

**THE MCDONALD CENTRE  
for Theology, Ethics, and Public Life**

**Report 2016-17**

*NJB = Nigel Biggar, Director*

*JB = Jonathan Brant, Associate Research Fellow*

*ED = Edward David, Associate Research Fellow*

*ML = Michael Lamb, McDonald-Templeton Post-Doctoral Fellow*

*JO = James Orr, McDonald Post-Doctoral Fellow*

*SR = Stuart Ramsay, Associate Research Fellow*

**A. Strategic aims**

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.

**B. Highlights**

- Reciprocal collaboration with Policy Exchange, the centre-right London think-tank: on the one hand, a public lecture in Oxford by John Bew, director of PE's 'Britain in the World' project; on the other hand, a public lecture at PE in Westminster by NJB, "After Iraq: When to Go to War?"
- "How Can *Realpolitik* be Ethical?", a McDonald Centre colloquium, whose participants included Roger Boyes, Diplomatic Editor and foreign affairs columnist at *The Times*; John Darwin, Professor of Global and Imperial History, University of Oxford; James Kidner, Counsellor at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and member of the Senior Directing Staff, Royal College of Defence Studies; Marc LiVecche, managing editor of *Providence* and Scholar of Christian Ethics, War, & Peace at the Institute for Religion & Democracy, Washington DC; and Sir Ivor Roberts, President, Trinity College, Oxford and former H.M. Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Ireland, and Italy.
- "What Should be Done about UK Immigration", a McDonald Centre colloquium, whose participants included David Coleman, Emeritus Professor of Demography, University of Oxford, and former Special Adviser to the UK Home Secretary; Sir Paul Collier, Professor of Economics and Public Policy, University of Oxford, and former Director of the Research Development Department of the World Bank; David Goodhart, Head of Demography, Immigration, and Integration at Policy Exchange, London, and former Director of Demos and founder-editor of *Prospect* magazine; and David Miller, FBA, Professor of Political Theory, University of Oxford.
- "What Do We Know about UK Immigration?", a report written for the immigration colloquium by Stuart Ramsay, Associate Fellow, which will be published by the Centre

as a briefing paper.

- NJB was appointed as an Independent Scientific and Technical Advisor at the Ministry of Defence, in which capacity he was employed to test the ethics of research proposals.
- NJB was invited to join the Advisory Council of 'These Islands', a new body devoted to developing and propagating a positive narrative about the United Kingdom. On this council he sits alongside the historians Lord Peter Hennessy and Tom Holland; Margaret MacMillan, Warden of St Antony's College, Oxford; Baroness Onora O'Neill, philosopher and former President of the British Academy; and Professor Louise Richardson, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University.
- NJB heard himself referred to as a 'public intellectual' for the first time at a conference on war in Cambridge in November 2016, and then he read it in an article by a former Lord Chancellor in the *Times* in April 2017. So it must be true.

### C. Summary of activities and achievements

#### ***Professor Nigel Biggar, Director***

This year has been thick with speaking engagements. The Director has spoken on assisted suicide in Dublin, Ireland; Christian 'just war' thinking in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands; the ethics of compromise in Bielefeld, Germany; nationalism and secession in Kiev, Ukraine; natural rights in New York and the First World War in Tallahassee, USA; and patriotism in Shanghai, China. While this has all been exhilarating and stimulating, it has also been taxing and distracting. NJB has therefore resolved that 2017-18 will be more sedentary, for the sake of making possible the completion of his book on rights.

The Director's expertise in the ethics of war has continued to be in special demand. He was invited to help evaluate the ethical education of Royal Marines Commando officers, to address battlefield mercy-killing at a conference for members of the Special Air Services (S.A.S.) regiment, to lecture at the first ever Naval Service Ethics Conference, to evaluate research proposals at the Ministry of Defence—and to a private supper with the Secretary of State for Defence.

