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Manning Clark's Repudiation of Anglicanism and the Appeal of 'Sentimental Humanism' in his Quest for Grace

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Abstract

Manning Clark is regarded as a pioneer of Australian national history. His output has been unequalled but it has provoked a vigorous division of opinions concerning its accuracy and the all-pervading thesis that Australia, to achieve its true national self-perception, must throw off the British heritage that included the baleful influence of the Anglicanism in which Clark was raised by his priest father. Here the work of three key scholarly critics, namely Dr George Shaw, Professor Brian Fletcher and Professor Alan Atkinson is evaluated, all of whom are Anglican historians of Australia. They have made very different assessments of the evolution of Australian national identity and the permanence of the British heritage. Shaw, as a former student of Clark, has assessed his mentor's work not as rigorous history but essentially as 'sentimental humanism'. As well, the opportunity is taken to reflect on the two extensive biographies of Clark, namely by Brian Matthews and Mark McKenna. Both these men were educated as Roman Catholics at a time when Rome was decidedly allergic to the idea of ecumenical outreach. Consequently, it is argued here that an accurate assessment of Manning Clark's oeuvre is yet to be accomplished.

Keywords: Anglicanism; acrimonious debate; autobiography; conversion; historiography; Roman Catholicism; 'sentimental humanism'

To students of Australian history Charles Manning Hope Clark (1915–91) was, as professor at the Australian National University, a virtual icon. He was the son of a London-born father, Charles, from a working-class background. The family had migrated to Australia when Charles Clark was only two years old. This baby grew up to become the father of Manning Clark and he played a unique role in moulding the character of his famous son. Most importantly, Charles had joined the most bourgeois profession imaginable, namely that of clergyman, having entered that notable institution for the training of evangelical clergy – Moore College, Sydney – in 1904. He was ordained priest in 1907. Having duly married Catherine Hope in 1910, Charles became *pater familias*. Manning was born the second of three

children all within six years. After serving in three positions within the diocese of Sydney and war service in the Australian Medical Corps from May 1917 until October 1918, Charles in 1922 took the family to the diocese of Melbourne and to the parish of Phillip Island. There, as a boy, Manning spent his formative years developing a passion for cricket and the typical Australian outdoor life that children in the countryside could lead. Apart from school, Manning's mental-spiritual formation took place between the densely printed pages of the *Book of Common Prayer*, the King James Bible and the *English Hymnal*. The language and cadences of these venerable texts had seeped deeply into the young Manning's soul and stayed with him all his life. After his early schooling, the gifted boy was awarded a scholarship to the prestigious Melbourne Grammar School, from where he advanced to Balliol College, Oxford.

The experience of a 'colonial' scholar – an Austral-Briton – at Oxford was painfully ambivalent. While there, the cricketing intellectual from Melbourne experienced instances of contempt for 'colonial' students displayed by his English fellow students. As Clark reports in many sections of his memoirs, all of that imbued him with a distinct resentment of the English, which no doubt contributed also to his later public repudiation of the Church of England. It is a recurring and enigmatic theme in his memoirs.

During his time at that 'sweet city with its dreaming spires' Clark continued to excel at cricket, having been selected to play for the university. Academically, although he broadened and deepened his scholarship in the humanities Clark did not finish his master's thesis on 'The Political and Social Ideas of A. de Tocqueville', choosing to return home to Melbourne where he joined the staff of Geelong Grammar School. Before all that, however, the young Clark had met and fallen in love with the daughter of the notable Belgian-born Germanist, Augustin Lodewyckx, namely the linguist Dymphna. She had been studying in Bonn, Germany. It was there in 1938 that Clark visited her, two weeks after the notorious pogrom against Jews, *Reichskristallnacht* (9–11 November 1938). It was decided that Dymphna should come over to Oxford where they married on 31 January 1939.

Clark did not finish his MA thesis on de Tocqueville at Balliol and began to apply for teaching posts, finally securing one as senior history master at the famous Blundell's School in Tiverton, starting on 1 November 1939. It was there that Clark manifested his pedagogic gifts.¹ The times, however, could not have been more turbulent both for the Clarks personally and, of course, internationally. The Nazi war machine was marauding eastward, and it was deemed prudent for Clark, Dymphna and newly born son Sebastian to return home. After weighing up their options a passage was secured, and the young family arrived safely in Australia on 10 August 1940.²

Clark searched for a new source of income and without that Oxford MA he was content to accept the post of Senior History Master at the prestigious Geelong Grammar School. He also coached the First XI cricket team. There he developed

¹Brian Matthews, *Manning Clark: A Life* (Crow's Nest, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2010), pp. 80–83, from where the previous biographical details have been taken as well.

²Matthews, *Manning Clark*, p. 86.

his pedagogy and was eventually able to complete his master's thesis for Melbourne University. This step upwards qualified Clark for appointment as lecturer to Melbourne University from where in 1944 he was appointed to the staff of Canberra University College, which became the Australian National University in Canberra (ANU). The vicar's son from Phillip Island found himself on an ascending academic trajectory, which finally led to a full professorship in the School of General Studies at ANU.

