



THE MCDONALD CENTRE for Theology, Ethics, and Public Life

Report 2013-14

A. Strategic aims and main achievements

The mission of the McDonald Centre is to bring a Christian intelligence to bear on ethical issues of public concern, with a view to

- developing Christian ethics' grasp of contemporary issues
- commending a Christian vision of moral life in society at large
- raising the quality of public deliberation about ethical issues; and
- encouraging Christian ethicists in the art of honest engagement with fellow-members of a 'secular' (i.e., plural) public.

In 2013-14 the Centre

- confirmed its partnership with the Royal Institute for International Affairs (RIIA or 'Chatham House') by holding the fifth annual conjoint colloquium on ethics in international relations;
- strengthened its relationship with Theos, by inviting its Director, Elizabeth Oldfield, to join the Advisory Council;
- developed an indirect relationship with the Templeton World Charity Foundation by agreeing to host the Templeton-McDonald Post-Doctoral Fellow in Character Formation for three years from 1 October 2014;
- and inaugurated discussion with Policy Exchange about holding a conjoint conference on the impact of European human rights jurisprudence on military institutions

It continued to foster dialogue about ethical matters across disciplines by involving economists, political philosophers, experts in international relations and security, international lawyers, and historians—together with moral theologians—in its colloquia and conferences.

Two of its events were recorded by the University and are now available on its website as podcasts:

- "How Much is Enough? Money and the Good Life": <http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/mcdonald-centre-theology-ethics-public-life>
- "Oh, What a Lovely War?": <http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/oh-what-lovely-war-first-world-war-anniversary-lectures>

In addition to his academic work, the Director has continued to make direct contributions to public deliberation through

- three essay-length articles on the First World War, universities' responsibility for moral formation, and Scottish independence in the current affairs monthly, *Standpoint*

- letters and articles on Syria, the Christian character of Britain, and the monarchy in *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and *The Church Times*
- blogs about Syria, the Christian tradition of just war, and intentional killing on the sites of Oxford University Press, the Marginalia Review, Public Discourse, and The Week (USA)

B. Advisory Council

Between 2008 and 2013, one member of the original Advisory Council (Charlotte Rendle) resigned and another (Jean Bethke Elshtain) died. When in the summer of 2013 the remaining members of the Council were invited to renew their membership for a further five years. Professors Hans Ulrich, Keith Ward, and Nicholas Wolterstorff declined. To replenish the Council, therefore, the following were invited to join and agreed to do so:

- **Dr Charles Mathewes**, who is the Carolyn M. Barbour Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. His recent books include *A Theology of Public Life* (2007) and *The Republic of Grace* (2010).
- **Dr Edwina Moreton**, O.B.E., a former Diplomatic Editor and Deputy Foreign Editor at the Economist, who chairs the board of VERTIC, an NGO working on treaty verification, and is an associate fellow at Chatham House and an honorary fellow of the Strategy and Security Institute at the University of Exeter.
- **The Revd Dr Edmund Newell**, who is Principal of Cumberland Lodge and an Associate Member of Nuffield College, Oxford, where he was formerly a Research Fellow in Economic History. With John Reynolds he is the author of *Ethics in Investment Banking* (2011).
- **Elizabeth Oldfield**, who is the Director of Theos, the religion and society think-tank with a broad Christian basis. Before joining Theos in 2011 she worked at the BBC in both television and radio production, most recently on *The Moral Maze*. She has a master's degree in Theology from King's College London and is a trustee of the Church and Media Network.
- **Sir Jonathan Phillips, K.C.B., Ph.D.**, a former Permanent Secretary in the Northern Ireland Office, who is Warden of Keble College, Oxford.
- **The Very Revd Dr Frances Ward**, who is Dean of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich Cathedral and author of *Why Rousseau was Wrong* (2013).

B. 2013-14

The Appointment of the second McDonald Post-Doctoral Fellow in Christian Ethics and Public Life

Since the departure in August 2013 of Dr John Perry to the University of St Andrews, where he has taken up a Lectureship in Theological Ethics, the Centre has been without the support of a postdoctoral fellow. In November 2013 an advertisement of the vacant McDonald Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Christian Ethics and Public Life was posted. This attracted 40 applications from half-a-dozen countries, which furnished a very strong shortlist. In February 2014 four candidates were interviewed: one from Cambridge, two from Princeton, and one from the University of Virginia. The post was offered to, and accepted by, James Orr, currently a doctoral student at Cambridge under the supervision of Professors Sarah Coakley and Janet Soskice. James will assume his post on 1 October 2014. Associated with Christ Church, it is tenable for up to four years.

