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Editorial

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Editorial

A significant role of higher education is to prepare students for their future professions, and contribute to the national research effort (Ministerial Council for Education and Youth Affairs, 2008). Research in Australian society is undertaken for the purpose of building up society's stock of knowledge over time through a progressive, self-correcting, and iterative process. Research also shows how knowledge can be applied (Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations, 2004), adapted, and interpreted (Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations, 2007). In order to undertake these two main roles, academic institutions need access to the most current and accurate material, and to disseminate their own research through conferences, publications, reports, and so forth. Any institution, which does not continually update itself and change to "meet the future," will become increasingly irrelevant, perhaps even to itself. Christian institutions, like others, need to remain up to date and avoid slipping into introspection, or developing a mediocre status quo mentality.

The term *new perspectives* is not new, as any rudimentary search of the internet will attest. New perspectives are continuously being developed in almost every discipline area, and religion (and Christianity) is no exception (e.g., on Paul, the origins of Christianity, and biblical traditions of the New Testament). Christ himself brought a radically, even perhaps revolutionary, new perspective to the religious of his day.

The research literature on Christianity in Australian society generally suggests an apparent decline of Christianity, at least in its traditional religious forms. This current phenomenon occurs in an historical context where British migrants in the 1700s colonised Australia on Christian principles. Though sometimes not acknowledged, Christianity has contributed much to the formulation and maintenance of key structures and institutions in Australia. However, in contemporary Australian society, the number of religious observances and the proportion of active Christians appear to be declining (e.g., Cahill, Bouma, Dellal, & Leahy, 2004; Kotila, 2006), though it also appears that there is still considerable interest in a less traditional spirituality. At the international level, recent data indicate a growth of Christianity in developing countries, while there is a corresponding fall in the number of Christians in mainstream religious groups in developed countries. Some revitalisation of mainstream Christian churches occurs in developed countries, where, for example, people from developing countries integrate into their congregations (Cahill et al., 2004). In this milieu of religious instability, many young people are "spiritually hungry" (European Values Study, 1999), with an increasing number of them defining themselves as being religious. They genuinely are searching for meaning, are more interested in spirituality than in doctrine, and avoid commitment to institutional religious structures. They are often more interested in other religious traditions than Christianity, or are eclectically multifaith believers.

The main purpose of this journal is to offer new perspectives on Christianity, and to identify ways and means through which Christianity can engage with, and be relevant to, people, issues, and structures existing in the twenty-first century. This purpose may be subdivided into several aims: (1) to open a portal for the ongoing scholarly analysis and evaluation of the interface between Christianity and contemporary society, most particularly Australian society; (2) to construct a forum for those new perspectives which will contribute properly and accurately to the national research effort and to improved knowledge and understanding of the world (*Weltanschauung*); and (3) to provide current information for young people as to how Christians may engage with social problems and thinking. Thus, rather than focusing on a form of Christianity that is "handcuffed to the past" (Cahill, Bouma, Dellal, & Leahy, 2004, p. 9), irrelevant and out of date, the journal invites papers that illuminate relevant new

perspectives (e.g., outlooks, attitudes, contexts, approaches, or views), particularly those which are of special interest to an Australian people.

In this first edition of the journal, several papers address the same issue from different vantage points (perspectives) while other papers address new but different issues. On the topic of the environmental crisis, David Tacey states that, "one way Christianity can increase relevance in Australia's primarily secular society is by showing leadership in the debate about the ecological crisis." Graham Fletcher introduces the Christian's response to Native Title legislation, and argues that the interface is based on age-old Christian principles, as well as the traditions and customs of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. Three papers add new perspectives concerning the New Testament and its context. Norman Young provides an analysis of Romans 14:5-6 via the New Perspective on Paul; Alanna Nobbs provides a view into Early Christians' responses to requirements in their social context; and Steven Thompson takes a new perspective on drinking and drunkenness in Greco-Roman times. Kevin de Berg discusses the interface between Christianity and Darwinism, and (the late) Eric Magnussen presents a new perspective on studying the Old and New Testaments from a viewpoint of tribal conflict.

An introductory paper by Vivienne Watts provides a brief overview of the current Australian demographic data and trends in relation to Christian denominations and other religious groups over the past 100 years. Given these trends and values in contemporary Australian society, it is opportune for Christians to ask what Christianity can contribute to groups, individuals, and the resolution of problems in Australia. As noted by Tacey (2000), "True spirituality always engages with the world and is unafraid to meet and transform it" (p. 24). Christianity can become more relevant by increasing its understanding and appreciation of contemporary issues, taking an informed and proper position on them, and finding its voice to speak out. Piggin (2006) stated further, "We 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 to our distinctive Australian context" (p. 7). Of course, Christians need to do much more than speak out – they need to act! Australian Christian thinkers need to engage with the cutting edge of thought and provide *New Perspectives on Christianity* at the intersection of their particular areas of expertise, Christianity, and the problems/gaps that need to be addressed in contemporary Australian society.

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Christianity's Potential Contribution to Australian Society

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Christianity's Potential Contribution to Australian Society

Vivienne Watts¹
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The proportion of Christians in the Australian population continues to decline. Internationally, the proportion of Christians in developing countries is tending to increase, whereas the proportion of Christians in developed countries generally is decreasing. This paper first provides a brief overview of the current Australian demographic data and trends in relation to Christian denominations and other religious groups over the past 100 years. Based on Christianity's past contribution to Australian society, it then posits a framework for a way forward to contribute to the current and future issues and problems confronting Christianity in Australian society.

Introduction

Religious organisations provide the structures, beliefs, ideology, goals, and purpose for religious groups, which in turn encourage people to connect with God, develop personal spirituality, meaning, and purpose in life. Tacey (2000) has commented that, "without religion we have no organised way of communicating or expressing truth, no sacred rituals to bind individuals into living community" (p. 28). Australia is not without religion. Indeed, Australia may be described as a multireligious nation, partly as a consequence of the change to Australia's religious profile (described below), which has facilitated the introduction of new beliefs, rituals, religious structures, and new models of religious leadership (Cahill, Bouma, Dellal & Leahy, 2004).

The term *religion* has been used in various ways over time and in different contexts. In 1902, for example, James defined religion as "the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude" (James, 2003, p. 32). Today, some use the terms *religion* and *spirituality* interchangeably (Tirri, 2006). Others refer to religion as "the organisational, the ritual, the ideological," and spirituality as "the personal, the affective, the experiential, and the thoughtful" (Pargament, 1999, p. 3). Others divide religion into two parts, the formal ecclesiastical part and the personal reflective part. Legally, in Australia, the term religion is defined by the High Court of Australia as "a complex of beliefs and practices which point to a set of values and an understanding of the meaning of existence" (Henry, 2009).

The definition of religion can be further confused by multiple definitions of the term spirituality, leading to (at least) three different viewpoints being held in Australia: (a) spirituality is separate and distinct from religion, (b) spirituality may co-exist with religion, and (c) spirituality and religion can grow together. In Europe, according to Stifoss-Hanssen (1999), spirituality emphasized people's search for meaning in relation to the big existential questions. Spirituality, for others, is a soft option, used by people who are not committed to the discipline necessary for true religious commitment, since is easier to claim to be spiritual than to comply with the more disciplined requirements of a religion. For others (e.g., Tacey, 2000), spirituality is a "mystery, a deep source of unknowing," such that "we must approach this subject with humility, awe and reverence ... because when we are most certain about spirituality, we are most certainly removed from its essence" (p. 24). Tacey notes that spirituality can pervade all religions, yet, if not treated appropriately, spirituality and religion can nullify each other. Some consider that spirituality can be expressed by atheists

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and agnostics, such as, for example, people deeply engaged in ecology and other altruistic endeavours. According to this view, spirituality is a concept wider than religion. Stifoss-Hanssen (1999) concluded that spirituality and religion share some common ideas, but they are separate and distinct concepts and terms.

However religion and spirituality may be defined, it is unequivocal that their meanings continuously change. To the modern thinker, religion is primarily something to think about (e.g., a set of doctrines to believe in, or theories to discuss), whereas historically, religion “is a practical discipline that teaches us to discover new capacities of mind and heart” (Armstrong, 2009, p. 4). As Armstrong notes:

It is no use magisterially weighing up the teachings of religion to judge their truth or falsehood, before embarking on a religious way of life. You will only discover their truth – or lack of it – if you translate these doctrines into ritual or ethical action. (p. 4)

Armstrong has highlighted a significant aspect of all true religions and spiritualities, namely, that they continually discover new capacities of mind and heart that are actioned as an authentic way of life.

Religion in Australia

In 2006, the world’s population was approximately 6.6 billion. Christians were the largest religious group with 2.1 billion adherents, and there were approximately 1.5 billion Muslims, 0.9 billion Hindus, 376 million Buddhists, and 14 million Jews. Christianity comprised approximately 34% of the world population, and was the largest group who claimed some religious affiliation. Christianity is growing in Africa and Asia, with a decline evident in Europe and the USA. In Australia, Christians comprised 63.9% of the population who claimed any religious affiliation, followed by Buddhists (2.1%), Muslims (1.7%), Hindus (0.7%) and Jews (0.4%). These figures support the common understanding that Australia is “predominantly a Christian country” (Tourism Australia, 2008). Although Christianity remains the predominant religion in Australia, there has been a steady decline in the percentage of Christians in the total population since the first census in 1901, when 96.1% of the population indicated that they were Christians (Table 1).

Table 1

Percentage of Christians in the Australian Population 1901-2006 (Australian Bureau of Statistics)

Year	1901	1947	1954	1961	1966	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
%	96.1	88.0	89.4	88.3	88.2	86.2	78.6	76.4	73.0	74.0	70.9	68.0	63.9

There are, of course, acknowledged difficulties in interpreting these census figures. First, the figures are not indicative of actual adherents, given that many reporting affiliation with a particular religion would be nominal or non-practising, and many would be unknown to the churches with which they report affiliation. Further, there is an acknowledged discrepancy between the church roll (which may include many lapsed participants) and active members. As a result of these two sources of data, some statisticians place the percentage of active Christians as low as 7.5% of the population (e.g., Tourism Australia, 2008).

Second, the census uses a self-report methodology that has inherent difficulties, such as whether or not respondents understand the question. This is possible, given that the increasingly multicultural population in Australia includes a growing proportion of people for whom English is not their first language. These persons may have difficulty understanding the questions and completing the census form. Third, the methodology does not allow identification of the number of Christians who change from one Christian denomination to another (thought to be relatively high).

The fourth difficulty relates to the honesty of responses. For example, a short time ago, many people in Australia who were of no particular religious persuasion used Church of England (now known as Anglican) as the default category. More recently, it is possible that the more socially acceptable category of no religion has become the default category. In support of this possible change in behaviour, the census data reveal a declining number of people identifying as Anglican, and an increasing number of people reporting no religion. Of course, other explanations are possible. Fifth, many Christians and non-Christians alike, for privacy reasons, may not wish to enter their religion on a public form and, therefore, enter a position of no religion. Sixth, the movement of Christians between Christian denominations apparently is quite frequent, and the census instrument lacks the sophistication to identify these changes in Christian denominations.

Although it is acknowledged that many difficulties, such as those identified above, are apparent in interpreting census data, nevertheless it equally should be acknowledged that difficulties exist with all census data. Therefore, there is still merit in comparing data from year to year, and especially over an extended time period of 100 years. The census data on religious affiliation over the period 1901-2006 indicate that the majority (96%) of the Australian population reported being Christians in 1901. Of these, 80% belonged to one of four main denominations – Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, or Presbyterian (the latter two merging as part of the Uniting Church). By 2006, the proportion of Christians had declined to 63.9% overall, with only 53.2% in the four main denominations. This decline in the major Christian religions (Anglican, Catholic, Uniting) is illustrated in Figure 1.

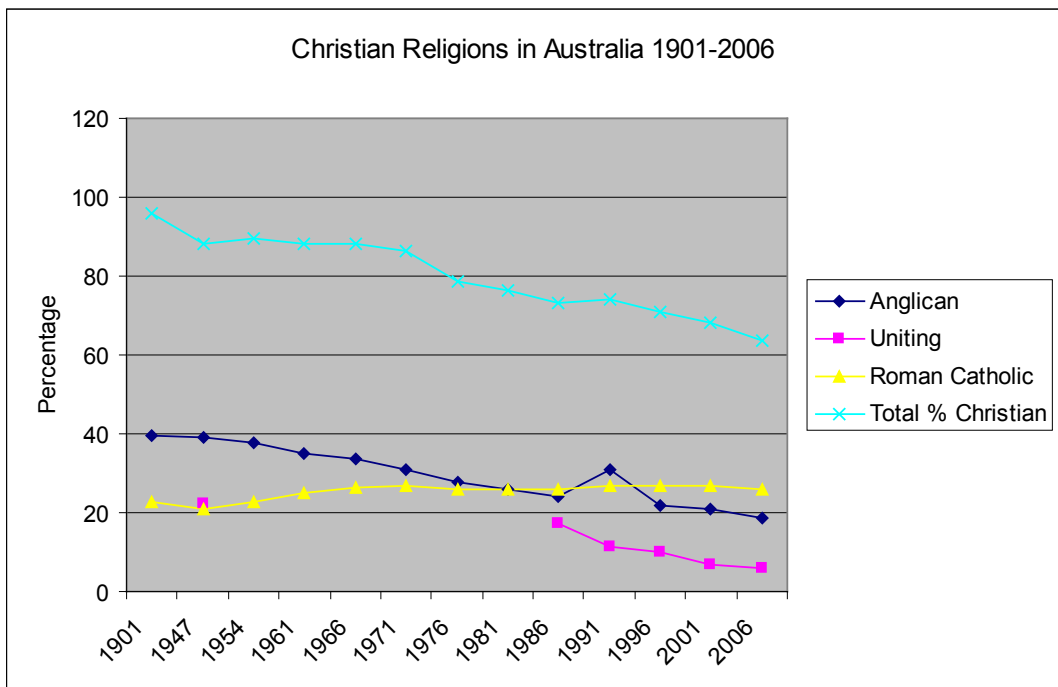


Figure 1. Decline in the major Christian religions in Australia 1901-2006, expressed as a proportion of the Australian population (The Australian Bureau of Statistics).

Table 2 shows a more recent breakdown of the trends in the major Christian religions, together with the addition of the remaining smaller ones. These trends indicate that the decline is more widespread than the major Christian religions, including

all Christian denominations except for the categories of Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Other Christian. These trends are not spread homogeneously throughout Australian society, and some local areas have experienced increases whereas other local areas have experienced decreases. (The total of 63.55% differs from the overall 63.9% due to rounding and to the omission of some very small groups.)

Table 2

Percentage of the Australian Population for Christian Denominations 1996-2006 (Australian Bureau of Statistics)

Denomination	1996	2001	2006
Catholic	27.03	26.65	25.8
Anglican	21.99	20.68	18.7
Uniting	7.52	6.65	5.7
Presbyterian/Reformed	3.81	3.4	3
Orthodox	2.8	2.82	2.9
Other Christian	1.43	1.72	2
Baptist	1.6	1.65	1.6
Lutheran	1.41	1.33	1.2
Pentecostal	0.98	1.04	1.1
Jehovah's Witnesses	0.47	0.43	0.4
Salvation Army	0.42	0.38	0.3
Churches of Christ	0.42	0.33	0.2
Seventh-day Adventist	0.3	0.29	0.27
Latter Day Saints	0.25	0.27	0.26
Brethren	0.12	0.1	0.12
Total	70.55	67.74	63.55

While most Christian denominations have been experiencing decline, there has been some growth in (a) Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Other Christian denominations; (b) non-Christian groups such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam; and (c) the proportion of Australians indicating no religious affiliation. These trends are illustrated in Figure 2.

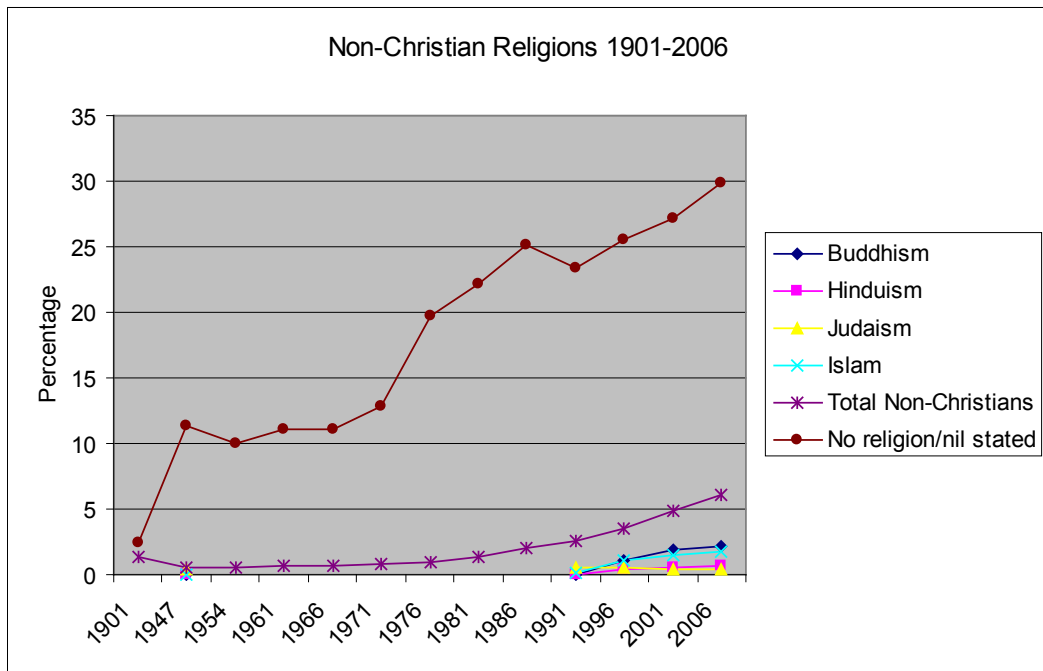


Figure 2. Increase in non-Christian groups 1901-2006, expressed as a proportion of the Australian population (The Australian Bureau of Statistics).

It is important here to observe that, since 1901, there has been an increase in the proportion of the population either indicating no religious affiliation or failing to state an affiliation. In recent years, this proportion has increased from approximately 23% in 1991, to 25% in 1996, 27% in 2001, and to 30% in 2006. These figures mean that, currently, approximately 30% of Australia's population appear to have no religious affiliation, and approximately 6% appear to be adherents of non-Christian religions or groups. With respect to this latter trend, Cahill et al. (2004) observed that long-term residents of Australia increasingly are concerned about the impact of this change in religious profile on the Australian way of life. This concern relates to the largely unknown nature of other world faiths, to the religious extremism often perceived to be associated with them, and the potential to "destroy the fabric of Australia's civil, pluralist and democratic society" (p. 8).

The Past: Australia's Christian Foundation

Christianity has contributed greatly to the development of what is often called the "lucky country" and the "best country in the world," a country that has achieved a great deal in a comparatively short period of time. Given these past contributions, a worrying aspect of the demographic changes to date is the decline in actual active participation of Christians in the community. Piggin (1994, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b) observed that, in the past, Christianity has made a rich and substantial contribution to Australia, and that Australia has essentially a Christian heritage. Christianity played a key role in the development of the new colony, so that the Judeo-Christian ethic is a key part of Australian identity. Christian structures, efforts, and events, feature as part of its icons. Contributions include the establishment of hospitals, schools, churches, universities, aged-care facilities, welfare agencies (e.g., Salvation Army), politics (e.g., establishment of the Labour Party and Union Movement), festivals (e.g., Christmas, Easter), and societies (e.g., Young Men's/Women's Christian Association,

Women's Christian Temperance Union). Such significant contributions begs the question: With a declining proportion of active Christians contributing to the national work effort, productivity, and the beliefs and values of the nation, what is to become of the foundations and heritage so firmly established by the pioneers? What is to become of Australia's Christian identity?

Australia, of course, is not the only country with a rich Christian heritage. Sløk (1993) reviewed Christianity's overall contribution to the European community, and despite persecution at levels not known in Australia, Sløk concluded that the reason that Christianity had been so successful was due to its belief system. This system had provided the foundations by which the European culture had extracted itself from the Greco-Roman culture to form a nation founded on Christian ideas, which had a "lasting impact on the way of life of the European" (p. 128). The major ideas, according to Sløk, were the beliefs in Jesus as Saviour God, God as love, the demand for love to fellow human beings, and a focus on the future world. In practice, these ideas produced a particular way of behaviour or lifestyle by which European people believed that they should not ignore another human being in need (based on the golden rule and the story of the good Samaritan), and that the only true humanity which ethics is able to demand, is to help the needy and the oppressed in their despair. The final goal for all human effort was entry into the future world, thus creating the concept that the current world was temporary and insignificant. While Sløk's thesis may be contestable (e.g., Paul, 2005), it is the case that, irrespective of denominational affiliation, the basic beliefs of all denominations are the drivers by which active adherents are motivated to engage with each other and the community.

