RACE AND CHRISTIANITY IN AUSTRALIA

Jason Goroncy

Whitley College, University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia

> [R]acism is a phenomenon of modern Christian civilization. By and large, the people who have been the racists of the modern world have also been Christians or the heirs of Christian civilization. Among large numbers of Christians, racism has been the other faith or one of the other faiths.[1]

The thesis of this essay is that racism in Australia has explicitly Christian roots. In particular, these roots find their beginnings in the European story of Christendom. To defend that claim, the essay does three things. First, it traces the history of racism in Australia, mapping how immigration policies and practices regarding assimilation following the Second World War expose longstanding commitments to the idea of an Australia that is both "white" and "Christian." Second, it explores how the roots of such racism intersect with and are sponsored by the "biological heresy" of Christendom and its practice of both politicizing and making "barbarians" of "the other." Finally, it offers three brief theological reflections on the possibilities of an alternative Christian witness amidst the conditions mapped in the first two sections. Here the concerns are with conceptions of power, with what it means to speak of the Christian community as "the body of Christ," and with the theological task itself.

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1. Kelsey, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man*, 10.

"New Australians"

After the Second World War, Australia embarked on an immigration program that sought 70,000 new arrivals per year.[2] Initially, these were to be of British "stock," but British persons were mostly uninterested in relocating to Australia. Arthur Calwell, Australia's Minister for Immigration at the time, instead directed his attention to Europe's displaced persons (DPs) and International Refugee Organisation (IRO) camps with a view to recruiting suitable migrants who might "share *our* life in the best country in the world."[3] The IRO's press release explicitly stated that Australia was seeking "principally 'horny-handed sons of toil.'"[4] Indeed Australia was; and the fittingness of those hands would be judged by their ability, or otherwise, to contribute to Australia's post-war economic growth. As the sociologist James Jupp noted, "Australians would not reject such migration if it presented no threat to working conditions."[5]

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2.   I am indebted to Jayne Persian's work in *Beautiful Balts* for much that follows in this section. On the matter of Australia's treatment of refugees, the immigration program is constrained by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, ratified in 1954. Australia's interpretation of its obligations to that Convention remains a live debate. In 2014, the Australian Government moved to strike from the country's own Migration Act almost all references to the 1951 Refugee Convention.

3.   Calwell, *Australia, House of Representatives, Debates*, 3 October 1947, 483. Cited in Persian, *Beautiful Balts*, 59. Italics mine.

4.   IRO Press Release dated 23 July 1947, Immigration—Displaced Persons—General, IRO Agreement, Department of Information, Central Office, Correspondence Files, CP 815/1, 021.114, NAA. Cited in Persian, *Beautiful Balts*, 59.

5.   Jupp, *Immigration*, 107. Section 501 of Australia's Migration Act 1958, still current, spells out that one must pass "the character test" to live in or to visit the country, legislation reminiscent of Caldwell's public statement that "Our policy has no race prejudice. All we ask of DPs is that they be of good faith, good character and willing to work." Markus, "Labour and Immigration 1946–49," 80. Then, as now, migrants undertook menial, low paid, dangerous, and "dirty jobs" unattractive to real "Australians." See Brooks, *Understanding Immigrants and the Labour Market*, 10; Foster, *Australian Multiculturalism*, 71, 195; Meredith and Dyster, *Australia in the Global Economy*, 20. This was not an unfortunate by-product, but rather a result of deliberate and calculated decisions by government and labor unions. See Department of Immigration,

And yet—the principal qualification for inclusion in Australia's immigration intake was race. Australians would embrace post-war migration only if it presented "no threat to . . . the total domination of society by those of British or Irish origins."[6] The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 was expressly constituted for the reason of blocking immigration from Asia. Around WWI, it played into pronounced fears of the Japanese. By the 1930s, the government employed the Act to refuse the immigration of European Jews. Thomas White, Australia's Minister for Trade and leader of Australia's delegation to the Évian Conference,[7] made his country's position clear: "As we have no real racial problem we are not desirous of importing one by encouraging any scheme of large-scale foreign migration."[8] Governments were beholden to the White Australia policy for fear, among other things, of "political repercussions."[9] This led one Jewish

Considerations to Govern the Employment of Displaced Persons; Jupp, *Exile or Refuge?* 34–35. On 20 June 1949, Calwell wrote to E. Thornton of the Federated Ironworkers' Association: "I am happy to be able to inform your Association that the necessary assurances have been given by the Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited, which undertakes—(i) not to engage any unnaturalised displaced person for its operating staff, i.e., to undertake work with tools on normal award classifications; (ii) to employ displaced persons on jobs least attractive to Australian workers and to take advantage of the availability of displaced persons to effect desired transfers of Australian workers wherever possible and to give the benefit of 'pickings' wherever practicable." Calwell, "Letter to the Federated Ironworkers' Association, 20 June 1949."

6.   Jupp, *Immigration*, 107. Similar exclusions were made at the end of the nineteenth century vis-à-vis work. See Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line.*

7.   The Évian Conference was convened in 1938 to discuss the fate of Europe's Jews.

8.   Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, *Proceedings of the Intergovernmental Committee*, 20.

9.   Enshrined into law in 1901, the White Australia policy was federal government policy promoted by both sides of politics and designed to restrict immigration and jobs to those who were white and British. Certainly, as Persian has argued: "White Australia was an anachronism in the context of a new international discourse promoted by the United Nations of racial equality and universal human rights. The Australian Government had to tread a thin line between (populist) national and (liberal) international condemnation. It attempted to do this by selecting 'racial' and cultural types that would assimilate into

member of the Australian selection team in Europe to comment:
"Hitler could not have done better."[10]

In June 1947, the Head of the Australian Military Mission in
Berlin fired off a memo encapsulating the advice about the "very
good types" that were then available: "Balts," he wrote, were the
"best material"; Poles would need to be carefully selected to ob-
tain "assimilable types"; while "Yugoslavs" would "no doubt be
worth some consideration."[11] As it happens, Calwell had been in
Paris in 1947, during which time he had confessed that Australia
wanted "Latvians": "It came out . . . that he had seen some nice
blond Latvians at Bremen, and well, they were blond and Chifley

Australia. In other words, if Australia could not attract enough British migrants,
then the government could fulfil its economic and population aims, as well as
neatly fitting into an ostensibly humanitarian international program by taking
'white' migrants who could potentially assimilate." Persian, *Beautiful Balts*,
60–61. The Australian Government rejected large numbers of Jewish refugees
on grounds that they would not assimilate. There were also allegations that
many Jews were "Communist agents." Minutes of Conference held at Cologne,
17–18 December 1948, Greenhalgh Papers. Cited in Persian, "Chifley liked
them Blond," 97. As one Australian immigration official put it: "We have never
wanted these people and we still don't want them." Cited in Rutland, *Edge of
the Diaspora*, 237. See the discussion in Persian, *Beautiful Balts*, 61–75. The
'Balts' were to be preferred because they were anti-communist. Persian notes
that "the conservative political legacy of displaced persons, buttressed by anti-
communism, was not lost on Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, who reportedly
complained in mid-1975 about having to accept 'hundreds of fucking Viet-
namese Balts' (who would presumably not be voting for the Australian Labor
Party)." Persian, *Beautiful Balts*, 183. On the history of the White Australia
Policy prior to WWI, see Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy to
1920*, reprinted with some corrections in 1967 by Frank Cass and Co.

10.   Berlin Instruction, No. 42, 2 June 1949. Cited in Rutland, "Subtle Ex-
clusions," 58.

11.   Immigrants for Australia, Berlin Dispatch No. 46/47, 26 June 1947,
from Australian Military Mission, Berlin to Department of Defence and De-
partment of External Affairs, Dispatches from Australian Military Mission,
Berlin—(New Series)—Number 32/1947 (dated 10 April 1947) to Number
48/1947 (dated 30 September 1947), Department of Defence [III] Central
Office, 37301/337 Attachment 17, A816, NAA. Cited in Persian, *Beautiful
Balts*, 62.

liked them blond."[12] This was not revealing anything that Calwell had not already publicly confessed. Three days earlier, he had stated in a press release that "the Baltic people will have preference over other nationals," assuring Australians that while he was in Europe he was most "impressed by the bearing, the physique and the general industry of the Balts."[13] And he had already remarked in Parliament that same year that "two Wongs don't make a White."[14] When Australia's Jewish Council raised concerns about the presence of alleged Nazi collaborators within the DP scheme and about antisemitism at work in its augmentation, Prime Minister Ben Chifley reminded them of one of the government's key goals in the assimilation policy: "When these Baltic women get into bed with Australians they'll forget all that"[15]—racist (and sexist) sentiments widely echoed by others.[16]

12.   The confession was made to Helen Ferber, an Australian who worked as a public information officer for the DP's headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. See Helen Ferber, Letter, 21 July 1947, Letters from Paris and Geneva March 1947–November 1947, Papers of Helen Ferber, NLA, MS 9740. Cited in Persian, "Chifley liked them Blond," 94. Ben Chifley served as Australia's Prime Minister from 1945 to 1949.

