

DISARMING TIMES

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EARTH@PEACE, A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Harry Kerr

The recent IPCC report on climate change makes grim reading. Time is running out for humanity to create a just relationship with the earth which sustains us. It is time for people of faith to examine the resources of faith and to ask how the faith tradition gives us an understanding of where we are and a vision for what lies ahead.

The World Council of Churches has for many years encouraged us to seek *Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation*. More recently Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* places care for creation in the context of the struggle

for a just and peaceful world. However these messages have not been taken up by most local churches who see the care of creation as marginal at best if not irrelevant.

How has this happened? When I was young one of the big occasions in the church year was Harvest Thanksgiving. Churches would be lavishly decorated with flowers fruit corn sheaves and a specially baked harvest loaf. It made a strong statement of the interconnectedness and interdependence of God humanity and earth. Sadly harvest thanksgiving has disappeared but the inter-

connectedness has been fading for

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DISARMING TIMES

A quarterly journal of Pax Christi Australia. It aims to provide members and interested peacemakers with peace news and views both local and international. We endeavour in each edition to reflect the three-fold emphasis of Pax Christi which engages members in study, Non-violent action and prayer for peace, justice, human rights, development and inter-faith and inter-civilisation dialogue.

PAX CHRISTI AUSTRALIA

is an Australia-wide

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We take a stand against militarism, nuclear weapons and the arms race.

As an ecumenical Christian movement

Pax Christi fosters the spiritual and scriptural dimensions of peace-making.

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for many centuries. Until about the 17th century people lived close to the earth. They depended on it for their livelihood, and for survival. It was closely bound up with faith as dependence on God followed naturally from dependence on earth. People knew that much of their health and well being was beyond their control and depended on the grace and mercy of God. Their liturgies and festivals reflected this.

The seventeenth century is recognised as the beginning of modern science. Humanity was gaining understanding of how creation and their own bodies worked. They could control and determine life without reference to God. They discovered that the world was round and therefore self contained and autonomous. They worked out the laws of physics which enabled them to manufacture a whole range of life enhancing machines which could be mass produced in factories. Medicine discovered the circulation of the blood and the nature of disease. They realised the importance of clean water and proper sewage for public health. It became easier to travel and discover other cultures. Psychology uncovered the mysteries of the mind.

The early scientists saw the new discoveries as opening up the mystery of God's creation but the development of industry and manufacturing and the rise of capitalism to facilitate industrial production changed our attitudes to creation. It became a resource to be used for human activity, forests to be cut down, minerals and metals to be dug up, water to be dammed, land to be farmed intensively, urban sprawl to spread wherever the market would take it. Our relationship with creation changed from partnership to exploitation. Our dependence on the creator was replaced by the worship of the free market. God was relegated to the margins of life.

As we re-examine the Bible and tradition we find that it has much to tell us that we have been unable to see because we have come to take the scientific and rational worldview for granted. So we look again at the creation stories in Genesis. Much time and energy has been wasted in trying to reconcile these stories with

the rational worldview, in particular with Darwin's theory of evolution. The creation stories have nothing whatever to do with evolution and to get bogged down needless argument is to miss the real message. These stories were put together when Israel was in exile in Babylon. People found themselves in an alien culture with an alien religion. The early books of the bible were put together to remind them who they really were in this alien culture. The Babylonians had their own creation narrative in which creation emerged from a violent conflict between the Gods. Clearly the Babylonian myth is alive and well to-day. The supposed inevitability of violence underlies much of our national and international life. The Genesis account on the other hand celebrates *Shalom*, the peace and interdependence between God, humanity and the created order in which all participate in the one reality. Genesis 2 makes the same point: God creates humanity from the dust of the earth again emphasising that God, earth and humanity are belong together in the one reality.

Humanity is set to live with God in a harmonious garden environment. When humanity oversteps the limits, humanity is driven from the garden and creation becomes an alien space. Humanity is condemned to a constant struggle with earth for survival.

Michael Northcott from the University of Edinburgh begins his book on the ethics of global warming (*Moral Climate*, DLT London 2007) with a quote from the prophet Jeremiah. The prophet laments the breakdown of his community their oppression of the poor, and their failure to live as a just society by pointing to what they are doing to earth: *Take up weeping and wailing for the mountains, and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness, because they are laid waste so that no one passes through, and the lowing of cattle is not heard; both the birds of the air and the animals have fled and are gone. I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a lair of jackals; and I will make the towns of Judah a desolation without inhabitant. Their own failures as a society, their degradation of the*

earth and alienation from God go together. They have abandoned God's shalom and so everything is crumbling around them. It is very contemporary as we contemplate the links between international conflict and climate change to-day.

The scientific rational worldview and the market economy banished God to the margins of our life. Religion is at best a concern for individual salvation, at best code of ethical behaviour.

Richard Rohr the American Franciscan priest suggests we need a "paradigm shift" if we are to recover the partnership of God, creation and humanity. He proposes:

Instead of God being the Eternal Threatener, we have God as the Ultimate Participant in everything both the good and the painful.

Instead of God watching life from afar and judging it, how about God being inherent in life itself, the Life Force of everything?

Instead of God being an object like any other object, how about God being the Life Energy between each and every object, which we usually call love and Spirit?

