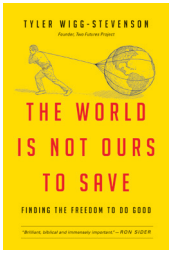
BOOK REVIEWS

The World is Not Ours to Save: Finding the Freedom to Do Good

Wigg-Stevenson, T. (2013). Downers Grave, Illinois: IVP Books. 222pp
ISBN-13: 978-0-8308-3657-4

Nathan Brown

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***The World is Not Ours to Save* is a book that is both sobering and liberating. Amid welcoming the renewal of awareness, concern and action in relation justice issues in many parts of the contemporary church—of which he is one of many leading voices—author Tyler Wigg-Stevenson is concerned about the sustainability of these worthy impulses, and where these noble exertions and potential burnout by many—particularly younger—Christians might find the church in a few years time. He is also concerned that the church as a whole remains ill-equipped to respond well, faithfully and compassionately, to possible large-scale terrorist attack or other nuclear-nightmare scenario, the effects he is all too conversant with as an anti-nuclear campaigner and founding director of the Two Futures Project. (He urges that the continued availability of nuclear weapons makes their use inevitable at some point.)**

Wigg-Stevenson was an anti-nuclear weapons campaigner before he became a Christian and describes a key moment of "conversion" as the experience of realisation suggested by his book title, that he simply could not save the world—the problems were too big, the risks too great, the underlying brokenness too profound, his best efforts too small. He describes it as the time when has most clearly heard the voice of God: "The world is not yours, not to save or to damn. Only serve the one whose it is."

This moment of clarity as a young activist changed his worldview and his faith but not his passion for justice and work for the world God loves. The acknowledgment that "the world is not ours to save" is not a resignation from peacemaking and doing justice. Rather it frees us to work for good, realising the responsibility is not ours and that we work in harmony with the God whose world and work it is.

In so doing, this book also answers voices within Christianity that would dismiss or even discourage working for the good of the world on theological grounds. "There is no contradiction in labouring as Christians to serve the kingdom that is 'at hand' and 'near to us' while believing that such efforts are distinct from its final consummation," writes Wigg-Stevenson. Faithfulness is active and engaged but in some different ways and with some different motivations to some of our fellow activists.

The World is Not Ours to Save identifies four fallacies that limit our attempts to save the world: misplacing ourselves as the hero of the story, rather than Jesus; underestimating the evil and brokenness of our world; trying to co-opt God in support of our causes, rather than working with His kingdom; and ignoring our own brokenness and complicity in the lost-ness of our world. In the second half of the book, Wigg-Stevenson responds to each of these fallacies in turn, seeing them addressed in the prophet Micah's vision of the peaceable kingdom, building peace with God, peace between nations and peace within communities (see Micah 4:1–5).

This study is a call to better, more kingdom-focused, God-centred, world-embracing activism, which may well be more sustainable, more passionate and ultimately more transformative. *The World is Not Ours to Save* should lighten the self-expectations from many passionate and earnest but often burdened activists and would-be activists, in whatever their profession, role or cause. Even the worst-case scenarios he portrays are placed back where they belong, in the hands of the God whose world it is, offering hope that surpasses our best efforts and our greatest fears. God is always bigger than our earnest best or our nightmarish worst—and that frees us to work passionately with and for Him to serve others and love our world. TEACH



Anzac's Long Shadow: The Cost of our National Obsession

James Brown (2014). Collingwood, VIC: Redback. 184pp
ISBN: 9781863956390

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James Brown's book *Anzac's Long Shadow* is a timely insight into the problems of too much of a good thing. As the centenary of the Gallipoli landings looms up next year, an increasing flood of celebratory and memorial activities is publicised, and print, electronic and broadcast media is in overdrive.

This book seeks to put our emphasis on a mythic past into a clear and contemporary perspective. Brown brings significant personal and professional experience to bear on his analysis of the impact of the Anzac legend on modern Australian consciousness. He served in Iraq and Afghanistan, analysing the activities of the enemy irregular troops and briefing soldiers on operations, frequently travelling on dangerous missions himself.