13.   Calwell Press Release, 18 July 1947, Cabled from Berlin, Australian News and Information Bureau, Displaced Persons—Policy General (Chermside); IRO Press Release, 23 July 1947 and Australian Department of Information Press Release, 13 October 1947, Immigration—Displaced Persons—General, IRO Agreement. Cited in Persian, "Chifley liked them Blond," 94.

14.   Reported in "Two 'Wongs' and a 'White,'" *Courier-Mail*, 3 December 1947, 3; "Malays With Two Wives," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 1947, 4; and "Malays Must Go, But Wong May Remain," *Argus*, 3 December 1947, 9; and subsequently picked up in the international press. See "Asia 'Didn't Relish' Minister's Crack," *Daily Telegraph,* 18 December 1947, 2, citing Singapore's *The Straits Times*; and "Criticism of 'White Australia'," *Daily Telegraph*, 30 September 1948, 2, citing London's *Daily Telegraph*.

15.   Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace*, 32.

16.   For example, M. Stewart, a senior medical officer with the Australian Military Mission based in Europe, noted that "Baltic . . . men are often blonde and tanned and would on appearance do justice to a Manly Surf Team." Letter from M. Stewart, Senior Medical Officer, Australian Military Mission, to Head, Australian Military Mission, 18 June 1946, Medical—Displaced Persons. Policy and Procedure in Regard to Migrants and Applicants, for Landing Permits, NAA, A445, 200/1/5. Cited in Persian, "Chifley liked them Blond," 94.

Mark Wyman has noted: "Fearing that any influx of non-Britons would provoke stability at home, the minister [i.e., Calwell] and his entourage moved cautiously among the camp inhabitants, picking blue-eyed, blonde DPs less likely to offend native-born Australians."[17] Indeed, such officials were under Calwell's explicit instructions to "hand-pick" a "choice sample" for the first shipments: young, single, healthy, educated "ideal types"—code for male, fair-haired, fair-skinned, and, preferably, blue eyed.[18]

Between 1947 and 1952 Australia resettled more than 170,000 DPs from Central and Eastern Europe. Formal migration agreements were made with Malta (1948), The Netherlands and Italy (1951), West Germany, Austria, and Greece (1952), Spain (1958), Turkey (1968), and Yugoslavia (1970). Further intakes of refugees from Trieste (mid-1950s), Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968), Chile (1973), Vietnam (after the fall of Saigon in

17. Wyman, *DPs*, 191.

18. Calwell noted: "There had been some doubt about the quality of these DPs who had the blood of a number of races in their veins. Many were red-headed and blue-eyed. There was also a number of natural platinum blondes of both sexes. The men were handsome and the women beautiful. It was not hard to sell immigration to the Australian people once the press published photographs of that group." Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not*, 103. George Kiddle, one of the first selection officers, and an ex-Royal Australian Air Force serviceman, later recalled: "Our instructions were to take displaced persons from the Baltic states only for the first ship. That is Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia . . . We tried to pick . . . good, decent-looking people . . . appearance very much so . . . We've got to make sure they look very impressive . . . we've got to pick people that look attractive to the Australian population . . . we tried to make the first ship particularly impressive." George Kiddle, interviewed by Ann-Mari Jordens, 2008, Chief Migration Officers' Oral History Project, NLA, 5930-0005. Cited in Persian, "Chifley liked them Blond," 95. J. S. Ergas, an IRO surgeon who accompanied DPs on the ship General Black to Australia reported: "Most of this group consisted of young men and women with very few children. They were well dressed . . . made a fine appearance, and looked bright and intelligent. Most of them were from the Baltic countries . . . The women in general were very good looking. Some had beautiful, dark, long hair; others were platinum blonde with blue eyes, light complexion and very tall. The men were fine looking too . . . It was indeed a very select group of young people." Ergas. "Immigration of Displaced Persons to South America and Australia," 32.

1975), Poland (1980s), and China (especially students after the 1989 massacre in Tiananmen Square) followed. Post-war figures have since expanded to approximately one million each decade since 1950. These migrants have contributed phenomenally to the changing shape and flavour of Australian life, and helped to make public discourse vis-à-vis national identity unavoidably concrete and (mostly) constructive, even while the country's parliaments and boardrooms remain predominantly white.

The year 2001 saw something of a reversal to that conversation with the attempted arrival on 26 August of mostly Afghan Hazaras on the *Tampa*. The September 11 attacks in the United States just a few weeks later transformed "the refugees" on the *Tampa* into "Muslim boat people" and "suspected terrorists."[19] Since that time, the rhetoric around Australia's refugee policy has again hardened—emboldened, been made complicated, and justified by the rise of Islamist terrorism. Significant too is a decided change in the grammar employed to refer to public policy on immigration matters: "multiculturalism" has been replaced by "integration," "Australian values,"[20] "national unity," and "citizenship," ideas often explicitly linked, such as in the Howard Government's 2003 *United in Diversity* policy. This Government stated that "there are threats to Australia and our

19.   At an address given at the Federal Liberal Party campaign launch for the November 2001 election, Prime Minister John Howard famously stated: "We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come . . . We have had a single irrevocable view on this, and that is that we will defend our borders and we'll decide who comes to this country." Howard, "Australian Federal Election Speeches, 2001." With these words, Howard was merely repeating the old mantra of white Australia. Only three years earlier, he made a similar comment: "I don't think it is wrong, racist, immoral or anything, for a country to say 'we will decide what the cultural identity and the cultural destiny of this country will be, and nobody else'." Howard, cited in Malone, "Moore and Howard at Odds over Presidency," 1.

20.   In a 2006 interview, Howard described "Australian values" as those that embrace "democracy . . . a belief in a free media, the equality of men and women, the concept of mateship, the concept of having a go and the concept of looking after the very vulnerable in our community." Howard and Robb, *Transcript of the Prime Minister the Hon John Howard MP Joint Press Conference*, 3.

way of life in the post-9/11 era" and that the articulation of a
"coherent set of national values" will "help protect Australia in
these uncertain times."[21] Such threats were met with the Howard
Government's reform of citizenship laws, including the reintro-
duction of a new citizenship test that focused on ensuring "cohe-
sion and integration."[22] In 2007, Howard used the word "assimi-
lation"—a word with its own ugly, violent, and painful history in
relation to Aboriginal Australians—to describe his government's
agenda vis-à-vis Australian Muslim communities: "Well there's
every reason to try and assimilate, and I unapologetically use
that word, a section of the community, a tiny minority of whose
members have caused concern and after all once somebody's be-
come a citizen of this country the best thing we can do is to ab-
sorb them into the [white] mainstream."[23]

Christendom as the Root of Whiteness

Having sketched aspects of racism's expression in Australia
post-WWII, we turn now to explore how such racism finds ex-
plicit justification in the notion of a nation that is both "white"
and "Christian," and how such ideas have their genesis in, inter-
sect with, and are sponsored by the enduring ideology of Europe-
an Christendom and its practice of both politicizing and making
"barbarians" of "the other." Here we shall note various models
and forms of pluralism that seek to offer a counternarrative to the
hegemony and territorialism of Christian whiteness, and note
that while such models challenge expectations of national identi-
ty they have been unsuccessful in obliterating the idea and lega-
cy of a white and Christian Australia.

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21.   Hardgrave, *Australian Citizenship*, 1.
22.   Howard and Robb, *Transcript of the Prime Minister the Hon John Howard MP Joint Press Conference*, 3.
23.   Howard and Mitchell, "Transcript of the Prime Minister the Hon John Howard MP." Cited in Koleth, "Multiculturalism," 34.

James Stephen and a "White" Christian Australia

Howard was conscientiously tapping into a narrative that pre-dated even government efforts at assimilation. He was giving re-newed life to the idea of an Australia that is both "white" and "Christian." To further trace some of this story, we turn first to the work of Sir James Stephen who served as the Undersecretary for the Colonies between 1836–47.

