (Balliol College). He has held chairs of history at four Australian universities, and was foundation professor at the Sir Robert Menzies Centre for Australian History at the University of London from 1982 to 1985. His professional associations include Fellowships of the Royal Historical Society, the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the Royal Society of Arts. He was ABC Boyer Lecturer in 1992 and is an Officer of the Order of Aus-

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tralia. He is married to Carol Grattan, and has two sons, and three grandchildren. Professor Bolton will speak on 'Australia's Christian Heritage', the first of the plenary addresses at the National Forum.

Anthony Byrne (Member for Holt)

Elected to the House of Representatives for Holt, Victoria in 1999, Anthony Byrne was re-elected in 2001 and 2004. He is a member of the ALP Caucus Committee on Security and Defence. Born in 1962 in Adelaide, SA., before entering Parliament he was the Chief Executive Officer of the Anxiety Disorders Foundation of Australia and Adviser to Senator J.M.A. Collins. Anthony will be a respondent with Tim Costello on the opening plenary paper on Australia's Christian Heritage.

Roger Corbett (CEO, Woolworths)

On 1 January 1999, Roger was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Woolworths, after a career in retailing with Grace Bros and David Jones. In June 2003, he was made a Member in the Order of Australia (AM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for "service to the retail industry, particularly as a contributor to the development of industry policy and standards, and to the community." In January 2006, the prestigious US *MMR Magazine* acclaimed him as the 'International Retailer of the Year'. Under his direction, Woolworths has become one of the most successful businesses in Australia with 170,000 employees and 300,000 shareholders. Roger and his wife, Rosemary, have three adult children - Amanda, Sarah and Robert, and a granddaughter, Georgia Kate Benn. At the Forum, he will address the subject of the Christian contribution to the development of Australian business and commerce.

Tim Costello (CEO, World Vision)

Voted as one of Australia's 100 National Living Treasures, Tim Costello has been the CEO of World Vision Australia since February 2004. He leads an organisation of about 400 staff, with an annual income of over \$200 million, and more than 300,000 children overseas sponsored by Australians. In July 2004, Tim was named Victorian of the Year 2004, in recognition of his years of public and community service. In June 2005, he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO), for "service to the community through contributions to social justice, health and welfare issues, international development assistance, and to the Baptist Church". Tim was born in 1955. He and his wife of 25 years, Merridie, have three children, Claire, Elliot and Martin. At the National Forum Tim will respond to the first plenary address on Australia's Christian Heritage.

Graeme Davison (Professor of History, Monash University)

Graeme Davison has taught at the University of Melbourne, Harvard University, where he was Visiting professor of Australian Studies, and at Monash University. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and the Academy of the Humanities and an adjunct professor in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University. His main interest is in the history of cities in Australia, Britain and the United States. He has been active as an advisor to heritage bodies, museums and in other fields of public history where his publications include 'A Heritage Handbook' and *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*. His current projects include a collaborative history of the Powerhouse Museum and a history of suburban Australia. At the National Forum Professor Davison will speak on the Christian contribution to Australian culture.

Geraldine Doogue (ABC Broadcaster)

Geraldine Doogue, currently presenter of Saturday AM with Radio National, has thrived in every area of the media: print, television and radio. She has worked both for the ABC and for commercial radio and television stations. For the ABC she has served as a presenter for *Four Corners*, *Nationwide*, *Life Matters*, *Compass*, as well as *Saturday AM*. She seems equally at home with matters of spirituality, philosophy and belief as well as international politics, Australia's role on the world stage, and business. In 2000 Geraldine was awarded a Churchill Fellowship for social and cultural reporting. In 2003, she was recognised with an Officer in the Order of Australia for services to the community and media. She is married with two children and two step-children. At the National Forum, Geraldine will act as chair/rapporteur at the plenary session on 'Australia's Jesus and Australia's values'.