The Present: Problems and Issues

Pope Benedict XVI (2005) is said to have observed that, "the mainstream churches appear moribund ... in Australia ... and also in Europe, but not so much in the United States" (Collins, 2007, p. 1). In concert with the demographic data outlined in the introductory section, this statement appears to indicate that the task of changing the situation in Australia is almost impossible.

Perhaps, however, there is reason to be more optimistic. Pohlmann (2009), for instance, identifies a seeming paradox that, though there is a decline in Christianity in Australia, there is a corresponding increase in the growth of chaplaincy services in Queensland public schools, which are funded by the government. Superficially, it appears that, on the one hand, the nation is claiming to be not religious, and, on the other hand, public schools are quite welcoming of a (predominantly Christian) chaplaincy service. This seeming paradox appears to highlight the fact that definitions of religion and spirituality have changed in contemporary Australian society, and from those used in the census data. The Australian community has a perception that Christianity can make a positive impact (such as in counselling unchurched young people in secular contexts). Webber, Singleton, and Hughes (2006) found that 48% of young people aged 18-25 said they believed in God, and a further 32% were not sure. These data point to differences in understanding of the beliefs and the spirituality of young people when compared to the understanding of religious observance of older Australians. Bouma (2006) concurs with this position, suggesting that Australians are not godless but are "quietly spiritual."

Christians in Australia have to engage with a number of contemporary issues. For example, it is reasonable to suspect that the number of active Christians is far less than the number of Christians indicated in the census data. Christians live in a society that perceives itself to be mostly secular. They also acknowledge that they have internal problems of their own. Cahill et al. (2004, pp. 19-20) reported that the main issues of concern to Christians were religious education in mainstream public and private schools; the definition of religion in a multi-faith context; Aboriginal

reconciliation; the education of faith community leaders; employment practices and religious expression, including religious holidays; religion and the role of women; and the place of Aboriginal spiritualities in a multi-faith context.

It is right and proper that attention be given to the problems within Christianity itself, and to problems associated with the decline of Christianity. Christians, however, are also called upon to engage with numerous general problems in the wider community, many of which require urgent attention. These problems include child sexual abuse and neglect (Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce, 2006), breakdown of family structures, illegal drug use, various health care problems (Rodricks, 2006), homelessness (Thompson, 2007), financial uncertainty, water shortages in many of Australia's urban areas, drought in rural Australia, the proliferation and safety issues related to the use and storage of nuclear weapons, international terrorism, the economy, medical ethics, taxation (Pinnock, 2007, p. 337), climate change (Stern, 2007), the impact of the global financial crisis, and the development of vulnerable complex systems resulting from the computer-based infrastructure upon which most operations of the global village world depend.

Of particular concern for Australian Christians is the continuing exclusion of Indigenous spiritualities in the fabric of Australian religion. Australian Aboriginal cultures have existed for thousands of years but, as yet, are barely recognised (1% of Aboriginal people) in Australian data (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Indigenous spiritualities and religions should be recognised, for, as McIntosh (2006) comments, "We have our culture, our dreamtime and dance, our spirit guides and our elders" (p. ii). Furthermore, Indigenous spiritualities substantially fulfil the definition of a religion legislated by the High Court of Australia. In 2006, 73% of the Indigenous population reported affiliation with a Christian denomination, mostly Anglican and Catholic. However, when Indigenous Australians convert to Christianity, they want to maintain their links with their traditional religions and practice a type of "dual allegiance, based on the notion that God ha[s] created everything, including the Dreaming for Aboriginal people" (Tonkinson, 2002, p. 18). Noting that the Christianisation of Indigenous Australians has not been successful overall, Tonkinson attributes this fact to Christianity's inability to disengage the existing Indigenous religious system, which for Indigenous Australians was inseparable from life itself (p. 6). An Aboriginal theologian (Harris, 1996) has suggested that the Aboriginal church should lead Australian Christians back to the true and living God of the Dreamtime, and in this way be introduced to the Christ of the New Testament (see also Goosen, 1999).

In summary, Australian Christians currently confront a range of challenges relating to (a) the changed religious demographics; (b) the overall decline of Christianity; (c) the range of issues within the Christian churches and church structures; and (d) active participation in, and contribution to, Australian society. This current situation leads to the questions: What is the role of Christianity in Australia? When confronting contemporary issues (e.g., social, financial, ecological, and political), does Christianity have anything to contribute to contemporary society? What is the way forward?

The Future: A Way Forward?

Australian Christians may choose from three distinctive positions (e.g., Scharmer, 2009, p. 5): retromovement activists, defenders of the status quo, and advocates for transformational change. In terms of a movement metaphor, the three positions may be restated as retro-movement (past), non-movement (past and present merge), and forward-movement (future meets the present). The first position is taken by fundamentalists and old time religionists who have closed their minds and hearts to any new perspective, and their basic motto is to retreat and defend tradition. The second (and largest) group contains those habitualised in the uncritical present,

who also have closed their minds and hearts to any new perspective, and whose basic motto is no-change management of the current state of affairs. Both of these positions negate the Christian ethos of freedom, responsibility, and engagement. The third group contains those who wish to engage with future possibilities and new perspectives, mind-sets, and skills, and whose basic motto is relevant leadership for the future. If Christianity is to regain its relevance in contemporary Australian society, then it must reposition itself to the third positioning, and be prepared to engage with new perspectives for, and from, the future. It is this third position that confirms and sustains the Christian ethos of freedom, responsibility, and engagement.

Klingberg, Jr., (2001, p. 8), in his biography of Frankl, comments that Frankl saw spirituality as bringing human freedom, but more of a *freedom to* than a *freedom from*, in the sense that individuals are not removed from their circumstances and situations, but they are free to choose their responses and what will receive their attention and devotion. Frankl believed that this *freedom to* carried with it an *obligation to*, that is, an obligation to the world, to something and someone outside of self. This viewpoint aligns with the third position (forward-movement), and implies a significant way forward for the future, namely, community engagement, where Christians apply themselves to community challenges, needs, issues, and problems.

Christians may act alone individually, but perhaps it is now time for fresh collective action, for Christians to act communally for the good of the community. For such a collective to work, however, there would need to be an acceptable framework of factors to sustain its survival, including: relevance, common beliefs, a common group purpose, and a feeling by participants that their Christian faith is worthwhile and will provide strength in times of trial. Each of these factors is briefly discussed below.

Relevance

The process of addressing contemporary needs, problems, issues and concerns, was a focus of Australian Christian pioneers. Whether it was the establishment of schools, hospitals, political movements, or infrastructure, Christians were involved with the resolution of community problems. Contemporary Christians too can make a valuable and relevant contribution. Christian academics, for example, can research the most appropriate solutions to some of the current community problems, disseminate their findings, and engage responsibly with the community in implementing solutions. Christians can be a relevant force for good, if they unlock the handcuffs that often bind them to the past and which are a sure track to irrelevance and demise.

Common Beliefs

Since beliefs are motivational drivers for action, it is important to identify what the central beliefs of Christianity are, in actuality and practice. The published beliefs of the various Christian denominations are widely available on the internet, catechisms, and creeds. However, it is well known anecdotally that adherents' actual beliefs often differ from these denominational or faith-tradition sets of beliefs. Many individual Christians attempt to keep their beliefs current and relevant, and related to their perceptions of their contemporary society. However, this attempt is largely ignored, even condemned, by respective ecclesiastical hierarchies, and inevitably a gap opens between hierarchy and congregation that lessens the overall credibility of Christianity.

Sløk (1993) proposed the central beliefs of Christianity as belief in Jesus as Saviour God, God as love, the demand for love to fellow human beings, and a focus on the future world. These beliefs are demonstrated in a practical sense as care for human beings in need, and looking forward to the final goal for all human effort, which is entry into the future world. Perhaps it is time to move away from speculative theological traditions formulated over past centuries, to a fresh understanding of the actual, current, core beliefs of Christian denominations.

Common Purpose

A declining understanding of Christianity's identity has left many unclear about the future direction of many denominations and faith-traditions. Some traditional religions, after a process of introspection, have tried to clone the behaviours of "successful" churches (e.g., by introducing upbeat music and focusing on entertaining young people as a strategy for combating decline). There are alternatives to cloning successful business models for churches, however, such as religious worship and the development of spirituality. A focus on introspection and numbers should be replaced by a focus on community engagement. The focus on exclusion should be replaced by a focus on welcoming new members and inclusion. Those denominations which remain silent on current issues should begin to speak out.

Strength of Faith

Many previous Christians who faced war, death, martyrdom, imprisonment, illness and various trials and difficulties, declared that they were able to face these enormous challenges because of their faith. While this facet is not exclusive to Christianity, Christianity would not be credible unless it was able to sustain adherents in times of crisis. Therefore, the Christianity of the future needs to focus on character development, moral development, faith development, authentic spirituality, and how these are applied and meaningful to Christians in everyday practical life.

Advocacy

Religion is alive and well in Australia, as it is in the world. Armstrong (2009) notes: "Even though so many people are antagonistic to faith, the world is currently experiencing a religious revival" (p. 9). Consequently, as Tacey (2000) has stated, "We can no longer afford to remain silent about matters of meaning" (p. 6). Piggin (2006) also opines that, "We 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" (p. 7). The latter point is pertinent to a proper and accurate advocacy, since, as Armstrong suggests, there is the temptation to succumb to a new religiosity that is unskilful (p. 9). Such an unskilful religiosity fits the first two positions (retro-movement & non-movement) described above, but what is needed today is a new religiosity (forward-movement) free from irrelevant traditions and practices, self-indulgence, dogmatism, ineptitude, violence, and intolerance, a new religiosity that is free to express itself in practical community engagement. Watts (2006), for example, has suggested that Christians can speak out on behalf of minority groups such as women, children, disabled, ethnic groups, and Australia's Indigenous peoples, all of whom are currently "rendered invisible or insignificant ... by atheistic, or secular and other overtly and covertly anti-Christian movements" (p. 3).

Conclusion

In the past, Christianity has made a sustained and valuable contribution to Australian communities. To focus on the changing religious demographics in Australia may be discouraging for many Christians, but Christianity again can make a valuable contribution to contemporary societies – if its attention is focussed on the community and not on itself. This paper proposes that Christians learn from the past and, rather than introspectively focussing on maintaining the two first positions described above, accept the third position and engage with existing communities by utilising communal practical life-style Christian principles. Perhaps from this new perspective, Christianity will become relevant and re-invigorate the traditional (Christian) Australian values as described by Linder (2006), values of justice and a fair go, self-sacrifice for the good of the community, mateship based on selflessness, and neighbour love.

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Environmental Spirituality

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Environmental Spirituality

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It is difficult to address the crises of ecology and relevance in religion where the culture is increasingly secular, disbelieving, and unable to ground itself in local experience. This paper proposes that church leaders have the opportunity to change perspective from one that is “other-worldly” to one which focuses on the environment as earth-based, sacred, and which ultimately requires our respect. Indigenous Australians led the way in this regard. Only by making the world sacred, by turning the earth into creation, can we approach the problem of the environmental crisis and work toward repair.

Many people today claim that religion is irrelevant. Secularism has made such an impact that it is hard for religion to reassert its authority in the old ways. In several books, I have tried to argue that the religious outlook remains important for our personal and social wellbeing and mental health (Tacey, 1995, 2000, 2003). However, another way for religion to insist on its relevance in a secular society is by showing leadership in the debate about the ecological crisis. The crisis occurs because human beings do not care enough about the environment, and mistreat it as a resource for human exploitation. How do we get humanity to care more about the physical world? I don't think secularism or humanism can win this battle, merely by appealing to people's guilty conscience about their impact on the environment. I think only religion can provide the answer in this regard: by showing that the world is sacred, and, as such, worthy of our respect, concern and love. Only by making the world sacred, by turning the earth into creation, can we approach the problem of the environmental crisis and work toward repair. But here lies the rub, because Christianity has been historically ambivalent about the natural world, and has often contrasted earth-worship and paganism with its own transcendental message. How does Christianity face this challenge today, and can it show leadership in the most important task of our time: to protect the earth from ruin?

Non-indigenous Australians imported a spirituality into this country that was not earth-based. It was, in fact, primarily heaven-based, and Adelaide theologian Norman Habel (1995) has even referred to certain excesses of our Judeo-Christian inheritance as heavenism. Our religious sights were firmly upward, toward heaven, the future, the afterlife and the company of angels. We did not look too much to the earth, at least, not for the presence of the divine or for spiritual inspiration. In response to the question, “Where is God?”, Aboriginal people pointed to the earth, but we white fellows pointed up to the sky. The task for Australians today is to ground our spirituality in place and earth. This is especially urgent, because the ecological crisis has forced us to see that we need to bring sacred awareness to the earth, which has been desecrated and profaned for too long.

We need to develop a spirituality of creation, to remind ourselves that creation is sacred, since the secular and humanist awareness has not managed to generate a reverential or loving relationship with the earth, but, on the contrary, has led to the exploitation and destruction of the environment. This patent failure of secular humanism must be compensated by a strong earth-based approach emerging from our

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increased sense of cosmic spirituality. Already we have witnessed several important books which have argued that a new spirituality in Australia will need to be earth-based and creational, including works by Catherine Hammond (1991), Paul Collins (1995), Eugene Stockton (1995), Denis Edwards (2004), and Aboriginal Rainbow Spirit elders (1997).

Apart from the ecological emergency, there is another reason why spirituality must become a creation spirituality, and that has to do with the crisis of relevance in religion. In an increasingly secular and disbelieving culture, the majority of Australians are not convinced that heaven or an otherworldly God exists, and therefore there is no point in devoting energy or interest to things that are seen as illusory. Any spiritual practice based on heaven is liable to come to grief in this land, and to be deemed irrelevant to human existence. People say, "if religion or spirituality is only concerned with the afterlife or heaven, then we can safely ignore it and there is nothing lost by this renunciation." In 1904, A. G. Stephens, a leading Sydney literary figure and authority on the 1901 federation of the Australian states, wrote:

Our fathers 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 has seized; modifying, altering, increasing, or altogether destroying. In the case of religious belief the tendency is clearly to destruction – partly, no doubt, because with the spread of mental enlightenment the tendency is everywhere to decay in faith in outworn creeds; but partly also, it seems, because there is in the developing Australian character a sceptical and utilitarian spirit that values the present hour and refuses to sacrifice the present for any visionary future lacking a rational guarantee. (quoted in Turner, 1968, p. x)

What Stephens says is partly true. The Australian outlook is sceptical and disbelieving, our spirit is closer to existentialism than to theology. We hover at the edges of nihilism, refusing to take comfort from talk about other worlds, an after life, heaven or hell. To many Australians, these are myths of the past, myths that have been exposed as fraudulent by education and science. Needless to say, the religious traditions and institutions that speak only of a God who is far away, interventionist and supernatural, are destined to fade into oblivion and social insignificance. All through this country we see church buildings up for sale. This is a tragic sign in many ways, a symbol of a religion that was unable to ground itself in local experience.

Australians are not sentimental about the demise of religion, and many freely tell us that we are better off without it. But what we can say is that Judeo-Christianity remains artificial, colonialist, and external to the psyche of this country. It remains an imported religion, not indigenous, until such time as we try to ground our experience of spirit in earth and place. Theology has been aware of this problem in the past, and it is called enculturation. A genuinely post-colonial spirituality in Australia would have to come to terms with place, and find its roots in our soil, in our experience of lived reality. But here is where Judeo-Christian religions hit a real problem. We have been reluctant to focus too much on the earth, because it has not been emphasised by our traditions before now. There is little celebration of the earth in our churches or cathedrals, not many visible signs that religion in Australia is actually based in Australia and on this red desert soil. And if, as the poet Les Murray (1984) has written, "God in Australia is a vast blue and pale-gold and red-brown landscape" (p. 116), perhaps God is not altogether at home in our sacred dwellings or practices.

There is also the historical problem that Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are sensitive to what they decry as earth worship. Earth worship is frowned upon as heathen and pagan, and not representative of a religion that seeks to emphasise the transcendental dimension of the divine. God is not confined to things, but is beyond

all things. Here theology can help us out again, by its emphasis on the difference between pantheism and panentheism. In pantheism, God is found in all things, it is true, but in the panentheist vision, all things are found in God, and this means there is still plenty of room for God to be greater than things. Some feel it might be a “pagan” regression to focus on the earth, but I doubt this very much, and I believe this to be mere rumour and prejudice. There are constant references to the earth, to its sanctity and goodness, in both the old and new testaments. We can feel God in the here and now, without having to deny the existence of the greatness of the God of the cosmos.

In Catholic tradition, we have a long line of mystics and saints who communed with nature, especially St Francis of Assisi, who found God in the world of animals and plants, in the simple things of the earth. Pope John Paul II nominated St Francis as the patron saint of world ecology, in a creative attempt to show the relevance of religion to contemporary concerns. We also have the Celtic background to draw on, which was intensely earth-focused and based on the sanctity of creation, and the spiritual significance of rocks, streams and forests. Moreover, churches are now aware of this moment as a great opportunity to emphasise their relevance in a secular time. They can see that secularism has failed to link us emotionally and spiritually to the earth, and the more progressive souls in the churches are saying, “Here’s an opportunity to show leadership by showing how sanctity can be found in creation.”

Once sanctity is restored to creation, respect is restored to the environment, and one could almost say that the resacralisation of nature is the prime foundation upon which any ecological program should be based. I do not believe that an ecology without depth, without a spiritual dimension, can ever be effective in bringing about the revolution of attitude that we require. Secular governments plead with us to be more respectful of the earth, but such pleading is in vain unless we can feel that the earth is sacred.

Another major obstacle to a creation-spirituality is the lack of connection between white and black Australia. We know that Aboriginal spirituality is earth-based, and has been so for up to 40,000 years or more. While many of us have ignored the spirituality of the earth because our heads have been in the clouds or looking toward the heavens, we have also bracketed earth-spirituality out of our culture partly because we have not wanted to enter into conversation with Aboriginal spirituality. Some of this reluctance has been positive and culturally sensitive, and some of it negative. The positive element is that we have often felt that the spirituality of the earth is Aboriginal cultural property, and we have been aware of this fact and reluctant to step upon areas that have not traditionally been ours. The negative side is that we have been reluctant to come to the table to discuss religious matters with those who are not part of the Judeo-Christian traditions. We have not been proactive with regard to cross-cultural religious inquiry, or to what is now called interfaith dialogue.

Perhaps Euro-Australians have felt that our religious tradition is superior and should not be watered down by concessions to another religion, deemed to be somehow primitive or of less value. Or perhaps we have been unable to discern the presence of God in other, non-Western religious traditions, and so have been unable to open up a conversation with a culture in which God could not be recognised because he did not wear a European face. But as Norman Habel (1999) has correctly surmised, the first question facing theology in Australia ought to be: “What was God doing in Australia before the white people arrived?” (p. 93). The idea that white people brought God to Australia in their ships and boats is utterly preposterous, and an arrogance that ought to be condemned. But until we can ask and answer this question, there is no way that Judeo-Christian and Aboriginal religions can have a fruitful or creative dialogue and conversation.

Beneath and below these theological problems is another social and political problem, and a different pocket of resistance. This problem concerns the presence of white Australian guilt. We know in our hearts that our European forebears appropriated this land illegally and immorally. The taking of Australian land was conducted under the banner of a legal canard called *terra nullius*, which the 1992 Mabo decision of the Australian High Court overturned and found to be baseless. The land was not “empty” at the time of the first settlement of British colonists. It was very much occupied and inhabited, although the European consciousness was not capable of understanding Aboriginal occupancy. There were no town halls, no bridges, libraries or hospitals, and so to an ignorant consciousness it was declared uninhabited. We know better today, but the sense of inauthenticity remains in our hearts and souls. We realise we owe Aboriginal culture a great deal of recompense for our previous failures and misdemeanours, and the official apology of February 2008 has at least acknowledged this problem in the Australian psyche, and our need to face the facts of the past.

The Rudd government’s apology (Rudd, 2008) is an important milestone in the tragic history of race relations in this country, but much more needs to be done. As well as symbolic gestures, we need social action and justice. Nevertheless, Aboriginal people are surprisingly generous in their willingness to accept our official apology, and also to work with us at the spiritual and religious level about the sanctity of the land. This is the phase of race relations that we have not yet reached. It is one thing to acknowledge white guilt, and political wrongdoing and injustice, but the next step is to enter into dialogue with Aboriginal people about the sacredness of the land, and what we can learn from them about it. Judeo-Christian culture has been shy and slow to embark on this kind of spiritual conversation. It involves courage and conviction, and also a great sensitivity to the way the spirit moves in another culture, another people.