On 17 July 1841, Sir George Gipps, Governor of the British colony of New South Wales (NSW), sent a dispatch to Lord John Russell in London reporting that some employers of labour in NSW wished to introduce coolies (unskilled labourers) from India. The idea was not supported, however, by Stephen who rig-orously argued that the British Government should act to protect the white labouring classes in the colonies, and that "Australia must be kept as a white man's country."[24] In a letter written to Lord John Russell, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Stephen wrote:

24.   Knaplund, "Sir James Stephen on a White Australia," 241. Stephen wrote the following to the English politician Lord Stanley on 12 September 1843: "It being the most arduous, if not the first, duty of a Government to con-sult for the permanent interest of society as opposed to the immediate interests of the most active and powerful of its members, and to watch over the welfare of the many rather than the present advantage of the few, and to protect those whose only property is in the power of labour against the rapacity of the rich, it is, in my mind, the evident duty of the British Government to oppose the appli-cation of any part of the revenue of New South Wales to the introduction of coolies. They would debase by their intermixture the noble European race. They would introduce caste with all its evils. They would bring with them the idolatry and debasing habits of their country. They would beat down the wages of the poor labouring European's . . . They would cut off the resource for many of our own distressed people. To introduce them [i.e., the coolies] at the public expense would be to countenance and affirm the favourite theory of all colo-nists that the first settlers in a new country become the proprietors of it all; and that the affairs of it are to be conducted for their benefit rather than for the ben-efit of the metropolitan state." To this Lord Stanley remarked: "I entirely con-cur." Cited in Knaplund, "Sir James Stephen on a White Australia," 241–42. See also Lockwood, "British Imperial Influences in the Foundation of the White Australia Policy," 23–33; Ohlsson, "The Origins of a White Australia," 203–19; Ohlsson, "James Stephen's Doctrine of a White Australia," 131–51.

> To expedite augmentation of wealth in New South Wales by intro-
> ducing the black race there from India would, in my mind, be one of
> the most unreasonable preferences of the present to the future, which
> it would be possible to make. There is not on the globe a social inter-
> est more momentous, if we look forward for five or six generations,
> than that of reserving the continent of New Holland [i.e., Australia]
> as a place where the English race shall be spread from sea to sea un-
> mixed with any lower caste. As we now regret the folly of our ances-
> tors in colonizing North America from Africa, so should our posterity
> have to censure us if we should colonize Australia from India.[25]

While Stephen certainly shared the Enlightenment's commitment
to reason, equality, and progress, and while he championed the
common law precepts of individual rights and liberties, he drew
his deepest inspiration from "evangelical doctrines of faith, sin
and salvation." His essays on the Jesuits, on Martin Luther, on
Richard Baxter, on the Evangelical Succession, on William
Wilberforce, and on the Clapham Sect, among others, reveals
just how deeply his religious beliefs shaped his life and work. He
considered himself a moderate evangelical who, like the early
Methodists, had "shaken off the lethargy in which . . . the Church
of England had been entranced"[26] and desired to practice a reli-
gion that was "hardy, serviceable, fruit-bearing, and patrimoni-
al,"[27] marked by "unextinguishable zeal"[28] and grounded in "be-
lief in the literal and plenary inspiration of every word of each of
the sixty-six books, which collectively we call the Bible."[29]

The Evangelical faith, he believed, ought to be disseminated
through "elaborate education, greater familiarity with the world
and with human affairs," and with deep "insight into science and
history."[30] Keeping with this end, he commended the Clapham
Sect's support of efforts undertaken by the Church Missionary

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25.   Minute of 7th May, 1841, Public Record Office MS., C.O., New
South Wales, 201. Cited in Knaplund, "Sir James Stephen on a White Aus-
tralia," 241.
26.   Stephen, "The Clapham Sect," 308.
27.   Stephen, "The Clapham Sect," 308.
28.   Stephen, "The Clapham Sect," 311.
29.   Stephen, "The Evangelical Succession," 145.
30.   Stephen, "The Evangelical Succession," 309.

Society and the Bible Society to "extend the kingdom of light" to Africa and to "the East," expressed in no small measure by his opposition to the slave trade. That opposition, in other words, came packaged with "the diffusion of Christianity, the war against vice and ignorance, [and] the advancement of evangelical theology."[31]

Here, Stephen and his colleagues at the Colonial Office were influenced in no small part by views expressed by Charles Grant, William Wilberforce, and James Mill concerning Indian culture and society. Channelling Grant's "Observations," Wilberforce, in 1813, persuaded Britain's House of Commons that "sixty millions [sic] of [Indian] souls" were "deeply sunk, and by their religious superstitions fast bound, in the lowest depths of moral and social wretchedness and degradation."[32] He denounced the Hindu gods as "countless rabble," as "absolute monsters of lust, injustice, wickedness and cruelty," and India's entire religious system as "one grand abomination."[33] And he argued for the complete incompatibility of English and Indian culture:

> Our religion is sublime, pure and beneficent. Theirs is mean, licentious, and cruel. Of our civil principles and condition, the common right of all ranks and classes to be governed, protected, and punished by equal laws, is the fundamental principle. Equality, in short, is the vital essence and the very glory of our English laws. Of theirs, the essential and universal pervading character is inequality; despotism in the higher classes, degradation and oppression in the lower.[34]

This is the air that Stephen (and his colleagues) breathed, and propagated. Consequently, he argued that Australia should welcome only those from European (and especially English) races

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31. Stephen, "The Clapham Sect," 306, 311.
32. "East India Company's Affairs," 834.
33. "East India Company's Affairs," 864.
34. "East India Company's Affairs," 865. See also Hind, "William Wilberforce and the Perceptions of the British People," 321–35. On the claim that racism always uses the attractive force of purity to do its violent work, see Berthold, "Tidy Whiteness," 1–26; Miller, "Against Purity," 5–8; Campt, *Other Germans*; Hartman, "Appalachian Anxiety," 229–55; Monahan, *The Creolizing Subject*; Vesely-Flad, *Racial Purity and Dangerous Bodies*; Zimring, *Clean and White*.

and resist being corrupted by the customs and superstitions of India's degraded castes. "Colonisation had converted the Australian wilderness from a hunting ground for naked savages to a home for more than a million people of British birth or parentage in the space of one lifetime, and had given the colonists hundreds of churches and schools, four universities, representative legislatures, roads and railways, and a thriving commerce."[35] The migration of Indian coolies to the Australian colonies was judged to be a threat to such achievements, and to the stable and superior culture that only whiteness could guarantee. Moreover, Stephen joined opponents of contracted Indian labour in British colonies by arguing that the practice of binding coolies to contracts based on English law would only promote fraud, abuse, and a "repetition of the slave trade . . . in everything but the compulsion and cruelty."[36]

Stephen's views on immigration and its challenge to the settled doctrine of a white Australia were typical of many secretaries of state, Colonial Office officials, and members of the Molesworth Committee who "also wished to see Australia 're-served' for emigrants from the United Kingdom."[37] Such policy traversed party lines, and successive state premiers, party leaders, and later prime ministers—whether Free Trade, Labor, or Protectionist—proudly championed its cause. By the time of federation in 1901, the doctrine was settled policy waiting only to be enacted into federal law with the drawing up of the

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35.   Ohlsson, "James Stephen's Doctrine of a White Australia," 148.

36.   Merivale, *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies*, 347. See also Knaplund, *James Stephen and the British Colonial System*, 23. Stephen even opposed Indian emigration for British Guiana on grounds that "the Christianity of the negroes must be impaired by the introduction among them of many thousands of idolaters trained up from childhood, in all the barbarous and obscene rites of Hindoo superstition." In a minute written by Stephen, dated 16 May 1846. Cited in Mellor, *The British Imperial Trusteeship*, 225–26.

37.   Ohlsson, "James Stephen's Doctrine of a White Australia," 148.

Immigration Restriction Act 1901.[38] Just prior to debate on the Bill, Labor Member James Ronald stated:

> We do not object to these aliens because of their colour. We object to them because they are repugnant to us from our moral and social stand-points . . . I want to say, however, that our intention in regard to these alien races is perfectly honourable, and that we have no racial hatred or antipathy towards . . . these inferior races.[39]

Likewise, Senator J. C. Stewart argued: "If we are going to succeed as a nation, we must build upon the foundation of a white Australia. We must lay the foundation of this young community in the purist and whitest of marble without streak or stain. That is an absolute necessity."[40] And on 7 August 1901, Australia's first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, introduced the Act to the House of Representatives with these words:

> I do not think either that the doctrine of the equality of man was really ever intended to include racial equality. There is no racial equality. There is basic inequality. These races are, in comparison with white races—I think no one wants convincing of this fact—unequal and inferior. The doctrine of the equality of man was never intended to apply to the equality of the Englishman and the Chinaman. There is deep-set difference, and we see no prospect and no promise of its ever being effaced. Nothing in this world can put these two races upon an equality. Nothing we can do by cultivation, by refinement, or by anything else will make some races equal to others.[41]

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38. Australian Government, "Immigration Restriction Act 1901." The Act was styled on the South African Immigration Restriction Act (The Natal Act, 1897).

39. Ronald, "Immigration Restriction Bill," 4665. For a discussion on the role that eugenics had on notions of race, see Smithers, *Science, Sexuality, and Race in the United States and Australia*; Tort, *Dictionnaire Du Darwinisme Et De L'évolution*.