His book examines the engagement of the legacy of Anzac in nine chapters. The first studies the plans for commemoration next year, while the next two analyse the war in Afghanistan and Australia's (non) response to it. Chapter 4 discusses the 'widening gap' between matters civilian and military, while the next looks at how the Anzac legend has warped perceptions and analysis in Australia's modern military. Chapter 6 looks at veterans' issues through the eyes of Australian television soaps, and Chapter 7 critiques the current functioning of veterans' organisations and charities. Chapter 8 engages the relationship between Anzac commemoration and the contemporary soldier, while the final chapter questions Australia's capacity to deal with its military future while still bound by the myths of the past.

The essential point of Brown's book is captured in its subtitle: that our national obsession with Gallipoli has distracted us from contemporary military issues and blinded us from paying attention to the urgent issues that emerge from our engagements in current conflicts and Australia's strategic military priorities in the immediate future. Anzac has so captured our imagination that we are prepared to spend a fortune commemorating it, while at the same time ignoring the pressing fact that our current military is gravely underfunded. The legend's emphasis on the efficacy of our amateur Anzac soldiers compromises our awareness of the need for a thoroughly professional military capable of effective response in today's extremely complex military operations. Our treatment of veterans is shamefully inadequate and stems from a collective failure to see past idealised or simplistic images through to the very real issues that affect veterans, and our unwillingness to address the organisational and structural problems that beset those institutions historically tasked with looking after returned servicemen and women.

Brown's analysis matters in the year leading up to the centenary of the Gallipoli landings, where celebrations threaten to deepen the divide between idealised memorialisation of a distancing past and the grave issues of the pressing present and immediate future. This book will help teachers through the complex issues that surround the Anzac hype of the coming year. Unlike other Anzac detractors, such as Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds in What's Wrong with Anzac? The militarisation of Australian history, and Craig Stockings in Zombie Myths of Australian Military History (reviewed in TEACH 4(2)), Brown is not opposed to the Anzac story or its celebrations per se. What he objects to is that it prevents any meaningful public discussion, or understanding, of military matters that lie outside of the myth's narrow purvey. He simply asks us to bring to the celebrations a wider and deeper awareness of other issues that matter. Anzac's Long Shadow reminds us that remembering the past should never be at the expense of ignoring the present, and as such, should be almost compulsory reading for every teacher – primary, secondary or tertiary – who will have to address in one way or another the centenary of Anzac. TEACH

Captains of the Soul: A history of Australian Army Chaplains

Michael Gladwin (2013). Newport NSW: Big Sky. 412pp
ISBN: 978-1-922132-52-9

Daniel Reynaud

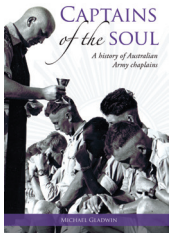
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Michael Gladwin's *Captains of the Soul* fills a vital void in Australia's war history. Our national war stories are overwhelmingly secular, and Anzac is now widely considered as the national secular religion, complete with a national temple, a national holy-day, regional temples and memorials, and a widely-accepted national dogma. Yet Gladwin's book is an overdue reminder that religion has played an important part of Australia's military history. While it would be an unsupportable exaggeration to claim too close a tie between our military and Christianity, at the same time the Christian influence on and engagement with the army is far too significant to be swept under the carpet of the secular Anzac myth.

Captains of the Soul is an long-overdue part of the official Australian Army History Collection, drawing official recognition for the role of the Chaplaincy Corps for the first time in its history. The book's launch at the War Memorial late in 2013 was accompanied by ceremonies dedicating a plaque to the Corps, again, in belated recognition. Gladwin's book traces the origins of the Chaplaincy Corps and its vicissitudes over time from a part-time amateur organisation frequently overlooked by the more martial arms to its modern fully professional body of highly-trained specialists who work in close integration with Army command. It takes a basically chronological approach with two parallel themes.

Each major period has a chapter dealing with the chaplains in action with an accompanying chapter on the organisational and administrative side of the Corps. For the teacher and student, the latter chapters will probably be of less interest, vital as they are to an informed understanding of the way the Chaplaincy Corps has developed, but the chapters dealing with the chaplains in action are full of fascinating narratives which can enliven and lend insight to a classroom engagement with the interaction of faith and war.