In between speaking engagements, and as Faculty and Cathedral duties have allowed, NJB has continued to make progress in writing his book, *What's Wrong with Rights?* He intends to complete the manuscript by September 2018.

He has had academic articles and book-chapters published in France, Germany, Norway, and the USA. And he has written on Trident in the (Glasgow) *Herald*, why the West is Christian for the (London) *Times*, Brexit and the Battle of the Somme for *Providence* (Washington, DC), and freedom of speech in universities for *New Criterion* (New York).

#### ***Dr Michael Lamb, McDonald-Templeton Postdoctoral Fellow***

Now in the third and final year of his post-doc, Dr Lamb has served in a part-time role as he transitioned to his new position at Wake Forest University.

This year, ML pursued research on leadership and character, the relationship between religion and politics, and the role of the virtues in public life. He finished two articles:

'Augustine and Republican Liberty: Contextualizing Coercion' (forthcoming in *Augustinian Studies*) and 'Ethics for Climate Change Communicators' (forthcoming in the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia for Climate Science* and the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Climate Change Communication*). He also made significant progress on several other articles and on his book manuscript, *Commonwealth of Hope: Reimagining Augustine's Political Thought*, which he intends to finish this summer. He gave academic presentations at the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham (with JB); American Political Science Association; American Academy of Religion; Villanova University; Cornell University; University of Pavia, Italy; Haverford College; University of Virginia; and Wake Forest University.

With Brian Williams, he has also edited the papers from last year's McDonald Centre conference on 'Everyday Ethics.' OUP has expressed strong interest in the volume, which is currently under review. Readers reports are expected in May or June.

ML has continued his research and programming with the Oxford Character Project. With JB, he has worked on multiple papers on character education that they plan to submit for publication this summer. They also co-organized the 2017 McDonald Centre conference on 'Cultivating Virtue in the University' and intend to co-edit a volume of the conference proceedings. ML secured a sponsorship from Wake Forest University to bring speakers and additional funding to the conference. He also served as a speaker and facilitator at the very successful 'Character of Leadership' at Hong Kong University with the Oxford Character Project team in April 2015.

ML continues to provide counsel as a member of Advisory Council for the Rhodes Character, Service, and Leadership Programme. He participated in an intensive moderators' workshop in October 2016 and co-led moderators' training for the Rhodes retreat in January 2017. With JB and OCP, he co-organized the pre-conference panel on 'How Might Universities Cultivate Leaders of Character?' at Rhodes House with NJB; Charles Conn, Warden of Rhodes House; Nathan Hatch, President of Wake Forest University; and Ngaire Woods, Dean of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government.

ML will officially finish his post-doc with the McDonald Centre on September 30, 2017.

#### ***Dr James Orr, McDonald Postdoctoral Fellow***

Over the last academic year, Dr Orr has published two articles for *Modern Theology* and *Political Theology*; three more are under review at *New Blackfriars*, *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, and *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*. He has prepared a monograph manuscript—provisionally entitled *Divine Law and Natural Order*—which is currently under review with Oxford University Press. He has published book reviews in *Religious Studies* and *Heythrop Journal*; two more will appear later this year in the *Times Literary Supplement*. An interview with Dr Orr about his academic research is due to be published later this year in the popular literary magazine *3:AM*.

Dr Orr has been overseeing the Centre's Inequality Project, an interdisciplinary research project examining the theological and ethical issues of economic inequality in Britain and their implications for policy-making. This work includes preparation of a report

on the project's key findings with a small group of researchers (to be published in May 2018). As part of the project, he organized a public lecture and discussion on inequality (February 2017) and convened two colloquia on income and wealth inequality in Britain (March 2017) and the philosophical and theological dimensions of inequality (June 2017).