40. The Senate, "Governor-General's Speech," 266–67.

41. Barton, "Immigration Restriction Bill," 5233. On federation and the geographies of whiteness, see Kendall, *Within China's Orbit?*, 7–35; Li, "Explorations into White Australia's Sense of Superiority over Chinese," 313–29; Tanner, "Race as a Factor in the Strengthening of Central Authority," 237–52. Anne Barton offers an assessment of her great grandfather's legacy in Barton, "Going White," 16–19. Churchmen reflected this same view into the new

Such is the foundation upon which the idea of Australia is built. It is entirely fitting therefore that the Immigration Restriction Act was the new Parliament's very first act. As one essayist recently noted, ethnic homogeneity is "Australia's first myth."[42] Australia's young parliament enshrined that myth into law. The only objection voiced was that it was not strong enough to halt non-white immigration, especially Asian.

Attorney-General Alfred Deakin, who was largely responsible for bringing the Bill to the House, was subsequently elected as Australia's second Prime Minster in 1903. He spoke of the need to "exclude the undesirable and coloured aliens" from the country, and confessed that "a white Australia is not a surface, but it is a reasoned policy which goes down to the roots of national

century. For example, in 1915, a Presbyterian minister, Rev. J. B. Love, would say regarding Aboriginal peoples: "It would be foolish to argue that all men are equal. The blackfellow is inferior and must necessarily remain so." In 1934, another, a padre of the Australian Inland Mission, would state that "the niggers . . . [have] never been any good and never will be. The best they've a right to expect is a decent funeral." Cited in Pattel-Gray, *The Great White Flood*, 126. Such views echoed those of the Rev. Samuel Marsden, a revered hero of the church's mission in Australia, who had earlier confessed that "The Aborigines are the most degraded of the human race . . . the time is not yet arrived for them to receive the great blessing of civilisation and the knowledge of Christianity," and that "there never would be any good done until there was a riddance of these natives." Cited in Pattel-Gray, *The Great White Flood*, 135. So Pattel-Gray: "The churches had difficulties in defining their own autonomous ecclesiology, considering they so often blurred their function with the functions and policies of the government. They did not protest, for example, against many racist government proclamations and policies. In fact, quite the contrary, the Australian church already had begun practising quite a different ecclesiology— it had already taken on the role of 'Enforcer' of such racist policies by going along with Government 'Protection' policies, for a start." Pattel-Gray, *The Great White Flood*, 126–27. In fact, as Pattel-Gray avers, "The Australian church laid the groundwork for the Australian government's oppression. That is, the government can truthfully claim that in establishing its policies of segregation and then assimilation, it was simply following the lead of the churches." Pattel-Gray, *The Great White Flood*, 147–48. This mutually-reinforcing heresy is described by Pattel-Gray as "a thoroughly flawed racist European missiology" that "became a thoroughly flawed racist Australian polemic." Pattel-Gray, *The Great White Flood*, 130.

42.   Badge, "Difference and the Politics of Fear."

life, and by which the whole of our social, industrial, and political organisations is governed."[43] Indeed, he had argued the same two years earlier, in the very first session of the first parliament, when he not only compared the "White Australia" policy to the Monroe Doctrine but also stated that it is "no mere electioneering manifesto, but part of the first principles upon which the Commonwealth is to be administered and guided."[44] The issue of a "white Australia" would also feature in the 1913 election a decade later. Labor Party leader Andrew Fisher stated:

> The people of Australia desire the sugar industry to be a white labor one, and I gladly give my support to any arrangement which will ensure the realisation of that desire. It is also their wish that this industry should pay the white labor the highest wage consistent with its prosperity. . . . Legislation will be passed to equalise the bounty and excise, and thereby protect the white growers against unfair competition by those employing colored labor.[45]

That same year, Joseph Cook, of the Commonwealth Liberal Party which won the election, announced that: "In the first place our objective is an Australia—white, free, federal." And, to cheers, spoke of the need to promote "the circulation of [the Empire's] Imperial life-blood,"[46] commitments echoed again the following year:

> Liberals now as always stand inflexibly for a white Australia—white, not alone in colour, though it is appropriate in these days once again to emphasise this aspect of a wide and wise humanitarian sentiment. Viewed dispassionately, the racial complications in other countries should make us profoundly thankful for our immunity in Australia, and steel our determination to maintain these ideas for ourselves and our children, as well as the world in large. Whatever may be our sense of justice, religions, and social ideas, our sympathies are and ought to be with our kinsmen and blood brethren, and we cannot afford to countenance the "pacific penetration" of our country by those of alien civilisations, whether under the British Crown or not. As

43. Deakin, "Election Speeches."
44. House of Representatives, "Immigration Restriction Bill," 4807.
45. Fisher, "Election Speeches."
46. Cook, "Election Speeches: Joseph Cook, 1913."

> Kipling says: "East is East, and West is West: and never the twain shall meet."[47]

Prime Minister Billy Hughes made it clear, in 1922, that to be an Australian is to "stand for the Empire; for a White Australia";[48] as did Stanley Bruce who, in 1925, said "We are for the Empire; . . . for the maintenance and protection of a White Australia."[49] Three years later, he named "the maintenance of the White Australia policy" as one of "four fundamental principles upon which the whole of our national life is based."[50]

Even after the Second World War, when the need to rebuild the nation's workforce was so pressing, the policy of a white Australia was employed for political gain. For instance, in 1949 Robert Menzies stated: "We will continue to maintain Australia's settled immigration policy, known as 'The White Australia Policy'; well justified as it is on grounds of national homogeneity and economic standards."[51] And in a radio interview six years later:

> that [the White Australia policy] is important for us I haven't the slightest doubt. As long as we possibly can we ought to aim at having a homogeneous population. I don't want to see reproduced in Australia the kind of problem they have in South Africa or in America or

47. Cook, "Election Speeches: Joseph Cook, 1914."
48. Hughes, "Election Speeches."
49. Bruce, "Election Speeches: Stanley Bruce, 1925."
50. Bruce, "Election Speeches: Stanley Bruce, 1928." He continued: "The Government stands uncompromisingly for the White Australia policy. The overwhelming majority of the people recognise that this policy is the basis of our national life, and would be prepared to make any sacrifices to ensure its maintenance. Until recently no serious challenge was offered by any section in Australia to this policy."
51. Menzies, "Election Speeches." The fuller context for this citation reads: "Though we naturally want as many migrants as we can get of British stock, we denounce all attempts to create hostilities against any migrant or group of migrants, whether Jew or Gentile, on the grounds of race or religion. Once received into our community, a new citizen is entitled to be treated in every way as a fellow-Australian. The strength and history of our race have been founded upon this vital principle. We will continue to maintain Australia's settled immigration policy, known as 'The White Australia Policy'; well justified as it is on grounds of national homogeneity and economic standards."

increasingly in Great Britain. I think it's [i.e., the White Australia policy] been a very good policy and it's been of great value to us and most of the criticism of it that I've ever heard doesn't come from these oriental countries it comes from wandering Australians.[52]

Clearly, as these examples (among countless) make plain, that Stephen defended the notion of a white Australia was not unique. But that he did so in part on explicitly *theological* grounds was so. The same providence that had guided the "British Race" from darkness to light and brought it to possess the "far greater and nobler regions of the globe"[53] would now, he argued, diffuse "our Race, language, Law, and Religion"[54] across the vast land of Australia. This sentiment, expressed in both secular and theological terms, "laid the foundation for the White Australia policy that defined Australian national identity from the late-19th century to the 1970s."[55] It also judged the White Australia policy to be "Christian" in ways akin to how through colonization Christianity in the West is understood to be inseparable from commitments to whiteness and to white hegemony.[56] This remains true even in officially "multicultural" countries such as Australia.[57] It goes

52. Menzies, "Sir Robert Menzies on the White Australia Policy." The radio interview was conducted with 2UE's Stewart Lamb. See also Menzies, "Australian Immigration Policy."

53. Stephen, "The Clapham Sect," 378.

54. Stephen's minute, 11 December 1839, TNA, CO 18/22, ff116–17. Cited in Ohlsson, "James Stephen's Doctrine of a White Australia," 148.

55. Ohlsson, "James Stephen's Doctrine of a White Australia," 148. See Bouchard, *The Making of the Nations and Cultures of the New World*, 230–42; Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*.

56. Pattel-Gray cites the noted Aboriginal theologian, Charles Harris: "Christianity practised in this country is definitely not New Testament Christianity . . . The massacres and the genocides that took place in the name of Christianity and God are part of the colonisation in this country." She continues: "The Australian church contributed to racism through its roots, heresies, theological imperialism, hypocrisy, collusion with the Government, and its tacit and often active support of racist institutions, individuals, theology and teachings, and violence." Pattel-Gray, *The Great White Flood*, 118. For a fuller account of the story of racism in the Australian church, see Pattel-Gray, *The Great White Flood*, esp. 117–86.