Many bridges have been built at the local level, and the project of the Rainbow Spirit elders is a major achievement in the resacralisation of place. Also, there are many Aboriginal people who have converted to Western religions, and they are in an ideal position to lead the conversation we must have about the sacredness of the land. Although there have been grassroots developments, these have not yet been formally developed by the non-indigenous culture as a whole, which still remains slow to move in this direction. Secular authorities are reluctant to take the lead, because secularists are by definition not spiritual in their outlook, and don’t know how to begin a conversation about the sacredness of land. Secularists are plagued both by the sense that a conversation about sacredness would be inauthentic if one does not believe in the sacred, and by the lingering presence of white guilt. It is hard to be authentic about land and place if one does not believe that one belongs in the land, due to political and moral injustice.

However, it has to be said that Aboriginal people are eager for us to sit down and discuss the sacredness of the land, and to make this the basis of the reconciliation of black and white Australia. They are astonishingly generous in their readiness to open their sacred business to the white intruder, and the problem is really with us. As Eugene Stockton (1995) has argued, Aboriginal people are extending the gift of belonging, but we don’t yet know how to receive their gift. The theological obstacles stymie reconciliation for white religious culture, and the wound of inauthenticity and guilt stymie reconciliation for white secular culture. But Aboriginal people are ready for us, when we are ready for them. Just as they generously accepted the official apology, so they are prepared to wait until such time as the white Australian psyche matures to the point that it can receive the spiritual blessing of the land, which is at the same time, an entrance into and belonging to the land. This is the next step in our ongoing reconciliation, and it might be some time before we reach this step.

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A New Perspective Concerning Place, Reconciliation, and Judgment via a Consideration of the Nexus between Christianity and Indigenous Spirituality

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A New Perspective Concerning Place, Reconciliation and Judgment via a Consideration of the Nexus between Christianity and Indigenous Spirituality

Graham Fletcher¹
National Native Title Tribunal

The paper first offers a brief overview of some key concepts of Native Title, inclusive of key dates and events significant to the current native title issues in Australia. It then proffers a new perspective concerning three key issues relevant to the nexus between Christianity and Indigenous spiritualities, namely (a) the importance of place, (b) reconciliation, and (c) the judgment.

Introduction

A famous cartoon character, Agro the puppet, once said that opinions were like bottoms, everyone has one. Native title is one of those topics about which everyone, or almost everyone, seems to have an opinion. I am engaged in the mediation of native title issues, assisting parties involved in the process to resolve their issues by agreement. As a result of my personal experiences, I would like to proffer a new perspective concerning three key issues relevant to the nexus between Christianity and Indigenous spirituality: (a) the importance of place, (b) reconciliation, and (c) the judgment.

Brief Overview of Some Concepts of Native Title

It is necessary to understand some basic principles about native title in order to make sense of these three key issues, since it is possible to have firm beliefs with little supporting knowledge. Similarly, the strong opinions that are commonly expressed about native title matters are often based on a very limited understanding of the topic. There must be some common understanding of the underlying principles in order to make sense of the following illustration of native title, so, first, I will outline some key concepts.

Some of the more significant dates and events that help us to make sense of the development of the native title system that we have today are:

- 1770 – Captain Cook sailed along the east coast of Australia carrying instructions from the King of Great Britain. Amongst the instructions were the following points (Jones, n.d.):

You are likewise to observe the Genius, Temper, Disposition and Number of the Natives, if there be any and endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a Friendship and Alliance with them, making them presents of such Trifles as they may Value inviting them to Traffick, and Shewing them every kind of Civility and Regard; taking Care however not to suffer yourself to be surprized by them, but to be always upon your guard against any Accidents. You are also with the Consent of the Natives to take Possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the Name of the King of Great Britain.

The evidence suggests that, while Captain Cook observed that there were natives,

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he did not endeavour to cultivate a friendship or seek consent to the taking of possession of “convenient situations.” Successive government policy positions were then built on this lack.

- January 26, 1788 – English sovereignty is first established in Australia. This is not the complete picture as sovereignty was extended over an ever-increasing area in stages until 1879 and, even as late as November 13, 1990, the territorial sea was extended from 3 to 12 nautical miles. For the purpose of this discussion the important date is January 26, 1788, as the date on which a new sovereign power established a new legal system in Australia.
- October 31, 1975 – The Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) was proclaimed, establishing that the rights of our citizens are protected, without reference to racial origins. The important point for our consideration is that the rights of native title-holders, comprising our Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders, are protected by our Australian legal system in the same way as the rights of non-indigenous Australian citizens. Importantly for native title, it meant that the State and Commonwealth Governments could no longer legally ignore the rights that Indigenous people held in land, and that such rights are protected by the Australian legal system. The fact that the various and successive governments did not recognise the existence of such rights did not remove their obligation to do so, and this was ultimately to be found in the High Court’s decision in *Mabo No 2 (Mabo and Others v. Queensland [No2], 1992)*.
- June 3, 1992 - The High Court of Australia handed down its decision in the case of *Mabo No. 2*. For the first time, the Australian legal system found that rights in land that arose from the traditional law and custom of our Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal Peoples’ existed, and that the rights were legally protected where they continued to exist. The case also found that native title could be extinguished by the valid acts of government such as grants of interests in land. The Meriam People, on their island of Mer (the traditional name for Murray Island in the eastern Torres Strait), still held the traditional rights and interests in their land under their law and custom that became recognised in Australian law as native title. The rights were recognised as having continued to exist in accordance with the Meriam People’s law and custom. Importantly, also, the Court found that native title had been extinguished on part of Mer by certain valid acts and grants of government. Those acts were valid because of the sovereign power deriving from the Australian Government. Later, it would be found (*Wik Peoples v. Queensland and Others; Thayorre People v. Queensland and Others, 1996*) that proclamation of the RDA was crucial in determining the procedural rights afforded the traditional owners when the government acted to effect valid extinguishment. In effect, discriminatory practice was legal, valid, before the RDA, but not after. Put simply, procedural rights including compensation apply to acts affecting rights of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders after the RDA came into force, but not before.
- January 1, 1994 – The Native Title Act of 1993 (NTA) was proclaimed as the Keating Government’s policy response to the decision of the High Court in *Mabo No. 2*. Importantly for this discussion, the first of the four main objects of the NTA (1993, Section 3[a]) is to “provide recognition and protection of native title.” It is fifteen years this month, January 2009, since the NTA was proclaimed.
- December 23, 1996 – The High Court handed down its decision in the *Wik* native title case. Two key findings (Toohey, 1996, pp. 82, 83) were that: (1) “... there was no necessary extinguishment of those [native title] rights by reason of the grant of pastoral leases under the Acts in question,” and compensation for the grant of a mining lease, which took away or extinguished native title rights and interests, before the RDA was proclaimed on October 1, 1975, was valid, and that therefore

no compensation was payable. It should be noted here, that validity is a legal rather than a moral issue.

- September 30, 1998 – The Australian Government gave effect to a major revision of the NTA, commonly known as the “Ten Point Plan” amendments in the Native Title Amendment Act (NTAA, Cth). This was the government’s policy response to the Wik Decision and other developments in the native title law. There were three key legal developments. First, the Full High Court in *Brandy v. Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission* (1995), found that the Human Rights Commission’s powers were not the same as a Court. This also affected the National Native Title Tribunal’s perceived powers as it had been established on a similar misunderstanding. Second, the High Court in *Waanyi (North Ganalanja Aboriginal Corporation and Another for and on behalf of the Waanyi People v. Queensland and Others*, 1996), found that claims to native title could be made over grants other than private freehold, thus causing a debate about the extinguishing effect of a wide range of leasehold interests, other than pastoral leases which had been the subject of the Wik case. The amended NTAA contained schedules of leases that extinguish native title. Pastoral Leases were not scheduled leases. Third, the Full High Court’s decision concerning the Wik and Thayorre Peoples (*Wik Peoples v. Queensland and Others; Thayorre People v. Queensland and Others*, 1996) clarified that native title could co-exist with pastoral leases.

An important point of distinction in regard to native title is that either the existence, or extinguishment, of native title is a legal fact based on existing rights and not a policy choice of government. How governments respond to the legal fact of native title is a policy choice. For example, since Captain Cook took possession of the eastern part of Australia in 1770 for the King of Great Britain, some key policy responses of governments aimed at addressing the needs of Indigenous Australians include:

- Captain Cook was instructed to cultivate a friendship and seek consent of the natives – though it appears that Cook ignored this government policy.
- Aboriginal reservations were established in the 1800s to provide a place for the Indigenous inhabitants.
- Church-run missions were established in early to mid 1900s.
- Land Rights grants, government grants of titles to land, to the Indigenous people, commenced in 1975. Two significant examples of high profile Land Rights grants are the freehold titles held by the Traditional Owners over Uluru and Kakadoo. These are freehold titles granted to them by the government. Native title may co-exist with a grant of title under Land Rights legislation but they are conceptually quite different in their origin.
- Prime Minister Rudd’s apology to the stolen generation on February 13, 2008.
- The Victorian Government’s announcement (Topsfield, 2009) that it will consider an alternative native title settlement scheme for Victoria. This consideration was the result of a joint Government and Aboriginal proposal after negotiations facilitated by Aboriginal leader Professor Mick Dodson AM. Professor Dodson became the Australian of the year on Australia Day January 26, 2009, in recognition of a lifetime of work for his people and reconciliation.
- The Queensland Premier, Anna Bligh’s announcement on January 16, 2009, to establish a committee to provide recommendations for wording to be included in Queensland’s constitution to recognise the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the original inhabitants of Queensland.

The crucial distinction between native title and policy decisions of government is illustrated by the fact that governments opposed the claim to recognition of native

title by the Meriam People (Mabo No. 2, 1992) and the Wik People's claim (1996) for recognition of native title over pastoral leases. In both cases, the Court found the traditional owners had, or could have, rights and interests that derived from their traditional law and custom. In the case of Wik, the Court found that native title could co-exist with pastoral leases, but left the final determination of whether it does so in the specific cases for the Federal Court to decide in the first instance. Since then, native title has been found to exist by consent over some of the pastoral leases, but some other pastoral leases covered by this claim are yet to be determined. The recognition in each case was confirmation of a legal right that already existed, and not a policy choice made by government.

It is necessary to demonstrate that the claimant group has maintained their law and custom including, for example, cultural heritage, spiritual attachment, and other of their traditional society's norms, to secure the recognition that native title exists. However, the rights recognised as native title relate only to the physical activities and use of the land. These rights could include the right to hunt, gather food, conduct ceremony, camp and live on the land. At its highest form, native title can provide exclusive possession of the land, providing the right to exclude others.

As native title is a pre-existing right arising from a pre-existing society's laws and customs that are recognised in the modern legal system, we need to briefly consider what are the elements of a determination of native title. The Native Title Act (1993, Section 225) sets out the questions that the Court must answer when it makes a determination of native title. Those questions are briefly summarized as follows:

First, does native title exist (Yes or No)? If the answer is "Yes," then answers are required to the five questions paraphrased as follows:

- 1 Who are the people who hold native title? How are the members of the native title holder's community identified?
- 2 What rights and interests do they hold, that are recognised as native title?
- 3 What other rights and interests are held in the land? (Leases, licences, permits and reservations are some examples of other interests that may coexist.)
- 4 How do the two sets of rights, (2) and (3), relate to each other?
- 5 Is the native title exclusive or not? (This is essentially answered by the time the previous questions have been answered.)

By observing when and where determinations of native title have occurred, whether native title has been found to exist or not, and whether determinations have resulted from a contested trial or are made by consent of the parties, questions and conclusions can be drawn regarding both the legal circumstances and also the policy positions taken by the applicant and respondent parties from time to time. The law exists in a political context that provides differing policy responses.

The different policy positions of key parties are observable in patterns that have emerged from agreements reached about native title. For example, there is a particular form of agreement that is available to parties to deal with practical issues that are not resolved within the terms of a determination of native title. The particular form of agreement provided by the NTA is termed an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA). Indigenous Land Use Agreements are agreements registered by the National Native Title Tribunal. They can deal with a wide range of subject matter related to native title and other interests. Indigenous Land Use Agreements can be made between the parties to the agreement, whether or not there is a determination by the Court that native title exists. The fact that these agreements are used more widely in some states than other states, is due to the differing policy responses. The fact that there is not a steady flow of determinations recognising native title by consent, is also partly due to various policy positions and pressures that arise over time.

In summary this far, the key points as they relate to the subject of this paper are that:

- recognition of native title is the recognition of a pre-existing right, not a grant received from government;
- native title is the recognition of that part of the traditional law and custom that relates to traditional physical activities on their land; and
- traditional law and custom that gave rise to the rights must be maintained, observed and practised through time.

The Importance of Place

Continuing with the illustration of native title, I now address the first key issue of the importance of place. Let me ask you about “your place” (where you live, where you were born, the place you call home) to establish identity. When first meeting people, we often ask, or are asked, about “our place.” Where is your place? This should conjure up pleasant, happy thoughts, and it is a tragedy indeed if this is not so, for whatever reason. Our thoughts of our place have a powerful affect on our wellbeing, our feeling of self worth and assurance. It is part of our physical wellbeing. Tacey (2009) noted: “It is a pity that spirituality is contrasted with the physical when it is a part of the whole being.”

The close link between our perception of our place, our sense of belonging, and our physical wellbeing, has been recognised from ancient times. Some biblical and more recent indigenous examples of this link are:

- The psalmist wrote about the depression of God’s people, Israel, as they were forced to sit by the waters of Babylon, where their captors demanded of them that they sing their traditional songs: “How can we sing the songs of the Lord, while in a foreign land?” (Psalm 137:4 New International Version). It is perhaps because we can all relate to the feeling of depression at the situation they found themselves in, even if we are not in the same circumstance, that this psalm became a popular song some years ago.
- Daniel (Daniel 9:2,3) pleaded strongly for his place when he thought that it would remain in ruins for some considerable time to come. It is also interesting that God’s final promise to Daniel (Daniel 12:13) was not that he would understand all things, but that his place in eternity was sure. Daniel’s strong feeling for his place had not diminished during 70 years of separation.
- Nehemiah was severely depressed at the state of his place, even though it is most unlikely he had ever seen Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:4-2:9).
- Jesus knew the importance of place to Zacchaeus when he told him to hurry down from the tree, because he wanted to go home for lunch with him (Luke 19:5). Jesus was interested in Zacchaeus’ salvation rather than the meal, as he was on his way to Jerusalem for the final time.
- Job, the man from Uz, looked for the day when his redeemer would stand with him on his land (Job 1:1, 19:25).
- Jesus promised that he was going to prepare a place for each of us. It is his place too (John 14:1-3).
- Abraham left his place while considering his inheritance, and looking by faith for a place for his descendants on this earth and the city whose builder is God (Hebrews 11:8-10).
- God’s people in trouble have a place prepared for them by God (Rev. 12:6).
- Lucifer lost his place in Heaven. He was evicted, and the locks were changed (Rev. 12:7-9).
- Not surprisingly, Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders also have a strong connection to their place. For example, Tania Major (young Australian of the Year for 2007) stated in an interview with Andrew Denton (Denton, 2007) that she was

“a Kokoberra woman [which] means I’m from Kowanyama in a right Aboriginal community, in Cape York,” when explaining the importance she attached to her place.

- Recently, the traditional residents of the former Mona Mona Mission near Kuranda were offered new housing in Mareeba or Cairns in exchange for leaving their place, because it was considered too expensive to provide services to the remote community (e.g., see Strauss, 2009, January). They strongly rejected the proposal that would require them to leave their place, particularly in order to help government meet its short-term housing and budgetary requirements. Where is your place? Would you answer the question the same way now?

The first object (Section 3[a] of the four main objects of the Native Title Act, 1993) is: “to provide recognition and protection of Native Title.” It is important that we, as Australian citizens, recognise the importance of place and belonging to our original owners of the land.

As a personal observation, I have witnessed a change of attitude in the Traditional Owners across the Torres Strait and Cape York, as they have seen their traditional connection to the land recognised as Native Title in the Australian legal system. Rather than closing off areas to the wider community, there has been a more relaxed and welcoming attitude flowing from the determinations generally, with appropriate protocols for respect.

Native Title is, as stated above, *recognition of rights that exist*. What is your attitude toward the recognition of the rights of others, and in particular, Native Title rights?

Reconciliation

The second key issue, reconciliation, has many facets. Issues of employment, health, education, and housing, are important elements of reconciliation, but recognition of traditional place is a vital element in the total perspective. This is not surprising, as we observe that the wellbeing of biblical people, the Jews, was also linked to the recognition and importance of their place

While appropriately seeking recognition of their Native Title rights, at each crucial step, traditional owners have extended the hand of friendship and reconciliation as they have proposed practical solutions to complex legal questions. For example, after the High Court’s decision to recognise Native Title (*Mabo and Others v. Queensland* [No2], 1992), it was Aboriginal People who proposed and accepted the process to validate an unknown number of invalid grants that had been made post the Racial Discrimination Act of 1975. Similarly, after the Wik Decision (*Wik Peoples v. Queensland and Others; Thayorre People v. Queensland and Others*, 1996), there was an issue with an unknown number of invalid grants since the Native Act was proclaimed in 1994, and, again, the solution to validating these grants was proposed and accepted.

Whilst the recognition of native title rights and interests is a question of law, not a policy option of Government and others, it nevertheless requires a policy response to the fact from governments, corporations, and individuals. It is a reasonable expectation that Christians should support, and be amongst the leaders of, reconciliation in our nation. For example, as Christians, we believe that all things are reconciled to God by Christ making peace through his blood (Col. 1:20). Importantly, we also believe that we are given the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). This ministry is a requirement of all who claim to follow Christ, not an option. The heart of the ministry of reconciliation is that we are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). This means that Christ bought back the right of existence for us. Accordingly, whether we recognise it or not, we all belong to God.

Jesus showed, by practical example, what true acceptance and reconciliation meant. He openly associated with people whom his society considered to be sinners

and social outcasts (Mark 2:15-17). He sought the friendship of the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, against the social norms of the day, in order to reach her as well as her family and friends (John 4:39-42). He healed ten lepers, with no strings attached; only one, a Samaritan, would return to thank him (Luke 17:12-17). He took an international detour to heal the daughter of the Syrian Phoenician woman (Mark 7:25-30). The actions of reconciliation, as Jesus' ministry showed, are to be carried forward without reference to whether or not there will be recognition, thanks, or reward. The ministry of reconciliation often is misunderstood by those closest to us, and of whom we anticipate the greatest support; but the ministry does not depend on appreciation or approval of others.

We are given the ministry of reconciliation because "...to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave *the right* [italics added] to become the children of God – children ...born of God" (John 1:12,13). He also encourages that: "[a]s I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34). We are all one family, and responsible for the wellbeing of one other.

On July 1, 1871, the Rev. Samuel MacFarlane from the London Missionary Society arrived at Darnley Island in the Torres Strait (Burton, 2007). The Torres Strait Islanders were ready to accept the "new light," and readily converted to Christianity. July 1 each year is a public holiday in the Torres Strait, celebrating the "Coming of the Light." Generally speaking, they were, and remain, a deeply spiritual people.

Other principles common to our Indigenous peoples and Christianity include the principles of acceptance, forgiveness, and appreciation. These principles often are seen in the dealings that we have with Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders. It is not surprising, therefore, to also find that they have a strong identity with their place. It is common to find that Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders are leaders in the process of reconciliation with the wider society. This makes my work more rewarding, as there is a common understanding and acceptance of the benefits of reconciliation through agreement-making processes wherever possible. Prayer is not unusual when opening and closing secular meetings to resolve native title issues.

Judgment

We have covered briefly the first two key issues of place and reconciliation. Now I turn our attention to the third key issue, the Judgment. This issue is significant for the biblical writers, since the term is used more than a thousand times in the Christian Scriptures, normally in a juridical sense. Native Title cases are, at their core, legal cases that are usually decided by the Federal Court of Australia.

The Bible speaks of judgment in two distinct contexts. The first and most commonly understood and quoted context is judgment in the sense of a criminal trial. The Bible speaks of the examination of the record to determine the outcome (e.g., Daniel 7:10). Our secret thoughts and motives are on trial (e.g., Eccles. 12:14; Luke 8:17, 1 Cor. 4:5). Our idle words and works are also taken into account (Matt. 12:36; Rev. 20:13). It is not surprising that, in Hebrews 10:27, we find reference to a fearful looking for of judgment, since, if we are honest, we recognise that we are in a hopeless position.