The Appointment of a Templeton-McDonald Post-Doctoral Fellow in Character Formation

In 2013 the Oxford Pastorate, led by Dr Jonathan Brant, won funding from the Templeton World Charity Foundation for a three-year project on the moral character formation of postgraduates. This involves the appointment of a postdoctoral fellow, who will hold the fellowship in the University under the auspices of the McDonald Centre, assist in the project, and conduct research in the field of moral formation. An advertisement was placed in November 2013, which attracted 14 applications. A strong shortlist of four was drawn up. In February 2015 the candidates were interviewed: two from Princeton, one from the University of Virginia, and one from the University of Notre Dame. The post was offered to, and accepted by, Michael Lamb, currently a doctoral student at Princeton under the supervision of Professors Jeffrey Stout and Eric Gregory. Michael will assume his post on 1 October 2014. Associated with Harris Manchester College, it is tenable for up to three years.

Events

“How Much is Enough? Money and the Good Life”, a McDonald Centre colloquium on Robert and

Edward Skidelsky’s book at Christ Church (28 February 2014):

<http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/mcdonald-centre-theology-ethics-public-life>

“The First World War and its Lessons”, the Fifth McDonald Centre-Chatham House colloquium at Christ Church (7 February 2014)

“Oh, What a Lovely War?”, a McDonald Centre–Christ Church Cathedral lecture series in commemoration of the outbreak of the First World War, Christ Church (January-March 2014), part-funded by Christ Church Cathedral [£1000]:

<http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/oh-what-lovely-war-first-world-war-anniversary-lectures>

“Meditations from Purgatory: Kant, Freedom, and Happiness”, the 2013 McDonald Lectures, delivered by Professor Christopher Insole, Durham University, at the University of Oxford

(October-November 2013)

“New Conversations in Islamic and Christian Political Thought: Affections, Art, and Contemporary

Practice”, a McDonald Centre Workshop (14-15 September 2013): directed by Professor Joshua

Hordern

“Does Morality Need Religion?”, a McDonald Centre-Exeter University conference at Christ Church

(16-17 May 2013), part-funded by the University of Exeter [£1000]

The Director

Invited lectures, talks, etc.

“The First World War: A Christian View”, sermon for Oxford Partnership for Theological Education

and Training (19 May 2014)

“Give War a Chance?”, Conference on *In Defence of War*, School of Divinity, University of St Andrews (1 May 2014)

“Debating *In Defence of War*”, Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh (30 April 2014)

“Imprudent Jurisprudence? Individual Rights and Moral Contingency”, Emory University, USA (26

March 2014): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IzKWu-jjldY>

“Imprudent Jurisprudence? Individual Rights and Moral Contingency”, Developing a Christian Mind

Programme, Oxford (22 March 2014)

“Christian ethical perspectives on two contemporary issues: Looking back at the Financial Crisis; looking forward to the Centenary of The Great War”, Continuing Ministerial Education Study Day, Diocese of Birmingham (20 March 2014)

“Can War Ever be Just? *In Defence of War* by Nigel Biggar”, King’s College London (18 March 2014)

“Where’s the Virtue in the Humanities?”, The Oxford Research Centre for the Humanities (25 February 2014): <http://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/virtuehumanitiesvideo>

“Christianity and the Life of the Mind: An Introduction”, Developing a Christian Mind Programme, Oxford (1 February 2014):

<http://www.oxfordchristianmind.org/conferences/worldview/>

“Just War Reasoning and Three Cases: Zululand 1879, Britain 1914-18, Ireland 1916-21”, Ferguson

Centre for African & Asian Studies and Development Policy & Practice seminar, Open University, Milton Keynes (29 January 2014)

“The First World War: Was Britain Right to Fight?”, Faculty of History, Cambridge University (27

January 2014)

“‘Just War’ Thinking”, Philosophy & Theology Society, Wellington College (16 January 2014)

“*In Defence of War?*”, a panel discussion of Nigel Biggar’s book at the Society for Christian Ethics,

Seattle, USA (11 January 2014)

“Conflict: A Moral Imperative?”, a Veritas Forum debate with Clare Short, former Secretary of State

for International Development, St John’s College, Oxford (14 November 2013):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCcBmC9IRvY>

“The Place of Religion in Public”, Swansea University (31 October 2013)

“In Defence of War: Military Intervention and Theological Ethics”, Veritas Forum lecture, St John’s

College, Cambridge (25 October 2013)

“Telling the Truth ... about the Lords Spiritual”, King’s College London and the Westminster Institute,

Westminster Abbey (9 October 2013)

“Individual Rights versus Common Security? Christian Moral Reasoning about Torture”, Society for

the Study of Christian Ethics, Cambridge (6-8 September 2013)

“Christian Just War Doctrine and the Ethics of Humanitarian Intervention”, contribution to a conference, “Waging Peace and Restraining War: East-West Dialogue”, Centre for Applied Ethics, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong (22-23 August 2013)

“Resources and Partnerships for the Common Good: Collaboration”, inaugural meeting of the Alcuin Fellowship, Charlottesville, USA (29 May – 1 June 2013)

Books (published or in press)

Between Kin and Cosmopolis: An Ethic of the Nation. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, July 2014.

