

The Journal of Values-Based Leadership

Manuscript 1459

King Charles' Character Education: His Australian School, now and then

Elizabeth Summerfield

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl>



Part of the [Applied Ethics Commons](#), [Cultural History Commons](#), [Educational Psychology Commons](#), [History of Religion Commons](#), [Intellectual History Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

This Case Study is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Business at ValpoScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Journal of Values-Based Leadership by an authorized administrator of ValpoScholar. For more information, please contact a ValpoScholar staff member at scholar@valpo.edu.

Case Study



ELIZABETH SUMMERFIELD
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

King Charles' Character Education: His Australian School, Now and Then

As a 17-year-old in 1966, the then Prince Charles, spent two terms at Geelong Grammar School in Victoria, Australia. He described the experience as the best part of his secondary schooling, and formative of his character. The School was founded in the 1850s as an educational institution of the Anglican Church. By the twenty-first century, it became a leading exponent globally of the Positive Education (PE) movement, which has its foundation in Positive Psychology (PP). Critics of PE have argued that it diminishes, even supersedes, the tenets of the School's Anglican tradition. This paper tests the School's assertion of the complementarity of both. It does so using an historical approach, comparing the content of sermons delivered by the School's Senior Chaplain in the 1980s with that of the principal reference text for Positive Education, *Positive Education: the Geelong Grammar School Journey*. It argues the significant overlap between the themes of the sermons and the elements of PE. One implication is that, had Charles been a current student of the School, he may have found even greater affirmation of his inherent character strengths than he did almost fifty years ago.

Introduction

In 1966 the then-Prince Charles spent two terms at Geelong Grammar School in Victoria, Australia. It was the final component of his formal secondary schooling. "By far the best part," he's reportedly said, when his true appreciation of "character" was forged (news.com.au, 2022; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2011). The School is an Anglican institution (previously Church of England), and so its education in character is framed by that tradition. King Charles has, amongst other titles, assumed the role of Supreme Governor of the Church of England, its titular head.

By 2023, the School had also become a leading proponent globally of Positive Education (PE), a transformational ethos begun there with a sabbatical visit by Professor Martin Seligman. Seligman had founded Positive Psychology in the late 1990s, which in turn was adapted to produce PE. The movement has as its core objective to encourage participants' development of character strengths.

But there were critics of PE's potential to diminish, or even supersede, the School's Anglican tradition. Acknowledging the criticism, the School asserts its deliberate adherence to and valued co-existence of both in the institution.

This paper will use an historical approach to test the assertion of that continuity in the education of character at the School. An analysis of historical and contemporary texts forms the evidence base including one hundred sermons delivered by the School's Senior Chaplain in the 1980s, the Reverend Stephen Pash (Pash, 1991). The central themes of the sermons will be compared to the reference text on Positive Education named on the School's website and published in 2015: *Positive Education: the Geelong Grammar School Journey* (Norrish, 2015).

Charles: Embodiment of Tradition

The religious nature of King Charles' coronation ceremony is not only to invest the ritual with the theatre and splendour of its ancient tradition. It represents too the assumption by the monarch of the titular headship of the Church of England, a role first assumed, controversially, by Henry VIII in 1536. The Church is the founding member of what is now the Anglican Communion, which includes forty member Churches in 165 countries. So, it is no surprise that Charles' education took place in schools within the Anglican tradition and the Commonwealth. Geelong Grammar School in Australia was chosen for its conclusion (BBC, 2023).

Returning in 2005 to give a speech marking the School's sesquicentenary, Charles began by highlighting the "purple prose" he'd read in the School's prospectus, citing the inevitable hyperbolic language of marketing. His audience was in stitches as he compared the positive picture painted with his living memory. Warding off huge bush ants in frozen tents as he hiked tens of miles whatever the weather, being regularly referred to as a "Pommy bastard," and suffering the ever-present blisters from chopping firewood featured in those memories. But so were his exposure to the natural wonders of Australian birdsong and bush-covered mountains. Those humorous recollections gave way to his expression of genuine gratitude for the experience: of being part of a community that provided access to a sense of meaning, and of learning some of the essential truths which make "us truly human" (GGs archive). "By god," he declared, "it was good for the character" (*The Age*, 2022). He noted that change in educational philosophy and methods were inevitable but hoped that it wouldn't overtake those "eternal, timeless values" to which he'd been exposed (GGs archive).

The School and Positive Education

Around the same time as Charles' visit, the School began its Positive Education journey informed by Seligman, Zellerbach Family Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. A decade later PE stood alongside creative and adventure education as one of the three pillars of the "exceptional" education promised on the School's website. The website also assures prospective parents that the "Anglican identity continues to be foundational" while welcoming "students from a variety of Christian denominations" and other faith traditions. All are welcome, but attendance at weekly chapel services is still expected. Parents are asked to "encourage their child to approach Christian teaching and Christian precepts receptively and openly" in the belief that "everyone can learn from the values taught in this sacred space."