Clark had arrived. His appointment was soon to be validated by his prodigious productivity. He became a rising star in the firmament. By the early 1960s, at the latest, the young Clark had decided to immerse himself in the history of his native land, finally producing his six volumes of a *History of Australia*. (1962–87), a benchmark in Australian historiography. It was, however, an achievement that attracted not a few critics because it was mainly an attempt to define Australian national identity based essentially on a disparagement of Australia's British roots, about which he commented in 1990 that 'We were all still victims of the giant British philistinism'.³ Indeed, the anti-colonial haughtiness experienced at Balliol had wormed its way into Clark's psyche and left him with a lifelong mental-spiritual quirkiness. Some would say it became a pathological eccentricity.⁴

Clark had come to despise the English who had allegedly during his time at Oxford treated most colonials with peculiar disdain, though he records that some came to admire his cricketing prowess.⁵ Bitterness towards the English and the Church of England is a recurrent theme in his writings. Nevertheless, the six volumes were an unprecedented historiographical accomplishment. No one else had ever attained to such creative heights, so it was hailed by those who applauded its underlying tendentiousness. Indeed, it stoked the patriotic yearnings of the left-leaning, anti-British intelligentsia and quickened the pulse of the extensive Irish-Roman Catholic community, both of which, of course, were closely intertwined.

There is no doubt that Clark's persona came to resemble a Hegelian-Wagnerian spiritual *Streiter*, champion, like Wotan from the ethereal heights of the Valhalla of historical scholarship located in the more frigid and mountainous south-east corner of the continent. The region is now identified as the 'golden triangle' marked by Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney. The boy from Phillip Island revelled in his newly

³Cf. Manning Clark, *The Quest for Grace* (Ringwood, Vic.: Viking Penguin Books, 1990), p. 193. Clark's memoirs are peppered with sometimes virulent criticisms of the Church of England and its bourgeois members, for example. They were 'pharisaical' (p. 32); 'could not satisfy the "femina" in me' (p. 47); and they were 'life-deniers' (p. 95).

⁴Most notably Clark's work was severely criticized posthumously by his former student, friend and publisher, Peter Ryan (1923–2015) in a *cause célèbre* unleashed by an article in the September 1993 *Quadrant*. See Ryan's personal summing up in his *Lines of Fire: Manning Clark and Other Writings* (Clarion: Binnalong, 1997). Here, between pp. 179 and 234, Ryan engaged in a clinical dismantling of Clark's work, which he had edited for publication, saying that 'the technical faults were his eccentricities of style, his readiness to replace reasonable explanations with gnomic pronouncements, his tendency to let the narrative lift itself onto a level exalted beyond the requirement of common sense, and above all his unreliability with mere facts' (p. 195). See also Doug Munro, *History Wars: The Peter Ryan–Manning Clark Controversy* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2021).

⁵Clark, *Quest*, pp. 92–93.

won fame as a *Volksbildhauer*, that is, 'sculptor of the nation',⁶ and so it came to pass that on 6 August 1979, this colossus bestriding the Australian academic landscape had been invited to the academic wasteland of Queensland by a committee of students from St Leo's Roman Catholic university college to give the inaugural 'James Duhig Memorial Lecture' entitled, 'The Quest for an Australian Identity'.⁷

Sir James Duhig had been Roman Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane from 1917 to 1965 and certainly merited a memorial lecture, having served in the one diocese for almost half a century; it was a world record that still stands.⁸ Clark's exalted position as Australia's leading storyteller certainly recommended him for the task of honouring the long-serving Irish-born prelate. And like many unusually gifted people Clark himself was also on a quest combined with a thirst for popular adulation, a *Geltungsbedürfnis* or yearning for validation.⁹ He always resented critics and reading between the lines of his memoir of 1990, *The Quest for Grace*, this is also a recurring theme.

The Quest was written in a spirit of not always the most gracious magnanimity. It enabled Clark to get up close and personal about himself, his family and colleagues, both friends and enemies. It was clear that from the 1960s he had come to perceive himself to be gifted with a prophetic calling to mould the nation's self-perception or image, in short to impart to Australians a sense of their unique identity and destiny. He had thrown off his earlier mantle of being an Antipodean Briton and earnestly recommended that his countrymen should see themselves no longer as citizens living in an outpost of a decadent and effete empire but as a developing, energetic, independent *Volk* in the southern seas, striving to unbind the ties with which the British had harnessed the country and had imposed thereby the humiliating 'cultural cringe' that has allegedly characterized Australian self-awareness for so long. As he vitriolically remarked in his Brisbane lecture, the pretentious ceremony declaring the inauguration of the Commonwealth held at Centennial Park in Sydney on 1 January 1901, 'stank in the nostrils' because it was presided over by the Queen's representative Lord Hopetoun and where the Anglican hierarchy had been allocated an exalted position among the dignitaries on the stage. This was an opportunity not to be passed, to enable Clark to hammer the putatively pretentious British aristocracy.¹⁰

When Clark came to Brisbane the present writer was a relatively young 'ethnic' academic and had sought the opportunity to interview the notable visitor during his

⁶I owe this term to my German mentor Professor Walter-Peter Fuchs at the University of Erlangen in 1963–65. Fuchs was at pains to show how Prussia-Germany had been ideologically influenced by its nationalist historians during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when they shaped the anti-liberal and anti-democratic mentality of generations of students by extolling the virtues of authoritarianism and militarism as characteristically German. Thereby they had laid the foundations of a nation destined to expand by force of arms.

⁷Clark's lecture, 'The Quest for an Australian Identity' was published subsequently by the University of Queensland Press, St Lucia in 1980.

⁸See T.P. Boland, *James Duhig* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1986), p. 367.

⁹See n. 3 above.

¹⁰Remarkably, this attitude did not prevent Clark from accepting an honour from the Queen during her state visit of 1975. See Mark McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2011), p. 611.

visit.¹¹ Two things emerged from Clark's discourse,¹² which aroused concern about his vision: first, Clark evinced little or no interest in the multicultural composition of Australian society. For example, he did not know that Sydney had a Lord Mayor in the years 1973–75 of Lebanese descent. Nicholas Shehadie was Australia's most celebrated and unequalled Rugby Union champion,¹³ and he was followed by a Polish-Jewish Lord Mayor, Leo Port (or Rapaport), in 1975–78.