In Defence of War. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Chapters in books (published & forthcoming)

- “A Global State, International Law, and the Containment of Persistent Conflict: An Anglican Response to *Pacem in Terris*”, in Heinz-Gerhard Justenhoven. Claus Kress, Mary-Ellen O’Connell, eds.. *Peace through Law*, Studies in Peace Ethics (Baden-Baden: Nomos & Aschendorff Verlagen, forthcoming)
- “Fostering Reconciliation as a Goal of Military Ethics”, in *The Ashgate Companion to Military Ethics*, ed. James Turner Johnson and Eric Peterson (Farnham: Ashgate, forthcoming)
- “Regime-Change in Iraq: A Christian Reading of the Morals of the Story”, in Robert Song and Brent Waters, eds, *The Authority of the Gospel: Explorations in Moral and Political Theology in Honour of Oliver O’Donovan* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming)
- “Natural Flourishing as the Normative Ground of Just War: A Christian View”. In Anthony Lang, Cian O’Driscoll, and John Williams, eds, *Just War: Authority, Tradition, and Practice*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013.
- (with John Perry) “Religion and Intolerance: A Critical Commentary”. In Stephen Clarke, Russell Powell, and Julian Savulescu, eds, *Religion, Intolerance, and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Articles in journals (published & forthcoming)

- “Why Christianity benefits secular public discourse, and why, therefore, Anglican bishops should sit in a reformed House of Lords”, *Theology* (September 2014)
- “Review Essay: Doug Gay, *Honey from the Lion: Christianity and the Ethics of Nationalism*”, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 67/3 (2014)
- “*In Defence of War*: What’s it All About”, *Soundings*, 97/2 (2014)
- “In Response”, *Soundings*, 97/2 (2014)
- “Why Religion Deserves a Place in Secular Medicine”, *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 40/6 (June 2014)
- “*Men and Women in Marriage: Does it Add up?*”, *Theology*, 117/2 (March/April 2014).
- “Individual Rights versus Common Security? Christian Moral Reasoning about Torture”, *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 27/1 (February 2014)
- “Christian ‘Just War’ Reasoning and Two Cases of Rebellion: Ireland, 1916-21, and Syria, 2011-present”, *Ethics and International Affairs*, 27/4 (Winter 2013)

Other publications (bulletins, pamphlets, newspaper articles and letters, interviews, blogs)

- “Independence will do nothing for the Scots”, *Standpoint* (May 2014):
<http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/node/5523/full>
- “The Christian humanism of the Established Church attracts support from many outside it” (with Brenda Almond, Stephen R.L. Clark, David Conway, John Haldane, Jeremy Jennings, Roger Scruton, and Edward Skidelsky), leading letter, *Daily Telegraph*, 24 April 2014; also featured in a front-page article, “Atheists should show ‘liberal tolerance’ to Britain’s status as a Christian country”, *Daily Telegraph*, 24 April 2014:
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/letters/10783502/The-Christian-humanism-of-the-Established-Church-attracts-support-from-many-outside-it.html>;
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10783318/Atheists-should-show-liberal-tolerance-to-Britains-status-as-a-Christian-country.html>

“In Defence of Killing the Innocent, Deliberately but not Intentionally”, in *Public Discourse*, 28 April

2014: <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2014/04/13050/>

“Yes, war can be just. And just war reasoning is as sound as ever”, *The Week*, 28 March 2014: <http://www.isidev>

“Damian McBride: A Cautionary Tale”, *Standpoint* (November 2013):

<http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/node/5311/full>

“Justifying War: A Conversation with Nigel Biggar”, Part Two: “Was the Invasion of Iraq Moral?”,

The Marginalia Review, 29 October 2013: <http://themarginaliareview.com/archives/4438>

“Justifying War: A Conversation with Nigel Biggar”, Part One: “What is Just War?”, *The Marginalia Review*, 22 October 2013: <http://themarginaliareview.com/archives/4258>

“What Should we Do about Syria? A Moral View from the ‘Just War’ Tradition”, Oxford University

Press, blog: <http://blog.oup.com/2013/09/Syria-just-war-tradition/>

“On Prophetic Monarchy”, *Church Times*, 13 September 2013

“The Rights and Wrongs of Intervening in Syria”, leading letter, *The Times*, 30 August 2013

“Was Britain Right to Go to War in 1914?”, *Standpoint* (September 2013):

www.standpointmag.co.uk/features-september-13-was-britain-right-to-go-to-war-in-1914-nigel-biggar-first-world-war

“Can Science Replace Religion in our Lives?”, *Standpoint* (June 2013):

www.standpointmag.co.uk/critique-june-13-can-science-replace-religion-in-our-lives-nigel-biggar

Dr John Perry,

McDonald Post-Doctoral Fellow in Christian Ethics & Public Life, 2009-13

Book

John Perry, ed., *God, the Good, and Utilitarianism: Perspectives on Peter Singer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). This comprises the proceedings of the 2011 McDonald Centre

conference, “Christian Ethics Engages Peter Singer”, which was part-funded by the British Academy.