Dr Orr has also been engaged with policy research on the protection of religious freedom in Britain. At the start of the academic year, he convened an advisory panel of legal experts and religious leaders in London for a preliminary discussion of the central issues before drafting and publishing a policy report entitled *Beyond Belief: Defending Religious Liberty through the British Bill of Rights* with the independent think-tank ResPublica. The report was launched in the House of Commons and included a discussion panel featuring Dr Orr, John Bingham (Religious Affairs Correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph*), Fiona Bruce MP, and the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern. The report was accompanied by an article by Dr Orr for *ConservativeHome*, Britain's leading conservative blog. He was interviewed about the report on BBC Radio Scotland and Premier Radio; another interview was later published online in *The Christian Post*. He subsequently joined a panel of experts on Premier Radio's 'World Monthly' to discuss Brexit, environment policy, and security issues.

The conclusions of the policy report were discussed in a number of national newspapers, including *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, *The Belfast Telegraph*, *The Catholic Herald*, *CBN News*, and *Christian Today*, as well as in *Theos* and *Archbishop Cranmer*, two leading religion blogs. The report opened doors to policy discussions with senior government advisers on measures to protect religious freedom, including meetings with the Prime Minister's Special Adviser for Faith Communities and the Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for Justice.

#### **D. The 2017 May conference: "Cultivating Virtue in the University"**

The ninth annual May conference, "Cultivating Virtue in the University", gathered scholars, students, and practitioners from across the Atlantic and the English Channel and even from Hong Kong and Argentina. Drawing from the disciplines of history, literature, philosophy, and the social sciences, speakers included distinguished scholars from Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Stanford, Wake Forest, Virginia, Birmingham, and Worcester. Organized by ML and JB, in liaison with NJB, the conference was funded through the Oxford Character Project's grant from the Templeton World Charity Foundation and in partnership with Wake Forest University. The Oxford University Press sponsored the conference's formal reception.

Inspired by an idea from last year's Advisory Council meeting, The Oxford Character Project also organized a pre-conference panel in collaboration with Rhodes House and Wake Forest University on "How Might Universities Cultivate Leaders of Character?" Moderated by ML, speakers included NJB; Charles Conn, Warden of Rhodes House; Nathan Hatch, President of Wake Forest University; and Ngaire Woods, Professor of Global Economic Governance and Dean of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government. The event was held in Rhodes House and attracted an audience of senior Oxford academics, members of the Oxford Character Project

and the Oxford Pastorate, trustees and senior leaders from Wake Forest University, and Rhodes Scholars, among others.

### **E. The Oxford Character Project**

In the final year of its three-year pilot, The Oxford Character Project (OCP) is an interdisciplinary initiative that aims to supplement the acquisition of academic knowledge, expertise, and skill with a creative, academically-informed programme for character development for postgraduate students at the University of Oxford. The OCP has continued to achieve tremendous success in its practical activity and its academic research in 2016-17. In addition to the usual programming, including three year-long student formation groups; conferences; seminars; Ethics through Fiction and Film discussions; and special lectures, there have been two special initiatives for the final year. First, a 'Character of Leadership Forum', led by the OCP team and alumni of our Oxford programmes for forty undergraduate students at Hong Kong University, which was run in partnership with the HKU Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faith and Global Engagement Initiative. Second, the 'Cultivating Virtue in the University Conference' and related events that are described elsewhere in this report. Due to the success of the pilot, the OCP will continue beyond 2017, and we are actively seeking funding and partnership to allow for further development and expansion.

### **F. The Inequality Project**

In February, JO organized a public lecture by Dr Adrian Pabst on 'Inequality, Exclusion and Destruction: A Theological Critique of Capitalism and Defence of the Market'. The lecture was followed by a wide-ranging discussion on the social and historical context of UK economic inequality in the post-war period. In March, JO organized and chaired a one-day colloquium addressing historic and contemporary aspects of economic inequality in the UK. Participants included Advisory Council Members Sir Andrew Dilnot and Donald Hay, and Dr Andrew Hood, Senior Research Economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies. Dr Hood addressed themes from a report he had recently co-authored with the IFS on economic data concerning living standards, inequality, and poverty in the UK. Edward David, Associate Fellow of the McDonald Centre, had prepared a thorough review of major recent literature, and some of this was also discussed. A second colloquium will be held in June to consider how to develop a theologically informed ethical analysis of different kinds of economic inequality.