Rohr suggests that instead of the remote and limited God banished to the edge of life, God is with us in all of life; at least coterminous with the ever larger universe we are discovering and totally inclusive. (*The Divine Dance, The Trinity and Your Transformation, Whitaker House, Pennsylvania, 2016*)

To perceive God as Participant makes it possible to consider the place of Jesus Christ in the partnership of God creation and humanity. We perceive Jesus as the Human One, who comes to share our common life and to carry

in himself the suffering of the world. We also describe Jesus as *Emmanuel, God with us*. This suggests that Jesus represents in Rohr's words: *God being inherent in life itself, the Life Force of everything. Jesus, the Human One* represents the coming together of God the source and energy of life with Creation and humanity.

The prologue to St John's gospel points to this coming together: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it..... The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son. The Word is a translation of the Greek word Logos which could be translated as Rohr's Life Force of everything. The gospel writer sees Jesus as the expression of this life force. Jesus brings the promise of the reconciliation of God, creation into humanity.*

St Paul in the letter to the Colossians reinforces this idea: *(Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ... For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all*

things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. Salvation has cosmic dimensions. Christ bears the suffering not just of humanity but of the cosmos. On the cross he pours out the Life Force to defeat the "principalities and powers" which threaten humanity and the creation.

Our hope then is in a reconciled cosmos and we are called to the agents of that reconciliation: St Paul in the letter to the Romans: *For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. There is something very contemporary here as we struggle with the implications of the IPCC report God's Shalom, peace, involves not just the absence of conflict, reconciliation between nations and communities, healthy relationships and healthy people but all this in the context of responsibility and care for creation, the living organism of which we are part and which together with us opens the door to the mystery of the Holy God. In Advent we sing Charles' Coffin's hymn which included the words: *To heal the sick stretch out your hands and bid the fallen sinner stand; shine forth and let your light restore Earth's own true loveliness once more.**

WE NEED AN ECOLOGICAL CIVILISATION BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE Jeremy Lent

Promises of green growth are magical thinking. We have to restructure the fundamentals of our cultural and economic systems.

We've now been warned by the world's leading climate scientists that we have just twelve years to limit climate catastrophe. The UN's International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has put the world on notice that going from a 1.5° to 2.0° C rise in temperature above preindustrial levels

would have disastrous consequences, with unprecedented flooding, drought, ocean devastation, and famine.

Meanwhile, the world's current policies have us on track for a more than 3° increase by the end of this century, and climate scientists publish dire warnings that amplifying feedbacks could make things far worse than even these projections, and thus place at risk the very continuation of our civilization. We need, according to the

IPCC, "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society." But what exactly does that mean?

Last month, at the Global Climate Action Summit (GCAS) in San Francisco, luminaries such as Governor Jerry Brown, Michael Bloomberg, and Al Gore gave their version of what's needed with an ambitious report entitled "Unlocking the Inclusive Growth Story of the 21st Century

strategic initiatives, they claim, it's possible to transition to a low-carbon economy that could generate millions more jobs, raise trillions of dollars for green investment, and lead to higher global GDP growth.

But these buoyant projections by mainstream leaders, while overwhelmingly preferable to the Republican Party's malfeasance, are utterly insufficient to respond to the crisis we face. In promising that the current system can fix itself with a few adjustments, they are turning a blind eye to the fundamental drivers that are propelling civilization toward collapse. By offering false hope, they deflect attention from the profound structural changes that our global economic system must make if we hope to bequeath a flourishing society to future generations.

Ecological overshoot.

That's because even the climate emergency is merely a harbinger of other existential threats looming over humanity as a result of ecological overshoot—the fact that we're depleting the earth's natural resources at a faster rate than they can be replenished. As long as government policies emphasize growing GDP as a national priority, and as long as transnational corporations relentlessly pursue greater shareholder returns by ransacking the earth, we will continue to accelerate towards catastrophe.

Currently, our civilization is running at 40% above its sustainable capacity. We're rapidly depleting the earth's forests animals, insects fish and fresh water and even the topsoil we require to grow our crops. We've already transgressed three of the nine planetary boundaries that define humanity's safe operating space, and yet global GDP is expected to more than double by mid-century, with potentially irreversible and devastating consequences. By 2050, it is estimated that there will be more plastic in the world's oceans than fish. Last year, over fifteen thousand scientists from 184 countries issued an ominous warning to humanity that time is running out: "Soon it will be too late," they wrote, "to shift course away from our failing trajectory."

Techno-optimists, including many of the GCAS dignitaries, like to dismiss

these warnings with talk of "green growth"—essentially decoupling GDP growth from increased use of resources. While that would be a laudable goal, a number of studies have shown that it's simply not feasible. Even the most wildly aggressive assumptions for greater efficiency would still result in consuming global resources at double the sustainable capacity by mid-century—a desperate situation indeed, but one that need not lead to despair.

There is a scenario in which we can redirect humanity to a thriving future on a regenerated earth. But it would require us to rethink some of the sacrosanct beliefs of our modern world, beginning with the unquestioning reliance on perpetual economic growth within a global capitalist system directed by transnational corporations driven solely by the need to increase shareholder value for their investors.

In short, we need to change the basis of our global civilization. We must move from a civilization based on wealth production to one based on the health of living systems: an ecological civilization.

An ecological civilization.

The crucial idea behind an ecological civilization is that our society needs to change at a level far deeper than most people realize. It's not just a matter of investing in renewables, eating less meat, and driving an electric car. The intrinsic framework of our global social and economic organization needs to be transformed. And this will only happen when enough people recognize the destructive nature of our current mainstream culture and replace it with one that is life-affirming—embracing values that emphasize growth in the quality of life rather than in the consumption of goods and services.