C. 2014-15

Events

“The Fog of Law: How Prudent is Battlefield Jurisprudence?”, a McDonald Centre-Policy Exchange

colloquium at Christ Church (Autumn 2014)

“*Magna Carta* and Good Government: Lessons for Nation-Building”, a McDonald Centre Conference

to mark the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta (May or June 2015)

Oxford Pastorate Character Development Programme, Year 1

Director

Commitments from June 2014

- “*In Defence of War*: Nigel Biggar in conversation with Major-General Tim Cross”, Bloxham Festival
(30-31 May)
- “What’s Wrong with Lord Falconer’s Bill to Legalise Physician-Assisted Suicide?”, House of Lords, London (9 June)
- “Does the Establishment of the Church of England have a Future?”, Annual Political Dinner, The National Club, London (18 June)
- “Melting the Icepacks of Enmity”: Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland”, Conference on Restorative Justice, Regent’s Park College, Oxford (22-23 June)
- “A Christian Defence of War”, Council for Christian Approaches to Defence and Disarmament, Royal Hospital, Chelsea (25 June)
- “1914-18: Was Britain Right to Fight?”, Summer Gaudy, Christ Church (26 June)
- “On Not Always Giving the Devil Benefit of Law: Morality, Legality, and Military Intervention”, Colloquium on the Future of Humanitarian Intervention, Chateau de la Bretesche, Missillac, Loire, France (7-9 July)
- “World War One: A Moral Analysis of Britain’s Involvement”, Conference on War and Ethics, The Armed Forces’ Christian Union, Watchfield, Swindon (12 July)
- “A Global State, International Law, and the Containment of Persistent Conflict”, Societas Ethica, Maribor, Slovenia (21-4 August)
- “In Defence of War?”, Conference on Church, Theology, and War: Remembrance and Collusion, Catholic Theological Association, London (9 September)
- “Reflections on Karl Barth’s Response to the ‘Intellectuals’ Manifesto”, Colloquium on the Centenary of the ‘Intellectuals’ Manifesto’ of 1914, Keble College, Oxford (19 September)
- “The Christian Just War Tradition”, The Ethics of Conflict Panel, Oxford University Humanities Alumni Weekend (19-21 September)
- “What’s Wrong with Lord Falconer’s Bill to Legalise Physician-Assisted Suicide?”, East Midlands Training Course, Nottingham (25 September)
- “Where’s the Virtue in the Humanities?”, Axson Johnson Foundation Colloquium, British Academy, London (30 September)
- Sermon, St Paul’s School (9 October)
- “Reflections on National Identity”, Canford School, (17 October)
- “The First World War: How Should we Remember It?”, Remembrance Day sermon, Peterhouse, Cambridge (9 November)
- “Who Would Jesus Shoot? Is ‘Just War’ Thinking Christian?”, Ecclesia, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London (12 November)
- “The First World War: How Should we Remember It?”, Dublin, Republic of Ireland (19 November)
- “Can War be Just?”, Christians in Parliament and the Westminster Institute, London (24 November)
- “The First World War: How Should we Remember It?”, Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury (27 November)

“Melting the Icepacks of Enmity: Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland”,
Colloquium on

Forgiveness and Reconciliation, Institut Catholique d'Etudes Supérieures, Roche-sur-
Yon, Vendée, France (5-6 February 2015)

“Law and Religious Freedom: A Dialogue with John Witte”, Center for Theological Inquiry,
Princeton, USA (26-28 April 2015)

Rogge Lecture, Sion College, London (Autumn 2015)

The Director hopes to be on research leave from April 2015 to January 2016, when he will write a short book on what's wrong with human rights discourse. During that period the Centre is likely to be less hyperactive.

D. Acknowledgements

Warm thanks are due to the Centre's Administrator, Ginny Dunn, for taking charge of administering this year's conferences, colloquia, lecture series, and Advisory Council meeting; and to Emily Gum and James van Dyke, Research Assistants and postgraduate students, for managing the Centre's publicity and website, respectively.

*Nigel Biggar, Director
Christ Church, Oxford
9 May 2014*