### **G. Visiting Fellows**

The Centre has been pleased to host two Visiting Fellows: first, in Michaelmas Term 2016, Professor Nicholas Rengger; and then, in Hilary and Trinity Terms, Professor John Berkman.

Nicholas Rengger is Professor of Political Theory and International Relations at St Andrews University. His most recent book is *Just War and International Order: The Uncivil Condition in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2013). While at Oxford he

conducted research toward a book on contingencies, paradoxes, and the accidental in international relations.

John Berkman is Associate Professor of Theological Ethics at Regis College, University of Toronto, where he teaches and writes in the areas of fundamental moral theology, the ethics of Thomas Aquinas, medical ethics, and theological anthropology. His most recent book is *Searching for a Universal Ethic* (Eerdmans, 2015). While in Oxford he has been researching and writing on rationality in the Thomistic tradition.

## H. Professor Biggar: lectures and publications

### *Invited lectures and talks*

“Cultivating Virtue in the University: Can Theology Help?”, McDonald Centre for Theology, Ethics, & Public Life and Oxford Character Project conference, “Cultivating Virtue in the University”, Christ Church, Oxford, 25-26 May 2017

“Compromise: When is it Bad?”, conference on “Compromise and Moral Conflict: Theory and Practice”, Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Forschung”, Universität Bielefeld, Germany 17-20 May 2017

“A Christian Theological Ethic of the Nation, War, and Public Participation”, a series of eight lectures at the National Pedagogical Dragomanov University, Kiev, Ukraine, 17-19 April 2017

“Battlefield Mercy-Killing: Ethics versus Law”, Changing Character of War conference with 2 S.A.S., “Morality and Modern War”, Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford, 12 April 2017

“What is the Problem with Natural Rights?”, a Thomistic Institute conference, The Catholic Center, New York University, 1 April 2017

“Assisted Suicide: What Should Christians Think?”, All Saints Church, Eccleshall, Sheffield, 15 March 2017

“The Debate about Legalising Physician-Assisted Suicide”, Irish Palliative Medicine Consultants Association, Dublin, Ireland, 9 March 2017

“After Iraq: When to Go to War?”, Naval Service Ethics Conference, Amport House, 1 March 2017

“Battlefield Mercy-Killing: Ethics versus Law”, Changing Character of War conference, “Morality and Modern War”, Pembroke College, Oxford, 15 February 2017

“After Iraq: When to Go to War?”, public lecture, with response by Sir Stuart Peach, Chief of the Defence Staff, Policy Exchange, London, 31 December 2017

“Proportionality: Lessons from the Somme”, symposium, Florida State University, Tallahassee, USA, 9 December 2016

“The Somme: Can it be Justified?”, Oundle School, 1 December 2016

“Why Are We Fighting Today?”, symposium on “What is War Today”, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, 22-23 November 2016

“The Bible, Christianity, and Patriotism”, The 6<sup>th</sup> Bible in China Seminar, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, 9-11 November 2016

“Physician-Assisted Suicide: The Issues”, Kicking the Bucket Festival, Mansfield College,

Oxford, 1 November 2016

- “The Somme: Can it be Justified?”, Salisbury Cathedral, Salisbury, 20 October 2016  
 “Race, Rhodes, and Empire”, Winchester College, Winchester, 12 October 2016  
 “How Can War be Justified?”, Honorable Artillery Company, London, 3 October 2016  
 “The Rhodes Affair: Student Zealots and Liberal Dons”, conference on “Free Speech and the Academy: How left-wing censorship is threatening to destroy our universities”, Winchester, sponsored by New Criterion, New York, 30 September 2016  
 “What’s Wrong with Rights?”, Symposium on the History of Moral Concepts, the Centre for Global Studies and the University of Exeter, Westminster, 27 September 2016  
 “In Defence of Just War: Christian Tradition, Controversies, and Cases”, Theological Universities of Apeldoorn and Kampen, Netherlands, 24 June 2016