57. See Measham, "The Power or the Glory," 78–85.

part way to explain how Christians have sought to be both the high priests of segregated spaces in the wider culture and servants of the economic interests that create those spaces. More recent debates—and voting patterns—around issues of immigration, national identity, and freedom of religion both among Christians and the wider population suggest that that work endures.[58]

Having already rightly condemned the doctrine of discovery as "the most decorous veil which legal ingenuity can weave,"[59] Stephen might have drawn upon roots in the Christian tradition other than those represented by and embodied in the Constantinian settlement.[60] He might have instead championed the kind of cultural and ethnic plurality that the New Testament assumes, and celebrates.[61] While his early attempts to defend Aboriginal people and to engage in (failed) treaty work in the colonies of South Australia and Victoria is to be commended,[62] he might have pressed further in this direction and also received the gifts of First Nations peoples and their theologies, not as "curios of mission history, but as integral to the work of God in Australia"[63]—the truths that Jesus is no "European . . . with little or no kinship with Aboriginal culture";[64] that Jesus "came among us to overcome the [evil] powers under which the suffering land is groaning" and which because of "many European invaders . . . enslave people in society and in the environment in which we

58.   See Badge, "Difference and the Politics of Fear"; Hamad, "Folau's Fall is a Story of Whiteness"; Manne, "A History of Cruelty"; Ricatti, "A Country Once Great?," 478–93.

59.   James Stephen, memorandum to the parliamentary undersecretary, 28 July, 1839. Cited in Knaplund, *James Stephen and the British Colonial System*, 89.

60.   See Goroncy, "Church and Civil Society in the Reformed Tradition," 195–210.

61.   See Goroncy, "Ethnicity, Social Identity, and the Transposable Body of Christ," 220–45.

62.   See Brett, *Political Trauma and Healing*, 36–54.

63.   The Rainbow Spirit Elders, *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, 27. See also Brett and Havea, *Colonial Contexts and Postcolonial Theologies*; Budden, *Following Jesus in Invaded Space*.

64.   The Rainbow Spirit Elders, *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, 62.

live";[65] that Jesus reconciles all humans to each other and to the land and to the Creator Spirit; that Jesus calls persons to the hard struggles for justice and confession, not only in "quiet liturg[ies] hidden in the churches" but also in "bold public ritual, . . . to confront the rest of Australia with the ugly reality of its past sins."[66] He might, in other words, have undertaken the necessary work of decolonising 'God'. That he failed to do so goes part way, I suggest, to illustrating just how blinding the lies of Christendom are. Idols are very effective in restricting horizons of vision.

Christendom and the Making of "Barbarians"

To better comprehend the work of decolonizing 'God' calls for understanding colonization's historical roots in the European story of the politicising of "the other," and in the making of "barbarians." Peter Brown recalls that up to 400 CE, in terms of ecology, technology, and a common mindset, the contrast between "Romans" and "barbarians" was essentially non-existent. "The Roman frontier along the Rhine and Danube was a non-frontier,"[67] characterized by a very fluid, porous, and continuously-renegotiated sense of ethnic identity, something true also for Christians living in those regions. Indeed, for at least until the early medieval period, the history of Western Christendom "can

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65. The Rainbow Spirit Elders, *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, 68.

66. The Rainbow Spirit Elders, *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, 73. I am aware that drawing here upon work published by The Rainbow Spirit Elders in 2012 is anachronistic in the sense that the contemporary lessons born witness to therein are very hard won indeed and were far from being readily apparent in the nineteenth century, or, tragically, even today. But this only serves to highlight the lost opportunity that Stephen and others had. For a mixed record on earlier attempts by whitefellas to learn from Aboriginal theologians, see Hill, *Broken Song*.

67. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, xiv. "[F]or Eurasia as a whole, late antiquity and the early Middle Ages were not a period characterized by insuperable boundaries. Goods, ideas, [new religions], and persons traveled slowly but surely over huge distances. They crossed ancient political frontiers. They moved with ease across the seemingly unbridgeable frontier between the nomad and the settled worlds." Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, xiii–xiv.

be read as a tale of not altogether dishonorable diversity."[68] The idea that Europe ever knew any such thing as "natural unity"—whether under the Roman Empire, or (spiritually) with the Papacy, or commercially, or along any other lines—is a complete myth, albeit a popular and enduring one. Whatever else Europe was, it was "a world with neither a clearly defined center nor a clearly defined periphery."[69]

As a universal religion, Christianity helped to make cohesive things that had not co-existed before. Its sacred scriptures made it a "potentially worldwide 'textual community,'"[70] and its ecclesial polity translated reasonably smoothly across cultures. As Andrew Walls observes, despite "its geographical range, its linguistic profusion, [and] its cultural diversity" the early Church had a real sense of cohesiveness and "mutual belonging."[71] Most importantly, Christianity rejected—or at least claimed to reject—any notion of a tribal God—God as Ba'al.

Different social orders, however, were evident and, for the Romans, posed a challenge and created political opportunity. The Roman response was to "invent an absolute frontier where, in fact, no such frontier (such as that traditionally associated with the contrast between nomads and the settled land) existed. They treated all societies outside the political frontier of Rome as 'barbarians.'"[72] Genius propagandists, Roman rulers exploited for

68. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 16. Like Brown, Walls too warns of the pitfalls and the mistakes of identifying "the early church with the church of the Roman Empire," and of identifying "the determinative, formative processes of the early church as those taking place in the Greco-Roman world." Walls, "World Christianity and the Early Church," 18.

69. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 13.

70. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 14.

71. Walls, "World Christianity and the Early Church," 18.

72. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, xiv. Brown draws upon work by John Drinkwater who, in his study on the Alamanni, the confederacy of Germanic-speaking people who lived south of the Main and east of the Rhine rivers, persuasively argued that while in the mid-fourth century the Alamanni represented no economic, social, or political threat to the Empire, the Roman rulers, for their own political ends, birthed and promoted the idea of a "Germanic threat" (language which goes back until at least sixteenth century BCE) as "an essential element in the justification of the actions of Roman

political ends the fear of "the other" by tapping into long-held ideas about the Germani as bloodthirsty people who are always seeking ways to "'flood' the peaceful lands of the empire with murderous bands." Why? Because

> emperor, military, and civilian populations alike needed the idea of a "barbarian threat" to justify their own existence. The threat of invasion justified high rates of taxation. It justified the splendid palaces and cities ringed with high walls which overlooked the Rhine and the Danube, from the North Sea to the Black Sea. It gave a *raison d'être* to a powerful and well-paid military class. Above all, it enabled the emperor to stand tall as the defender of civilization.[73]

John Drinkwater has likewise argued that "as far as the late Roman west is concerned, the 'Germanic threat' was an imperial artefact—an indispensable means of justifying the imperial presence and imperial policies, and of maintaining provincial loyalty to the Empire."[74] In the sixth century, at a time during which there were still "many Christianities," the same argument was used against the Moors (the Berbers) in Northern Africa, many of whom had become Christians and "were in no way different from the wild, pagan nomads of the Sahara."[75] Peter Brown observes:

> What we now call a distinctively "European" Christianity was unthinkable in the year 500 A.D. Even the notion of "Europe" itself only took on its modern meaning in around the year 650 A.D. By the year 1000 A.D., what could be called a "European" Christianity had

emperors and of the mechanisms of imperial rule." Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 16.

73.   Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, xiv. Cf. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 361: "The leaders of the civil population, educated to believe in the German menace along the Rhine, impressed by imperial 'busyness,' and open to imperial persuasion through their desire for imperial generosity and imperial office, were happy to give this structure their support. The 'Germanic threat' thus allowed western emperors, generals, administrators and local aristocrats to validate their high position in society, by allowing them to be diligent: diligently spending the taxpayers' money, to their own economic and social advantage."

74.   Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 360.

75.   Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, xv, xvi.

only recently been established, with the conversion of Germany, of parts of Eastern Europe, and of Scandinavia. The drama of the expansion of Christianity into northwestern Europe should not blind us to the fact that, seen from the viewpoint of the older, more deeply rooted Christian populations of North Africa, Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria, the Caucasus, and Mesopotamia, what we call Western Christendom was out on a limb. It was the Christianity of a peripheral zone. It is important to do justice to this fact. In recent times, many Europeans have wished to insist that Europe is a "Christian" civilization. They claim that the centuries . . . [200–1000] are of particular importance. For it was then that the "Christian roots of Europe" were planted.[76]

But, as Brown avers, this was and remains a "self-congratulatory myth." Brown notes too that "a Europe with only 'Christian roots' would be a very airless place, even for Christians. One might, indeed, say 'particularly for Christians.' For, throughout this period, so many Christians wrestled with remarkable creativity with the fact that they lived in a society whose roots were not Christian."[77] Again, Brown:

The constant presence of a profane, pre-Christian world, which pushed deep roots into the past and into the hearts of Christian believers, provided the populations of what we now call Europe with an invaluable "structural reserve"—a space for the profane that could be constantly drawn upon. Without the tenacity of its gnarled, pre-Christian roots, modern Europe would have lacked the imaginative and

76. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, xvi. Cf. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 2: "[T]he Christianity of what we now call Europe was only the westernmost variant of a far wider Christian world, whose center of gravity lay, rather, in the eastern Mediterranean and in the Middle East."

77. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, xvi. The fact is, as the Dutch missiologist Hendrik Kraemer rightly diagnosed, Christendom is a "blurring of the vision by which [the Church] ought to live. In this world," he wrote, "we can only speak about a Christian society and a Christian civilization in a very attenuated and diluted sense." Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, 26. Indeed, it is a pagan definition of Church, the idea that "religion is a cult which is recognized by the community (or state) as its basic foundation, and which therefore is valid for and obligatory on every member of the community." Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, 27.

intellectual "roughage" provided by an unresolved tension between the sacred and the profane. A Europe which grew only from "Christian roots" would have been a sadly anemic Europe. . . . [M]odern insistence on the "Christian roots of Europe" has led to a subtle and dangerous slippage. Only too often, accounts of the Christianization of western Europe are written not as if Europe had "Christian roots," but rather as if Christianity itself had only "European roots."[78]

The years 325 and 451 represent early—and the most significant—efforts to rewrite that story. When church historians and others recount the events and achievements of Nicaea and/or of Chalcedon as if they were truly ecumenical events and highpoints in the story of the Church, they perpetuate the same self-congratulatory myth.[79] Both events, as Walls has mapped, represent "a great ecumenical failure," and mark "the end of the shared consciousness that had constituted world Christianity."[80] Walls traces the ways that these councils divided Europe's Christians from those in Africa and Asia, a move that eventually, before the close of the first millennium, resulted in "the slow eclipse of Christianity in Asia, its erosion in Africa, and the emergence of European Christianity as representative Christianity. European Christians," he notes, "came to think of themselves as if not exactly the only Christians, at least the only authentic

78.   Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, xvii.

79.   Regarding Nicaea, Walls ("World Christianity and the Early Church," 25–26) recounts how "the unity of the Church was a priority for imperial domestic policy; no one considered the effect on the Christians of Iran or An-Iran, the Armenians or the Ethiopians." He makes a similar point about Chalcedon: "From one point of view, the Council of Chalcedon of 451 was a triumph, defining the safe areas for Christology while leaving room for manoeuvre; but in effect it represented a consensus between those who did their theological thinking in Greek and those who did it in Latin. Those whose theological vocabulary was in Coptic or Syriac, left outside, felt at liberty to be unconvinced by what the Chalcedonian Definition said, or seemed to them to say. Terms such as 'Nestorian', 'Monophysite', and 'Melkite' became theological swearwords to hurl at other Christians. The century after Chalcedon, as successive emperors sought imperial unity by imposing the formula as the final statement of Christology, brought disaster, the Church split three ways, and broadly along cultural and linguistic lines: Greco-Latin, Syriac, and Coptic."

80.   Walls, "World Christianity and the Early Church," 26.

Christians, any other Christian form being essentially deviant, as the encounters in India and Ethiopia when the sixteenth century brought an end to Europe's isolation abundantly illustrate." And that isolation of European Christianity promoted the development of "features that impeded its later attempts to take the Christian faith to peoples beyond Europe."[81] He continues:

> Once there had been a Christian consciousness that was as near global as knowledge of the world then available would permit. Now the defining European consciousness was of Christendom, a word that simply means Christianity, but which in Europe acquired territorial significance. Christendom meant contiguous territory from the Atlantic to the Carpathians, where Christianity was the basis of customary law; where populations were, in principle, subject to the law of Christ, their rulers vassals of the King of Kings, their scriptures and their liturgy and their learning enshrined in the special Christian language, Latin. Europe was Christian territory over against heathen territory, Christendom over against heathendom Christianity had become a geographical expression.[82]

Against (White) Hegemony and Territorialism

Leaping back from Europe to Australia, and to that post-WWII period with which this essay began, we might recall the ways that potentially pluralistic structures such as churches, sports clubs, schools, Scouts, and Guides were recognized and valued for their contribution to social cohesion and stability and to the advance of the vision of Australia as a more culturally-diverse society. Jean Martin observes that Australia's integration policy reflected a government in "denial": "While the Australians have been stubbornly looking in the one direction, a kind of pluralism has been quietly consolidating in the other."[83] She suggests that "Australia is not a plural society in the sense that our polity is based on ethnic segments, but in the more limited sense that ethnicity is a source of formal and informal groupings and of some

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81.   Walls, "World Christianity and the Early Church," 26.
82.   Walls, "World Christianity and the Early Church," 26–27.
83.   Martin, *Community and Identity*, 128.

cultural differentiation."[84] Rejecting the grammar of assimilation, Martin describes Australia's immigration *experience* as "robust pluralism" or "ethnic structural pluralism," later termed "cultural pluralism" or "multiculturalism."[85] In this way, it was not unlike Europe during the first 1000 years of Christian presence. The sociologist Jerzy Zubrzycki, a Polish DP who met Martin in 1957 (a year after his arrival in Australia), also advocated for a broad model of cultural pluralism that "stands for the retention of ethnic identity and continued participation of individual settlers in minority group activities. [It] implies, therefore, a rejection not only of the attempts to promote an amalgam of cultures but also of any assumptions of Anglo-Saxon superiority and the necessary conformity to English-oriented cultural patterns."[86]

It is no accident that such calls and descriptions came initially from those whose ethnic origins were other than English. But such calls were heard by others. In the early 1970s, for example, the Whitlam Government expanded the concept of a multiculture, associating it with a refined notion of nationhood. Borrowing from the Canadian experience, Labor Immigration Minister Al Grassby announced multiculturalism as government policy and proudly accentuated Australia's immigrant character, speaking of the "many threads making up the national fabric."[87] In a 1973 conference presentation titled "A Multi-cultural Society for the Future," Grassby spoke of the ways that Australians were "weaving an ever more complex fabric for Australian society," and he sold Labor's vision of "permanent ethnic pluralism" whereby "each ethnic group desiring it, is permitted to create its own commercial life and preserve its own cultural heritage indefinitely while taking part in the general life of the nation."[88]

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84.   Martin, *Community and Identity*, 132.

85.   Martin, "Ethnic Pluralism and Identity," 11–27.

86.   Zubrzycki, "Multicultural Australia," 129.

87.   Grassby, *A Multi-cultural Society for the Future*. Cited in Murphy, *The Other Australia*, 198.

88.   Grassby, *A Multi-cultural Society for the Future*, 3, 9. He also bemoaned how white, dishonest, and antiquated Australia's national images are. For Grassby's description and vision for a "family of the nation," see Grassby,

This association of multiculturalism with the question of national identity transformed, but certainly did not obliterate, the idea and legacy of a White Australia. Grassby's work was both a recognition and an encouragement to all Australians to not only sever "the apron strings of our original 'Nanny'" but also to valorise migrants and New Australians as nation builders and as gifts in the evolution of Australia's "cultural diversity."[89]

Despite Grassby's invitation, Australia remains a country marked by white racist hostilities and deep xenophobia, the roots of which, as I have been arguing, coincide with its colonialist and Christian beginnings. Jacques Derrida once mapped the "considerable gap separating the great and generous principles of the right to asylum inherited from the Enlightenment thinkers and from the French Revolution and . . . the historical reality or the effective implementation (*mise en oeuvre*) of these principles." He observed that such principles are "controlled, curbed, and monitored by implacable juridical restrictions" and implemented by a juridical tradition that "remains 'mean-minded' and restrictive."[90] Judith Butler interprets this as an example of the nation-state seeking to shore up its claim to hegemonic sovereignty through "nation-building,"[91] an act that by necessity makes judgements between those who constitute part of the nation and those who do not. This, *prima facie*, seems to describe much that is modern Australia. But, as Jane Haggis has argued, there is more going on here than first meets the eye:

> Perhaps there is something distinctive about Australia's specific form
> of nation-state building, a kind of hyper-vigilance, in terms of same-
> ness, difference and bordering that results from both the logics of
> state power and the power of cultural imaginaries, such as the sense
> of victimhood, of being exiled—unwelcome at home, by virtue of be-
> ing a convict, an ill-paid worker or an economically precarious tenant
> farmer and the like and of having struggled too hard to earn the

A Multi-cultural Society for the Future, 2–4. For a more recent discussion, see Watts, *The Golden Country*.