A change of such magnitude would be an epochal event. There have been only two occasions in history when radical dislocations led to a transformation of virtually every aspect of the human experience: the Agricultural Revolution that began about twelve thousand years ago, and the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century. If our civilization is to survive and prosper through the looming crises of this century, we will need a transformation of our

values, goals, and collective behaviour on a similar scale.

An ecological civilization would be based on the core principles that sustain living systems that coexist in natural ecologies. Insights into how ecologies self-organize offer a model for how we could organize human society in ways that could permit sustainable abundance. Organisms prosper when they develop multiple symbiotic relationships, wherein each party to a relationship both takes and gives reciprocally. In an ecology, energy flows are balanced and one species' waste matter becomes nourishment for another.

Entities within an ecology scale fractally, with Microsystems existing as integral parts of larger systems to form a coherent whole. In a well-functioning ecosystem, each organism thrives by optimizing for its own existence within a network of relationships that enhances the common good. The inherent resilience caused by these dynamics means that—without human disruption—ecosystems can maintain their integrity for many thousands, and sometimes millions, of years.

In practice, transitioning to an ecological civilization would mean restructuring some of the fundamental institutions driving our current civilization to destruction. In place of an economy based on perpetual growth in GDP, it would institute one that emphasized quality of life, using alternative measures such as a Genuine Progress Indicator to gauge success. Economic systems would be based on respect for individual dignity and fairly rewarding each person's contribution to the greater good, while ensuring that nutrition, housing, healthcare, and educational needs were fully met for everyone.

Transnational corporations would be fundamentally reorganised and made accountable to the communities they purportedly serve, to optimize human and environmental wellbeing rather than shareholder profits. Locally owned cooperatives would become the default organizational structure. Food systems would be designed to emphasize local production using state of the art agro ecology practices in place of fossil fuel-based fertilizer and pesticides, while manufacturing would prioritise cir-

circular flows where efficient re-use of waste products is built into the process from the outset.

In an ecological civilization, the local community would be the basic building block of society. Face-to-face interaction would regain ascendancy as a crucial part of human flourishing, and each community's relationship with others would be based on principles of mutual respect, learning, and reciprocity. Technological innovation would still be encouraged, but would be prized for its effectiveness in enhancing the vitality of living systems rather than minting billionaires. The driving principle of enterprise would be that we are all interconnected in the web of life—and long-term human prosperity is therefore founded on a healthy Earth.

Cultivating a flourishing future.

While this vision may seem a distant dream to those who are transfixed by the daily frenzy of current events, innumerable pioneering organizations around the world are already planting the seeds for this cultural metamorphosis.

In China, President Xi Jinping has declared an ecological civilization to be a central part of his long-

term vision for the country. In Bolivia and Ecuador, the related values of *buen vivir* and *sumak kawsay* ("good living") are written into the constitution, and in Africa the concept of *ubuntu* ("I am because we are") is a widely-discussed principle of human relations. In Europe, hundreds of scientists, politicians, and policy-makers recently co-authored a call for the EU to plan for a sustainable future in which human and ecological wellbeing is prioritized over GDP.

Examples of large-scale thriving cooperatives such as Mondragon in Spain demonstrate that it's possible for companies to provide effectively for human needs without utilizing a shareholder-based profit model. Think tanks such as The Next System Projects, The Global Citizens Initiative, and the P2P Foundation are laying down parameters for the political, economic, and social organization of an ecological civilization. Visionary authors such as Kate Rowarth and David Korten have written extensively on how to reframe the way we think about our economic and political path forward.

As the mainstream juggernaut drives

our current civilization inexorably toward breaking point, it's easy to dismiss these steps toward a new form of civilization as too insignificant to make a difference. However, as the current system begins to break down in the coming years, increasing numbers of people around the world will come to realize that a fundamentally different alternative is needed. Whether they turn to movements based on prejudice and fear or join in a vision for a better future for humanity depends, to a large extent, on the ideas available to them.

One way or another, humanity is headed for the third great transformation in its history: either in the form of global collapse or a metamorphosis to a new foundation for sustainable flourishing. An ecological civilization offers a path forward that may be the only true hope for our descendants to thrive on Earth into the distant future.

From Transformation. Jeremy Lent is founder of the non-profit [Liology Institute](http://LiologyInstitute.com), dedicated to fostering a sustainable worldview. For more information visit jeremylent.com.

DENIALS DOWN UNDER: CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH.

Dr Binoy Kampmark

Richard Horton's note in an October 2015 issue of *The Lancet* was cautiously optimistic. It described the launch of Doctors for Climate Change Action, led by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) in the lead-up to the UN Climate Change Conference COP21. The initiative had arisen from a statement endorsed by a range of medical and international health organisations (some 69 in all), specifically emphasising that ancient obligation for a doctor to protect the health of patients and their communities. But, as if to add a more cautionary tale of improvement, the 2015 Lancet Commission also concluded that the response to climate change would, in all likelihood, be "the greatest global health opportunity of the 21st century".

A more sombre note tends to prevail in such assessments. The RACP has itself made the [observation](#) that,

"Unchecked, climate change threatens to worsen food and water shortages, change the risk of climate-sensitive diseases, and increase the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. This is likely to have serious consequences for public health and wellbeing."