Ken Duncan (Photographer)

The Vision Statement for the Ken Duncan Group of Companies is "To show the beauty of God's creation." During his travels around Australia, Ken has collected over 80,000 selected images in panoramic format. Unequaled in depth, the library has been hailed as the best collection of Australian landscapes ever seen. Ken sought out places not previously photographed in order to provide a feeling of the real Australia and our pioneer spirit which exists beyond the coastal fringes. In a feature article on Ken and his work, Australian Professional Photography magazine described him as: "The photographer who is now undoubtedly Australia's (and possibly the world's) leading exponent of panoramic landscape photography (certainly the most successful) ..." But in his own words, Ken is simply "an average photographer with a great God". As a photographer, Ken

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sees himself as an interpreter of God's creation. The art is in seeing, capturing and presenting these images to others. Ken will give a visual presentation on Australia's Christian Heritage at the second plenary session of the National Forum.

Mal Garvin (CEO, Fusion)

The Chairman of the Australia's Christian Heritage National Forum Canberra gathering is Mal Garvin. He is the Director of Fusion, an Australia-wide youth and community organization operating out of 25 centres with 180 full time staff workers. He is a consultant in structural change and counselling with Youth and Community Services N.S.W. and has been responsible for the training of Aboriginal Case workers for Youth and Community Services NSW. He has also given training in telephone counselling for Lifeline, CBA, and City Mission. For almost forty years he has been a much sought-after public speaker and a broadcaster for over 30 years, presently on around 100 stations around the nation. He is author of *Us Aussies* - the fascinating history they didn't teach you at school! *Breakthrough* - A Collection of radio scripts from a period of 30 years, and *The Divine Art of Networking*.

James Haire (Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture).

Reverend Professor James Haire is Professor of Theology at Charles Sturt University and Executive Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture and Director of the Public and Contextual Theology Strategic Research Centre. He has three doctorates. Prof. Haire has served in many leadership roles in the Uniting Church, and is President of the National Council of Churches in Australia. He is an authority on Christian work in Asia and has recently been appointed to the Christian Conference on Asia General Committee and to its Executive. He was involved in peace and reconciliation negotiations involving Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas, Indonesia, from 2001 until 2005. At the Conference, Professor Haire will chair the session on Education and Culture.

Ian Harper (Fair Pay Commissioner)

Professor Harper is Executive Director of the Centre for Business and Public Policy at the Melbourne Business School and is one of Australia's most distinguished and respected academic economists. He has extensive experience in public policy matters, which includes work as a member of the Wallis Inquiry into Australia's financial system and as a consultant to the Reserve Bank. In October 2005 the Federal Government appointed Professor Harper to be the first chairman of the Australian Fair Pay Commission (AFPC). At the National Forum Professor Harper will share the platform with Roger Corbett, CEO of Woolworths, and Shadow Treasurer, Wayne Swan,

to address the subject of the Christian contribution to the development of business and commerce in Australia.

Barnaby Joyce (Senator for Queensland)

Born in 1967 in Tamworth, Barnaby Joyce was elected to the Senate for Queensland in 2004, his term beginning on 1 July 2005. He has already served on a wide range of Senate Committees. He has been a member of the National Party Federal Council since 2002. Before entering Parliament, he was a farm worker, accountant and rural banker. Between 1995 and 2003 he served with the Royal Queensland Regiment. At the Forum, he will chair the seminar on social services and the family.

Stephen Judd (CEO, Hammond Care)

Dr Stephen Judd has more than 20 years experience in the health-care and information technology industries. He is the chief executive of The Hammond Care Group, regarded internationally as a leader in dementia care. In October 2005 Stephen was awarded the Federal Minister for Ageing's Award for Excellence in Aged Care (Australia) for his outstanding leadership and management. He is a member of various industry and government committees and has co-written two dementia-specific publications. Prior to his work in aged care Dr Judd co-authored *Sydney Anglicans* (Sydney 1987), a history of the Diocese of Sydney as well as worked in the information technology industry. At the National Forum Stephen will be presenting with Anne Robinson an assessment of the contribution of Christianity to Social Services in Australia.