89.   Grassby, *A Multi-cultural Society for the Future*, 6.
90.   Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 11.
91.   Butler, *Precarious Life*, xiv.

land—that . . . meant Australia never totally embraced the discourse of humanitarianism and of human rights that came to define one sense of the Western self during the twentieth century, itself a token nod to the Kantian notion of the law of hospitality. . . . The sense of exile, of expulsion from Europe to the bottom of the world, of being victims rather than members of God's elect, [shapes] Australia and Australians' historic sense of themselves as a national community [and] feeds a hyper-vigilance to maintain . . . "First World privilege."[92]

And yet even "victims" banished to what Prime Ministers Paul Keating and Kevin Rudd affectionately named "the arse-end of the world"[93] wish to be included, desire to be counted among the elect ones. Today, both within and outwith the Church, the kinds of commitments to multiculturalism expressed prior to 2001 are in decline, and the vision of a white Australia is again regaining its voice. Despite—or, some would argue, because of—Asian, African, and Middle Eastern immigration, multiculturalism is judged by an increasing number to represent a threat to the idea of "One Australia" (to employ John Howard's language) bound by the myth of a shared culture, language, and history. This brand of white hegemony is today expressed most publicly in, for example, far-right white extremists' groups, in the weaponizing of the notion of religious freedom, and in demands by some whitefellas to climb Uluru despite calls from Anangu elders to refrain. This is the fruit of a theology of colonialism, of Christendom, of Christianity *as empire*. It is the theology still propagated by many churches in the West. As such, it shares the colonist's and the empire's fear of difference, a fear that trammels both the interior and the borderlands of our politics. In this imagination, Jesus looks quite like a white squatter.[94]

92. Haggis, "White Australia and Otherness," 19.

93. Cited in Curran, *The Power of Speech*, 209. Also, Coorey, "Rudd Sees Nation at Bottom End, Too"; Lane and Cathcart, *From Great White Nation to Arse End of the World in a Single Lifetime*.

94. On this, see Goroncy, "A Pretty Decent Sort of Bloke," e1–e10.

Late-Christendom as Challenge and Invitation: Some Theological Reflections

The Church has long struggled to maintain the unattractive tension between "a church seeking to be faithful to Scripture" and "the prejudices and weaknesses of its members, their cultural norms, and the protective cocoon of Christendom."[95] A case can certainly be mounted that the creation of Protestant "sects" (Baptist and other) during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries actively sought to undermine Christendom via their own struggles for religious freedoms, and that the missionary movement of the nineteenth century helped to "expose the limitations of Christendom as an exportable model or universal ideal."[96] But just how far such undermining and exposure encouraged a rigorous reassessment of Christianity's continuing identity vis-à-vis Christendom's underlying commitments remains a question deserving attention, and that not least at a time in which the social contexts of pluralism and what some judge to be the de-Christianization of the West is birthing calls for a more credible Christian script and witness. Such work is clearly beyond the scope of this essay. But in this final section, I wish to offer three brief theological reflections on questions that touch directly on such concerns. The first is on the matter of power, the second on what it means to speak of the Christian community as "the body of Christ," and the third is concerned with the theological task itself.

On Rethinking Power

For most of its life, Western Christianity has not heeded the words of the Hebrew prophets to be a sanctuary unescorted by borders or bullets.[97] Nor has it placed much store in the warning carried in the words "crucified under Pontius Pilate." Instead, it has been made inebriated by quaffing from the same wells of imperialism that created the empires of Egypt, Assyria, and the United States.[98] There was a soberer moment in 1648 when the

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95.   De Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, 197.
96.   Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 94.
97.   Here I draw from Goroncy, "Reformation and Secularity," 11–13.
98.   See Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*.

Protestant Westphalia agreements suppressed the universalist as-
pirations of empire in favour of national ones, even while rein-
forcing the old alliances between throne (or parliament) and altar
albeit now along more local lines. Now, signs that the keg may
be running a little low occasion a fresh opportunity for Christian
communities to dissent from all "stupid allegiance to political
authority as if that were service to the church and, *a fortiori*, to
God,"[99] and to embrace instead what the Australian theologian
Davis McCaughey called a "transitory character."[100] It is a wel-
come fact that those traditions forged under Christendom's re-
markable achievements,[101] assumptions, atmosphere, and protec-
tion are undergoing fresh appraisal. This is to be welcomed. And
this, as John de Gruchy reminds us, does not mean "adopting a
politically neutral stance or eschewing the responsible use of po-
wer." Indeed, Christianity is, after all, essentially public and
acutely concerned for the public commons. "The question is
not," therefore, "whether the church is going to use political in-
fluence, but how, on behalf of whom, and from what perspective
it is going to do so. Is [such influence] going to be used 'to

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99.   Stringfellow, *Conscience and Obedience*, 49.

100.   McCaughey, *Tradition and Dissent*, 33.

101.   Perhaps the best and not uncritical defence of such achievements in
recent decades is still that offered by Oliver O'Donovan. O'Donovan argues
that Christendom "is constituted not by the church's seizing of alien power, but
by alien power's becoming attentive to the church," and that "it was the mis-
sionary imperative that compelled the church to take the conversion of the em-
pire seriously and to seize the opportunities it offered . . . for preaching the
Gospel, baptising believers, curbing the violence and cruelty of empire and,
perhaps most important of all, forgiving their former persecutors." While one
might argue that this represents something of an idealization of the data at our
disposal, O'Donovan is certainly not oblivious to the danger of the Church col-
luding with the State's assumption of its own inherent and autonomous au-
thority. He writes: "The peril of the Christendom idea—precisely the same peril
that attends upon the post-Christendom idea of the religiously neutral state—
was that of negative collusion: the pretence that there was now no further chal-
lenge to be issued to the rulers in the name of the ruling Christ." O'Donovan,
The Desire of the Nations, 195, 212, 213. Stanley Hauerwas offers a construc-
tive critique of O'Donovan in Hauerwas and Fodor, "Remaining in Babylon,"
199–224. For a more recent defence of Christendom, see Leithart, *Defending
Constantine*.

preserve the social prestige which comes from its ties to the groups in power or to free itself from the prestige with a break from these groups and with genuine service to the oppressed'?"[102]

For those who hanker after a secure life, a kind of pure and invulnerable area in the world, whatever its form, the Word of God holds out no promise, no escape, no counterfeit security, no withdrawal from the actualities, ambiguities, uncertainties, and instabilities of human life. The idolatry of homogeneity made concrete in Australian whiteness—whether cultural, political, or intellectual—not only bespeaks a lie of the gift of creation's radical diversity, freedom, and strangeness, but also signals "a withdrawal from accepting the peril and the promise of the Incarnation": namely, the call to live "an exposed life" before God, one "stripped of the kind of security that tradition, whether ecclesiological or institutional, easily bestows,"[103] or that politicians easily promise. This is the Church's atypical and baffling existence.[104] It is also its gift.

On Being the Body of Christ

Earlier, I drew attention to Walls's argument that Christianity has in principal always been a global religion. For most of its life, that character has also been expressed in many of its practices. "And global," Walls avers, "inevitably means

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102. De Gruchy, "Toward a Reformed Theology of Liberation," 107–8. Here de Gruchy cites from Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 266–67.

103. MacKinnon, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 33, 34.

104. It was this direction toward which a young Dietrich Bonhoeffer was looking when in London in the early 1930s he asserted that: "Christianity stands or falls with its revolutionary protest against violence, arbitrariness and pride of power and with its apologia for the weak . . . Christendom has adjusted itself much too easily to the worship of power. It should give much more offence, more shock to the world, than it is doing. Christianity should . . . take a stronger much more definite stand for the weak than to consider the potential moral right of the strong." Bonhoeffer, *London*, 402–3. Similarly, Kraemer diagnosed, in 1938, that part of the Church's response to "the shattering of the Corpus Christianum" is that the Church is now free to go "to the bottom in its identification with the sufferings and needs of the world." Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, 28, 30.

multicultural. Cultural diversity was built into the Church within the New Testament period. This was an inevitable result of the early decision not to require circumcision and obedience to the Torah for Gentiles who came to faith in Jesus."[105] The parallels between the contexts in which Christianity first spread and the ethnic pluralism that defines many contemporary societies has been well documented. So too has the fact that the earliest Christian movements broadcast the notion that community is not based on cultural or social or even theological uniformity but rather on the gift of God who in Jesus Christ is reconciling all creation to God's self.[106] It is a community gathered by, around, and for Christ, a gathering that has implications for how its members conceive of both the community's center and periphery. So Lamin Sanneh reminds us that:

> *Christianity affects cultures by moving them to a position short of the absolute, and it does this by placing God at the centre. The point of departure for the church in mission . . . is Pentecost, with Christianity triumphing by relinquishing Jerusalem or any fixed universal centre, be it geographical, linguistic or cultural, and with the result of there being a proliferation of centres, languages and cultures within the church. Christian ecumenism is a pluralism of the periphery with only God at the centre.* Consequently, all cultural expressions remain at the periphery of truth, all equal in terms of access, but all equally inadequate in terms of what is ultimate and final. Thus while we cannot conceive of the gospel without its requisite cultural expression, we cannot at the same time confine it exclusively to that, for that would involve the unwarranted step of making ends and means synonymous.[107]

One implication of Sanneh's claim is that the argument for ethnic homogeneity—whether by governments or by religious communities—forms the basis for a cultural hegemony[108] that is at its core idolatrous, particularly when it is pursued from above.