In recent years, the link to a rise in temperatures has been associated with specific medical events, such as the transmission of infectious diseases. *The Lancet* notes one example specific to mosquitoes and their increasingly energised role: "Vectorial capacity of *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* has increased since 1990, with tangible effects – notably the doubling of cases of dengue fever every decade since 1990."

Mona Sarfarty, director of the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health, could only be gloomy at this month's International Panel on

Climate Change report releasing a statement rich with claims. "As a physician, I know that climate change is already harming the health of Americans. Doctors and medical professionals see it daily in our offices, including the effects of extreme weather events like Hurricane Florence to droughts, smoke from large wildfires, spreading Lyme disease, and worsened asthma."

What, then, to be done? The RACP's November 2016 position statement outlines a set of canonical objectives still deemed profane by climate change sceptics, notably those coal deep: a decrease in fossil fuel combustion in the generating of energy and transport; a reduction of fossil fuel extraction; decreasing emissions from food production and agriculture; and the improvement of emergency efficiency in homes and buildings. Not exactly scurrilous stuff, but

but highly offensive to fossil fuel fiends.

The Morrison Government, hived off from such concerns, is more focused on immediate, existential goals. Its own electoral survival, shakily built on the reduction of energy costs to pacify a disgruntled electorate, has featured a degree of bullying on the part of the prime minister towards energy companies. Energy retailers, Morrison warns, must drastically reduce prices from January 1 or face the intrusive burdens of regulation. The considerations of the planet, and the health of its inhabitants, have been put aside, a point made clear in the Australian government's response to the IPCC findings.

The note of the report is one of manageable mitigation, shot through with a measured fatalism: "Limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society". While admitting that, "Some impacts may be long-lasting and irreversible, such as the loss of some ecosystems (*high confidence*)" stabilising temperatures at 1.5°C would at least draw a ring around the catastrophe. "The avoided climate change impacts on sustainable development, eradication of poverty and reducing inequalities would be greater if global warming were limited to 1.5°C rather than 2°C, if mitigation and adaptation synergies were maximised while trade-offs are minimised (*high confidence*)."

For the Morrison government, these words, admittedly technical and dry, are the stuff another galaxy, pressed to the outer reaches of the cosmos. The IPCC report did not, [according](#) to the prime minister, "provide recommendations to Australia", leaving his government to pursue policies to "ensure electricity prices are lower".

Fossil fuel lobbyists and advocates were comforted by this retreat from environmental reality. "There is a role," insisted former Coalition energy minister and Queensland Resources Council chief Ian Macfarlane, "for high-quality Australian coal and it's compatible with meeting Paris emissions reduction targets." An interesting omission on emissions here is that the richer the quality of coal, the more concentrated the carbon. Poorer quality brown coal, curiously enough, is less of a culprit. But Macfarlane wants it both ways, if not all ways. "Our economy depends on the coal industry, and we can have both a strong coal industry and reduce carbon emissions."

Such dismissive, a deluding behaviour, has been seen to be nothing short of "contemptuous" by a group of Australian health experts, whose Thursday letter in *The Lancet* suggests a disregard for "any duty of care regarding the future wellbeing of Australians and our immediate neighbours".

The signatories, including Nobel Laureates Peter Doherty and Tilman Ruff, suggested that, like "other established

historical harms to human health [such as tobacco], narrow vested interests must be countered to bring about fundamental change in the consumption of coal and other fossil fuels." They urge the adoption of a "call to action", including the phasing out of existing coal-fired power stations, a "commitment to no new or expanded coal mines and no new coal-fired power stations" and the removal of "all subsidies to fossil fuel industries".

A damp lettuce response came from the near invisible federal environment minister, Melissa Price, who insists that the Morrison government remains aware of the IPCC findings. This same minister, when asked about what she is doing in her portfolio, persists in [praising](#) the blessings of the good divinity that is coal, a spectacle as curious as a wolf at a sheep convention. "We have consistently stated that the IPCC is a trusted source of scientific advice that we will continue to take into account on climate policy." To account, it would seem, is to ignore; to acknowledge is to dismiss.

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'WORD MADE FLESH' TRANSFORMATIVE FOR ALL CREATION

Deborah Guess

In the unique incarnation of God in Jesus, God embraces the whole community of life on earth." This environmentally significant message was conveyed by the Revd Professor Denis Edwards, the keynote speaker at a three-day symposium Care for All that Exists: A Symposium on Creation Spirituality held at the Carmelite Centre, Middle Park, Melbourne from 26-28 May. According to the event's organiser, Philip Harvey, the aim of the symposium was to explore new ideas and ancient wisdom in relation to creation spirituality.

Professor Edwards, who teaches at the Australian Catholic University, Ade-

laide, chose as his topic "Deep Incarnation: The Meaning of Incarnation for the Natural World." He began by saying that for many of us who are Christians the central event of the year takes place at Easter with the lighting the paschal candle which is the symbol of the risen Christ. As light spreads throughout the Church, he said, we listen to the story of creation and salvation illuminated by the light of the crucified and risen Christ, and this reminds us that Christian theology involves seeing creation from the perspective of Christ.