Robert D Linder (History Professor, Kansas State University)

Bob Linder is University Distinguished Professor of History at Kansas State University, USA. His chief area of interest is the history of the relationship between religion and politics. He has done postdoctoral study at the Universities of Geneva, Oxford and Cambridge. He has written or edited 15 books including *A Dictionary of Christianity in America* which was awarded *Christianity Today's* Book of the Year award. He has served for eight years as a member of the Manhattan City Council in Kansas and served two terms as Mayor of the city. He is a veteran of the US Army from the time of the Vietnam War. Since 1987 Bob Linder has spent every winter in Australia doing research and writing in Australian religious history and, in the course of his research, has travelled every corner of the country. He has been a major architect of the current study of religious history in Australia and is in many ways the one who has made this conference on Australia's Christian heritage a possibility. At the National Forum Professor Linder will deliver the plenary address on 'The Australian Character'.

Graham McDonald (Director, Children of the World)

Graham is a Team Leader for Children of the World (a children's ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ) and has been involved in children's ministry for over twenty years here in Australia and overseas. He has a heart for children as the future of our nation and as part of the Kingdom of God. He currently has one regular scripture class of 40 children. Graham is married to Margaret, with two married children and five grandchildren. Graham is the Administrator of the National Forum and will speak at the opening dinner on his vision for it.

Helen McCabe (Plunkett Centre for Ethics in Health Care)

Helen McCabe is currently conducting post-doctoral research at the Australian Catholic University into the ethical aspects of providing for pain relief, as well as the ethical implications of nurses' involvement in euthanasia. Helen has practised as a registered nurse since 1977, specialising in oncology and palliative care. She has a degree in health administration and an M.A. in applied ethics in health care. In 2004, she completed doctoral research into the ethical implications of introducing 'managed care' into the Australian health care context. Helen's special interests include the ethical aspects of health policy, particularly the requirements of justice in the distribution of health care resources. At the National Forum, Helen will be speaking on the contribution of Christianity to the role of the family in Australian society.

Keith Mason (President of the NSW Court of Appeal)

Keith Mason became a Barrister in 1972 and was appointed a Queen's Counsel in 1981. He was Chairman of the NSW Law Reform Commission from 1985 until 1990, Solicitor General for New South Wales 1987-1997, and was made President of the New South Wales Court of Appeal from 1997. He was made a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) in 2003, a Non-resident Judge of the Supreme Court of Fiji from 2003, and a Member of the Appellate Tribunal of the Anglican Church of Australia from 2005, and is currently Chancellor of the Anglican Diocese of Armidale. Among his publications is *Constancy & Change* (1990, Federation Press) a series of lectures on moral and religious values in the Australian Legal System originally given at New College at the University of New South Wales. Keith is married to Anne and they have two young adult children. At the National Forum he will speak on the contribution of Christianity to the development of the law and the legal profession in Australia.

Stuart Piggin (ACHNF Chairman, Macquarie University)

Associate Professor Stuart Piggin is Director of the Centre for the History of Christian Thought and Experience at Macquarie University. He lectured in Religious History at the Universities of Wollongong and Sydney from 1974 to 1990 and was Master of Robert Menzies College, Macquarie University, from 1990 to 2004. He is the Founding Director of the Macquarie Christian Studies Institute. Stuart is interested in the contribution of Christianity to nation building, the nature of spiritual experience and of religious revival, and the human impact of natural and man-made disasters. He has written over 100 articles for academic journals and seven books, including *The Mount Kembla Disaster* (1992) and *Evangelical Christianity in Australia* (1996), both published by Oxford University Press, and *Firestorm of the Lord* (2000), a study of revival. *Evangelical Christianity in Australia* was reprinted in 2004 by Strand Publishing as *Spirit of a Nation*. Stuart is married to Rosemary, a medico, became a grandfather in November 2005, is a fanatical supporter of the Sydney Swans, and believes that we'll all be playing AFL in heaven. At the National Forum, Stuart will deliver the plenary lecture on 'Australia's Jesus and Australia's Values'.