On the other hand, the Bible presents an entirely different perspective of the judgment. First, we gain the picture that we can determine the outcome of our own case, as it is our right that is being judged. "If I judge myself then I am not judged" (1 Cor. 11:31). Our right is secure. We have been bought at a price (1 Cor. 6:20). We were purchased with "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18,19). John the Revelator states that, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may *have right* [italics added] to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). It is legitimate to claim my right, but rather futile to claim my innocence in God's Court. We read in the book of Daniel (7:22) that the "Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favour of the saints of the Most High and the time came

when they possessed the kingdom.” This perspective of the judgment gives us hope, not condemnation. The kingdom is ours, not because of our works, but because it is our right to possess. Our place has been prepared and our right has been secured.

The points of principle that I have often seen illustrated, as I observe Native Title claims go through mediation, reach agreement, and are confirmed by the Court, can be briefly summarized as follows:

- Place and belonging are necessary for all cultures, all peoples, in all times. One of the great promises that God has given us is the assurance of a place as a right in his family and his place. Our very health and wellbeing, our sense of self worth, is affected by reference to our sense of belonging and place, both now and in eternity.
- Reconciliation is offered by God, and given to us as a ministry. It is not an option for Christians, or a particular talent given to some Christians.
- To be assured of a positive outcome in the judgment, we need to plead our legal right to the inheritance or possession of a place in God’s kingdom, which was achieved for us by Christ. We are in trouble if we plead our right based on our innocence or our own merits.
- The only entitlement that is given is recognition of the right that already exists in law.
- The parties commonly settle Native Title claims once they have seen the evidence that can be presented to the court. They then collectively go to the court with an agreement to recognise that Native Title exists. The important point to note here is that the deal is done before the court begins. It is called a determination of Native Title by consent of the parties. The claimants are not examined or cross-examined in the witness box, because the right has been agreed to beforehand. Similarly, the outcome of the heavenly trial of my legal right to a place in the kingdom is settled before I appear in court.
- The deal is completed before the case is brought to court, where it is publically confirmed. If we have instructed our advocate, Jesus Christ, to plead our right to the kingdom, and this right is demonstrated by the evidence of our citizenship, then the outcome is assured, and confirmed by the court.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are two questions I leave for us (individually and collectively) to ponder:

- 1 How do we view the importance of our place, and the importance of demonstrating genuine respect for the rights of others as they exercise their right to have past wrongs addressed?
- 2 Do we respect the right of others to have their rights confirmed in regard to their land, their place, and their home?

The recognition that we each have a place in God’s Kingdom, by right, and that we can obtain it by no other means than by that right, may well be revealed by your answer to these questions.

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Overcoming Tribal Violence: A Challenge for Contemporary Christianity

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From a selected survey of some recent scientific findings from archaeology and ancient history, the paper draws two main conclusions. First, we who now know enough to follow the Bible story back from Roman Palestine into prehistory can see humanity's most obvious and tragic fault: tribal violence. Second, studying the Old Testament from this (new) perspective provides a lens to see inside one particular tribe how each tribe's hand has always turned against its neighbours. Against this background, the New Testament prophetically projects the only remedy – the Gospel of Jesus – and presents a challenge to contemporary Christianity to find non-violent ways to meet the future.

Introduction

Today, we know more about our ancestry than we ever thought it would be possible to know. We can even visualise it. Computer graphics, created against a background of real deserts and real forests, make ancient humankind real. Archaeological discoveries continue to illuminate our understanding and appreciation of ancient cultures. For example, clay tablets and potsherds and the multi-layered ruins of Jericho have been illuminating a familiar story for a hundred and fifty years, and they continue to do so. Kenneth Kitchen, the British Egyptologist, first wrote an account of it in 1966, and expanded it into a volume nearly two inches thick (see Kitchen, 2003).

It is no surprise that, the farther they go back in time, biblical accounts become more difficult to link to verifiable events, and the deeper into the ground the search has to go. So Kitchen wrote the story backwards, the logical direction to go—the story is richer if it starts with the recent past. Evidence of the occupation by the Romans and, before them, the Greeks, is fairly plentiful. But the information becomes scarce by 1000 BCE, about the time when David and Solomon were expanding tiny Israel into an empire. The habit of scavenging building materials from the ruins of earlier occupations means that the foundations are almost the only parts of the older houses still in place under the rubble. There are also the tombs, and, scattered around, pieces of pottery and coins and beads and, very occasionally, inscriptions.

Direct evidence sometimes can be backed up with records left by the neighbours. Well-known examples (see Kitchen, 2003, chap. 2) are the kings named in Assyrian and Babylonian clay tablets between 745 and 560 BCE: Ahab, Jehu, Jehoash, Menahem, Pekah and Hoshea (kings of Israel or Samaria) and Hezekiah, Manasseh, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah (kings of Judah). Radiocarbon dating to verify the time period of a biblical event is rarely called upon, because it is not usually accurate enough to remove the uncertainties. Hezekiah's tunnel, however, is one outstanding exception, made with the use of very recent technology (Frumkin, Shimron, & Rosenbaum, 2003). These researchers use accelerator mass spectrometry to date minute plant fragments in the original plaster and thorium isotope ratios to date a stalactite. Radiocarbon dates recently have become much more reliable by using a method for finding an elapsed

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time from a Geiger counter measurement by “calibrating” it with samples of known age. However, in the time period considered, the calibrated ages are themselves subject to large uncertainties. The great engineering feat of the tunnel, as mentioned in 2 Kings 20 and 2 Chronicles 32, as well as the inscription beside the pool, is attributed to Hezekiah (727-698 BCE), but the date of its construction and the inscription have been disputed by scholars who contend that they are works perhaps as late as the 2nd century BCE. The tunnel, which winds through the rock to bring water from the reliable Gihon spring outside the city wall to the Siloam pool inside, is now dated at between 800 and 510 BCE.

Judges, Patriarchs and Kings

No clear reference to David in documents contemporary to him and outside Israel has ever been found, and there are varying scholarly views about Ancient Israel and its kings (eg., Finkelstein & Silberman, 2001, 2006). There appear to be some references, however, written from the generations after him. Kitchen (2003) lists three fairly difficult-to-read inscriptions, two of which mention the “house of Dwd.” It should be noted here that there is ongoing debate as to how this phrase should be interpreted (see Dever, 2001), but the general consensus of scholars in the field is to accept “house of David.” There are other indicators of the drama of his life. For example, the recently discovered “Goliath inscription” (see Bar-Ilan University Website) was found at Tell es-Safi, thought to be on the site of Gath, the major Philistine town mentioned in the books of Samuel and Chronicles. The date of David’s kingdom is still contested, as well as the location and size of the palace on the heights of Jerusalem. Historians hope that excavations, notoriously difficult to undertake, will reveal more information about his kingdom, his capital, and his administration. Archaeologists working on a current project in Jerusalem, under the direction of Eilat Mazar, an Israeli archaeologist, uncovered in 2005 the (poorly preserved) remains of a large building, which, they suggest, could be a palace built by David (see Mazar, 2007). The team has collected pottery samples at the site for dating, but their interpretations are controversial. They have also submitted samples for radiocarbon dating, which has not been carried out previously in Jerusalem, probably because archaeologists never previously considered it accurate enough (see Lawler, 2007).

It is not only early Israelite data that are scarce, as little data survive from any early civilization. Clay tablets do not survive floods or fires or earthquakes very well, and early town-dwellers made few inscriptions and struck few coins. The few peoples about whom we have reliable information include peoples who are known to almost everybody (e.g., the Trojans and the pyramid-builders of Egypt), and some almost unknown (e.g., the ancient farmers of New Guinea, who built the great irrigation works of that country’s central highlands). One group whose achievements are well known is the Sanskrit-speakers of Southern Asia, from whom – it seems – come most of the Indo-Aryan languages, a branch of Indo-European languages to which English and most other European languages belong.

The chronology of these early civilizations sits conformably beside those that archaeologists attach to the history of Israel, as recorded in the Old Testament. The layers from Solomon’s time yield pottery - though there is currently some controversy about the exact date of the pottery pieces supposedly from the time of Solomon and preserved in Jerusalem - and some artifacts of iron. The Iron Age, usually considered to date from about 1200 BCE, is attested to in the Bible by a description of the Philistines’ exploitation of their iron monopoly, and by Goliath’s iron spearhead which, before iron became common, may have been imported from Crete. Iron weapons gave their owners the great advantage of strength and the ability to hold a sharp edge, but it was difficult to smelt and, therefore, expensive. The Bible records that Solomon had many chariots—see 1 Kings 4:26—so, obviously, he could afford it.

Their efforts go deeper, however, to the time before Judges and the Patriarchs. Levels in Palestine continue to be found beneath those from 1000 BCE, and they give evidence of bronze weapons and implements. Prior to this time, bronze gives way to stone (Paleolithic and Neolithic times). Nevertheless, there seems to be very little to gather from Israel, and its early history must come almost exclusively from the Bible. This is a convenient place to start, of course, since some scholars (e.g., Soggin, 1989) believe that the account of David's succession to the throne is "one of the earliest history writings in the world, if not the earliest" (p. 216).

Very little independent evidence can be found of the times when Israel was ruled by the heads of clans (judges) and beyond. The Bible places Israel in the middle of the Canaanites, small kingdoms almost continually in conflict with their neighbours, fighting for the best land in a country where drought and famine determined how many people would permanently survive. Like much of the Middle East, it was probably already deforested when the children of Israel settled there.

Historical investigation shows that Israel's situation in Palestine was as the Bible repeatedly portrays it, an unstable coalition of tribes never far from insurrection, and - to the anger of the prophets - repeatedly imitating their neighbours. The picture is painted vividly in the fierce Song of Deborah and Barak (Judges 5), believed to be one of the oldest pieces of text in the whole Hebrew Bible.

Worlds within the World

Of course, the Middle East is not the only place where ancient civilizations developed. The Incas and the Aztecs developed in the Americas, but much later than the period when the stories of Saul and Samuel were being enacted. On the other hand, the Mayan civilization began its rise to power in what is now Southern Mexico, as long ago as 2600 BCE, before the times of the biblical patriarchs. It held power for almost 3000 years, and was as astonishing a development as Egypt had been just a few hundred years earlier. Egypt, where the Nile enriched the soil annually, and allowed the pharaohs to govern populations in the millions, has left its amazing monuments and cities to show what its river allowed it to achieve. It did so because Egypt imported the food plants that had been bred in Mesopotamia, the place where the earliest evidence of settled, village life, has been found.

People in Europe also followed the lead of the Mesopotamians. The famous "Ice man" (Fowler, 2001, pp. 105-106), found in September 1991 in the high mountains between Italy and Austria, was civilized. Radiocarbon dating of some of his tissue gave a result of approximately 3300 BCE. At this time, ancient Greece still had 2000 years to reach its zenith, and Egypt, before the "Old Kingdom" and the first pyramids, was just starting to use stone in building. His last meal consisted mainly of coarse bread made from domesticated einkorn wheat, which is not native to Europe. There were also spikelets of the same low protein grass in his clothes. This and other evidence suggests that this 5300-year old man had been in a fairly warm-climate farming valley on the day that he climbed the mountains and died. He came from an early European civilization that was still not very advanced (Chalcolithic or Copper-age Europeans).

Was this the first time that the seeds of wild plants were collected and grown sufficiently enough to feed these people from one season to another? It appears that, because the climate had warmed up after the big freeze, farming settlements - invented for the first time - were appearing all around the world, roughly just over ten thousand years ago. There was also the mutated form of primitive wheat that kept its grains in the ear instead of scattering them. Archaeologists can still recognise this feature in the charred heads of wheat found in the debris around houses and can consequently chart the spread of this early domesticated plant (polyploid) variety.

One of the earliest examples so far discovered is Bab edh-Dhra, a small town currently being excavated in the Jordan Valley near the Dead Sea and dated at

11,500 years Before Present (cal. BP). The mud-brick and stone dwellings are more elaborate than those usually occupied by tribes moving seasonally and, critically, the excavators found the foundations of two oval-shaped mud-brick silos where grain had been stored (with notched stones to support floor joists to keep the grain above ground level, dry and safe from pests).

What surprises many people is just how narrow is the band of time into which mankind's civilised ancestors actually fit. There are numerous caves, middens, and rock shelters across the world where ancient humans left their traces, but settled existence is recent. A current review of the more reliable datings now available for occupation sites in the Americas, the Middle East, and elsewhere, suggests that agriculture took a little longer to develop than archaeologists had thought, but it nevertheless fits within thousands, not tens of thousands of years (see Balter, 2007, pp. 1830-1835).

From the evidence, it appears that these ancestors left their traces infrequently, but in Mesopotamia they did so early enough and often enough for present humanity to recognise it as the cradle of Western civilization. As far as it is known, this is where people first gave up rock shelters and gradually stopped scavenging, only possible when they had crops with harvestable fruits or seeds that could be stored between growing seasons. After a time, farming allowed humans to reduce the amount of time they spent foraging and, ultimately, to live completely off their harvests. The accompanying spurt in the population was so great that the resources of water, land, and forest, were quickly threatened. The deforestation in Palestine is characteristic of the whole of the Middle East. In parts of the Fertile Crescent, settlers had to abandon their settlements and move to new places after only about a thousand years of farming. There were too many people for a limited area of land.

By the time of Christ, alongside civilizations great and small, foragers were still to be found across the world, with examples across Europe and Scandinavia, North and South America, Africa, Asia, and Australia (less well-known examples are the fish farms developed in southern Australia and the highly developed irrigated agriculture of the New Guinea highlands). Today, hardly any remain.

Information about the first farmers is growing steadily, people who lived close to Palestine before the rise of the first kingdoms, and long before the great ancient civilizations. Few people can be unaware of at least some of the discoveries, especially those presented in television documentaries. One of the more able popularisers is Jared Diamond, who searched to find out how humanity came to be so prodigal. Poring over the disintegration of environments like those in the Euphrates valley and the more recent disasters of Easter Island and Greenland, he wove the threads together to show how the pattern repeats itself, that is, tribes learn how to grow food, they prosper, their needs outstrip their resources, and they fight. Though not uncontested, his explanation of how the boon of human progress has also been its doom caught the thinking world's attention. The celebrity and awards conferred on him have allowed him to work full time on what, for him, gives these discoveries their real importance—the chance that humanity might learn the lesson in time to save the planet (Diamond, 1997, p. 199).

The “Worst Mistake” in Human History

As a teenager, Diamond visited the state of Montana in the United States of America, and was imprinted with the “big sky.” Returning now is painful to him because of the violence wreaked on nature by toxic mine wastes, fertilizer runoff, herbicides, and clear felling of timber. But far worse pain is felt when the violence done by humans is done, indiscriminately, on other humans. Diamond points to the inequality, warfare, and disease, that quickly followed mankind's transition to settled life, claiming it to be the worst mistake in the history of the human race. There is some justification for

this surprising denunciation. Wherever the “tranquil” farming enterprise was taken up, mankind multiplied. The resources of land and lake and forest were exploited and, quickly, they were exhausted. Then, when his children cried for food, he fought his neighbours, the ones who had poured in to share the bounty (Diamond, 1987).

The story of humanity before the time of David and Solomon is becoming fairly clear and it is attracting major attention. Its significance for the environment and world peace is of particular relevance for contemporary societies, national/world leadership, and for Christians in general. For Christians, it opens a window on the violence of their past that might motivate them to confront the violence of the present. It hardly needs to be argued that it motivated Jesus. As he was passing through Jericho, almost as old as Bab edh-Dhra and not far away, his reaction to the suffering of the victim, a commonplace in Roman Palestine, was exactly what people who knew him would have expected: Victims were to be cared for immediately, wherever and whatever the circumstances.

Caring for victims, however, is not sufficient. The problem of violence and victimisation has to be tackled in the human heart, where it begins. It was the attitude of Jesus of Nazareth to the violent that distinguishes him from other idealists, perhaps best summed up as: “Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you.” Christians, historically, have found this attitude difficult to accept. While some Christians have always cared for victims, other Christians have mounted crusades against Mohammed, waged “just and holy wars,” and done violence to neighbour tribes or countries in competition with them for their scarce resources. If these actions and attitudes were not so anti-Christian, denunciations would never be made, and books like *The God Delusion* (Dawkins, 2006) would not sell.

Recent events in places where Seventh-day Adventists have enjoyed great success show that Christianity, as received, has not prevented all of them from perpetuating violence. This may be unthinkable for many who read this paper. Christians in Australia and similar countries are indeed fortunate, equipped with food, warmth and security that are never in doubt. But they have never walked in, say, Rwandan shoes, in desperate need of an inherited land, disputed by the starving members of their own families. Loving an enemy may not be all that significant when one’s family, relatives, and friends are starving to death. Diamond’s account of how environmental destruction initiates human anger is not just history: It is prophecy. Violence, he argues, follows the loss of resources (Diamond, 2005).

A recent report (de Soysa & Gleditsch, 1999) estimates that some sixty percent of the conflicts of the (then) past fifteen years resulted from shortages of land and resources, impacting the availability of livelihood and food. Little has changed in the past decade, though the increasing scarcity of safe drinking water has made it a far more precious commodity than it has ever been before. Christians urgently need to plan for the part they might play in a world soon to be desperately short of resources. If Diamond is even partly correct in his ideas, then violence is likely to increase dramatically, as it did in Rwanda and other countries around the world, some close to Australia (e.g., Solomon Islands and Fiji). Christian belief often has failed to prevent armed attempts to overthrow democratic governments. If the message of the “gentle” Jesus is truly the hope of the world, then Christians must find out how to recover this message for contemporary societies. Currently, the message largely has been violated, emasculated, or rendered invisible by the actions of Christian nations and churches.

Conclusion

Christians need to seriously consider Diamond’s claims. Though not uncontested, they nevertheless are supported by sufficient evidence to contend that “tribal violence” is an obvious and tragic fault of humanity. Christians now have an opportunity to study the Old Testament from this new perspective, as it provides a lens to see inside one

particular tribe how every tribe's hand has always turned against its neighbours. And against this background, the New Testament prophetically projects the only remedy, the message (gospel) of Jesus Christ.

Christians in developed countries are not free to denounce the warlike inhabitants of underdeveloped nations until they themselves have turned away from the attitude and actions of violence. Many Christians seem now to condone armed conflict, perhaps because they live securely beyond the threat of war and have never experienced real violence. They will be unprepared for the turmoil that now seems ever more likely.

The challenge for contemporary Christianity is to find non-violent ways to meet the future. What will Christians do, especially Christians with footholds in the cultures and countries where resources inevitably will deplete first and conflict therefore will first erupt? What will they do when the children cry for food? Will the gospel of peace and forgiveness have been injected into their message with enough urgency and efficacy for Christianity to reach its true goal and actually prevent violence of "tribe against tribe," and more particularly so, when both tribes are Christian? Will Christians now, before the cataclysm, scan the future and plan how to meet it in the spirit of Jesus?

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Christianity and Darwinism

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Since the publication of *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, some have viewed Christianity and Darwinism as bitter enemies, and others as useful partners in the process of understanding the nature of reality. Current scholarship suggests that Christianity has much to gain from a serious dialogue with Darwinism, particularly in relation to the doctrines of Creation, the Sabbath, Death and Suffering, Christology, and Eschatology. Given the fact that the year 2009 is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, it is rather fitting to examine Darwinism from the perspectives of both the nature of science and theology. This paper suggests that there may be a case for a more open encounter with the claims of Darwinism, even if Darwinism still fits uncomfortably within a conservative Christian framework.

Introduction

Given Darwinism's central place in modern science, my deep respect for both scientific methodology and Christian faith, and the significance of the year 2009 on the science calendar, it is an opportune time to assess the contribution of Darwinism and Christianity to our understanding of reality. In this paper, the term *Christianity* is taken to refer broadly to those belief systems which regard the historical Jesus of Nazareth (4 BC - AD 29), known as the Christ, the Messiah, and the Son of God, as central to their faith. The term *Darwinism* is taken to refer to that scientific account of the origin of living organisms, proposed by Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and others, which views organisms as having descended with modification from a common ancestor over a very long period of time by processes, one of which is known as natural selection, a view commonly referred to as organic evolution. There are extreme and moderate versions of both Christianity and Darwinism and, in this regard, Ruse (2001, p. 48) suggests that "discussion...of real value" and progress in understanding is more likely to occur between those holding moderate rather than extreme views.