Tracing the history of ecological theology, Professor Edwards said that in

reaction to what has often been an over-emphasis on redemption in the church, early ecotheology focused almost entirely on creation theology, with little or no space given to the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. This has been a problem, he said, because a genuine Christian theology needs to be related to both creation and incarnation. In more recent times, according to Professor Edwards, ecological theologians have more closely connected creation with incarnation: they are now certain that we cannot give an account of creation without speaking of the Incarnation of the Word which is both a completely unique event and is also

an event which includes the whole interconnected biological and physical world.

Professor Edwards said that the notion of 'deep incarnation' originated with Lutheran theologian Niels Gregersen and has been taken up by thinkers such as Elizabeth Johnson and Celia Deane-Drummond. The essential idea of deep incarnation, he explained, is that the incarnation of God in Christ can be understood as radical or 'deep' because it is an incarnation into the very tissue of biological existence. Professor Edwards went on to explain that this does not mean that God is incarnate in the things of the world in the same way that God is incarnate in Christ, as this would reduce incarnation to creation. Rather, he said, it is the case that the unparalleled event of the Incarnation (understood as Jesus' life, death and resurrection), uniquely relates God not only to all humanity but also unites the Word to all biological and material reality in its evolutionary nature. In the light of modern science, Professor Edwards said, we now understand that, like each one of

us, Jesus can be seen as truly made from stardust, with a biological ancestry stretching back to the first animals, even to the first microbes. Knowledge of the common evolutionary history of all creatures can be theologically understood to mean, Professor Edwards said, that the whole creation participates in the resurrection of Jesus Christ – the living God creates and cares for all creatures, even in their suffering and dying. These creatures, he said, are part of the flesh of the world, and the Word of God became united with that flesh in the incarnation. Therefore the death and resurrection of Jesus offers hope for the redemption of all flesh and the significance of this, Professor Edwards said, is that although there is a radical distinction between God and world, there is a divine self-giving which is the core of the world's reality as God commits Godself to this universe.

Professor Edwards went on to say that the particularity of the Incarnation reveals to us that particularity and diversity are infinitely precious, not only in Jesus but in all the features of

the natural world such as the flowering eucalyptus. Reflecting on the incarnation in light of our ecological context, he explained that it can help us to have a renewed appreciation that God is with all living things – that God is always a God of flesh and matter who binds Godself to matter for all eternity. The idea of deep incarnation is significant to our ecological context according to Professor Edwards because it questions the tendency, which has been especially prevalent since the time of the reformation, to leave creation out of the picture and tells us instead that the natural world is precious to God, that ecosystems have intrinsic value. This means, he concluded, that we should take seriously Jesus' claim that no one sparrow is forgotten in God's sight, because God is revealed as infinitely relational and creatively present with every creature in its specificity.

Dr Deborah Guess is the Honorary Postdoctoral Associate University of Divinity. This article first appeared in "The Melbourne Anglican"

SILVER WATTLE QUAKER CENTRE AUSTRALIA

Brendan Caulfield James

About thirty years ago, Franciscan Friar Richard Rohr, started a Centre for Action & Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He was motivated to do so by the realisation that many activists tended to adopt a confrontational stance towards those they were campaigning against. He felt an alternative approach was needed, in keeping with Jesus' teaching to love one's enemy. He concluded that a contemplative lifestyle was best equipped to achieve this.

Silver Wattle Quaker Centre is located on the shores of Lake George, amid stunningly beautiful surroundings. Because this was a place of plenty, coastal and inland indigenous groups would gather here. More recently, it became a sheep grazing property. For a period after the Vietnam War, returning veterans were helped to make the transition back to civilian life. In 1995, it was turned into an Outward Bound facility for young people, then used as an executive training centre. It subsequently became the home of St Joseph's House of Prayer, a Catholic community. When this community dispersed, the Catholic Diocese of Canberra-Goulburn took it over as a Retreat Centre. On the 30th December 2011, in a generous settlement by the diocese, it was purchased by the Religious Society of Friends, also known as Quakers, who continue to run it as a place of spiritual regeneration and restorative landcare.

Here we offer opportunities for individual or group retreats, courses and venue hires to people of all Faiths or none. Our vision statement declares that

"Silver Wattle centre is upheld by a Quaker community which welcomes all those seeking to deepen the spiritual dimension of their everyday living and to find the source of their inward strength. We celebrate the beauty and spirit of the land and offer opportunities for learning, personal retreat and time apart. In service of this vision, we strive to

- Connect with the spirituality and wisdom of First Peoples of this land which we hold in sacred trust.
- Encourage one another to surrender to the promptings of Love and Truth, trusting them as the leadings of God.
- Be a place where people experience spiritual transformation, healing and refreshment in community.
- Practice a way of life that is spiritually, physically and environmentally sustainable".

A special role we offer is to become a Friend in Residence (FIR), where we invite you to join us in observing our Rhythm of the Day. This is based on the monastic traditions of both East and West, which in turn derive from the rhythms of the Cosmos. The three elements to this are (a) experiencing living together, (b) praying together and (c) working together. Our aim in following this rhythm is to nurture the contemplative in us. The contemplative lifestyle helps us tap into our spiritual wellsprings, find our true identity within the Cosmos and surrender to the promptings of the Spirit. The decisions we make and the actions we take are then less likely to be dictated by our egos. The goal is to become a "contemplative in action", something that is not achieved overnight but requires the work of a lifetime. The term was used by Ignatius of Loyola, founder of

the Society of Jesus. His vision was that each member of the Order be trained to become a “contemplativus in actione”. This accounts for the lengthy formation Jesuits undergo.