Marina Prior

Marina's first professional audition resulted in her first lead role - that of Mabel in the Victoria State Opera's *The Pirates Of Penzance*. She has subsequently taken leading roles in many of the most celebrated stage productions in Australian theatre: *Camelot*, *Cats*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Student Prince*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Les Miserables*, *Anything Goes*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *West Side Story*, *The Secret Garden*, *Showboat*, *the Merry Widow*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Noises Off*, *Harp In The Willow*, *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Kiss Me, Kate*. A critically acclaimed Australasian concert tour with international tenor, José Carreras, remains one of the highlights of Marina's career. Marina is also well known on Australian television through her appearances on variety shows such as *Good Morning Australia* and *Carols by Candlelight*. Marina has recorded three CDs accompanied by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and has received numerous awards including three MO Awards, two Green Room Awards, and the Advance Australia Award for her contribution to the performing arts. In 2005, Marina took on a new role, as a Goodwill Ambassador for Samaritan's Purse Australia, an international relief organization. Marina has travelled with Samaritan's Purse to Cambodia, and has seen first hand how this organization meets the needs of poor and disadvantaged people. At the Forum, Marina will sing for us 'You Raise Me Up' and 'My Country'.

Harry Quick (Member for Franklin)

Harry has been elected to the House of Representatives for Franklin, Tasmania, in 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001 and 2004. Since 2001 he has been opposition whip. Before entering Parliament he was a teacher and electorate officer for Senator Tate. He has served on a number of parliamentary committees and on some challenging overseas parliamentary delegations. At the Forum Harry will chair the seminar on Law and Politics which will be addressed by Justice Mason and Kevin Rudd.

Margaret Reeson (Canberra historian)

An Independent Scholar, Margaret Reeson began work as a teacher in NSW in 1957. Between 1961 and 1978 she served as a teacher, Christian Education worker and missionary in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, with special interest in working with illiterate women and youth. Her interest in Papua New Guinea in particular and relationships with churches in the Pacific continues to the present. Since 1979 she has lived in Canberra with her family. Over the years she has served on a number of church councils and working groups with Uniting Church in Australia. She is the author of the much-acclaimed *Currency Lass* (1983), *Certain Lives* (1987) *A Singular Woman* (1999) and *A Very Long War* (2000). Her current project is a biography of a 19th century missionary couple, George and Lydia Brown. Margaret has been married to Ron since 1966 and rejoices in her adult children and five grandchildren. At the Forum Margaret will be a respondent at the plenary session on the Australian character.

Anne Robinson (Chair, World Vision)

Anne Robinson is the founder and principal of a legal practice, Prolegis, which specialises in providing legal services to non-profit and other charitable organisations. Anne has been practising law for some twenty years, first in the large Sydney firms, before establishing a firm in 1984 which pioneered the practice of legal audit and legal risk management. Anne has been involved in governance of Christian organisations for some twenty five years, including being on the boards of two independent schools in Sydney over the past fifteen years. She chairs the Board of World Vision Australia, and is the Moderator of the World Vision International Council. At the National Forum Anne will be presenting with Stephen Judd an assessment of the contribution of Christianity to Social Services in Australia.

Kevin Rudd (Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, Member for Griffith)

Kevin Rudd was born in Nambour, Queensland. He gained his Bachelor of Arts (Asian Studies) degree with First Class Honours in 1981 from the Australian National University and was appointed that year to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs as a cadet diplomat. He served in the Australian Embassies in Stockholm as Third Secretary and later in Beijing as First Secretary. Between 1988 and 1995, Mr Rudd worked as Chief of Staff to Wayne Goss both as Opposition Leader and Premier and later as Director General of the Cabinet Office. In 1998 Mr Rudd was elected to the Parliament of Australia. He was re-elected in the November 2001 elections and was appointed Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs. In December 2003, he was given the added responsibility of International Security. In June 2005, he was appointed to the Trade portfolio in addition to Foreign Affairs and International Security. Mr Rudd has written extensively on Chinese politics, Chinese foreign policy, Australia-Asia relations and globalisation. He and his wife Therese were married in 1981. They have three children and live in Norman Park in Brisbane. At the National Forum, Mr Rudd will speak on the Christian contribution to Australian politics and government.