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105. Walls, "World Christianity and the Early Church," 18.
106. Here I draw from Goroncy, "Ethnicity," 224–27, 238–40.
107. Sanneh, "The Gospel, Language and Culture," 61. Italics original. See also Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 81–82.
108. On cultural hegemony and its relationship with domination, see Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony," 567–93. Lears engages with the

This conviction about the ways that communities of real difference are not defined by their boundaries but by the relinquishing of their old centre through a making room for the gift of God's own humanity is at least part of what the Pauline notion of 'the body of Christ' is about. That body, as Graham Ward has argued, is "extendible," "transposable," and able to expand to incorporate other bodies, and to "make them extensions of his own."[109] "In being transposable, while always being singularities and specificities," Ward writes, "the body of Christ can cross boundaries, ethnic boundaries, gender boundaries, socio-economic boundaries."[110] This is a body that is continually seeking to be displaced through the transposition of its identity. It is also a body that is taken up—although not exhaustively so—"in the limbs and tissue of his body as the Church. Poised between memory and anticipation, driven by a desire which enfolds it and which it cannot master, the history of the Church's body is a history of transposed and deferred identities: it incarnates a humanity aspiring to Christ's own humanity."[111] An ecclesiology fittingly determined by the ontological scandal of the "extendible" and "transposable" character of the body of Jesus compels Christian communities to work for visibly multiethnic rather than homogenous churches in ethnically and culturally diverse contexts.

Socio-cultural identities are of fundamental concern to Christian theology not only because they are a basic feature of

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work of Antonio Gramsci who famously characterized cultural hegemony along two lines: "1. The 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production. 2. The apparatus of state coercive power which 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed." Antonio Gramsci, "Intellectuals," 306–7; cf. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 200–201.

109. Ward, *Cities of God*, 102.
110. Ward, *Cities of God*, 103.
111. Ward, *Cities of God*, 112–13.

creation as we know it but also because apart from such there can be no intelligible human speech about God. While the barriers erected by socio-cultural identities can both occasion and be occasioned by various forms of idolatry, in and of themselves the diversity of identities represents nothing less than the gift of the liveliness of God as life-affirming and creative Spirit. The divine action made tangible on the Day of Pentecost (as recorded in Acts 2) finds its counterpart in a theology that sees in radical diversity an expression of the promise and practice of apostolicity.[112] Such theology will celebrate real difference while avoiding making an idol of such, and accent the fact that it is only insofar as diversity represents a graced but no less creaturely response to the one Spirit that it can have an underlying unity, thereby witnessing to the Spirit's undoing of the idolatry of human pride which is as responsible for the Tower of Babel as it is for promoting ideologies of whiteness.

Rather than understanding its vocation as the extension or propagation of its own modes of being, therefore, the Church's vocation in and relation to the world might instead be determined by its relation to the transposing and boundary-crossing Christ. To be the body of Christ—that is, a body that is both catholic and missionary—is to be a body that "strives to show, to embody, the way in which the incalculable variety of human concerns can be 'at home' in and with the confession of faith in Jesus. It does not seek to impose a uniform Christian culture or a preconceived Christian solution; it aims only to keep open and expanding the frontiers of the community as gift."[113] This will be possible only insofar as the Christian community continues to undergo its own conversion through the hearing of the gospel. That hearing demands listening to voices other than its own. And that means doing theology itself in new ways, including ways that displace the colonial subject.

112. See Flett, *Apostolicity*.
113. Williams, *Resurrection*, 64.

On Doing Theology Beyond Colonial Subjectivity

One thing that this essay has sought to underscore is the fact that among the many assumptions of Christendom that much Protestantism shares quite uncritically with Rome is a commitment to modes of imperialism that preference and propagate particular cultural forms. The near-idolatry of, and proclivity to proliferate, its own forms, coupled with an ecclesiocentric view of the world, has very often restricted the Church from entering into unfamiliar territory in anything but highly-qualified and guarded ways— ways sometimes accompanied by the violent protection of the state. This is not simply part of the Australian story. It is the story of settler colonialism period, baptized as it is in various forms of commitment to the Christendom ideal. Recall the Conquistadors (lit. 'conquerors') who sought to extend the bounds of Europe—and the arms of the European church—to the Americas, to Oceania, to Africa, and to Asia.

Willie James Jennings maps how among the many tragic consequences of associating Christian belief with the power of colonial conquest has been the ways that Christian theology has been harnessed as a "discourse of displacement" which both imagines and appraises new situations "wholly within a colonialist logic."[114] This, as Jennings suggests, has "changed the trajectory of the teleological framework of Christianity" and "established a strange kind of insularity and circularity for Christian traditions of enquiry." One result of this decision has been that "the inner coherence of traditional Christian inquiry" has been "grafted onto the inner coherence of colonialism."[115]

Reflecting upon the work of the Spanish theologian and naturalist José de Acosta, Jennings outlines the ways that the historic colonialist trajectory of much Christian theology is marked by "pedagogical imperialism" and "epistemic insularity" that makes it frightfully difficult for theologians to imagine whom we "belong to as we write, as we think, as we pray. This problem," Jennings avers:

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114. Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 82–83.
115. Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 83.

has fundamentally to do with a world formed and continuing to be formed to undermine the possibilities of Christians living together, loving together, and desiring each other. Such a desire is not a narcissistic longing for self to be seen in others, or an indulgent seeking for the comfort of like-minded doctrinal confessors. It is the necessary beginning for overturning the remade world.[116]

Jennings's work is launched by the assumption that worlds constituted on slave ships or by racial subjugation need to be overturned, and that even where such efforts are provisional at best such capsizing bears witness to the right orientation of things birthed of the hope gifted by the God of life. Such capsizing also calls for drawing from "the processes of displacement and translation clearer sight of something genuinely new in the formation of Christianity in modernity, the interpenetration of the vernacularization of Christianity and the production of space."[117] The logic of the Incarnation means that the life and witness of the Christian community must not, as Jennings puts it, "stand over native flesh."[118] Jennings is concerned to not dismiss what he calls "the important parental legacy of Christianity" insofar as these nurture academic work in the modern West, especially for Black intellectuals. But, he argues, "we must not allow this legacy to blind us to the aching absence of a truly Christian . . . community" that reflects in its work "the incarnate reality of the Son who has joined the divine life to our lives and invites us to deep abiding intellectual joining, not only of ideas but of problems, not only of concepts but of concerns, not only of beliefs and practices but of common life, and all of it of the multitude of many tongues."[119]

To proceed along such lines is to take up one of the genius insights of that first generation of Protestants regarding the

116. Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 202.
117. Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 208.
118. Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 105. For a formal expression of this, see The Belhar Confession, esp. 10.4: "We reject any doctrine which absolutizes either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutization hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation."
119. Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 202.

freedom of the Word unharnessed from, but at home among, the particularities of any one culture or form, including ecclesial ones.[120] To proceed along such lines in Australia today calls for taking up the generous invitation offered in the Uluru Statement from the Heart written by "the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands" to complete the unfinished business of "agreement making,"[121] to properly address claims of Aboriginal sovereignty, and so to write "a richer story of nationhood,"[122] than those constructed merely from stories of war and conquest. No responsible theological vision of the future applicable to Australia can sidestep the call and intentions of the Makarrata. To proceed along such lines holds the promise of going some way towards exposing and crucifying the dark "biological heresy"[123] of white colonialism in Australia. To proceed along such lines is to bear witness to one who is determined to break down walls that divide, to make peace between different groups, and, in doing so, to reconstitute what it means to be human community.[124]

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120. See Goroncy, "Semper Reformanda as a Confession of Crisis," 43–73; Goroncy, "Reformation and Secularity," 3–21. Also, Flett reminds us that because "creation possesses no inherent capacity to facilitate or retard the communication of the gospel, the community is totally free with regard to the particular forms the community's witness takes in the world." Flett, *The Witness of God*, 294.

121. National Constitutional Convention, "The Uluru Statement from the Heart."

122. Davis, "The Status Quo Ain't Working." See also Pascoe, *Convincing Ground*.

123. Vincent, *The Race Race*, 19. See also Pattel-Gray, *The Great White Flood*, 120–31.

124. I am grateful to Mark Brett, John Flett, and Terry Falla for their constructive comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

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