In this regard, it is significant that Clark's formation had taken place in Melbourne where in those days it was akin to being acculturated in a foreign country. The regional-cultural divisions within Australian society were symbolized by the mutually exclusive codes of football in which Sydney was then the breeding ground for the two forms of rugby, while in Melbourne pulsed the national heart of Aussie Rules, a strange amalgamation of soccer and Irish football though played with a rugby-type ball. It features players who are mostly very tall and athletic young men capable of prodigiously long and high kicking of the ball on a very large oval. As a spectacle, 'Aussie Rules footy' attracts huge crowds who flock weekly in their tens of thousands to the Melbourne Cricket Ground for the club contests. The Victorian capital was and still is for many Australians the centre of the universe. Brisbane, Queensland's capital, by way of contrast, was then a bastion of two codes of rugby. It was regarded, however, if at all, at that time, as located in the deep, sweaty, unwashed north where it was mostly uncomfortably warm and people appeared to be on permanent holiday, lightly clad as the men often were, in shorts and long white socks. North of the Tweed River for some counted for virtually nothing.¹⁴

The second thing was that although Clark's father was an ordained and active Anglican priest, his son Manning evinced no systematic knowledge of theology, little church history and consequently could never have formed a mature comprehension of Anglicanism, although he would have attended countless Prayer Book services. For him it contained nothing that could satisfy his 'quest for grace' or his intellectual curiosity. Later Clark came to give the impression that he had toyed with endorsing Marxist-Leninism and then refocused his preference to its most consistent ideological adversary, Roman Catholicism. Could the Roman Catholic Church – read: 'Irish-Catholic' Church – possibly help in his quest for grace?

Like some notable ex-Anglicans before him Clark yearned for a more centralized, authoritative religion or ideology, which may help explain why he had arranged for his Jesuit colleague at ANU, the Reverend Dr John Eddy SJ, to organize and preside at his funeral in St Christopher's Cathedral in Canberra. John Eddy was reputedly a tolerant, hospitable and ecumenically sensitive priest who graciously allowed

¹¹Of Lebanese-Christian and Scottish-Episcopalian extraction.

¹²Published as a pamphlet by the University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1980.

¹³Nicholas Shehadie (1926–2018) was born in Coogee, Sydney, the son of the Sydney-based Syrian Orthodox priest, and husband of Dr Marie Bashir (born 1931) also of Lebanese extraction. His state funeral was held at Sydney's ancient colonial built Anglo-Catholic church of St James', King Steet on 21 February 2018, presided over by the then Archbishop of Sydney Glenn Davies.

¹⁴Illustrative of the nostalgia of the first British settlers are such names derived from the British Isles. The river, which is the border line between the then colonies of New South Wales and Queensland, is named 'The Tweed'.

Manning's brother, Russell (1912–98) also as an Anglican priest and Canon, to assist fully robed.¹⁵

Indications are that Clark inwardly tried to cultivate a 'sense of the numinous', but it remained elusively amorphous. Having a 'sense of the numinous' means having a conviction that there was an irreducible spiritual element in being human, and while Clark also retained cadences in his prose derived from the Bible and the *Book of Common Prayer*, he clearly had concluded that Anglicanism was far too theologically woolly and liturgically chaotic to have a future.¹⁶ Its adherents, he noted, were largely bourgeois and stuffy people who seemed to believe they were the salt of the earth. Indeed, Anglicanism, for Clark, apart from those social deficiencies, was a form of religion incapable of delivering the certainty that the common man so evidently craved.

So, like many others before him Clark seemed never to have grasped that Anglicanism had morphed into a religion of intellectual freedom. Indeed, there is anecdotal evidence that he could be quite contemptuous of it in the presence of an Anglican bishop.¹⁷ And that dimension came out in his James Duhig Memorial lecture at the University of Queensland, which drew warm approbation from the large Irish-Roman Catholic section of the audience who thronged to the St Lucia campus to hang on the prophet's Miltonic and Cranmerian phrases. People in the audience of Anglo or 'ethnic' derivation would have felt isolated and vulnerable among the overwhelmingly self-aware Irish-Catholic audience, which Clark had skilfully manipulated on that memorable night.

The Germans have a very concise expression to describe such personalities as Clark. They say that their significance is 'umstritten', which means 'contested' or 'controversial'. 'Umstritten', however, has a more energetic connotation than the English translations might convey because it is derived from the word *Streit*, which means 'conflict'. Clark's idiosyncrasies are emphasized by his latest biographer, Mark McKenna. And well before that the celebrated German-born Russian, Professor Eugene Kamenka, who occupied the now abolished chair of History of Ideas at ANU thought that Clark's vision for Australia in his 'John Curtin Memorial Lecture' (16 July 1993) was out of focus:

¹⁵Patrick O'Farrell, 'Obituary for Manning Clark', *Australian Book Review* 132 (July 1991). O'Farrell was a contemporary of Clark's, teaching at the University of New South Wales, Sydney and a doughty champion of Irish history and the Roman Catholic church in Australia. See also Ross McKibbin, 'Cursing and Breast-Beating', *London Review of Books* 54.4 (23 February 2012). This is a review of McKenna's biography of Clark, *An Eye for Eternity*.

¹⁶Clark had concluded after conversations with prominent conservative Roman Catholic personalities such as the poet James McAuley that there were only two versions of Christianity that preserved the true image of Christ, namely Romanism and Eastern Orthodoxy. So much for the Anglo-Catholic 'Three branch theory' of Catholicism. See McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity*, p. 412. To illustrate this aspect of Clark's literary style, the following examples are taken from his Brisbane lecture 'The Quest for an Australian Identity': 'majesty, dominion power' (p. 9), 'take down the mighty from their seat and sending the rich empty away' (p. 15), 'an outward and visible sign . . .' (p. 16) and 'inward, spiritual grace' (p. 19). Suffice it to say such allusions abound in all of Clark's prose.