John Smith of God Squad

John Smith has served as a secondary and primary School Teacher, Methodist pastor, Church planter, author, founder of several youth organizations and, most famously, God's Squad Motor Cycle Clubs. He has been a much sought-after itinerant speaker to youth festivals, the corporate sector, and other conferences. He is currently the Minister of an inner city Church in Collingwood. He is the author of *Advance Australia Where* and wrote for *Age Saturday Reflection* for several years. At the National Forum he will address delegates at lunch on Monday.

Wayne Swan (Shadow Treasurer, Member for Lilley)

Elected to the House of Representatives for Lilley, Queensland, in 1993, Wayne Swan was re-elected in 1998, 2001 and 2004. He served as Shadow Minister for Family and Community Services before becoming Shadow Treasurer in 2004. Born in 1954, Wayne graduated BA from the University of Queensland and lectured at the Queensland Institute of Technology. He also worked as a Policy analyst for the Office of Youth Affairs and was an adviser to ministers Hayden, Young and Beazley. At the Forum, he will chair the session on the Christian contribution to the development of Australian business and commerce.

Elizabeth Ward (rtd. Principal, PLC, Melbourne)

Elizabeth Ward retired as Principal of Presbyterian Ladies' College, Melbourne, in April 2006. Her previous experience includes positions as Deputy then Acting Headmistress at Abbotsleigh (Wahroonga, NSW) and Head of History at Ravenswood (Gordon, NSW). Over the years she has taught History, Divinity, English and Drama. For many years Elizabeth was involved in the development of secondary History curriculum for NSW. She has also served on many committees concerned with the professional development of teachers. Elizabeth has presented a number of conference and seminar papers on history teaching and learning, assessment and the collaborative management of change. Recently she presented a paper to the Association Heads of Independent Schools Conference titled 'Managing Social Diversity and Social Pluralism in Schools'. Elizabeth and her husband David directed a number of Crusader Camps and were Joint Superintendents for St Swithun's Sunday School, Pymble. At the National Forum Elizabeth will be speaking on the Christian contribution to the development of education in Australia.



ACHNF

Shaping the Good Society in Australia

Heritage is that part of our past which is useful for our future. Much of the best in our past is the fruit of the Christian values of many everyday Australians.

Christianity 'moralised' a population descended from convicts and taught us the arts of civility. It encouraged us to care for the needy in one of the world's best welfare systems, without transgressing the liberty of the individual in one of the world's freest democracies. It has also left us with the conviction that we could have done better and we should have done more. In the addresses, here reproduced, given at the first National Forum on Australia's Christian Heritage, are scores of stories which illustrate the contribution of Christianity to Australia's development. It is hoped that these stories, as told by academics, professional leaders, and parliamentarians, will alert all Australians to the value of our Christian heritage and will stimulate Christians to be more intentional in their commitment to shaping Australia into the good society.

Speakers

John Anderson

Brad Baker

Guy Barnett

Geoffrey Bolton

Graeme Davison

Ian Harper

Stephen Judd

Robert D Linder

Helen McCabe

Keith Mason

Stuart Piggin

Margaret Reeson

Anne Robinson

Kevin Rudd

Elizabeth Ward

'Notwithstanding the many rich and complex historical and more recent factors that have influenced Australia, Christianity has been an enormous force for good, and it has shaped not only the individual lives of people, but also the character of our nation.'

John Howard

'Throughout this country's history, the church has been at its best when it has been both fearless and informed in its ethical critique of government and corporate behaviour.'

Kevin Rudd