### **Book in progress**

*What’s Wrong with Rights?* (OUP, 2019)

### **Chapters in books (published & forthcoming)**

- “Stagger Onward, Rejoicing: Jean Bethke Elshtain, Augustinian”, in Michael Chevallier and Debra Erickson, eds, *In Search of the Ethical Polity: Critical Essays on the Work of Jean Bethke Elshtain* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, in press)  
 “The Moral Justification of Military Intervention: Some Fresh Proposals”, in Daniel Brunstetter and Jean-Vincent Holleindre, eds, *The Ethics of War and Peace in an Era of Contested and Fragmented Sovereignty* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, in press)  
 “The Religious: Obstacle or Facilitator of Forgiveness? The Case of Northern Ireland”, in *Le Pardon* (La Roche-sur-Yon, France: Centre Vendéen de Recherches Historiques, in press)  
 “A Global State, International Law, and the Containment of Persistent Conflict: An Anglican Response to *Pacem in Terris*”, in Heinz-Gerhard Justenhoven and Mary-Ellen O’Connell, eds., *Peace through Law: Reflections on ‘Pacem in Terris’ from Philosophy, Law, Theology, and Political Science*, Studies in Peace Ethics (Baden-Baden: Nomos & Aschendorff Verlagen, 2016)

### **Articles in journals (published & forthcoming)**

- “In Defence of Just War: Christian Tradition, Controversies, and Cases”, *Pacem: Militaert tidsskrift for etisk og teologisk refleksjon*, 19.2 (November 2016)

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

- “Assisted Suicide”, letter, *The Times*, 1 April 2017  
 “Outing yourself as a rightist isn’t easy”, *The Conservative*, April 2017  
 “Britain can and should punch above its weight”, *Standpoint*, March 2017  
 “After Iraq: When to go to war?” (London: Policy Exchange, 2017)  
 “Punching above our weight is just what Britain needs”, article, *Times*, 1 February 2017  
 “The Rhodes Affair: Student Zealots and Liberal Dons”, *The New Criterion*, January 2017

“Liberals are Wrong to Write Off the West”, article, *The Times*, 29 December 2016

“In Defence of Just War: Christian tradition, Controversies, and Cases”, *Providence: A Journal of Christianity and American Foreign Policy*, 4, Summer 2016

“What’s Hounding Baskerville? Reflections in the Wake of Brexit”, *Providence: A Journal of Christianity and American Foreign Policy*, 17 August 2016:

<https://providencemag.com/2016/08/whats-hounding-baskerville-brexit-theresa-may/>

“Evaluating the Somme”, *Providence: A Journal of Christianity and American Foreign Policy*, 18 July 2016: <https://providencemag.com/2016/07/evaluating-somme/>

“Why we should learn to live with Trident”, article, *The [Glasgow] Herald*, 18 July 2016

### I. Dr Lamb: lectures and publications

#### ***Invited lectures and presentations (completed and scheduled)***

“Between Presumption and Despair: Augustine’s Hope for the Commonwealth,” American Political Science Association (scheduled, September 2017)

“Cultivating Virtues in Postgraduates: A Case Study of the Oxford Character Project” (with JB), Cultivating Virtue in the University Conference, University of Oxford (May 2016)

“Cultivating Virtues in Postgraduates: A Case Study of the Oxford Character Project,” Beacon Project Working Group, Wake Forest University (April 2017)

“What Is Good Leadership?” and “Friendship and the Life of Leadership,” The Character of Leadership Forum, Hong Kong University (April 2017)