¹⁷Personal communication from the late Bishop Bruce Wilson (1942–2021) when he was Director of St Mark's National Theological Centre in Canberra, 1984–89.

Manning Clark was trying to make Australia into something it was not: The site of a great and universal moral drama, of morally and religiously tortured leaders and Wagnerian heroes on the football field. (He meant AFL of course.) *Our need is not to build an Australian culture but to promote culture, including art, music, drama and serious literature, rationality, democracy and criticism in Australia* [emphasis added]. Here we have in recent years made remarkable progress in contributing to the creation and appreciation of a culture of universal significance. We always did so by sending our best abroad; we now do so at home as well. At the lower, more nationalist level, our alleged 'Australian culture' is a copy, mostly of America, partly of Ireland, partly of a much more simplified working-class Britain.¹⁸

The reader may decide whether s/he thinks that is fair criticism of Clark's once regarded monumental endeavours to fashion a uniquely anti-British Australia. Is Australia conceivable without British institutions? The late Professor Brian Fletcher of Sydney University has set the record straight on this score.¹⁹ By recalling precisely the formative policies of the early governors, especially Lachlan Macquarie (1810–21) and Richard Bourke (1831–37), the mother colony of New South Wales began to evince all the major characteristics of a developing liberal, egalitarian society, chiefly in the emancipation of convicts (by Macquarie) and the disestablishment of the Church of England (by Bourke).

As contemporary history has taught us, there is a potential danger in educating students at any age that they are a racially special and favoured species of humanity. It is akin to fascist forms of teaching national history. Like everyone else in the world, white Australians are just another conglomerate of immigrant peoples initially from the British Isles and parts of Europe who have since 1788 subjugated piecemeal the vast island continent, once called New Holland. By the mid twenty-first century new citizens of multicultural derivation came to Australia in the expectation of finding a country that has finally been programmed to emphasize those things that promote the unity of the multifaceted human race over those things that divide peoples. Indeed, when one has been educated both within the family unit and in the more elevated strata of the Church of England one comes both to affirm multiculturalism and to be ecumenically oriented. These twin perspectives serve to promote *decency* among 'all sorts and conditions' of humanity.²⁰

Consequently, Australians have been uniquely formed both by history and geography to oppose anything that would stress national peculiarity over fraternal

¹⁸Eugene Kamenka, 'Australia Made Me . . . But which Australia Is Mine?', *The John Curtin Memorial Lecture*, held at the Australian National University, 16 July 1993, p. 13.

¹⁹Brian Fletcher, *An English Church on Australian Soil: Anglicanism, Australian Society and the English Connection since 1788* (Canberra: Barton Books, 2015). See also his previous articles: 'Anglicanism and Nationalism in Australia 1901–1962', *Journal of Religious History* 23 (1999), pp. 215–33; 'Anglicanism and National Identity in Australia since 1962', *Journal of Religious History* 25, (2001), pp. 324–45. Professor Fletcher's research negates essentially everything that Clark's work has asserted about the Church of England in Australia. Neither does Fletcher's work merit a place in the index to Mark McKenna's monumental biography of Clark.

²⁰Attention is drawn to the 'Prayer for all Conditions of men . . .', No. 31 of 'Occasional Prayers' in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

relations with other countries, especially those successor states of the British Empire that now form the Commonwealth of Nations.²¹ The reason is that the evolution of constitutionalism, the rule of law, freedom of religion and basic human rights that evolved in the long and tortuous history of the United Kingdom have been bequeathed to all former dominions and colonies and have made indelible contributions to their modernization even though some former colonies have struggled with this heritage. That said, even these struggles – such as in some former African, Asian and Pacific colonies – illustrate that the civilizing values of the British Commonwealth are humanely progressive. They serve to inoculate peoples against the bacillus of totalitarianism in both politics and religion.

The Question of Sentimental Humanism

Clark's autobiography and his other vigorous proclamations as the self-appointed national prophet have not escaped acerbic criticism by a variety of his contemporaries, but few of these have attempted to account for his abandonment and ultimate contempt for the Church of England. Pre-dating Professor Brian Fletcher, the other great exception is the now retired Queensland Reader in History at the University of Queensland and Anglican priest, Dr George Shaw.²² As a mature-age doctoral student of Clark's and having experienced the most rigorous theological training then available in Australia, not to mention having served many years in Queensland dioceses, the young priest-scholar was uniquely equipped to identify his mentor's sins of omission and commission.²³

To begin with Shaw knew his Anglican history far better than most of his contemporaries and concluded that Clark's oeuvre was essentially 'sentimental humanism'. This phenomenon may have appealed to some Australians in their intellectual isolation, but it is essentially flawed, and certainly not objective reporting of 'how it essentially was' (von Ranke).²⁴ One may concur; Clark was driven by an urge to give his country men and women an upgraded perception of themselves, indeed, to carry out a rescue operation from the fate of sinking into a morass of alleged British philistinism. As stressed, the Church of England for Clark did not possess the intellectual-spiritual equipment to achieve that goal, an assertion that has been exposed as completely unfounded by both Shaw and Fletcher.

²¹Obviously not all Australians everywhere show toleration towards immigrants. The studies on all aspects of this subject are legion, but see Abe W. Ata, *Cultural Pluralism: Ethnocentricity and Interethnic Relationships* (Fitzroy: Catholic-Italian Research Centre, 1986).