In recognition of the service FIRs provide, they are offered free board and lodging. Most who take up this challenge report that what they gained from this experience far exceeded what they gave in service. Some go so far as to say it proved a turning point in their lives.

There is one crucial benefit to coming to Silver Wattle. Our centre is located in one of the most magical of natural surroundings. Embraced by such an awesome environment, we are drawn to become intimate with the natural world and find ‘that of God’ in all creatures. Alienation from nature has been cited as a major reason for the Climate Change crisis we currently face. Silver Wattle is uniquely sited to reconnect us to our roots and remind us that, together with the rest of creation, we belong to a single sacred community.

Our contact details are Silver Wattle Quaker Centre, PO Box 337, 1063 Lake Road, Bungendore NSW 2621
www.admin.office@silverwattle.com.au Tel: (02) 62380588 Brendan Caulfield-James Director

BOOK REVIEW

No Friend but the Mountains, Writing from Manus Prison by Behrouz Boochani, Translated by Omid Tofighian, 2018, Picador \$32.99

Reviewed by Rita Camilleri

Much has been said about the book whose cover features the face of an incarcerated human being, who stares at a would-be reader of his *No Friend but the Mountains*. Written in Farsi, this book of prose and poetry was smuggled out of Manus Island in ‘installments’ to be transcribed, translated and published. How fortuitous that the translator Omid Tofighian approaches “storytelling, philosophy, memory and performance” in similar ways as does Boochani. Both writers are familiar with “narrative techniques common in . . . storytelling practices of Iranic peoples. . .” Boochani’s autobiographical narrative is infused with his philosophy and his understanding of the human condition.

The story begins with his departure from Indonesia on a leaky boat from which the passengers were rescued from their near-death experience by drowning. This fear of drowning has never left him.

However, he did embark on a second voyage of escape. This attempt landed him in a ‘cage’ on Christmas Island, from which he was airlifted to Manus Prison, as he calls it, to remain with other ‘prisoners’ for five years. He is still there. Before arriving the prisoners were told that the Manusians were cannibals.

In describing life in Manus the writer does not spare the sensitivities of his reader. Our senses are assaulted by the sights, smells, sounds and silences of Manus as the men’s morale deteriorates into “straddle[ing] the border

between human and animal” (p. 232). Life is all about standing in queues: for food in the searing sun, food which is not equally distributed leaving many on the point of starvation, or as he sees it as “maddening hunger”. Mercifully there are some exceptions, like the courageous woman who tries to verbally prod the prisoners into sharing whatever foodstuffs she is able to commandeer. We see the hungry with ribs protruding from their bodies when they are not wearing the “ridiculously large clothes” assigned to them. We smell the stench of bad breath in the cabins where the men sleep, and the smell of sweat-covered bodies in their cramped sleeping bunks. We hear the dirty, rusty fans creaking away at night. The lack of proper, clean toilets leaves the men, and boys in a powerless, vulnerable state. Each prisoner is permitted one disposable razor per month. When prisoners invariably have health issues they are either ignored, left to languish for a long time before being treated or given pills, for which they have to queue and to which they become addicted. There are absolutely no facilities to pass the time. Games are not allowed. When the use of the telephone is intermittently allowed the men have to wait in queues. The service can be terminated for the day – or longer - almost without notice.

In spite of all the lows, the author does envisage highs which he expresses through his poetry – the beauty of the ‘Flowers like Chamomile’, the sea caressing the shore, the splendour of the jungle at night, the starry sky (when he

is able to sneak outside). Much time is spent scribing the despair which overtakes the men, obvious from their eyes, their silences, the small riots, the self-harm, and the suicides. And what of the minders, the Australian soldiers? Well they too are not happy with their lot, and they descend to a point where they seem to “take pleasure in shattering the dignity of a human being” (p. 94). Abuse is systemic.

When the agreement was made to use Manus Island for the detention of refugees one of the conditions was that some Papuans would be employed. They would much rather tend their vegetable gardens or do what they would normally be doing. Their cultural background is unlike that of the Australian personnel and their attitude towards the prisoners is somewhat more humane at times, although they must obey orders and beat prisoners when ordered to. They may have some understanding of what the asylum seekers are feeling. As the translator tells us, the story is multi-layered, and Boochani shows us his many insights into the human soul.

Boochani’s is a harrowing story, a hard book to read. It is total immersion into the misery that is Manus Island. Boochani reminds me of the lotus flower which rises out of the filth around it but grows into something beautiful. What a wonderful contribution Boochani’s mind and sensibility could make to our society. Perhaps this book should be made compulsory reading for our politicians to take on their Christmas holidays this year.

BOOK REVIEW

The War for White Australia, by Peter Cochrane

Text Publishing, Melbourne 2018

Reviewed by **Professor Peter Stanley**

Australians' racial anxiety towards Asia in general and Japan in particular in the decade before 1914 made Australians' political leaders prepared to underwrite an imperial war in the hope of securing British support for the security of White Australia.

The Great War centenary has seen a goodly trickle – though not the flood we anticipated – of books about Australia's part in the Great War. We have seen important books on the operational side of the war (Meleah Hampton on Australians on the Somme say, or Lucas Jordan on “stealth raiding”) and on the experience of war (Greg Raffin exposing the First Battalion protest to scrutiny or Joan Beaumont and her co-authors in *Serving our country* revealing the war experience of Indigenous communities).