Similarly, Charles referred to the role of the monarch as “defender of faith” rather than of “the faith” (*The Conversation*, 2022). The partisanship of arguing the greater truth of one denomination or one religion over another was being overtaken by an awareness of the spiritual commonalities at the heart of many faiths.

But while Charles was encouraging inclusion and diversity, some critics of PE were said to “fear... losing the unique wisdom of the Christian faith tradition to an emerging human science”, or were concerned that the “ethics of a genuinely good and generous life” were being subsumed by the “short-sighted pursuit of success and happiness” (Norrish, 267). Notably, it was the then Senior Chaplain who made clear that the choice was not a binary one. The paper now turns to the documentary evidence of the sermons of the Senior Chaplain from the 1980s, and the School’s primary reference for Positive Education in order to test these criticisms against the School’s assertion of philosophical complementarity.

Core Themes from Pash’s Sermons: 1983-1991

Some of the core themes that emerge from the sermons are: identity, self-love and love; power and authority; morality or hope; convention and meaning; suffering and wisdom; language and worship, and the definition of God (Pash, 1991). These will be outlined in turn.

Identity, Self-Love, and the Love of Others

Pash puts the following question to his congregation: “Isn’t the kernel of Christianity the denial of self so that we give ourselves whole-heartedly to God and our fellow human beings?”

This is a common but profound misconception of the Christian message, he says. The answer is in fact the opposite, and for compelling reason. The capacity to generously accept and love others is absolutely dependent on engaging over time in the acquisition of self-knowledge and self-acceptance, and self-love. In his words

we cannot love anyone else if we do not or cannot love ourselves. Love yourself and you will love your neighbour. Refuse to love yourself and you will be unable to love your neighbour. The extent to which we can love ourselves determines the extent to which we can love.

He notes that Jesus, human exemplar of the Christian faith, linked three loves: “love of God, love of neighbour and love of self.” Our wholeness, our spiritual health and well-being, depend upon the effort to keep those in “dynamic balance,” Pash argues.

Understanding and valuing our unique gifts enables us to act in the best interest of ourselves and others.

Each one of us has received a gift, a skill perhaps, a gift of intelligence, a gift of temperament. For example, a tranquility which can be used to bring peace to others. None of us is without something to offer. Our opportunity is to discover what lies within... and to find ways to offer that for the well-being of others.

The School’s role in this discovery can be enabling or disabling. In a sermon to staff, Pash reflects on the message of the novel *Bliss*, written by a famous alumnus, Peter Carey. He refers to its theme of “enabling of identity,” and the “importance of story, ceremony and ritual to that process.” But there is the danger of the second overwhelming the first in the life of the School. Daily life can come to resemble the experience of being on a Japanese bullet train, with the individual lost in the momentum:

...you get crammed on at one section and off at another somewhere down the line; and in between there isn't a great deal of time and space to reflect upon where you are going or how you are travelling or what you are passing along the way. It's simply a hermetically sealed rush.

Individual identity of students and staff can be at risk of being subsumed, lost to the School's "pre-existing story – a rich and powerful narrative moving towards an unknown destination." But the work of discovering one's identity and self-love can be found in the other, countering story told by the School, he says. This is "the God with us" story. It is not "one and the same thing as the School's narrative" but needs to sit "alongside and within and [at times] against" the School story.

Power and Authority

Pash was not calling for an ill-considered defiance of the School's authority. He explained that Christian teaching "holds in tension two truths." The first is that human authority, represented by figures such as a King, a President, a Prime Minister or a Headmaster, can be a symbolic expression of God's authority, if they promote the "welfare and good order of human society." The second is that such figures can equally be a denial of that authority, examples instead of "degeneration into tyranny and abuse."

The Church, as a necessarily human institution, is not immune to the misuse of power either, he adds. Whenever the church has resorted to coercion or corruption, "it has departed from that principle to appeal to the heart."

The markers of true kingship, genuine power, and authority, are exemplified in the Jesus story. These are gentleness and humility. Not a false humility but one based in reflective self-acceptance and self-love. Secular notions of power and greatness are often aligned with material wealth or status, irrespective, or perhaps even because, of the questionable behaviour of the wealthy or institutionally powerful. Christian understanding is that the truly great are those who "refrain from the misuse of power – physical, emotional or financial" and who are "actively willing to serve others, and to give place to them." That can apply just as well to a headmaster, a house captain, a managing director. "It depends on your motive" for the behaviour, he declares.

Christian teaching is that a spiritual freedom results from not "grabbing for power" or engaging in the "false ambition to dominate others." It requires being "unwilling to be part of a way of seeing others and dealing with them in terms of superiority or inferiority, of servant and master, of weak and powerful."

The symbolism of the cross in Christianity is one of rejecting false or superficial power. It stands for

a willingness to detach oneself from the world, and from accepted values and ways of doing things which we regard as being wrong in light of the gospel...to oppose racism, physical or emotional bullying, economic and business practices which are unjust. To have the courage to say to others: "your ways are not mine." It is to be willing to be dismissed.