²²Shaw's contributions are: 'A Counter Revolution in Australian Historiography?' in John A. Moses (ed.), *Historical Disciplines and Culture in Australasia: An Assessment* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979), pp. 101-18; 'Australian Sentimental Humanism: A Reading of Manning Clark's Autobiography', *Colloquium* 24.2 (1992), pp. 82-93; 'A Sentimental Humanist', in Carl Bridge (ed.), *Manning Clark: Essays on his Place in History* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1994), pp. 30-44. These path-breaking essays were all missed by McKenna in his assessment of Clark.

²³Shaw had written as Clark's doctoral student a benchmark biography of Australia's first and only Bishop of Australia namely William Grant Broughton entitled, *Patriot and Prophet: William Grant Broughton 1788-1853: Colonial Statesman and Ecclesiastic* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1978).

²⁴Shaw, 'A Sentimental Humanist?'

The question about Clark's later formal rejection of Anglicanism surely cannot be explained solely by the slights he experienced while a student in England. It must go deeper. Did he find the *Book of Common Prayer* services dull, pretentious and socially irrelevant? McKenna quotes Clark as writing in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht* (Bonn, 9–10 November 1938) that 'the BCP and hymns *Ancient & Modern* and all the aspirations of the souls of the Enlightenment were pathetically inadequate to combat the phenomenon of human evil'.²⁵ As Clark later became increasingly drawn into the Roman liturgy, he finally turned his back for ever on the Anglicanism of his birth.

That was not by any means unusual for some well-known former Anglicans, several of whom had also chosen to 'swim the Tiber'. Clark publicly demonstrated that by electing to be buried as a Roman Catholic. What is puzzling is that Clark's spirituality had initially been formed as an Anglican, but he was an Anglican in a fog most likely generated by the Moore College low church (read Calvinistic) expression of Anglicanism. Finally, his gnawing doubts led him to follow like Newman that imagined 'kindly light' that beckoned from the tower of St Christopher's Cathedral in Canberra.²⁶

In explaining Clark's 'conversion' George Shaw could possibly have hit the nail on the head when he pointed out two things: first, Clark's undergraduate enthusiasm for the 'Melbourne Enlightenment' enriched by his wide reading of modern European literature and secondly, his seemingly deep attachment to the 'Galilean Fisherman' that he had formed in his youth. In this context, however, one must also consider Clark's reading of Marx and Lenin. Their doctrines may have seemed for a while to have supplied an answer to the human condition, but like all secular humanists they possessed no 'eye of pity, lacked the eye for the human tragedy'.²⁷ The Babel of tongues obviously left Clark in a seemingly impenetrable fog.²⁸ Shaw perceptively comments here, 'The fog is a metaphorical allusion to that maddening obscurity about the ultimate meaning of existence and living which Clark voiced through his almost obsessive quotation of Dostoevsky's sentence: "I want to be there when everyone suddenly understands what it has all been for"'.²⁹ Now, gathered to his fathers, no one will ever know for certain whether his apparent conversion really had led him to the longed-for light.

²⁵McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity*, p. 648.

²⁶Nowhere is Clark's 'fog' better illustrated than in McKenna's report that Clark asked his friend and former student and now Roman Catholic priest to celebrate masses for him and give him communion. According to Sheehan, Clark always brought his *Book of Common Prayer* with him. He was accompanied by Dymphna, but she abstained from receiving the sacrament. And Clark confided to Sheehan that Anglicanism could never be enough for him. Interestingly, Fr Sheehan himself became a 'Canterbury pilgrim', having married and continued his priesthood in the Anglican Church. See, McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity*, pp. 659–61, *passim*.

²⁷Clark, *Quest*, p. 135.

²⁸Cf. Shaw, 'Australian Sentimental Humanism', p. 83. Note that already on the first page of his autobiography Clark confessed that since his childhood he existed in a 'dense fog'. Indeed, like many great personages of history, who penned their 'confessions', Clark also endured the agony of the enveloping fog: 'While in the fog I said many foolish things, hurt many people and hurt myself. This book [*Quest for Grace*] is the story of how I found my way out of the fog. It is the story of my search for wisdom and understanding.' See *Quest*, p. 1.

²⁹Shaw, 'Australian Sentimental Humanism', p. 83.

A reading of Clark's autobiography makes one aware of the evanescence of fads especially in the realm of 'belief'. This was especially the case with many of Clark's contemporaries who are still well known to students of history in Australia. They all seemed to be living in a fog, groping towards a light which they hoped would lead them on the right route to a destination without the foggiest idea of what was awaiting them there.³⁰ George Shaw has observed that they all were/are living in a fog of 'sentimental humanism' because of the lack of intellectual rigour.³¹

Returning to Clark himself, he undoubtedly loved his father, the cricketing and tipping vicar, sympathetically observing his struggles with faith. Indeed, he records that his dad might well have abandoned his then Moore College Anglicanism and joined the Roman Church had it not been for the years he had paid into the Clergy Provident Fund.³² All this is indicative of the problem of being caught up in the fads of the time. Who today would think of abandoning the freedom of Anglicanism and its openness to 'all sorts and conditions of men'³³ to join any exclusionary or fundamentalistic church of whatever provenance? Indeed, the liberal Anglican way of comprehending the Gospel grounded as it is in modern biblical scholarship challenges all previous scholarship in the field.³⁴ Some, of course, still cannot resist the beckoning certainties that Rome has traditionally promised the weary, stumbling pilgrim. But it should be remembered in this context that there is also a steady flow of 'Canterbury Pilgrims', that is Roman Catholics who have relocated their spiritual home on the 'broad and pneumatic bosom of the Church of England'.³⁵

The appeal of Ecumenism is indicative of a growing intra-church tolerance. The idea is increasingly taking hold that the Christian faith at its core is intended to encompass all humanity as the New Testament proclaims. It is recognized in ecumenical agreements that former denominational differences have been caused by past historical crises in theology and political hostilities. Consequently, theologians have more recently been at pains to historicize past divisions and encourage more closely than before intra-church collaboration. In short, it recognized that Christianity possesses a Promethean quality, which should not be surprising

³⁰Clark, *Quest*, p. 1.