From the late 19th century Darwinism began to split Christianity into two groups: (a) those who concluded that it was impossible to believe in Darwin's theory of evolution and remain a Bible-believing Christian, and (b) those who regarded evolution as offering a deeper understanding of how God went about doing things. It would appear that the two Christian groups who differ in their relationship to Darwinism probably do so on the basis of their understanding of Scripture. While this is too exhaustive a topic to deal with here in any coherent fashion, it is interesting to observe that from the time of Augustine (AD 354-430) there has been debate about the use of biblical texts, often written in an obscure ancient form, for guidance in matters of contemporary knowledge, whether that knowledge be in relation to matters of natural philosophy, history, or some other branch of learning.

In relation to the book of Genesis, Augustine (Collins, 2006) cautioned:

In matters that are so obscure and far beyond our vision, we find in Holy Scripture passages which can be interpreted in very different ways without prejudice to the faith we have received. In such cases, we should not rush in headlong and so firmly take our stand on one side that, if further progress in the search for truth justly undermines this position, we too fall with it. (p. 83)

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Boyle (1674) noted: "Scripture is designed to teach us about nobler and better truths (divinity), than those in (natural) philosophy" (p.11). One could argue that up until the 17th and 18th centuries, one did not need to take these counsels seriously since, according to Borg (2001), "Theology and science alike took it for granted that the universe was relatively young and the earth and its continents, mountains, oceans, and varieties of life were created in very much the same form in which we now find them" (p.59). Borg goes on to describe the impact of Darwinism on the reading of Genesis as follows:

The challenge to the factual reading of the Genesis stories of creation was intensified by Charles Darwin's argument for evolution in *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859. Suddenly the issue was not simply the age of the earth but the development of present life forms from much earlier life forms through natural processes....Some intellectuals and village atheists delighted in using science to debunk the Bible and Christianity. Among Christians, some adjusted quickly to the new scientific claims and integrated them into a non-literal reading of Genesis. Others felt that the truth of the Bible and Christianity were under attack. The controversy continues to this day. (p. 59)

Outspoken atheists, such as Richard Dawkins (1986, 2006), believe that it is impossible to take the Bible seriously in light of Darwinist thinking. In fact, theology, the discipline of the study of God, is a non-event and should be, according to Dawkins, removed from the curriculum of our universities given that God is a delusion. In this regard, Dawkins (2006) takes the side of the Biblical Fundamentalist (a term here used for Christians adhering to a literal reading of the Genesis creation story as a factual account of origins) because it is a literal reading that is most at odds with modern science, and hence he argues that one cannot be a Bible-believing Christian and a Darwinian at the same time. Consequently, he has no time for contemporary biblical scholarship (which does not read the Genesis stories as historically factual accounts), because such scholarship interprets the Genesis stories in such a way that there is no conflict with the methodological naturalism of Darwinism. However, contemporary Bible scholars such as Alister McGrath (2007), do recognize a conflict with Darwinism as metaphysical materialism, a view espoused by Dawkins (1995), which claims that at a fundamental level there is no ultimate meaning to life beyond the marvellous interactions between the particles of matter: "The universe we observe had precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference" (p. 133).

The irony of the often hostile relationship between Christianity and Darwinism is that, according to Ruse (2006): "We could not have had the theory (evolution) had not we been living in a Judeo-Christian type of society, asking about origins and about humans and so forth" (p. 212). Given this irony and relatively brief background, I wish to explore (a) what appear to be similarities between the origins of Christianity and Darwinism, (b) the place of Darwinism in modern science, and (c) some recent claims that Darwinism has much to offer Christian theology. Given this agenda, the question of whether there might be an argument for the need of Christians from backgrounds typically hostile to Darwinism to begin to dialogue with it, will be addressed. The study outlined here takes seriously the view of Francis Bacon, Galileo, Robert Boyle, and Michael Faraday, that God speaks to his children through the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature (see Poole 2007, Chapter 1).

Christian and Darwinist Origins: Some Similarities

In this brief section I would like to suggest a similarity according to the level of acceptability of Christian and Darwinist doctrines during the lifetime of their original expositors (Jesus of Nazareth & Charles Darwin), and the nature of the truth of their expositions in the light of what was publicly believable at the time.

Both Jesus and Darwin gained widespread acceptance of their teachings posthumously (e.g., for Christianity, see Bornkamm, 1973; Frankforter, 1978; for Darwinism, see Bryson, 2003; Schwartz, 1999). As to the matter of the truth of Jesus' and Darwin's expositions, it is reasonable to argue that they often were counter to the common sense of the day. In fact, the very centre of Jesus' message was to overthrow then current views on life, salvation, and religious practice (e.g., Matthew 5:3; Mark 10:14-15; Luke 17:33). When Darwin (1859, p. 148) began to think about the origin of a complex organ like the eye, he agreed that it did not appear to make sense that such an organ could have developed from a primitive eye spot. It made more sense to suggest, like William Paley and his watch, that a designer had orchestrated the manufacture of the eye in one step since, like a watch, the eye could not function efficiently, it was understood, with missing parts. However, Darwin (1859) reasoned that it was perfectly legitimate for the eye to form by a process of natural selection (p. 148). While some of Darwin's contemporaries thought he was being a little optimistic in his assessment, Francis Collins (2006, p. 191), director of the Human Genome project and practising Christian, agrees with Darwin's assessment. The point to be made here is that scientific knowledge, whether in geology, biology, chemistry, or physics, is often counterintuitive. This leads us now to consider the place of Darwinism in modern science.

Darwinism and Modern Science

Biology's theory of evolution by Darwin's natural selection is recognised as one of the biggest ideas in modern science (Atkins, 2003; Wynn & Wiggins, 1997). Daniel Dennett, quoted by Ruse (2006), suggests:

If I were to give an award for the single best idea anyone has ever had, I'd give it to Darwin, ahead of Newton and Einstein and everyone else. In a single stroke, the idea of evolution by natural selection unifies the realm of life, meaning, and purpose with the realm of space and time, cause and effect, mechanism and physical law. (p. 1)

This is all the more remarkable given the fact that Darwin knew nothing about DNA and genetics, knew nothing about isotopes and radioactive dating techniques, faced a very scant fossil record, and received significant criticism from scientific colleagues of his day. As Poole (2007, p. 97) notes, it is mere folklore that Darwin's theory was welcomed by scientists and opposed by the religions, the truth being that a few theologians and many scientists dismissed Darwinism and evolution. Another part of the folklore concerned the view that Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford and Vice President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and debater of Darwin's theory with Thomas Huxley, was an obscurantist clergyman who opposed science. He, in fact, wrote a review of Darwin's *Origin* which Darwin called "uncommonly clever; it picks out with skill all the most conjectural parts, and brings forward well all the difficulties" (quoted by Poole, 2007, p. 97).

In the face of such strong 19th century criticism of Darwin's theory, how did Darwinism come to be recognized as a unified picture over space and time? To answer this question, we need to present how modern science places Darwin's ideas in the total scheme of things. The development of living organisms across geological space and time, according to modern science, is shown in Table 1, represented by the views of Atkins (2003, p. 29) and Falk (2004, p. 85).

The simplest organisms appear in the oldest rocks and the more complex in the younger rocks. While Darwin could only make a reasonable guess at the age of the earth (far in excess of 300 million years based on erosion rates and suggested in Darwin, 1859, p. 227), the advent of radioactive and cosmological dating techniques in the 20th century affirmed a very old age for the earth (4.6 billion years), and an age within the cosmic timescale (14.5 billion years). If our dating techniques could have proved a relatively young earth or young cosmos, Darwin's theory would have been dismissed immediately. The fact that Darwin's idea of descent with small modifications over a very long time coheres with science's modern timescale, and was proposed without an intimate knowledge of the atom, molecule, and reproductive processes, suggests to some observers (e.g., Polkinghorne, 2005) that Darwin was a genius.

Table 1
Geological, Cosmological, and Biological Space and Time

Millions of years ago	Era	Period	Epoch	Event
0.01	Cenozoic	Neogene	Holocene	
0.15	Cenozoic	Neogene	Holocene	First Homo Sapiens
2	Cenozoic	Neogene	Pleistocene	Ice ages, extinction of large animals
5	Cenozoic	Neogene	Pliocene	Early hominids
25	Cenozoic	Neogene	Miocene	
35	Cenozoic	Palaeogene	Oligocene	
55	Cenozoic	Palaeogene	Eocene	
65	Cenozoic	Palaeogene	Palaeocene	Early mammals
145	Mesozoic	Cretaceous		
205	Mesozoic	Jurassic		First birds and mammals
250	Mesozoic	Triassic		First dinosaurs
290	Mesozoic	Permian		Extinction of invertebrates
350	Mesozoic	Carboniferous		First reptiles
400	Palaeozoic	Devonian		First amphibians, first forests
440	Palaeozoic	Silurian		First air-breathing animals, insects, land plants
500	Palaeozoic	Ordovician		Fish emerge
540	Palaeozoic	Cambrian		First invertebrates
700	Precambrian			First animals
3400	Precambrian			First organisms
4600	Precambrian			Formation of the Earth
14500				Formation of the Universe

What about the advent of modern genetics? Does it give any insight into descent with modification according to Darwin? Falk (2004) summarizes the impact of modern genetics as follows:

Today geneticists, molecular biologists and computer scientists have read the genetic instructions for dozens of species, and the number will soon climb into the hundreds. Because of this recently acquired ability to read the instruction books of a host of species, we are in a new and exciting era. It allows us to compare the instruction books of similar organisms. In so doing we see things that bring us deep into the past, and the things that we see fit extremely well with what biologists have long predicted about the history of life on this planet. (p. 194)

Collins (2006) suggests that Genomic Studies across organisms:

provides powerful support for Darwin's theory of evolution, that is, descent from a common ancestor with natural selection operating on randomly occurring variations. At the level of the genome as a whole a computer can construct a tree of life based solely upon the similarities of the DNA sequences of multiple organisms Bear in mind that this analysis does not utilize any information from the fossil record, or from anatomical observations of current life forms.

Yet its similarity to conclusions drawn from studies of comparative anatomy, both of existent organisms and of fossilized remains, is striking. (pp. 127-128)

On our chromosomes the genes, which are made up of long sequences of DNA bases (A, G, C, & T), code for important proteins. Often there is a segment within coding genes which is made up of a sequence of DNA bases which do not appear to code for anything, a section sometimes referred to as an *intron* or part of junk DNA. This is illustrated in Figure 1(a). Sometimes other non-coding segments, known as *retroposons*, can be inserted into an existing non-coding segment (*intron*) in such a way that, as Falk (2004, p. 191) notes, "there is no mechanism to remove retroposons once they have been inserted, so they are passed faithfully through generation after generation down through the millennia" (see Figure 1b).

<p>(a) ATGGTGCACCTGAC ggacttgcattcc TCCTGA.....</p> <p>(b) ATGGTGCACCTGACggaccaaccaaccaattgcattcc TCCTGA.....</p>

Figure 1 a) DNA base sequence showing an intron (ggacttgcattcc).
b) DNA base sequence showing an insertion of a retroposon (cca.....).

Falk (2004) provides an interesting example of this phenomenon in the case of even-toed ungulates and their close relationship to whales and dolphins. It turns out that whales, dolphins and the even-toed ungulates like cows, sheep, deer, giraffes, and the hippopotamus:

have the retroposon code-named SINE CHR-1 inserted at the same position in a specific intron within a specific gene. On the other hand, more distantly related animals, such as the camel and pig, do not It is clear to virtually all geneticists that many millions of years ago the SINE CHR-1 retroposon became inserted into the intron of one gene of an animal that was on the lineage to whales, dolphins, hippos and other even-toed ungulates. Camels and pigs, on the other hand, do not share that ancestral history; hence they do not have the same inserted retroposon. (pp. 191-192)

This information is consistent with the common ancestry diagram in Figure 2, generated from Murphy et al. (2001, pp. 614-618). These molecular techniques have been important in correcting data such as that which traditionally grouped hippopotamuses with pigs, as demonstrated by Shimamura et al. (1997, pp. 666-670).

The ancestry of different organisms can be studied by looking at the DNA segment between coding genes, because more mutations will accumulate in the non-coding DNA segments than in the coding segments over long periods of time. The further apart organisms are in the tree of life, according to Darwin's theory, the more different the DNA segment between coding genes should therefore be. This seems to be borne out in data presented by Collins (2006, p. 127) and shown in Table 2. The kind of evidence presented here suggested to Ruse (2006) that:

Darwinian biology gains objective status - it is no mere epiphenomenon of culture-because it is epistemically successful. It does what is needed to tell us in a disinterested fashion about the world of experience. It works, and that in the end is why it deserves our attention and support. Until and unless a more powerful rival appears on the scene, that is why we should be Darwinian. (p. 213)

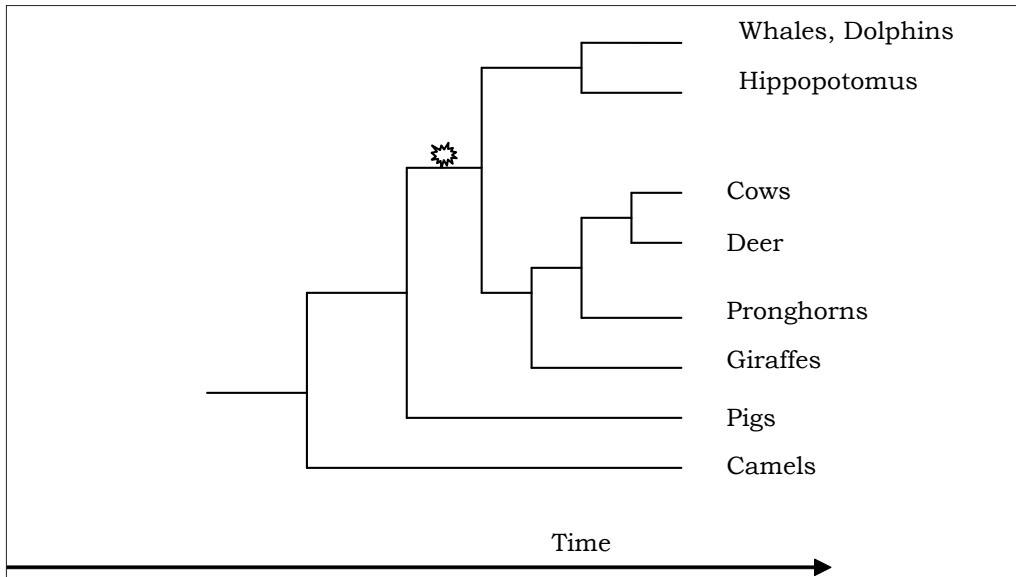


Figure 2 Ancestry of the Cetartiodactyla.

Note. ✨ Approximate time of Ancestral Retroposon Insertion.

When Ruse uses the term *epistemically successful*, he is referring to epistemic desirables such as “coherence, consistency, unifactory power, predictive ability and fertility, and simplicity” (p. 242), and epistemic consilience whereby a theory or model is supported by evidence from reasonably independent sources.

Table 2

Likelihood of Finding a Similar DNA sequence in the Genome of Other Organisms, Compared with a Human DNA Sequence

Organism	Random DNA segment between genes
Chimpanzee	98%
Dog	52%
Mouse	40%
Chicken	4%
Fruit fly	0%
Roundworm	0%

Darwin, in the *Origin*, used data from Instinct Studies, Paleontology, Geographical Distribution, Classification, Morphology, and Embryology, to support his thesis even though data from any one of these sources may have been rather scant in the 19th century. It was his use of the concept of consilience that added great support to his theory. In the 20th century, we can now add data from Cosmology, Dating Techniques, and Molecular Genetics to the consilience profile.

In the attempt to bring together data from different areas of study, a scientist will often face anomalies. This is certainly the case with Darwinian Studies. A fossil record that shows sudden emergence of life forms (e.g., in the Cambrian Explosion) rather than the expected gradual emergence of life forms, still presents as an anomaly. The still reasonably limited evidence of transitional species in the fossil record is always puzzling, although there have been quite important discoveries and propositions in these anomalous areas of late (Falk, 2004). If anomalous behaviour in any branch of science is not ultimately resolved, adjustments may need to be made to a scientific model until a resolution is reached. Christians may be assured that this is true of any science, including Darwinian biology. The fact that Darwinian biology continues to provide powerful explanations for new phenomena suggests that it cannot be easily dismissed. Some Christians even claim a gain for Christian theology from a dialogue with a modest form of Darwinism. We will now consider some recent scholarship in this area.

Darwinism and Christian Theology

Haught (2008) claims that: "To a great extent theologians still think and write almost as though Darwin had never lived" (p. 2). While some theologians may have been happy to accept Darwin's theory as a scientific theory, they have been reluctant to place the Darwinian model and the biblical model alongside each other. Such a process, however, can lead to great gains for biblical theology and Darwinism particularly, according to Haught (2008), if placed in the larger context of cosmic evolution.

While Darwin's theory and contemporary cosmological theory draw upon pure materialistic explanations, there are other considerations that warrant attention. Astrophysicists have shown that one could consider the universe as having been set up for life, given the fine-tuning of the cosmological constants required for the production of carbon in the stars. According to Haught (2008):

For life to be possible at all, the argument goes, the rate of expansion of the universe, the force of gravity, the ratio of electron to proton mass, and the cosmic birthmarks had to be fixed infinitesimally close to their now established values. Otherwise the universe could never have produced hydrogen atoms, supernovae, carbon, and other ingredients essential to the emergence of life. (p. 38)

Christians would consider that this information adds substance and strength to the biblical notion of God as creator, though it is not a proof of God's existence.

As far as biological evolution is concerned, even Darwin admitted that natural selection, although regarded by him as the most important mechanism of evolution, was not the only force operating for biological change (Darwin 1859, p. 167). Polkinghorne (2005) agrees with the basic Darwinian picture of life but takes issue, in relation to hominid development, with the claim that natural selection or simple materialistic conditions can account for such development. In the case of *Homo sapiens*, he underlines such qualities as self-consciousness, profound language development, great range of rational skills, creative endeavours in art and culture, moral thinking and actions, and God-consciousness. Specifically in relation to rational skills, he argues that if these were developed only on the basis of the need for survival, the development of simple arithmetical skills would have been all that was needed. He then adds:

Yet when Isaac Newton recognized that the same force that makes the high cliff dangerous is also the force that holds the Moon in its orbit around the earth, and the Earth in its orbit around the Sun thereby going on to discover universal gravity, something happened that went far beyond anything needed for survival. (p. 51)

In relation to ethical behaviour, Polkinghorne (2005) acknowledges that typical Darwinian explanations for kin altruism and reciprocal altruism offer some partial insight. He then adds, “But sociobiology tells too banal a story to be able to account for radical altruism, the ethical imperative that leads a person to risk their own life in the attempt to save an unknown and unrelated stranger from the danger of death” (p. 54). One may rightly ask about the origin of these human qualities if they do not derive from naturalistic processes. Polkinghorne (2005) gives his answer as follows:

For the religious believer, the source of these dimensions lies in the unifying will of the Creator, a fundamental insight that makes it intelligible not only that the universe is transparent to our scientific enquiry, but also that it is the arena of moral decision and the carrier of beauty. Those dimensions of reality, the understanding of whose character lies beyond the narrow explanatory horizon of natural science, are not epiphenomenal froth on the surface of a fundamentally material world, but they are gifts expressive of the nature of this world’s Creator. Thus moral insights are intuitions of God’s good and perfect will, and aesthetic delight is a sharing in the Creator’s joy in creation, just as the wonderful cosmic order discovered by science is truly a reflection of the Mind of God. (p. 58)

Descent with modification need not naturalistically lead to more elegant, perfect, or complex structures. Darwin (1859) himself noted that, “Natural selection will not necessarily produce absolute perfection” (p. 163). What then, of the bias towards complexity? Conway Morris (2003, 2008) proposes the notion of convergence of species towards complexity, where the evidence now strongly suggests humans to be an “evolutionary inevitability” (2003, p. xiii). By convergence, Conway Morris (2003) means “the recurrent tendency of biological organization to arrive at the same solution to a particular need” (p. xii). In other words, similar solutions, such as the development of the camera-like eye, are found in response to a biological need for sight in widely divergent species. The subtle interplay between “chance” and “law” seems to have played an important part in the living world being as it is (see Poole, 2007, p. 120). Just like the fine-tuning of cosmological constants for life, so it seems that the modification of living organisms has been fine-tuned, as it were, for complexity. Conway Morris (2008, p. viii), however, cautions against premature invoking of an anthropic principle in evolutionary biology. He does suggest that, at least, convergence is a fingerpost in that direction. Again, to a Christian observer, such convergence adds to the evidence pool for a God, although not proving God’s existence.