“Between Presumption and Despair: Augustine’s Hope for the Commonwealth,” Presentation in “Ethics and the Good Life” course at Haverford College (March 2017)

“Character in Higher Education,” Panel at The Educators Roundtable, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, University of Virginia (March 2017)

“Between Presumption and Despair: Augustine’s Hope for the Commonwealth,” Hope and Optimism Working Group, Cornell University (March 2017)

“Between Presumption and Despair: Augustine’s Hope for the Commonwealth,” University of Pavia, Italy (February 2017)

“Rhetoric, Reason, and Republican Liberty: Augustine on the Use and Abuse of Power,” American Academy of Religion (November 2016)

“Augustine and Republican Liberty: Contextualizing His Defense of Coercion,” Reconsiderations V Conference, The Augustinian Institute, Villanova University (September 2016)

“Hope from the Margins: Wendell Berry’s Vision of Democratic Transformation,” American Political Science Association (September 2016)

“Cultivating Virtues in Postgraduates: A Case Study from the Oxford Character Project” (with Dr Jonathan Brant), Jubilee Centre for Virtues and Character, University of Birmingham (July 2016)

#### ***Books (in progress)***

*Everyday Ethics: Moral Theology Meets Anthropology and the Social Sciences* (co-edited)



volume from conference under review with OUP)  
*A Commonwealth of Hope: Reimagining Augustine's Political Thought* (under revision,  
 invited for full review by Princeton University Press)  
*Augustine and Republican Liberty* (drafts of 3 of 6 chapters)

**Articles and chapters (published)**

"Augustine and Republican Liberty: Contextualizing Coercion," *Augustinian Studies*  
 (forthcoming, 2017)  
 "Ethics for Climate Change Communicators," *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate  
 Science* and *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Climate Change Communication*  
 (forthcoming)

**Articles (in progress)**

"Beyond Pessimism: A Structure of Encouragement in Augustine's *City of God*" (under  
 review)  
 "Between Presumption and Despair: Augustine's Hope for the Commonwealth" (in  
 preparation)  
 "Cultivating Virtues in Postgraduates: A Case Study from the Oxford Character Project"  
 (with JB; drafted and in revision for presentation to Jubilee Centre for  
 Virtues and Character)  
 "How Are Virtues Cultivated?: A Practical Program for Postgraduate Moral Education" (with  
 JB)  
 "Character Education for Social Action: Conceptualizing and Cultivating a Habit of Service"  
 (with Emma Taylor-Collins)

**J. Dr Orr: lectures and publications**

**Books**

*Divine Law and Natural Order* (under review with Oxford University Press)

**Articles**

"Berlinian Pluralism and Abrahamic Monotheism," *Political Theology* 18(3) (2017)  
 "Teleology as a Theological Problem in Kant's Pre-Critical Thought," *Modern Theology* 32(4)  
 (2016)

**Reports**

"Beyond Belief: Defending Religious Liberty through the British Bill of Rights," *ResPublica*  
 (November 2016)

**Reviews**

David Marno, *Death Be Not Proud: The Art of Holy Attention* (Chicago, IL.: University of  
 Chicago Press, 2016), *Times Literary Supplement* (forthcoming, November 2017)  
 Oliver O'Donovan, *Entering Into Rest: Ethics as Theology III* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans,

2017), *Times Literary Supplement* (forthcoming, August 2017)  
Paul L. Allen, *Theological Method: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012),  
*Heythrop Journal* (forthcoming, 2017)  
Rupert Shortt, *God is No Thing: Coherent Christianity* (London: Hurst Publishing,  
2016), *Religious Studies* 53(2) (2017)

### **Acknowledgements**

Warm thanks are due to the Centre's Administrator, Ginny Dunn, for her administration of this year's two colloquia and Advisory Council meeting, and for co-administering the May Conference with Claire Shuttleworth of the Oxford Character Project.

*Nigel Biggar, Director  
Christ Church, Oxford  
20 May 2017*