³¹See George P. Shaw (ed.), *1988 and All That* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988).

³²Clark, *Quest*, p. 199.

³³See n. 20 above.

³⁴Among the flagbearers of this discipline, one may name the outstanding works of John Polkinghorne (1930–2021). See Thomas Jay Oord (ed.), *The Polkinghorne Reader: Science, Faith and the Search for Meaning* (London: SPCK, 2010). Some leading Anglican theologians whom Clark could have consulted but chose not to in his day were John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966); E.L. Mascall, *Christian Theology and Natural Science* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1956); Alec Vidler, *A Plain Man's Guide to Christianity: Essays on Liberal Catholicism* (1936). Neither did Clark seem ever to have registered the pioneering works of the champion of Christian Socialism, the Reverend F.D. Maurice. All the above named were scholars of prodigious productivity.

³⁵See Emmanuel Amand de Mandieta, *Rome and Canterbury: A Biblical and Free Catholicism* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1962). My personal experience of 'Canterbury pilgrims' is quite extensive, having met many, both priests and laity at such prominent Anglo-Catholic centres as Christ Church St Laurence, Railway Square, Sydney; St James', King Street, Sydney; All Saints Church, Wickham Terrace, Brisbane and St Peter's Eastern Hill, Melbourne. I owe the phrase 'broad and pneumatic bosom of the C of E' to my English lecturer at the University of Queensland, Mr Cecil Hadgraft. He used it referring to the quirkish English poet and painter, William Blake in classes during 1957.

because inevitably all denominational leaders throughout history were/are creatures of their own age; some more confused than others.³⁶ How to get everybody on the same page at the same time has proved an elusive goal. So where does that leave self-appointed prophets like Clark who, as he so engagingly phrased it in his autobiography was on a 'quest for grace' of which he claims to have experienced only moments?³⁷

As the present writer is now ancient in days, he has observed the passing parade of his colleagues in both the priesthood and in the history profession. Having sat at the feet of some highly acclaimed German mentors such as the great liberal Roman Catholic Franz Schnabel in Munich for two years (1961–62) and then the notable Reformation historian, Walther-Peter Fuchs in Erlangen for another three years, he learned like Leopold von Ranke that a historian must get old to be able to gain a more balanced perspective on how the past has issued into and influenced the present. And in the field of Australian history, Dr George Shaw – by virtue of his unique insights – has eloquently demonstrated that Clark's oeuvre has been a heroic but flawed attempt to 'challenge Australians to begin a new discovery of their past for the benefit of all humanity in Australia'.³⁸ By no means were all other 'sentimental humanists' in Australia convinced, as the above-mentioned Peter Ryan controversy demonstrated. Many have been motivated by peculiarly personal agendas and a puffed-up sense of their political-pedagogic importance.

Shaw has justifiably queried whether any of that could lead to a recovery of humanity. He answered his rhetorical question by asking whether *sentimental humanism* was equal to the task.³⁹ Interestingly, 'sentimental humanism' is still with us. Not a few occupants of chairs of history in Australia evince this characteristic. In short, some are transparently unable to be objective.⁴⁰

Curious, indeed. But in an open, pluralist society everyone is entitled to publish whatever they like, so long as it is not slanderous or otherwise legally actionable. And Anglicanism in Australia has long endured the slings and arrows of under-informed critics, both self-inflated literary chieftains as well as incorrigibly vacuous journalists.⁴¹ It is a lamentable situation rescued only by the heroic efforts of a few

³⁶The literature on intra-church collaboration is extensive. One can point, for example, to the work of the International Bonhoeffer Society that unites Christians of all denominations, to the ongoing work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, and many other ecumenical organizations. For the theological implications see, especially, Hans Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View* (trans. Peter Heinegg; New York: Doubleday, 1988); Hans Küng *et al.*, *Christentum und Weltreligionen* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1984); Hans Küng, *Theologie im Aufbruch - Eine ökumenische Grundlegung* (Munich: Piper, 1987). Note: Although these texts by Küng were written some decades ago, they are still benchmarks in the ongoing reconciliatory collaboration among the divided churches.

³⁷Clark, *Quest*, p. 221.

³⁸Shaw, 'Australian Sentimental Humanism', p. 92.

³⁹Shaw, 'Australian Sentimental Humanism', p. 92.

⁴⁰John Moses, 'The Fallacy of Presentism in Australian History: A Cautionary Tale', *Honest History* (28 August 2016), pp. 1–13.

⁴¹One of the less endearing characteristics of the Australian intelligentsia is to claim the right to criticize anything one may personally dislike. In short, they will trumpet their opinions no matter how unqualified they are to do so. In our egalitarian democracy everyone feels entitled to 'have a go' at anything of which they for some reason disapprove, no matter how trivial that perceived flaw may be. Rigorous thinking and

such as Alan Atkinson, who, as a practising Anglican has led Australian historiography on to arguably new and more scholarly paths of development.⁴² Australia, it may be confidently observed is 'still a work in progress'.