The Scientific and Biblical images of the Nature of Things could be compared as shown in Table 3. The comparisons are not designed to highlight the differences as confrontations, but as composite meanings providing increasing depth to our understanding of the way things are. Recently, Finlay (2008) paralleled biological history (the scientific image) with biblical Israelite history (the biblical image), noting that, even though both have their chaotic and tumultuous story, they will reach a special climax with the second advent of Christ. As regards Creation, a literal reading of Genesis 1 and 2 renders an image depicting an event over a relatively short space of time (six evening-morning days), and the scientific image is one of a process over a very long period of time (billions of years). The former portrays the Creator as the designer of living organisms, while the latter portrays the Creator as allowing living organisms to design themselves. Haught (2008) believes that the scientific image of creation is consistent with the notion of God as creator of order and of the “disturbing wellspring of novelty” which allows the process to provide “opportunities to participate in its own creation” (p. 6). The giving of such freedom to nature is deeply consonant with the biblical doctrine of grace, which leads to true intimacy between God and his creation. Haught (2008) envisages that, “Only a relatively independent universe, a universe allowed to ‘be itself’, could be intimate with God” (p. 43).

Table 3*The Nature of Things according to Biblical and Scientific Images*

	Biblical Images		Scientific Images	
1	Creation as an event of the past	1	Creation as an ongoing process	
2	Creation as a state of being	2	Creation as a story of becoming	
3	Suffering caused by the intervention of extraterrestrial beings	3	Suffering is the natural outcome of a free creative process	
	Sola Scriptura		Theistic	Atheistic
4	Redemption from sin	4	Redemption from suffering and death	Redemption has no meaning
5	Sin is the transgression of the law	5	Sin is refusing to participate with God in his free creative process	Sin has no meaning
6	Redeemed for a new heaven and a new earth	6	Redeemed for a bright future	No future beyond death-eventual annihilation of our planet

The Cosmic and Darwinian picture of the universe shows how intimate human beings are with the rest of creation. While the biblical picture links human beings to the earth, the Darwinian picture links them with other organisms as well, and, through the Cosmic picture, with the elements themselves. This intimacy with the rest of creation is pictured also in the biblical model of the sabbatical year, when the cultivated earth was, as it were, again allowed to be itself and in the process recover its elements lost previously in the cultivating process. The weekly sabbath also has significance for all creation since, as Haught (1995) notes, "Sabbath, sacramentalism, and silence...provide us with the deepest roots of the ecological concern the world so desperately needs to recover today" (p. 201).

According to Table 3, suffering is an outcome of allowing creation to create itself. Haught (2008) reflects the thought of Teilhard de Chardin when he says, "Evil and suffering could be thought of as the dark side of the world's ongoing creation. To say that suffering is a logical possibility in an evolving universe, however, is not to claim that it is morally tolerable" (p. 41). In this context, the biblical image of the suffering Christ has deep meaning (see Table 3, items 3, 4, & 5; Hebrews 2:18; Philippians 2:8). If Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God to the world, it would seem that the image of a suffering servant is more relevant to his creation than that of a conquering king, although this image is not completely absent. The image of the suffering servant (Isaiah 53) does begin to emerge in the Old Testament, and seems to reach a climax in the life of the Christ of the New Testament. The suffering Christ has identified himself so intimately with humanity, that every joy and every sorrow are remembered by him. According to Haught (2008), all human experience is "saved by being taken eternally into God's own feeling of the world; (etched) permanently within the everlasting empathy of God; and redeemed from absolute perishing" (pp. 46-47). But what of the future for a life of suffering and death?

Haught (2008) uses biblical images of the future to suggest that biological evolution has available to it novel informational possibilities present in an always dawning future. This is in contrast to a materialist view of evolution, which he claims depends on the "lifeless and mindless atomic constituents...(and)...the grinding onward of an algorithmic past" (pp. 94-97). One of the strongest biblical stories in regard to the importance of the future in the spiritual life is that of the patriarch Abraham, who was led from his home in Ur of the Chaldees to an unknown future. He was sustained in this journey by God's promise that he would originate a great nation, and he was also

sustained by a hope whereby he “looked for a city whose builder and maker was God” (Hebrews 11:10). Haught (2008) is emphatic when he says, “We must be able to show that the visions of hope at the heart of the Abrahamic religious traditions provide a coherent metaphysical backdrop for the important discoveries of modern science” (p. 115). These visions go “beyond the predictions of science without contradicting them” (p. 103).

Many New Testament commentators have observed how the future and the present in a sense coexist in many of Jesus’ sayings. Gunther Bornkamm (1973), for example, states:

We must not separate the statements about future and present, as is already apparent from the fact that in Jesus’ preaching they are related in the closest fashion....God’s future is God’s call to the present, and the present is the time of decision in the light of God’s future. (pp. 92-93)

In the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, Christian hope is based on a future beckoning us on through the blood of the Lamb, Jesus himself. The divine blood represents a guarantee of a future without suffering and death gained by Jesus’ victory at the cross (Rev. 5, 12, 21).

Conclusion

A major benefit of dialogue is the opportunity it affords each party to be enlightened by the other. Some Christians, for example, see in Darwinism a clue to the age-old question: Why does God allow suffering? Some Darwinians see in Christianity a clue as to what might be responsible for the information package that could drive evolution. Another benefit is the necessity to keep abreast of the fundamental assumptions and difficulties behind Darwinism and Christianity. Encouragement of a dialogue with Darwinism is in no way meant to minimize the extent of the assumptions involved. Lennox (2009) has recently reminded us of these assumptions, one of which is the often unstated extension of demonstrable microevolutionary processes to the scale of macroevolution. Thinking of evolution in cosmic as well as macro and molecular terms, however, has brought a continuity to the explanations, though there are assumptions involved. Christian scholars have also found the concept of continuity across all scales helpful in theological reflection.

In relation to cosmic and biological evolution and Christian discipleship, Haught (2008) places God very much in the beckoning future so that, while such a God is hidden from our view in the sense that he is not analyzable like the causal events in the past, he is nonetheless intimately involved in his creation. Accordingly:

It is the self-withdrawal of any forceful divine presence and the paradoxical hiddenness of God’s power in a self-effacing persuasive love that allows creation to come about and to unfold freely and indeterminately in evolution. It is in God’s self-emptying humility that the fullest effectiveness resides. (p. 104)

Ruse (2001) notes that there is agreement between Christians and some Darwinians about the uniqueness of human beings in that “our appearance was not just inexplicable chance” (p. 218). Also, the Darwinian human and the Christian human have those similar ironic qualities of selfishness and kindness.

Placing biblical images beside scientific images (e.g., Table 3) is potentially problematic, however, if one considers that the images should coincide. The vehicles in which divine truths are carried in the biblical context are very ancient ones that often seem irrelevant in the light of the vehicles used in modern science. Most of the battles we face in the issues surrounding science and faith have to do with attaching more significance to the vehicles than to the truth carried by them. Paying attention

to this fact will help us never to *choke* on God's word, whether spoken in Scripture or Nature, but to *feed* upon it to God's glory.

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Christians in a Pluralistic Society: Papyrus Evidence from the Roman Empire

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Christians in a Pluralistic Society: Papyrus Evidence from the Roman Empire

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Christian sources allow readers to gain the impression that the Christians were especially sensitive to, or even exaggerated for apologetic purposes, the Roman government's hostility towards them. However, by using the often neglected papyrus documents which are contemporary with the events described, we now can gain direct evidence, from the official side, of the initiative of Decius in AD 250 which, at the time, provoked this sense in our surviving Christian literary tradition of a comprehensive attack. In the light of this evidence, we can perceive the emotional and intellectual realism of the literary accounts of this Christian response.

Introduction

From Christian writings such as the letters of Cyprian, many martyrologies and the fourth-century historical and quasi-historical accounts of Lactantius (*On the Deaths of the Persecutors*) and Eusebius (*History of the Church and Life of Constantine*), we learn that the emergent Christian church of the third century was targeted for persecution by the Roman Emperors. From reading such Christian sources *prima facie*, it is possible to gain the impression that the Christians were especially sensitive to, or even exaggerated for apologetic purposes, the Roman government's hostility towards them. However, by using the often neglected papyrus documents which are contemporary with the events described, we now can gain direct evidence, from the official side, of the initiative of Decius in AD 250 which, at the time, provoked this sense in our surviving Christian literary tradition of a comprehensive attack. In the light of this evidence, we can perceive the emotional and intellectual realism of the literary accounts of this Christian response.

Before the late second century, there is no first-hand information on Christianity in Egypt, whether in the historical record or in documentary sources, though of course we have later accounts, especially that of Eusebius. Papyri form a valuable and independent source, which can give us first hand accounts of the experiences of Christians in Egypt prior to and including the time of Constantine, when Christianity for the first time began to enjoy state favour. In terms of the existence of Christians up the Nile in the second century, the literary papyrus record may provide some evidence. Various Christian literary texts have been assigned to the second-century *chora*, indicating that there were Christians, if not full Christian communities, in such centres as Oxyrhynchus, Antinoopolis and the Fayum (see Roberts, 1979, pp. 1-25).

The Alexandrian church comes into focus from the late second century, in both a theological and institutional sense. The writings of Clement (c. AD 150-215) and Origen (c. AD 185-254) underscore the increasing importance and influence of the Alexandrian "Catechetical School," which developed from obscure beginnings to a position of importance within the Alexandrian community.

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Beyond Alexandria, the spread of Christianity can be detected from secure evidence by the third century. Christian literary papyri become both more numerous and of better quality, most importantly the codices in the Chester Beatty and Bodmer collections. The range of Christian literature also expands, with non-canonical material increasing over time. In addition, documentary papyri begin to attest the presence of Christians in the countryside. Shortly after this, Christians began appearing in the public records, the first being Dioscorus of Arsinoë dating probably to the second quarter of the third century (*Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Aegypten*, 1985-1988), iterating a list of nominees to be appointed to obligatory public service, possibly in preparation for the visit to the Fayum of the Roman governor of Egypt.

In the Fayum, Christian papyri begin to appear in growing numbers in the third century, and it is from this point that we have the valuable evidence from documentary papyri of the way both individual Christians and groups of Christians operated within a pluralistic society.

A major test for the Christian communities took place in AD 249 with the accession of the emperor Decius. Decius had taken power in a senatorial reaction to the policies of his predecessor Philip; these were seen at the time to be favourable towards the Christians (Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 6.14.9). For a year before the change of power, there had been violent public agitation against the Christians in Alexandria. Origen, writing in AD 248 (Origen, *Against Celsus*, 3.15), reports that people attributed the contemporary political discord to the growth in the number of believers and the fact that the government was not combating them as in earlier times. Decius, as a Roman traditionalist, may also have been eager to respond in a traditional manner to the beginnings of Rome's new millennium (one thousand years since the accepted foundation of the city, as recorded for example by Livy).

To show the solidarity of all Romans behind their ancestral gods and sacrifices, every household was obliged to appear on a fixed day, veiled and crowned, and submit a *libellus* (certificate) declaring participation in the sacrifice. The requirement to produce documentary witness to the act of sacrifice was novel. The obligation to retain a personal copy indicated that this proof of religious piety had ongoing significance and implications for the civil identity of those concerned. The wording must have been prescribed in the edict itself, or in an attachment to it, as an analysis of the remarkably fixed form of the forty-six extant *libelli* demonstrates (Clarke, 1984; Keresztes, 1975; Knipfing, 1923; Leadbetter, 1982; McKechnie, 2002; Rives, 1999).

Aspects of the government's process may thus be observed in the surviving *libelli* (though many are fragmentary or otherwise incomplete). They show us that the intention was to encompass all (males, females and children) and to establish their compliance even if the compliance were to be retrospective.

The sacrifices were required of Roman citizens, whose number at the beginning of the third century had been greatly increased by Caracalla. Roman Jews, however, were surely exempt, since there is no record of difficulty over sacrifice in their case. Special rolls must have been prepared; this showed the government's commitment to the process. It may well be that all the extant *libelli* were submitted by non-Christians, but this may be an accident of preservation.

The declaration asserts an unvarying past practice of sacrifice, indicating a total identity with the Roman community. To avow this would be doubly difficult for Christians, and moreover, since they were obliged to taste the sacrifice, it would be harder to pretend. The use of multiple witnesses was designed to prevent negligence, or collusion with the applicant. Two copies were made both countersigned by the witnesses; one for the official file and another for the personal record (the personal copies may have been folded).

Below are reproduced very literal translations of two of the surviving *libelli* (Grenfell & Hunt, 1916, 1904), which enable us to observe the formulaic character, and make it clear that conformity was intended to be absolutely enforceable.

To those chosen (to be) over the sacrifices of the Oxyrhynchites' city, from Aurelius Gaion, (son) of Ammonius, (his) mother being Taeus. Always of course to sacrifice and pour (the libation) and revere the gods having been my custom, in accordance with what was ordered by the divine judgement now too in front of you (pl.) (am I) sacrificing and pouring (the libation) and (have I) tasted of the offerings, along with Taos (my) wife (?) and Ammonius and Ammonianus (my) sons and daughter Thecla (?) (acting) through me, and I ask (you) to certify (this) for me below. Year 1 of the *Imperator* Caesar Gaius Messius Quintus Traianus Decius Pius Felix Augustus, Epeiph 3. I, Aurelius Gaion, have handed (it) in. I, Aurelius Sarapion who is also (known as) Chaeremon wrote for him, (due to his) not knowing letters.

To those over the offerings and sacrifices of the city (of?) from Aurelius L(?) [...] -thion, son of Theodorus, his mother (being) Pantonymis, from the same city. Always of course in sacrificing and pouring (libations) to the gods did I persist, and since now too in front of you (pl.) in accordance with what was ordered, I poured (libations) and sacrificed and tasted of the offerings, along with my son Aurelius Dioscorus and my daughter Aurelia Lais, I ask you to certify (this) for me below. Year 1 of the *Imperator* Caesar Gaius Messius Quintus Traianus Decius Pius Felix Augustus, Payni 20.

However, in spite of the pains with which the edict of Decius was applied, as demonstrated by the extant libelli, the effort failed to achieve its goal. Many Christians did conform, and thus created long-term dissension within the churches. Some paid to avoid it (Cyprian, *Epistles*, 55.14.1). The fact that many refused to do so, and willingly sacrificed themselves, did not help the government's case, but rather engendered admiration beyond their own Christian communities. Cyprian makes it clear that many stood their ground, and were not in fact prosecuted. After Decius' (fortunately timely) death in AD 251, nothing suggests the documentation of sacrifice was ever again required, though comprehensive sacrifices based on the calling of a roll were imposed again by Maximinus in AD 306 and 309. This does not mean that Christians were immune from civil and personal difficulties.

Diocletian, half a century later, in January/February AD 304, added to the many legal disabilities imposed upon prominent church leaders in the preceding year (Eusebius, 8.2.4-5). He had altars installed in all courts of law, and required litigants to sacrifice before proceeding (Lactantius, 15.5). The letter of Copres, reproduced below (Barnes, Parsons, Rea, & Turner, 1966), is an example which documents this event. It was a surprise to Copres, yet it clearly presented no great crisis. He simply gave power of attorney to his "brother" (a professional colleague probably and presumably not a Christian) to appear on his behalf:

Copres to his sister Sarapias, very many greetings. Before all else I pray for the good health of you all before the lord god. I want you to know that we arrived on the 11th. It became known to us that those who present themselves in court are being made to sacrifice. I made a power-of-attorney in favour of my brother. So far we have accomplished nothing. We instructed an advocate on the 12th(?), so that the case about the land could be brought on the 14th. If we accomplish anything, I'll write to you. I've sent you nothing, since I found Theodorus himself setting out. I'll send them to you by another hand soon. Write to us about the health of you all and how Maximina has been and Asena. If it's possible let him (her?) come with your mother so that his (her?) leukoma can be cured – I myself have seen others cured. I pray for your health. My best wishes to all our friends by name.

Conclusion

Such documents offer case studies demonstrating how broad policies and procedures of the Roman government towards Christians were worked out in practice and at the individual level. Along with the recalcitrance of the martyrs, it was this widespread spirit of accommodation that undermined all the official campaigns in the long run (Eusebius, 9.1). What has been called “indestructible elasticity” saved the day, as far as the church was concerned (MacMullen, 1990).

These few sample papyrus documents, contemporary with the events they describe, show something of the impact on the lives of ordinary Christians of the attempts by the Roman government in the later Roman empire to enforce common, traditional practice, in what was clearly a pluralistic environment. These and other documents show that what was at stake was not actually *belief* per se, but the maintenance of those traditions which were believed to have held the Roman state together and ensured its military superiority for over a thousand years: namely the due attention paid to ancestral rites and sacrifices.

The Christians in the Roman world (taken en masse) were, in general, unable to make this compromise, and again (in general) stood out and attracted admirers and support because of their stand. Assisted too by Decius' early death, by the death of the emperor Valerian (AD 260), and by the death-bed reversal (AD 309) of Galerius' fierce persecution, Christian churches were able to survive and to attract the notice, patronage, and ultimate endorsement of Constantine. The establishment of the church at the end of the fourth century under Theodosius I was the culmination of this process.

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An Analysis of Romans 14:5-6 via the New Perspective on Paul

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An Analysis of Romans 14:5-6 via the New Perspective on Paul

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The Apostle Paul has often been held responsible for transforming the teachings of Jesus the Jew into an anti-Semitic religion of hate. The recent emphasis on Paul's essential Jewishness and his positive attitude to the Law has given a more historically nuanced picture of the Apostle. This "new perspective" on Paul is somewhat affirmed in this paper's examination of Romans 14:5-6. Contrary to the opinion of numerous New Testament scholars, a careful analysis of Romans 14:5-6 reveals that Paul is not opposing the Jewish Sabbath. Indeed, it argues that the passage is about a group of festive days, and is not dealing with just a single day (the Sabbath) in contrast with no holy day at all. Furthermore, the dispute over foods is to be related to the festive days discussed in vv. 5-6. However, Paul's main concern is not when the Roman churches gather for fellowship meals, nor indeed the nature of the viands. His prime, perhaps his only, desire is that these fellowship meals be inclusive of Jew and gentile alike in the unity of Christ.

Introduction

The insanity of the Holocaust still challenges belief—not that it happened, but that it could happen. Anyone who has visited the Holocaust museums in Jerusalem, Stockholm, New York, London (in the Imperial War Museum), or even Sydney, is staggered by the brutality and the stupidity of the Nazi systematic genocide. I've been to Dachau but not Auschwitz: to visit such places is to leave one ashamed and bewildered. Anti-semitism is still present even in Australia. For example, some of the Melbourne demonstrators against the Israeli bombing of Gaza carried placards with such slogans as "Clean the Earth from the Dirty Zionists," "Chosen Dirty People of the Earth," "Stop the Sub-human Zionist Land-grabbing, Mass Murders in Occupied Palestine." One Australian told a BBC interviewer in Beirut, "I'm here to kill Jews" (Sheehan, 2009). Whatever the excesses of Israel's response to the relentless rocket attacks against her, nothing excuses this kind of rhetoric of hate.

One is appalled emotionally and logically at the holocaust. Logically, it is so insane. A Jewish joke emphasises how illogical anti-Semitism is. Some Nazi ruffians roughly accosted an old Jew and abused his race as the cause of all the ills in Germany. "Yes," agreed the old Jew, "and the cyclists." "Why the cyclists?" the puzzled Nazis asked. "Why the Jews?" the old man responded. Many post-holocaust Jews have asked the same question, "Why us?"

Jewish scholarship's first answer to this question was that the holocaust could not have occurred without the long history of Christian anti-Semitism (e.g., Bartrop, 1994; Cohn-Sherbok, 1992). First, they pointed to the support of Nazi policy found in German Christian scholarly writings, including theologians and New Testament specialists (Weinreich, 1946). They pushed it back further to Luther's polemical rhetoric against the Jews and his facile dismissal of Judaism as legalistic in contrast with the grace of Christianity. The Middle Ages proved to be no less anti-Semitic than later Christianity. The passion plays are a visual means of maintaining the Christian hatred of Jews, especially their misuse of Matthew 27:25: "Then the people as a whole answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!'" The cry of an enraged "lynch mob" hardly speaks for a nation.

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Scholarship pushed research back into the writings of the early church fathers, and the evidence of an anti-Jewish rhetoric was again a constant theme in writers such as Ignatius, Barnabas, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian and Chrysostom (de Lange, 1976; Wilken, 1983). The final bastion of the Christian claim of being bearers of love and tolerance to the world, the New Testament itself, seems to many also to have within it the language of anti-Semitism, especially in the passion narratives, John's excoriation of the Jews, and Paul's abandonment of the Law (Beutler, 2006; Das, 2003; Dunn, 2001; Motyer, 1997, 2002; Richardson, 1986; Sandmel, 1978). When all the emotion and extreme assessments are discounted, what remains in the history of Christian anti-Semitism presents a very sorry picture indeed.