Such a book would be a helpful addition to any school library and can inform classes both in history and in religion. Christian schools in particular should invest in this book to ensure that an accurate and engaging picture of faith in action is communicated to balance the stories of Anzac which ignore the involvement of men, and increasingly women, of faith. TEACH



Taking God to school. The end of Australia's egalitarian education?

Marion Maddox (2014). Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin. 248pp
ISBN: 9781743315712

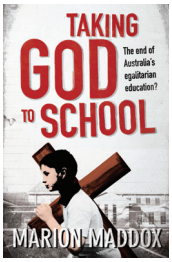
Rommert Spoor

Formerly Associate Director (Government Affairs), SPD Education Department, NSW

There is a strong theme running through this book: A campaign to restore the integrity of the concept of "free, secular, and compulsory" to the public schools of Australia. Maddox acknowledges that she has been helped by a team of researchers in the compilation of the work. This soon becomes evident to the reader through repetition, which makes for heavy reading.

The author takes us back to the nineteenth century when debates and arguments about education raged in all of the Australian colonies. From their earliest days, education was provided to the select few by the Churches and funded by the various colonial governments.

In the 1870's, in most European countries and America, laws were enacted to provide education to the general population. This phenomena was



not absent from the colonies, but who was going to pay for it? When the Australian Constitution followed the American pattern, the responsibility for education was passed on to the states. As a result, public schools were established far and wide. However, private schools maintained a ready clientele. The separation of public (government) and private schools continued until the 1960's.

Maddox seems unclear regarding the forces that changed this pattern. Some of these were that Catholic schools grew rapidly in the early post war period due to migration from eastern and southern Europe. The Catholic portion of the ALP broke away to become the DLP under Bob Santamaria. On the world scene, the Cold War caused the USA to take a comparative look at their education system with the realisation

that American schools fell far short of their counterparts in the USSR, especially in Science and Maths.

Robert Menzies, as Prime Minister in the post war years, echoed the US move by setting up a special Department of Education and Science with Malcolm Fraser as its head. The Commonwealth Government for the first time moved into the direct funding of schools by offering science laboratories to both public and private schools in 1963. This was followed by funding for libraries and library books before the decade closed.

Maddox gives all the credit to Gough Whitlam for offering financial support to schools. It is true that Peter Karmel was commissioned to investigate the best methods to provide funding to schools. The Karmel report resulted in the establishment of the Schools

Commission to oversee the distribution of per capita grants to the private sector. The subsequent development of the Education Resource Index, to calculate the level of need, received a warm reception from the Catholic schools.

Maddox attributes the rise of the so called "Christian Schools" to the emergence of the Pentecostal or "charismatic" churches in the late 70's. This claim is debatable because The Christian Community Schools were founded by the Baptist minister Rev Robert Frisken., while the Christian Parent-controlled schools had their origin with the Dutch Reformed Church in Tasmania and was led by a school Principal, Mr Jack Michelsen.

The Christian schools group was an informal group joined by the Lutheran Schools under the Rev Tom Reuter from SA, and the Seventh-day Adventist Schools represented by Bob Spoor. None of these could be generally branded as Pentecostal.

Maddox, who pursued a PhD in Theology before gaining another PhD in Politics, has a unique background. Presently a Professor of Politics at Macquarie University, she is the daughter and granddaughter of Anglican ministers. She claims to be a regular church goer, but denies the validity of the Bible and mocks the idea of "creationism" as having any place in modern education. Her ridicule is directed at any school that seeks to choose its teachers and staff on the grounds of allegiance to scriptural standards of morality.

Finally, Maddox comes across as politically biased in favour of the Australian Labor Party. She seems theologically confused about Christianity, and is socially conformist to the idea that there are no moral boundaries. Maddox endeavours to build a strong case that only truly free, secular and compulsory schools have any right to public funding, thus drawing attention to current and ongoing controversy in Australian society. TEACH