The controversy about Manning Clark's legacy is still unresolved and it is suggested here that part of the problem lies in recognizing the lacunae in Clark's mental-spiritual formation as an Anglican in his peculiar circumstances. Many of the scholars involved have not been able to evaluate the significance of the kind of Anglicanism in which Clark was raised. The two main biographers, Brian Matthews (1936–2022) and Mark McKenna (born 1959) belonged to the Roman Catholic Church which has played a particularly divisive role in Australian society, some more amenable Irish bishops and clergy notwithstanding. The reason was due to the Roman insistence during those days on *extra ecclesiam non salus*, and because the Australian hierarchy and many parish clergy were more focused on Irish causes than the essentials of the faith. While some countries have been deeply anti-Semitic for example, Australia had always been riven by often bitter sectarianism. Thankfully, this pugnacious stance between both sides, Roman and Protestant, has now been abandoned and a more fraternal attitude characterizes intra-church dialogue in Australia. But this was not the case during Clark's lifetime. Rome was indisputably the sole custodian of truth and arbiter of the way Christianity should be promulgated.⁴³

That being so, the Papal Church appealed to those souls everywhere who hungered and thirsted after righteousness cemented in certainty. And right here Clark came to believe that he had finally found his way out of the fog in which he had felt himself enveloped for so long. One must appreciate that many people, especially in Australia, had come to believe that one had to choose between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism to ensure salvation. So, the world fell under the spell of a false dichotomy characterized by those, on the one hand, who believed in the infallible authority of the Bible and those, on the other, who enthusiastically followed the route dictated by an infallible Pope.

Lutherans, however, always felt secure in their faith in *sola scriptura* and the 'mighty fortress' of their God. But post-Reformation Anglicans wanted to perceive themselves as still 'catholic' but dispensing with the oversight of the dictatorial

painstakingly won scholarship are scant commodities in broad sections of the Australian academic landscape, an observation made after half a century as a continuously productive academic historian.

⁴²Atkinson's *magnum opus* is a work in three volumes, *The Europeans in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2014). He, too, has subjected Clark to some gentle criticism deftly avoiding any suggestion of polemic, though reading between the lines reveals a penetrating and rigorous taking-to-task. See his chapter, 'A Great Historian?' in Bridge, *Manning Clark*, pp. 123–35. On p. 122 by way of introduction, Atkinson writes: 'I have no doubt that he [Clark] was a great historian, but it is not so easy to work out the elements of his greatness, taking into account especially of the serious charges which are often laid against his scholarship.' One may comment that that is a fine example of Anglican moderation in all things.

⁴³It may not be forgotten that the Roman Archdiocese of Sydney sponsored a Sacred Heart priest named Fr Leslie Rumble to broadcast a weekly Sunday evening program on their radio station 2SM called *Dr Rumble's Radio Replies*. In it Rumble fielded questions about Roman Catholicism from mostly irate Protestant enquirers. Rumble was cited for many years as a renowned 'Catholic Apologist', even in the USA where his project was sponsored in pamphlet form by Archbishop Fulton Sheen of New York. Rumble's program lasted from 1928 until 1968 and achieved considerable resonance throughout the country. See the entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

Bishop of Rome. That was a concept too hard for most people with an 'either-or' mentality to digest. The notion that one could have 'unity in diversity' was far too nebulous to be entertained, but that is precisely what Anglicanism came to be, namely a very broad church that has historically encompassed believers of 'all sorts and conditions'. For example, one can find faithful people who hold conflicting views about the nature of the Church's main act of worship, the Eucharist, in the same congregation. Such things challenge the under-informed or neutral observer to understand the complex history of the evolution of the *Book of Common Prayer*.⁴⁴ Add to that the reality of individual mental-spiritual formation. Each person is programmed differently.

No one can prescribe how people think about the indefinable mysteries of faith. There are bound to be competing views and doctrinal dispute, but it is hoped that these differences can remain peaceable and do not lead to fracture in the Body of Christ. Admittedly, the situation in the Anglican Church must be quite confusing to many people as it was even to a highly regarded scholar like Manning Clark. That said, one wonders whether he ever took pains to investigate the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Church of England which were ratified in 1571 in the reign of Elizabeth I. These statements of what were the essential differences between Rome and Canterbury at that time seem to have eluded Professor Clark, as has the subsequent history of the Church. The idea that it was possible to maintain belief in the historic faith without submitting to the authoritarianism of Rome was never entertained by God's Australian prophet. Curiously, though, McKenna observed that 'in 1940, and for the rest of his life, Clark understood his existence through biblical language, a language of trial and examination, of stern and harsh punishment, of unremitting labour, guilt and torment. He knew how to punish himself.'⁴⁵ Did that really come from Anglicanism? McKenna further observes that the King James Bible, and the novelists Fyodor Dostoyevsky and D.H. Lawrence combined to provide the cultural inheritance that 'constituted Clark's eyes on the world'.

That being the case, Shaw's assessment of Clark's oeuvre as 'sentimental humanism' seems vindicated. As far as religion was concerned Clark obviously relied on uninformed sentimentalism rather than to invest any serious effort studying the great modern theologians such as Karl Barth (Reformed), Teilhard de Chardin (Roman Catholic) or Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Lutheran), not to mention the Anglicans such as Mandell Creighton, Eric Mascall, Austin Farrar, Dorothy Sayers, Evelyn Underhill or John Macquarrie. In short, Clark chose to ignore what the Church of his upbringing could have offered him. What he gleaned from his Moore College tutored father was hardly representative Anglicanism.

For example, Clark appeared to have never noticed when Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher visited Australia in 1950. The Primate of All England told a packed audience in Brisbane's City Hall that the 'Church of England has no doctrine of its own', but only that of undivided Church catholic. In retrospect one can see that it was an incredibly wise statement, but at the time it was confusing to many. Since the

⁴⁴Cf. Brian Douglas, *The Anglican Eucharist in Australia* (Leiden: Brill, 2021). Note, too, that the late Bishop Stephen Sykes, criticized 'Anglican intellectual laziness' in *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (London: Mowbray, 1978).