It is painful for any follower of Christ to discover the long history of Christian persecution of the Jews, but it is intolerable to think that the very foundation documents of Christianity are themselves anti-Semitic. Gaston (1987) observed: "A Christian church with an anti-Semitic New Testament is abominable, but a Christian church without a New Testament is inconceivable" (p. 15. See also Kee & Borowsky, 1998). This has led to a reappraisal of some long-held scholarly opinions. First, there has been a renewed Christian appreciation of Judaism as a religion of grace (Sanders, 1977). Second, Christian scholarship has gained a better understanding of the kinship between the two faiths. Third, and not least for our purposes, there is an increased acceptance, not only of Jesus' Jewishness, but also of Paul's Jewishness (Charlesworth, 1991; Witherington, 1997, 1998; Young, 1997). Indeed, the process of re-assessment of Paul has given rise to what has been called "the new perspective on Paul."

The new perspective emphasises three things in contrast to the traditional Protestant view (Dunn, 2008). First, Judaism is not essentially legalistic. Second, "works of the Law" in Paul refers to the marks that distinguished the Jews from the gentiles, and not to meritorious works performed to gain salvation (Watson, 2007). Third, Paul's major concern was the incorporation of gentiles into the covenant people of God through the death of Christ, rather than the justifying of individual sinners (see Westerholm, 2004, for a critique and defence of the traditional view). One of the problems confronting the new perspective is just why Paul conflicted with his fellow Jews. If their obedience was in the form of "covenantal nomism," that is, a response to grace, how does that differ from Paul's own view? Or to put it another way, why is Paul both positive and negative towards the Law, if Judaism was not a legalistic religion? For our paper, we are concerned to discover whether the new perspective's more positive view of Paul and the Law guides us to a better appreciation of a text such as Romans 14:5-6. I now analyse this text in more detail.

The Altercation over Days

Hos men [gar] krinei hēmeran par' hēmeran, hos de krinei pasan hēmeran; hekastos en tō idiō noi plērophoreisthō. Ho phronōn tēn hēmeran kuriō phronei; kai ho esthiōn kuriō esthieī, eucharistei gar tō theō; kai ho mē esthiōn kuriō ouk esthieī kai eucharistei tō theō.

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God (Romans 14:5-6 NRA).

Several traditional interpretations are commonly proffered concerning the altercation over days in Romans 14:5-6, including the following:

1. The most common view is that Paul in this passage is confronting a situation where some are observing the Sabbath while others respect no day (Moo, 1996). Those observing the day are said to be the "weak," and those not observing are identified as the "strong" (Barclay, 2001; Dunn, 1988; Jewett, 2007).

2. de Lacy (1982) takes the unusual view that it is the strong, such as Paul, who observe the Jewish holy days, while “the consciences of the weak might well have forbidden them from enjoying the festivals” (p. 182).
3. Another variation is the suggestion that the weak are observing the Sabbath, while the strong are treating every day as the Sabbath, that is, Sabbath indicates a daily lifestyle. The text is then read as saying, “one person observes the Sabbath as more important than any other day, but another person observes every day as a Sabbath” (Bruce, 1963, p. 245; Weiss, 1985).
4. The suggestion that the issue is over one group (the weak) observing Sabbath, and another (the strong) observing Sunday, has little to commend it. Paul’s apostolic ministry is historically too early for such a debate, and nothing in the text indicates the dispute is over the shift to Sunday as the preferred Christian day of worship (Black, 1973; Michel, 1966; Winter, 2002).
5. The idea that the differences revolve around lucky days or fast days does not do justice to the obvious Jewish nature of the dispute, nor the fact that the issue was over eating and not about abstaining from food (Cranfield, 1979; Dederen, 1982; Käsemann, 1980).

The verb *krinō* is used in verse 5 with the meaning “to distinguish,” “to adjudge,” “to prefer,” “to separate,” “to decide” (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, & Danker, 1957; Liddell & Scott, 1940). The preposition *para* with the accusative *hēmeran* is comparative, that is, one day more than, or rather than, another day (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, & Danker, 1957). The coupling of *hos men* with *hos de* emphasises a contrast, that is, “one adjudges this ... but another adjudges that.” If someone adjudges one day as more important than another, it implies that more than one day is esteemed to some degree. Wright (2008) adjudges Easter as more important than Christmas, but that does not mean that he despises and ignores Christmas. Approving every holy day, of course, also requires more than one day. From these initial observations, I now draw a series of conclusions.

The Social Context

My first contention is that the historical context of the discussion concerning days relates to the congregations’ worship. The reference, then, is not to private practice, but to corporate conduct. Hence, Paul’s concern is for peace and for mutual upbuilding (v. 19). Second, I maintain that whatever *krinō* means in the first clause in verse 5, it must also mean in the second clause. The syntax and thought of the language is too closely parallel for the meaning to change. Hence, if the first clause refers to some action, such as observing a day as holy, then the second clause must have the same idea. This would then make it difficult to see the text as referring to one observing the seventh-day Sabbath, while another observes every day as the Sabbath, for the one who esteems every day as a Sabbath would not actually be observing any day as such (Weiss, 2008). This latter view would be more relevant to a twenty-first century secular society than to a first-century religious milieu.

Third, and accordingly, the second clause refers to a positive action regarding every day, just as the first clause refers to a positive attitude concerning selected days. Jewett’s understanding of the situation reverses what the text actually says. In Jewett’s (1982) opinion, “some members of the Roman community of Christians are committed to a liturgical calendar, ... while others feel free from the obligation to observe holy days (p. 131). However, the text reads positively, *hos de krinei pasan hēmeran* (another esteems every day), which unequivocally states that a person esteems or values every day. That is not being free of the celebration of holy days, but being committed to every holy day as opposed to valuing one holy day above another. Jewett’s view would require Paul to have written *hos men krinei mian hēmeran para*

pasas hēmeras, hos de ou krinei hēmeran (one esteems one day more than all other days, another esteems no day), but he says no such thing.

Fourth, and contrary to the majority view, the strong is the one who *krinei hēmeran par' hēmeran* (esteems one day more than another day), and the weak is the one who *krinei pasan hēmeran* (esteems every day). Paul elsewhere consistently has the order strong then weak (14:2, 3, 6b, 22-23; 15:1) (an insight from Dr Ross Cole in an unpublished paper). The language implies a group of holy days, hence *pasan hēmeran* should not be read as though it meant “every day in the week,” but rather as “every day in a set of holy times.” Those who wished to retain Judaism’s festive tradition in its entirety would affirm all the holy times, while the strong were prepared to celebrate some of the festivals as more relevant than others. In the Christian tradition, this would be Passover and Pentecost, but not Purim.

Consequently, fifth, both groups are celebrating days, even if one values some holy days while another values them all. And this is exactly what Paul says: *ho phronōn tēn hēmeran kuriō phronei* (he who considers the day, considers it to the Lord, v. 6a). Unlike the issue over meals—where both the one eating and the one not eating do it to the Lord (v. 6b)—Paul does not say, “he who does not consider the day, does not consider it to the Lord” (Ancient scribes were bemused at the lack of balance and added *ho mē phronōn tēn hēmeran kuriō ou phronei* [he who does not consider the day, does not consider it to the Lord]). He has only the positive statement, “he who considers the day, considers it to the Lord.” This is because both groups are still observing days, whether it is one day as more important than another or every day as equally important. Moo (1996, p. 843) gives no reason to support his view that Paul is addressing only the weak in verse 6a. Paul does not say, “he who does not observe the day, does not observe it to the Lord,” for the simple reason that that was not what was happening in the Roman churches.

Sixth, we may safely dismiss the idea that the issue was caused by a debate over Sunday and Sabbath. It appears that both sides were observing Passover and Pentecost as fellowship meals, even though one group wanted more than this. Hence, it is also misleading to limit the debate to the observance or non-observance of the Sabbath. Indeed, Paul’s emphasis is on festival days rather than on the Sabbath as such. Lucky and unlucky days can be dismissed as very unlikely, given the clear Jewish-Torah nature of the debate in Rom 14-15 (Käsemann, 1980, p. 370). The suggestion that the issue was over fast days likewise has little to commend it. The language clearly implies the issue was over a group of days, and within a Jewish context these would be Judaism’s various festivals, which within synagogue worship invariably involved fellowship meals. Thus, the discussion about eating and drinking should not be dissociated from the issue over the celebration of festive days, and that of course rules out fast days.

Christianity moved quickly away from the temple rituals (Dunn, 1991, p. 95). However, through the synagogue, the temple worship profoundly influenced the church’s early liturgical development. We should note that the synagogue had already largely shorn from the temple’s festival days many of their ritual aspects. Christianity continued this “de-templation” process. Of course, we do not know much about the worship life of the first-century synagogues, but it seems clear that the festivals were observed in some manner (Sanders, 1992, pp. 133-134; Schürer, 1986, pp. 144-145; Stern, 2002, p. 107; Tcherikover, 1959, p. 355; Thornton, 1989, pp. 97-100). This is true also of the early Christians. Dunn (1988) appeals to 1 Corinthians 16:8; Acts 20:6, 16; 27:9 as indicating “the continuing importance of the Jewish festivals at this [early] period of Christian development” (p. 806). Inevitably, Christians initially reflected the synagogue tradition of worshipping on set holy days, as noted by van der Horst (1999): “The oldest Christian communities conducted weekly religious services. It seems to me an inevitable conclusion that they adopted this practice, too, from

their Jewish contemporaries,.... So it seems almost certain that the weekly worship in earliest Christianity was a legacy of Judaism” (p. 33).

Burtchaell (1992) has argued that, “when the record is silent or all but mute on any aspect of how the Christians arranged their affairs and provided themselves with church officers, it is safe as an initial assumption to suppose that the traditional patterns may have been carrying on” (p. 199). Burtchaell also says: “Every enterprise, even if it is most creative, prolongs many of the older ways unchallenged, and therefore often unnoticed. Because these continuities are uncontroversial the record tends to be silent about them” (p. 194). The early Christians may not have been as averse to celebrating the Jewish holy festivals in their own way as is sometimes supposed.

The Viands at Communal Meals

The frequent reference to the impact of one member’s action upon another clearly shows that the dispute over food is occurring within the context of fellowship meals (see Rom. 14:3, 10; 15:1-2). This reinforces our contention that the issue of the festival days cannot be isolated from the dispute over food. Some are so conscientious about unclean foods that, to avoid any possible contamination, they limit their diet to vegetables, while others will eat everything (*panta*, 14:2). Clearly, “everything” includes meat. Whether it means all meats without distinction is not necessarily demanded by the *panta* (for a conservative assessment, see Tomson, 1999, 2001). Paul urges that the Christian fellowship meals allow freedom, where those who restrict their food to vegetables are not belittled, and those who eat everything are not condemned (vv. 3-4). The issue in Paul’s view is simply a “dispute over opinions” (v. 1 *mē eis diakriseis dialogismōn*). When he further addresses these initial verses, it is not the matter of days (vv. 5-6) that he expands, but the issue over foods. Thus, Paul’s concern had more to do with the tension over the food at the meals than the time of the occasion.

For his key premise he can appeal to a dominical ruling, namely, that nothing is unclean of itself (vv. 14, 20). The terms *koinos* (common) and *katharos* (clean) inform us that the contention is Jewish in origin. The sanctity of foods is a matter of cultural conditioning, and is not inherent in the viands themselves (*tō logizomenō ti koinon einai, ekeinō koinon*, [to him who reckons something to be common, to him it is common] v. 14b). The problem is in the person’s thinking or faith in that (s)he is still fettered to primitive taboos about food (v. 23). However, having said that, in Paul’s view both those who limit their diet at the church’s social gatherings and those who have no such restrictions, are doing so out of a good and acceptable conscience to the Lord (v. 6b). The issue has to do with *kashrut* and not food that had been sacrificed to idols (Gooch, 1993, pp. 117-118).

It is evident that synagogue worship involved fellowship meals. There is evidence from Jericho, Ostia, and Stobi, of synagogues designed with a *triclinium* as part of their architecture (Clausen, 2001, pp. 155, 158; Richardson, 2003, pp. 95, 99; Smith, 2004, p. 33). Josephus also provides testimony that the synagogue provided the venue for fellowship meals (AJ 14.215, 259-61). Josephus speaks of their coming together on stated days (261), and of having their own place for gathering together (235, 258, 261). Smith (2003) notes that, “separate sects within Judaism tended to celebrate their separateness and cohesiveness by holding special meals together” (pp. 133, 150). Christians likewise practised their worship at the table, and coming together meant assembling to eat together (Banks, 1985; Smith, 2003, pp. 178-179). The issues at Antioch, Rome, and Corinth, to which we may add Caesarea and Colossae, are “related to Jewish dietary laws” (Smith, 2003, p. 180). Early Christians were to some degree celebrating their fellowship meals on festival days inherited from Judaism, but they debated which days and what food. Was this the only cause of the disruption? Paul was determined to defuse the issue over eating and drinking at the Christian fellowship meals. This would seem to indicate that there was more at stake than simply the matter of days and food.

Paul's Pastoral Concern for Unity

The author's primary objective in Roman 14-15 is to preserve the harmonious unity of the Roman congregations. The material cause of the division was a difference of opinion over the choice of viands, but the real cause was the participation of uncircumcised gentiles in the fellowship (Nanos, 2002, pp. 300-304). Paul's focus was on the division the food served at their fellowship meals was causing (Barclay, 2001, pp. 293-295). The reference to the divine welcome in verse 3 (*ho theos gar auton proslabeto*), and Christ's welcome in verse 15:7b (*kathōs kai ho Christos proslabeto humas*), is the basis of the imperatives to welcome one another in verses 14.1 and 15.7a (*Ton de asthenounta tē pistei proslambanesthe; Dio proslambanesthe allēlous*). That *proslambanō* sometimes refers to partaking of food (Acts 27:33, 36) is relevant to the context of Rom 14-15, where Paul is wanting to head off the threat to the unity of the church - especially in its fellowship meals - posed by scruples over diet. Paul's concern about taboos regarding food and its disruptive potential is readily discerned in the texts. Barclay (2001) notes:

Paul is discussing here not the general practices of the Christians concerned but their specific behaviour when they meet and eat together. The disputes arise when they do (or do not) welcome one another to meals (Rom 14:1-3), and their debates are given urgency not as general discussions of lifestyle but as specific arguments about the food set before them on such occasions. (p. 291)

The controlling factor for gaining unity in the fellowship meals is the love of Christ revealed in his death for others (vv. 8-9, 15; 15:3-7). The kingdom of God and its righteousness is much larger than the matter of eating or drinking (v. 17). Those who feel free to eat everything are to use their liberty judiciously so as to retain the unity of fellowship with those who are unable to exercise the same freedom. They are to restrict their diet for the sake of those who do not feel free to eat everything (vv. 20-22).

The frequent references to Jews and gentiles in Romans telegraph to us Paul's concern in the letter. "Uncircumcised" occurs 11 times in Romans (25 times in the New Testament) and "circumcised" is found 15 times (41 times in the New Testament). There are 11 incidents of "Jews" in Romans (201 times in the New Testament, mostly in Acts) and 29 of "gentiles" (167 times in the New Testament). Paul's admonitions in chapter 15 address this diversity. They are not to please themselves (v. 1), but to live in harmony with one another (v. 5) and to glorify God with one voice (v. 6), for the gentiles too are to glorify God (v. 9). Paul quotes four biblical texts, all containing the plural *ethnē* (gentiles), to prove that the inclusion of the gentiles into the worshipping Christian community was always God's intention. Moiser (1990) says that "only Jews needed convincing of that," but that is surely not true (p. 580). Gentile Christians needed assurance that, equally with the Jews, they were heirs of the covenant. God is praised among the gentiles (vv. 9b, 11), they rejoice with his people (v. 10), and their hope is centred in Christ (v. 12). Both groups, Jew and gentile Christians, are therefore to welcome one another (v. 7).

Paul's concern was that whenever the Christians gathered for a fellowship meal, they did so with mutual acceptance. The frequent use of the reciprocal pronoun *allelōn* in chapters 12-16 emphasises Paul's concern for unity. The pronoun *allelōn* occurs 100 times in the New Testament. Romans has 14 of these, which is second in frequency to the Fourth Gospel with 15 occurrences. Eleven of the examples in Romans occur in chapters 12-16, and three in chapters 1-2. They are members of one another in the one body in Christ (12:5), they are to love one another with sibling love (12:10; 13:8), they are to have mutual respect for one another (*to auto eis allēlous phronountes*, 12:16; cf. 15:5), they are no longer to judge one another (14:13), they are to affirm one another (14:19), welcome one another (15:7), and instruct one another (15:14).

The admonitions in Rom 15:1-13 seem to be directed at the several house churches in Rome to cultivate an integrated worship. In Lampe's (1991) well-researched opinion, because of "the lack of a central worship place in Rome throughout the centuries, we can hardly avoid the conclusion that these (at least) eight circles also worshipped separately—in separate dwellings somewhere in the different quarters of the city" (pp. 229-230). The Old Testament quotations are all directed towards mutual acceptance within the congregations of Jewish and gentile believers. Paul's desire was for a united worship of the diverse social groups. No doubt these separate house churches gathered for communal meals. Moiser (1990) notes: "The church [in Rome] consisted of about eight autonomous cells which kept in touch by exchanging the eucharist" (p. 577). According to Watson (1991): "Thus, Rom. 16 confirms the hypothesis about the purpose of Romans derived from 14:1-15:13. The purpose of Romans is to encourage Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome, divided over the question of the law, to set aside their differences and to worship together" (p. 211). It is likely that there were in fact several congregations in Rome (Clark, 2002; Lampe, 1991). Or, as Moiser (1990) states it: Paul's "aim is to reconcile Jew and gentile in the Roman churches and thereby provide himself with a starting-point for his further mission" (p. 575).

Conclusion

Has the new perspective on Paul assisted us in understanding any better the debate reflected in Romans 14.5-6? The answer is both no and yes. Since the new perspective sees Sabbath as one of the markers of Judaism that Paul categorises as *adiaphora*, the answer is no. The tendency to see the issue as a matter of keeping Sabbath or abandoning it (at least for the gentiles) is unchanged (e.g., see Dunn, 1988, p. 805; Meeks, 1987, p. 292; Sampley, 1995, p. 42; Toney, 2008, pp. 61-67). Nevertheless, the new perspective has given us a deeper appreciation of Paul's concern for a united worship of Jewish and gentile believers. This brings us to our own conclusion. Paul's concern was not about *kosher* food or Jewish festivals as such. His concern was that the Christian fellowship meals be conducted in an inclusive manner. Paul would have had no objection to a Sabbath communal gathering, provided the viands on the table allowed everyone to feel welcome. Nor is it likely that he would have been offended at a Christian gathering over Passover or on some other Jewish festive day. Nor is there any reason to doubt that the practices of the synagogue provided the Pauline churches with a tradition of communal meals on set days that they readily embraced. Why would former Jews and gentile God-fearers think to do otherwise?

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Thirst for Spirits? Thirst for Spirit? Two Models to Explain Alcohol's Impact

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Two main models, the spiritual and the physiological, have been put forward to explain the cause of drunkenness. While the spiritual model was dominant prior to the rise of modern science and medicine, it has been largely replaced during the past two centuries by the physiological model. This paper summarises both models, traces their history, and notes a contemporary new perspective and re-emergence of the older spiritual model. The paper suggests that theorists and therapists who remain unwilling to consider a spiritual cause of drunkenness in favour of a strictly physiological one, do so at the risk of adopting an inadequate working model of drunkenness and alcohol addiction.

Introduction

Is there a spiritual contribution to the experience of drunkenness, or is it adequately accounted for by biochemistry, microbiology, and physiology? In the long history of observation and discussion of alcohol's impact in its consumers, two main models have been put forward to explain the cause of drunkenness. The first model will be designated *spiritual* and the second *physiological*. While the spiritual model was dominant prior to the rise of modern science and medicine, it has been largely replaced during the past two centuries by the physiological model. This paper summarises both models, traces their history, and notes the re-emergence of the older spiritual model. Finally, it argues that the spiritual model remains useful, even central, in accounting for aspects of the sensations and behaviours accompanying drunkenness, which the physiological model has not been able to satisfactorily explain.