Yet, no one (not even Beaumont in her prize winning 2013 *Broken Nation*) has fully answered the biggest question of all: why did Australia become involved in such a ruinous conflict, seemingly without a second thought? The conventional answers to that question have been ‘because as a part of the British Empire Australia had no choice, and anyway went willingly’ or ‘no one could have known what the war would bring’. Both of those responses are true, but only up to a point.

Peter Cochrane is an independent scholar who has published widely on aspects of Australian history, including penetrating books on Simpson and his Donkey and New South Wales colonial politics, and a couple of historical novels. Now, his *Best We Forget* is, quite simply, the most important book on Australia and the Great War to appear in the course of the war's centenary.

Australians' racial anxieties and antipathies in the late colonial and early federal period are, of course, well known and documented, as are their effects in making a White Australia

one of the earliest and most durable creations of a national parliament, and in sending successive Australian governments off in the ‘search for security in the Pacific’. So what is new about Peter Cochrane's book?

Cochrane shows that key members of successive Australian governments decided in the decade before 1914 that, when war came (as all expected it would), Australia would go ‘into this conflict for our own national safety’, as Billy Hughes said in 1919. That ‘national security’ was not conceived with a remote and notional German threat in mind, but with a conviction that a ‘race war’ would begin in the Pacific and that Japan would become an enemy.

Cochrane's work endorses and elaborates the research of John Mordike, who in two books, *An Army for a Nation* (1992) and *We Should Do This Thing Quietly* (2002), showed how Australian politicians were willingly co-opted at imperial conferences before 1914 to commit troops to the Empire. These decisions remained unknown for some 80 years. Mordike's argument, warily regarded or even rejected by more cautious historians, is complemented by Cochrane's book. And we need to acknowledge the strength of Douglas Newton's 2014 book, *Hell Bent*, on the Australian decision to accept (and indeed anticipate) the Empire's war in 1914, a work which likewise confirms and corroborates much of Cochrane's argument.

Cochrane avers that his title *Best We Forget* is ironic. It is certainly ironic that, in over a century of writing about the Great War in all the dimensions in which we have, we – Australians – should have missed the essential facts as Peter Cochrane has found them. His argument is, in essence, that Australians' racial anxiety toward Asia in general and Japan in particular in the decade before 1914 made Australia's political leaders prepared to underwrite an imperial war in the hope of securing British support for the security of a White Australia.

Cochrane supports his contention beyond question. Future historians of the Great War, while avoiding the easy characterisation of Australia as a prematurely ‘independent’ nation, can no longer find refuge or solace in its standing as a part of the British Empire. Australia's membership of the Empire is part of the story, but not, as Cochrane shows, the whole explanation. ‘Popular memory’ of the war in Australia, he writes, has hitherto known ‘little or nothing of the racial dimension’ of the thinking and decisions underpinning the Australian decision to so enthusiastically commit to support the Empire. That now has to change. The next popular history of Australia's Great War must acknowledge this fact. One of the most important changes that Cochrane's book has precipitated is that he shows that Charles Bean's Official History, while perhaps not fostering outright lies, certainly presented a misleading view of events before and during 1914. It did this not least by failing to explain the importance of Australian apprehensions of Japan, despite Bean himself sharing those fears, as is clear from his published writing before the war. Did Bean *really* not know of the thinking that led to the decision to embrace the war so fully, or was he dissembling?

Cochrane has made the original and profound connection between Australian racial fears and its participation in the Great War. This is something that – amazingly – no-one else has done, despite the abundant literature on all of the historiographical strands from which Cochrane spins his yarn.

Cochrane's is a most original and illuminating argument. It is perhaps more complex than it needs to be to provide a popularly accessible survey of the subject – Cochrane's aim – but the detail strengthens his case. He takes the reader through late colonial Australia's generalised racial antipathy, its eventual focus on the spectre of a resurgent Japan, and the anxieties of Australians conscious of their vulnerability and frustrated that Britain, their

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Cochrane's focus is ultimately to explore the question of why all this was so. His answer is to argue that the creation and dispatch of an expedi-

tionary force (one that suffered the death of one in five of its members and the wounding of half the rest) was based not only – or not so much – upon simple imperial loyalty, but upon the quite deliberate trading of the lives of Australian citizen soldiers for an assurance that Britain would thereby undertake to protect a nervous, vulnerable White Australia, anxious over potential Japanese aggression.

Come the outbreak of the expected Great War the chief villain emerges, in the figure of William Morris Hughes, the self-proclaimed 'Little Digger', whose portrait adorns the book's cover. Cochrane argues that Hughes changed his mind to seek conscription in order to demonstrate Australia's bona fides. In this he was aided by Defence Minister George Pearce, who had been implicated in promises made at imperial conferences and who was now responsible for creating and maintaining an Australian Imperial Force.

Thus, Australia's seemingly pointless sacrifices on the Somme and at Passchendaele were, Cochrane shows, made in order to guarantee a White Australia. The sixty thousand Australian dead Hughes famously claimed to speak for at Versailles were the premium Australia paid for what Hughes hoped would be an imperial guarantee, one that in the event was not honoured as Hughes and Pearce had hoped.

Cochrane's case, if overly detailed, is clear and convincing. We can no

longer continue to simply argue that 'Australasian Britons' simply responded to the appeal of Empire. They *did* – that was what made Hughes's and Pearce's task all the easier – but, in their motivations and – the word is unavoidable – machinations, the decisions of successive Australian governments, Labor and Liberal, committed their nation to a tragedy in order (in their view) to forestall the greater threat of an aggressive, imperialist Japan.