⁴⁵McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity*, pp. 192-93.

accumulation over many years of increased knowledge, the present writer – who was in the audience on that occasion at the age of 20 – has come to see the point of it. Christendom has inherited the Gospel with all its humanitarian principles that have over centuries seeped into our culture and bestowed upon the world ineradicable notions of decency, love of neighbour and service to others. Significantly, as reported in John 17 in Jesus' high priestly prayer, all humanity should be united in peace. One may justifiably ask when all the tribes that inhabit the earth will see the wisdom of that prayer.

Clark's 'sentimental humanism' and his struggles with the *Zeitgeist* must be evaluated for what they were, namely the expressions of anxious insecurities and the delusion or hope that there must be a certain outcome or clear answer to *what it had all been for*. Not content to remain within the body of pilgrims, put on the full armour of God and march with them in the Church militant here on earth, he preferred to struggle on, equipped only with a woolly comprehension of the Church of England, the Bible, and the tentative wisdom of spiritually tortured novelists.

One is left wondering about several things. To begin with, it was never clear what Clark meant by *grace*. Out of the context of his biography it is abundantly clear that Clark did believe in a gracious deity and was not shy to confess it. Given the encircling gloom of atheism among his colleagues, Clark's stance certainly showed some courage of conviction; he was a feisty if confused believer, and remarkably an often out-of-control bold sinner. One wonders whether he had boned up much on Luther especially the German theologian's advice 'to sin boldly'.⁴⁶ That implied the grace of God was always available to sinful man regardless of the extent of his corrupted human nature. Interestingly, neither of Clark's biographers mention Luther. But as they were both educated as Roman Catholics the great anti-papal Reformer would never have figured positively in their theological training at school. Luther was for Roman Catholics always a medieval heresiarch.⁴⁷

Equally, neither Matthews nor McKenna would have anything much to say about Anglican apologists and spiritual mentors. In this regard their analysis of Clark's formation and its implications could not have been of much consequence. Neither had they bothered to consult the articles by George Shaw on Clark's 'sentimental humanism'.

To sum up, then, Clark's oeuvre must be understood as the product of 'sentimental humanism', charitably expressed. Shaw has weighed up his reflections and pontifications and judged them to be those of a gifted preacher whose pronouncement

⁴⁶Luther's injunction 'to sin boldly' comes from a letter he wrote on 1 August 1521 to Philipp Melancthon while hiding at the Wartburg disguised as Junker Jörg. *Pecca fortiter* sin boldly but believe more boldly in Christ. The full text is: 'Wenn du ein echter Prediger der Gnade bist, so verkünde keine fingierte, sondern die echte Gnade. Gott macht nur echte Sünder selig. Sei immerhin ein Sünder und sündige, aber glaube noch tapfere, auch wenn du ein ganz tapferer Sünder bist' [English: 'If you want to be a genuine preacher of grace proclaim no feigned but rather genuine grace. God only saves the genuine sinner. So be a sinner and sin but believe more boldly even if you are a very bold sinner.'] Cited after Walter von Löwenich, *Martin Luther: Der Mann und das Werk* (Munich: List Verlag, 1982), p. 193.

⁴⁷Rome has in the meantime revised its views on Luther as the joint statement made at Augsburg on 23 February 1980 illustrates. See *All under One Christ: Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission Statement on the Augsburg Confession*. Source: *Lutheran World Information* 12/80.

belongs in the category of ‘pulpit history’. He wrote of Australia’s past ‘like the burdened prophet’, as Shaw perceptively observed, addressing himself to those who will mould its future.⁴⁸ If Clark’s six volumes on Australia split the profession at the time of their appearance, it is safe to conclude that they arouse only antiquarian historiographical interest today. Their cultural-political-pedagogic intent has faded into oblivion. If Clark could have surmounted his ‘sentimental humanism’ by applying a methodology informed by rigorous theological scholarship, the outcome may at least have satisfied the demands of modern Christian apologetics. Neither prejudice nor polemic, however, could serve that end so Clark’s noble dream, to cite the German poet Heinrich Heine, *zerfließt wie eitel Schaum*, that is, it has dissipated like frothy spume on the sea.⁴⁹

Future writers on Clark must observe the problem of his flawed comprehension of Anglicanism in greater depth than has hitherto been attempted. In addition, Clark’s consistent denigration of the British roots of Australian society and polity must be better explained. But even now, one can see that he had to denigrate Anglicanism because it had bequeathed so much to the formation of the English national character.⁵⁰ And finally, one must be suspicious of the implications of Clark’s nationalism. While he would have strenuously denied it, his hostility to all things British came chillingly close to endorsing the racist nationalism of the notorious Prusso-German nationalist historian Heinrich von Treitschke (1834–96).⁵¹ Lest we forget!

⁴⁸Shaw, ‘A Counter Revolution in Australian Historiography’, p. 107.

⁴⁹From Heine’s famous poem cycle *Dichterliebe* (‘Poet’s Life and Love’) set to music by Robert Schumann. The English translation of the fifteenth song in the cycle is entitled ‘The Fairy Tales of Childhood’ in the German original, *Aus alten Märchen* from which is taken the quote, *zerfließt wie eitel Schaum*, the concluding line. Clark could have been familiar with it since he was both a pianist and knew some German.

⁵⁰Just as Lutheranism had moulded the German national character.

⁵¹Treitschke (1834–96) notoriously wrote Prusso-German history by imposing on it a template fashioned from his political ambitions, namely to promote the expansion of a Prussianized (read: militarized) Germany over Europe and especially the British Empire. In short, he wrote with the very opposite objective of Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886) whose declared aim was simply to show how it actually was (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*) as objectively as possible. Treitschke was out to use history as a political weapon employed to promote his wish dream. To that extent Manning Clark could be said to have attained a similar historiographic-pedagogic importance for Australians as Treitschke in his day had for Germany.