This paper employs Christopher Cook's definition of drunkenness, which distinguishes between drunkenness and intoxication. Cook (2006) defines intoxication as "a transient state, arising as a biological result of consumption of alcohol. The physical phenomena which mark intoxication include impaired physiological function, slurring of speech, coordination and cognition, memory and psychomotor tasks are all impacted, and in extreme cases of intoxication, coma and death follow" (p. 13). He defines drunkenness as behaviour. Drunken behaviour is influenced by a range of factors which include, but are not limited to, the beliefs, wishes, and cultural expectations of a drunk person (p. 14). This paper focuses on the phenomena of drunkenness rather than of intoxication, although ancient sources typically did not distinguish between them.

Spiritual Cause of Drunkenness in Greek and Roman Sources

According to surviving sources, most people in ancient Greece and Rome assumed a consistently "spiritual" cause for drunkenness that accompanied consuming alcohol. This section of the paper sketches this spiritual cause, and illustrates how it impacted both Greco-Roman and early Christian attitudes towards alcohol. A good starting point for illustrating this Greco-Roman understanding of the cause of drunkenness is the Greek *symposion*, or drinking party, which followed formal evening meals. The typical symposion carefully followed a ritual which included a libation, or drink offering, to Dionysos the god of wine, consisting of a small amount of undiluted wine poured out

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in his honour, to acknowledge his power. This was followed by the paean, a hymn sung by guests in honour of Dionysos. To participants, Dionysos was understood to be “present” at the symposion, guiding the conversation and other forms of interaction. While the ideal of the symposion, as depicted by Plato and other highbrow authors, consisted of civilised, philosophical dialogue, the day-to-day reality was sometimes different, as indicated by the following quotation (see Cook, Tarbet, & Ball, 2007) of a fragment (fragment 93) from a play by Eubulus (4th century BC):

I mix three *kraters* [ancient equivalent of today’s punch bowls in which wine was mixed with water before being served to guests] only for those who are wise. One is for good health, which they drink first. The second is for love and pleasure. The third is for sleep, and when they have drunk it those who are wise wander homewards. The fourth is no longer ours, but belongs to arrogance. The fifth leads to shouting. The sixth to a drunken revel. The seventh to black eyes. The eighth to a summons. The ninth to bile. The tenth to madness, in that it makes people throw things. (p. 1303)

The role of Dionysus in the ancient world grew increasingly complex, but the god’s core manifestation remained that of the god of wine and drunkenness. The most sobering ancient account of his considerable spiritual power and modus operandi through his devotees is the tragedy by the Greek playwright Euripides, titled *Bacchae* (first performed 405 BC), in which Dionysos in human guise arrived in the city of Thebes where his human mother had been born, and approached the local king, Pentheus, demanding recognition. Anyone who failed to recognise the deity of Dionysos put themselves in great peril—in the case of the unbelieving Pentheus, a violent death at the hand of his own mother while under the spell of Dionysos. The spiritual basis of Bacchic celebration has been vigorously championed by, among others, E. R. Dodds in his classic works on ancient Greek thought (e.g., see Dodds, 1951). His definition of the Greek verb *Bakchuein*, from which the play derived its title, helps the modern reader grasp the ancient context: “*Bakchuein* is not to have a good time, but to share in a particular religious rite and (or) have a particular religious experience—the experience of communion with a god which transformed a human being into a *Bakchos* or a *Bakchē*” (p. 278). Dodd’s definition continues to be cited approvingly by specialists (e.g., Schlesier, 1993).

Evidence that drunkenness, in the view of many Greeks and Romans, had a spiritual cause is also provided by the widely-held ancient view that dreams conveyed messages from the gods, but that distortion of both dream and interpretation was caused by the wine consumed by the dreamer. According to Flavius Philostratus (died c. AD 250), dreams could only be rightly interpreted at dawn or later, because by then the soul would have cleansed itself of wine. By implication before midnight, after drinking, dream messages were unreliable because of the wine-induced spiritual interference. To be more precise, the interference was attributed to the spirit of wine at work in its consumer. Even at midnight the soul was still “under the influence” (*Life of Apollonius* 2.37, as cited in White, 1975, p. 69). Philostratus maintained that priests of the famous if semi-legendary Greek seer Amphiaraus required three days of abstinence from wine by those consulting him, so their souls would be “in a state of absolute transparency” and able to receive divine oracles without distortion (White, p. 70).

A spiritual cause of drunkenness is expressed in the Socratic-Platonic traditions. According to his two most illustrious students, Plato and Xenophon, Socrates (469-399 BC) assumed that drunkenness had a spiritual cause. The view that Socrates was atheist was communicated by his younger contemporary, the playwright Aristophanes, through his influential comedy, *Clouds* (see Henderson’s discussion in his introduction to *Clouds* in Aristophanes, 1998). But he was not correct. Atheism was certainly not at the heart of the charge levelled against Socrates by his fellow

Athenian citizens, which led to his execution, so, according to the testimony of both Plato and Xenophon, Socrates was a believer in God, or the gods. His theology was unconventional for a man of his time and place. Xenophon noted in his *Memorabilia* (1.1) that Socrates was “guilty of not recognizing the gods which the city recognizes, and for bringing in new daimones. To Greeks, *daimones* was a stock expression for the spiritual presence of a god, any god, among people. It was not used in the negative sense that its English equivalent *demons* has inherited. Xenophon (1.2) claimed that his teacher acknowledged the existence of his own personal guiding *daímōn*.

In a dialogue with Critobulus recorded by Xenophon, Socrates provided what may be termed a divine, or spiritual explanation for the behaviour of people who, despite opportunity, intention and will to act, are “prevented from doing these things by the rulers [Greek *archontes*] and goddesses [*despoinai* ‘mistress, lady of the house’; feminine form of *despotēs*]” (*Oeconomicus* 1:18-22). These rulers and goddesses are not earthly masters. The spiritual nature of the archontes is confirmed by Plato, as are the *despoinai*, despite translators’ efforts to “secularise” Socrates’ concept of them. According to Socrates, these spiritual archontes and *despoinai* manifest themselves in such human behaviours as idleness (*argia*), moral cowardice (*malakia psuchēs*) negligence (*ameleia*), and excessive indulgence in pretended pleasures such as gambling, gluttony, lechery, and, important for this paper, drunkenness (*oinophlugia*) (*Laws* 10.903). The point of this passage is that Socrates directly attributes drunkenness to spiritual entities.

When the Romans came under Greek influence, they identified their ancient god of wine, Liber Pater, with the Greek Dionysos, and continued to worship his power in wine. In summary, most Greeks and Romans understood drunkenness resulting from wine consumption to have a spiritual cause. The drinker “invited” Dionysos to enter and take over the life while “under the influence.” The sensations experienced, and the behaviours manifested while drunk, were understood to come from the god. Transformed attitudes and actions during the time of this divine takeover were attributed to the wine god within. As god of wine and drunkenness, Dionysos was both powerful and unpredictable—just like human behaviour while under his influence. While Dionysos was welcomed for his soothing effect, his destructive power caused dismay and was the frequent focus of Greek and Roman authors.

Spiritual Cause of Drunkenness in Scripture

The Judaeo-Christian Scripture heritage contains little direct address of the spiritual nature of wine and alcoholic addiction, but there is sufficient incidental reference to suggest that, here too, a spiritual cause of drunkenness was assumed in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. The most deliberate and direct Hebrew Bible contrast of the spirit of Yahweh, Israel’s covenant God, with the spirit of wine, is in Deuteronomy chapter 29. Immediately following the programmatic recital of the covenant blessings and curses, the reader is reminded of the marvel of the exodus, during which garments and sandals of the migrants did not wear out, and their food and water were providentially provided: “I led you through the wilderness forty years, the clothes on your back did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. Bread you did not eat, wine and other intoxicant you did not drink, in order that you might know that I [am] Yahweh your God” (Deuteronomy 29:4-5).

Note the total absence, in this summary of the wilderness wanderings of Israel, of the two basic ancient foodstuffs, bread and wine (or beer), referred to in the heart of this covenant reminder passage. The purpose for this extended period of abstinence from bread and alcohol is clear—Israel was to become experientially acquainted first-hand with Yahweh as provider, keeping his covenant promise to their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Both Hebrew and later Jewish readers of this passage lived in cultures where the god of wine and the god of grain were acknowledged nearly every mealtime. Ancient Jewish readers of this passage realised its goal was

not asceticism, but rather the removal of competing spirits, the elimination of other spiritual influences.

Belief in the spiritual cause of drunkenness is likewise behind New Testament passages such as Acts 2, the account of the street-side attempt to account for the Spirit-inspired exuberances expressed by the followers of Jesus assembled in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. The jeering explanation of passers-by, that the disciples were “filled with new wine” (Acts 2:13), was countered by Peter, who rejected drunkenness as the cause of their exuberance by declaring: “These are not, as you suppose, drunk ... but ... God declares ‘I will pour out my Spirit’” (2:15-16). In other words, there was an unequivocal contrast between the Spirit of God and the spirit of Dionysos.

Note also the contrast between drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit of God in the epistle to Ephesians 5:18: “Do not get drunk with wine ... but be filled with the Spirit.” According to Romans 13:13-14, the antidote to drunkenness, with its assumed spiritual cause, is likewise clearly spiritual: “clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ and make no allowance for the flesh, to gratify its cravings!”

Physiological Cause of Drunkenness in Greek and Roman Sources

While the belief in a spiritual cause of drunkenness pervaded the classical and biblical world, its dominance was being challenged by some Greek physicians even prior to the Christian era. Working in the tradition of Greek investigative science, they put forward a natural account of the cause of drunkenness, free from appeal to spiritual intervention. It was based on observation and expressed with the terms, and within the constructs, of human anatomy, biochemistry and physiology available to them. They employed primarily the bodily properties of hot and cold, wet and dry, to explain drunkenness. While their explanations, if taken out of context, may strike today’s reader as farfetched, they were based on rational analyses of phenomena. Drunkenness was asserted to occur more quickly, for example, when the heat inherent in wine was mixed with the heat and moisture inherent in young men!

The work of these Greek physicians laid the foundation for modern methods and approaches to explain drunkenness widely employed by those who research into the mechanism of alcoholic intoxication. This paper employs the term *physiological cause* to refer to any explanation of drunkenness employing, and limiting itself, to natural properties and processes. A physiological cause and a spiritual cause of drunkenness tend to be mutually exclusive, standing over against one another, and competing to have the final word in explaining the cause of drunkenness.

Present Dominance of the Physiological Cause of Drunkenness

Nineteenth-century advancements in the sciences and their accompanying revolution in medicine set the stage for the rapid sophistication of the physiological account of drunkenness, and it gained predominance over earlier belief in a spiritual cause. Firmly rooted in the categories of biochemistry, microbiology and physiology, it continues to serve with increasing precision to explain alcoholic intoxication as defined in this paper’s introduction. However, it has been less successful at explaining the behavioural dimension of drunkenness. This is illustrated whenever (a) two drinkers with nearly identical physiologies, who consume equal quantities of alcohol in identical circumstances, exhibit widely differing behaviour; or (b) an individual consumes the same quantity of alcohol on two occasions, yet exhibits different behaviour on the second occasion. In an effort to account for individual variables, the remainder of this paper traces the revival of the idea of a spiritual cause of drunkenness, and suggests it be employed alongside the physiological cause, which is so successful at explaining intoxication.

Revival of Spiritual Cause of Drunkenness

Concurrent with the dominant physiological cause, there have been renewed suggestions in the past century that there is also a spiritual cause for the behaviours associated with the consumption of alcohol. Two twentieth century expressions of this spiritual dimension, by William James and Carl Jung, will introduce this section.

William James

Harvard physician and psychologist William James (1842-1910), at the beginning of the twentieth century, delivered the Gifford lectures at the University of Edinburgh. They were later published as *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902/1960). James expressed his keen awareness of the mixed blessing/curse of alcohol, and referred to its somewhat autonomous nature and influence as “part of the deeper mystery and tragedy of life that whiffs and gleams of something that we immediately recognize as excellent should be vouchsafed to so many of us only in the fleeting earlier phases of what in its totality is so degrading a poisoning” (p. 373). In the chapter titled *Mysticism*, James wrote, “The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour ... The drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystic consciousness” (p. 373). Here he attributed to alcohol power over a certain part of the individual, and declared an overlap of the drunken with the mystic within consciousness. James also employed language which attributed to an external entity the human states of drunkenness and sobriety: “Sobriety diminishes, discriminates, and says no; drunkenness expands, unites, and says yes. It is in fact the great exciter of the Yes function in man. It brings its votary from the chill periphery of things to the radiant core. It makes him for the moment one with truth” (p. 373).

In his chapter on *Saintliness*, James declared:

The man who lives in his religious center of personal energy, and is actuated by spiritual enthusiasms, differs from his previous carnal self in perfectly definite ways. The new ardour which burns in his breast consumes in its glow the lower “noes” which formerly beset him, and keeps him immune against infection from the entire grovelling portion of his nature. (pp. 264-265)

James then disclosed precisely what this statement meant, by providing summaries of a significant number of reports of people whose lives reportedly underwent major transformation, most often accompanied by their abandoning of drinking and drunkenness. He labelled them “regenerate characters” (p. 265). Similar experiences of lasting transformation of lives, including the breaking of the hold of alcohol over persons, continue to be reported and subjected to scrutiny by psychologists (e.g., Hawks, 2002; Miller & C’De Baca, 2001). James was clearly impressed by what he termed the mystic power of alcohol, and took seriously the breaking of alcoholic dependence and the subsequent regeneration of persons by means of religious conversion, Spirit replacing spirits.

Carl Jung

Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung (1875-1961) acknowledged a spiritual cause of drunkenness in communication about his treatment of alcoholic Roland H., during the 1930s. This case has become widely known because of correspondence between Jung and Bill Wilson, recovered alcoholic and co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous. Wilson had written Jung to let him know Roland H. had been cured of his addiction. In Jung’s reply to Wilson, dated 30 January 1961, he rejoiced at news of Roland H.’s release from alcohol, then went on to articulate his understanding of a spiritual cause of his addiction: “His craving for alcohol was the equivalent on a low level of

the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness, expressed in medieval language: the union with God.” Jung followed this with a reference to the “evil principle prevailing in this world” which can be countered by “a real religious insight.” He closed his letter with the explanation: “You see, alcohol in Latin is *spiritus* and you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. The helpful formula therefore is: *spiritus contra spiritum*.” In a footnote to his letter, Jung cited Psalm 42:1: “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God” (Jung, 1976, pp. 623-625). Here Jung expressed his conviction in unambiguous language, backed with a citation of Scripture, that alcohol exerted spiritual power over its consumers.

Hints at further evidence for the revival of belief in a spiritual cause of drunkenness are scattered through the works of twentieth-century novelists and other creative writers. Note, as an example, the phrase “God in a bottle.” Novelist Thomas Wolfe, in *Look Homeward, Angel*, wrote: “Why, when it was possible to buy God in a bottle, and drink him off, and become a God oneself, were men not forever drunken?” (p. 525). Koch (1978) allowed for some sort of belief in the spiritual, or at least inner, non-material core of a person, when he wrote: “Drunk, he becomes more Australian” (p. 57).

Australian academic and social critic, David Tacey, addressed another dimension of the relationship of alcohol to spirituality when he paraphrased the Proverb 29:18, “when religious vision is lost, the people perish” (Tacey, 1995, p. 8). Tacey acknowledged a spiritual dimension to drunkenness when he contrasted “mythic vision and spiritual integrity,” on one hand, over against “violence, alcohol and drug abuse, social disorder, and individual disorientation,” on the other (p. 9). Tacey explicitly declared that drunkenness may take hold in lives experiencing a spiritual vacuum: “The loss of spiritual ecstasy in both white and black cultures has been replaced by the spurious, artificial ecstasy that is provided by alcohol and drugs” (p. 9).

Recent Expressions of Spiritual Cause of Drunkenness

The final section of this paper summarises two current exemplars of the spiritual relationship of drunkenness by authors working within their respective professions, and within a Christian framework.

Nelson’s “God Thirst and Alcoholic Thirst”

James B. Nelson, recovering alcoholic and professor (emeritus) of Christian Ethics in a Protestant seminary in the United States, has contributed to the revival of a spiritual model of alcohol addiction. He adopted Jung’s term *thirst* as the title of his 2004 book, *Thirst: God and the Alcoholic Experience*. His treatment of the topic is especially credible because of his first-hand encounter with what to him was the spirit of alcohol. He drew not only on the richness of the Christian heritage of spirituality and theology, but also on his own journey, which he generously shared with the reader in order to bring home the flesh-and-blood realities of his suggestion that alcohol is “a way of searching for God” (p. 27).

Nelson’s model of a spiritual cause of drunkenness rests on two theses. First, alcohol can be a mediated experience of God: “most, if not all, of our experiences of the divine presence are *mediated*” (p. 31). The infinite is accessed through the finite. Wine can mediate the divine. He supports this by quoting Psalm 104:15: “You bring forth ... wine to gladden the human heart.” He experienced a strong thirst for the seemingly godlike experiences that alcohol induced: “Alcohol gave me a sense of well-being and connectedness—and wasn’t that an experience of God?” (p. 31). Second, mediated experience of God through alcohol can become absolutised. It can transmute from a mediation into a God-substitute. This is idolatry (pp. 32, 72, 76). The challenge is to discern the finite experiences that safely mediate God, and those that do not. Failure

to do so leads to idolatry: “How can we describe that idolatrous urge—the temptation to believe as infinite that which is only finite, to absolutize that which is only relative, and in doing so to make the good into something demonic?” (p. 32).

Nelson did not draw on Greco-Roman sources for his work, but knew the significance of Dionysos well enough to apply the following simile: “Like members of the cult of Dionysus, we were trying to become divine by consuming the god; it was communion” (p. 27). Nelson further stated: “Precisely because alcoholism expresses a fundamental longing for the divine, it finally takes homecoming to the Spirit to heal the alienating idolatry and wounding caused by alcoholic spirits” (p. 169). Nelson concluded his personal story/theological treatise/spirituality narrative with some of the final words of the risen Christ in the New Testament (Revelation 22:17), “let everyone who is thirsty come” (p. 191).

Cook’s “Relatedness and Transcendence”

British psychiatrist and Christian theologian Christopher Cook has also developed a model for the spiritual component of drunkenness. Cook (2004) published a descriptive study of 265 published books and papers on spirituality and addiction. He found a diversity and lack of clarity of understanding of the concept of spirituality, but he identified 13 conceptual components of spirituality which recurred within the literature. Among these conceptual components of spirituality, “relatedness” and “transcendence” were encountered most frequently. Here, and in other publications, Cook has worked these two components into a spiritual model of addiction (Cook, 2006; Cook, Tarbet & Ball, 2007). His model includes two components: the power of sin, and the divided self and will. Cook (2006) describes the first component as:

an apparent “power” of addictive behaviour which seems to enslave and to bring people into captivity.... The present argument is intended to imply neither the objective reality of evil powers nor their demythologization. What is inherent to the present discussion is that sin is experienced as a power which adversely influences human choice and decision-making. (p. 167)

Cook describes the nature of the second component as follows:

Human beings thus face a choice between two competing powers . . . We are not neutral agents . . . we will be drawn into the sphere of influence of one or the other. The one will enslave, and the other will bring freedom. McFadyen has developed this theme in terms of worship and idolatry ... Idolatry, as worship of anything that is not God, acts to block and disorientate joy. Alcohol dependence, with its narrowing of the repertoire of enjoyment of alcohol, its salience of alcohol over other (more highly valued) people and things, and its subjective compulsion towards harmful behaviour is just such an orientation of life under the power of sin. (p. 168)

Cook has articulated a model of drunkenness, and especially of addiction to alcohol, which incorporates a spiritual contribution. In his words, it is the result of “*a desire which exerts over an individual a power which competes with the call of God, and where it results in a life which is inappropriate to, or unready for, the kingdom of God*” (p. 51). He has also implied a spiritual cause of drunkenness by his expression, “the religious and spiritual context of drinking” (p. 50).

Conclusion

Nelson and Cook are contemporary advocates of a model for drunkenness and alcohol addiction which allows for a spiritual cause. They have brought a new contemporary perspective to a belief once prevalent among ancient Greeks, Roman, Jews and

early Christians, that a spiritual power is at work influencing the behaviour of those who open themselves to it by drinking. Through their work, a spiritual account of drunken behaviour and of alcoholic addiction has now been articulated in the light of contemporary theological and psychological insights. Their contribution strengthens the platform for those engaged in analysis of drunken behaviour, and for those engaged in the work of intervention, to incorporate a spiritual dimension. It is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a critique of the models of Nelson and Cook. In the meantime, nevertheless, it is reasonable to suggest that theorists and therapists who remain unwilling to consider a spiritual cause of drunkenness in favour of a strictly physiological one, do so at the risk of adopting an inadequate working model of drunkenness and alcohol addiction.

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