These governments were, of course, twenty-odd years previous, and the Australian crisis of 1942 when it came had to an extent been exacerbated by Hughes's rhetoric and actions at Versailles. Arguably, Australia did eventually fight a 'race war' in the Pacific, but the losses suffered in the Great War did little or nothing to forestall it. To end, a disclaimer: I read parts of this salutary book in manuscript, am thanked by the author in his acknowledgments and contributed a puff to its publisher (as did half-a-dozen other historians). Despite having tipped my Nor do we. HH)

* *Professor Peter Stanley of UNSW Canberra is one of Australia's leading historians of the Great War. As well, in 2008 he published [Invading Australia: Japan and the Battle for Australia, 1942](#), in which he explained the long roots of Australian apprehension of Japan, and in 2017 [The Crying Years](#), a history of Australia's Great War that could have benefitted from Best We Forget.*

Pax Christi Australia 45th Anniversary

9 December 2018



RACHEL HARDIE 1935 – 2018

Rita and Joe Camilleri

We respectfully remember Rachel Hardie as a passionate seeker of peace and social justice. The pursuit of what was fair and just led her to become an activist on many fronts.

Perhaps her first foray into progressive activism was joining the local branch of the Labor Party then known as Diamond Valley. But her commitment would also extend to supporting a number of community organisations, not least Pax Christi whose role she saw as informing the churches on some of the defining issues of our time, in particular the ever-present threat of nuclear war.

In the 1970s the Movement Against Uranium Mining became another area of engagement. The reasons were two-fold: the mining and selling of a substance in Australia which not only fuelled the nuclear industry, but greatly contributed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Importantly, Australia's uranium was mined Aboriginal land.

In 1987 a major new initiative got under way, the Rainbow Alliance a people's movement which sought to educate and empower citizens, and to link in new and imaginative ways issues of social and economic justice, environment, human rights and peace and disarmament. For close to a decade the Rainbow Alliance would bring some of the most critical issues to the attention of the public and those in authority. Rachel was a keen and



faithful member of the organisations, participating in many of its meetings and activities and serving as treasurer for some time.

Rachel was also the Secretary/Treasurer of the Church Library Association!

At the height of the global disarmament movement during the 1980s Rachel, together with Alan by her side, attended meetings and demonstrations – at the same time as being a mother, active member of her Uniting Church congregation and using her skills as a music teacher – she was still teaching privately until the time of her death.

Although Rachel never blew her trum-

pet, she did not suffer fools lightly but in a quiet, dignified manner asked probing questions, made helpful suggestions, insisted on meticulous records, and generally kept everyone on their toes.

An important part of her legacy to Pax was the "Contributions Fund" which she established single-handedly some 15 years ago. She would prepare an annual letter of appeal pointing to Pax Christi's past and future projects, and send it out to members and friends. For this purpose, she operated a dedicated bank account, regularly reported to the Pax Christi Committee and the Annual General Meeting on the progress of the Contributions Fund, and every so often presented a handsome cheque to general funds. She carefully guarded the confidentiality of all those who contributed.

To know Rachels as a fellow member of Pax Christi was to appreciate the meaning of "staunch." She and Alan were among the foundations of the movement. Their support could always be relied on whether they approved of what was happening or not. The last time we saw her with Alan at our committee meeting was two months prior to her death. We mourn friend and a faithful "Companion on the Way"

May she rest in peace and rise in glory!



NOTICE BOARD

NEW SOUTH WALES

Pax Christi Meetings

We normally meet on the First Monday of each month at 6.00pm for shared meal that members bring and the meeting follows at 6.30 pm.

Contact: Claude Mostowik
(02) 9550 3845 or 0411 450 953

The venue: 209A Edgeware Road,
Enmore.

QUEENSLAND

Pax Christi Meetings

Pax Christi Queensland

Pancras Jordan OP

0415 461 620

pancrasjordan@gmail.com

Clare Cooke SSps

mccl@holyspirit.com.au

Pax Christi National Council
Meets regularly on Skype

for national and international
issues

Contact:

02 9550 3845

0411 450 953

Pax Christi Australia *National Conference 2019*

Pope Francis' Non-Violence Initiative

Special Guest: Greet Vanaerschot
General secretary Pax Christi International

2-4 August 2019

@ Kildara, Malvern, Victoria

Pax Christi Victoria 2019

February Agape

17 February @ Kildara

Geoff Lacey will lead a discussion on Climate
Change

23, 24 April

EARTH @ PEACE CONFERENCE (see p.1)

25 April 11 am ANZAC Day

Service of Lament, Repentance & Hope
St Paul's Cathedral

May/ June

Showing of Bill Kelly's Film
The Big Picture

**I/We wish to apply for or renew membership of the International Christian Peace Movement -
Pax Christi Australia.**

(Membership is from January to December)

(Please tick box if you wish to receive your copy of **Disarming Times** by e-mail)

New South Wales Members please return your membership application/membership renewal to PO Box A
681 Sydney South 1235 NSW

All others: please return your membership application/membership renewal to P.O. Box 31 Carlton Sth
Vic. 3053

Name..... Address.....

.....P'code.....Phone.....

Email..... Mobile.....

ENCLOSED \$..... (Single \$35; Low income \$20; Family \$45)