Morality and Hope

One popular view of the role of Chapel and religion in the School (and more generally), Pash declares, is the expectation that it be a "training ground in personal morality." If this were its

proper purpose, he suggests, could the school not as easily substitute for chapel services a “classroom programme of moral education?”

Contrary to this misconception, is the example of Jesus’ life. He was not simply “or even primarily, a judge.” His life and story were rather about offering a sense of hope. In Christian understanding being “moral” was not about choosing to “accept intellectually a set of ethical beliefs which sound like wisdom.” Rather, it was about responding in thought, action, and “reverence to something greater than ourselves – beyond us yet within us.”

Pash invited staff to share in supporting this provision of hope as the most “desired gift for the students.” The warrant for this faith in hope is, in Christian terms, he says, “the mystery we name ‘God.’”

Convention and Meaning

Another sermon to staff dealt with the appropriate questioning of assumed tradition or convention. The reflective time and space of the chapel acted as a necessary complement to the School’s action-packed schedule for students and staff. It was a place to contemplate deeply what constitutes meaningful purpose and action within and beyond the School.

The abolition of slavery and the enfranchisement of women were examples he cited of the remediation of social injustices resulting from the reflective critique and consequent action of many who questioned the status quo.

Closer to home, the busy work of the school on the one hand offered students the possibility of finding and developing their talents and self-discipline, academically, artistically, and physically. On the other, busy work did not necessarily encourage deep work. It could, in the words of Seligman, simply constitute “fidgeting until we die” (“The Happy Heretic,” *The Washington Post*, 24//12/2002). It could in fact deflect the inner work of discovering a sense of meaning and purpose.

While mandatory attendance at weekly chapel services could also be seen as part of the process of keeping students busy and disciplined, its true intention was to provide something complementary: a place of contemplation of the inner purposes of living, to locate meaning beyond the prevailing busyness.

The religious notion of grace, “something which in the first place we receive,” rather than achieve, was offered by Pash as a reminder that life itself has meaning as a universal gift. The comparative stillness of the chapel was intended to promote a sense of “wholeness and well-being,” whatever the physical, academic or artistic talents students were discovering beyond its walls. Value was inherent, not earned.

Suffering and Joy

Central to the Christian story is Easter. It describes a paradox: suffering contains the prospect of joy; “the risen Christ is the wounded and crucified Christ.”

Pash explains that the Christian conviction is that “no suffering we encounter is... big enough to defeat us.” He grounds this explanation in the students’ lived experience as teenagers. In adolescence, he says, there are “many other little (not literal) deaths we can and do suffer”: personal rejection, death of intimate relationships, not being able to find purpose in life, the boredom of routine. Christian belief is that “the power of God [defeats] all those deaths.”

The personal experience of suffering, universal in the human condition whatever its particular manifestation, can serve as a “basis for developing empathy,” not only with fellow members of the school community but with the “dislocated beyond school.” Those “people in our society and here at school who meet those who come from other countries and races with intolerance, hatred and bigotry” can have their suffering overturned by those able to genuinely empathise with them and act in love and understanding towards them.

Suffering and Wisdom

Suffering is connected to wisdom, and so to the School’s motto: “Christus nobis factus sapiential,” which translates, “For us, Christ was made wisdom.”

The Easter parable of death and resurrection not only speaks of the cycling of suffering and joy in human being, and the courage and resilience demanded to manage it. It speaks to the prospect of a deepening wisdom from accepting and living with that suffering.

Wisdom is a hard-won, profound knowledge of self and humanity. Suffering is not to be avoided but regarded as a chance to learn life more deeply. Pash declares that,

the mark of someone who is wise is the ability to be thankful for all that happens (easier looking back of course), and to turn it to advantage by using it as an opportunity to grow.

He acknowledges that the demands on a staff, responsible for promoting wisdom, are exceptional in the School:

our task as educators (not just teachers) is to be questing people ourselves so that we may be some use to those around us in theirs. The unexamined tradition (Plato) is not worth living by. The unexamined life-the non-questing life-is not worth living.

The fundamental and unstoppable quest is the quest for meaning in a mysterious universe. It is more basic than the quest for economic or financial security. It is the first and last question to be asked. We can believe we are avoiding the quest, but we cannot avoid finding-at any time-something to take first place in our life.

For the process to happen at all requires on your part a serious commitment to Truth, the courage to make the quest, and the recognition that the quest goes on without stopping.

But the pay-offs can equally be deeply rewarding:

while we tackle those hard, painful questions the possibility exists for us to grow – as individuals and as a community.

The Christian metaphors of “heaven” and “hell” offer another way of describing the human cycle of suffering and joy. Heaven, explains Pash, can be seen in the aspiration to work towards “personal wholeness, physical and mental well-being, the intimacy of deep personal relationships.” Hell is its opposite.

Again, the payoff is found in a sense of spiritual freedom.

Jesus suggested that to know the truth was to be freed. And it is people who are free and at peace with themselves and with God who bring peace to others.

The acceptance of an unexamined life should also be regarded as a choice, however passively decided. Everyone frames their lives, actively or passively, by a set of assumptions about what constitutes value in being. As Pash says, one can make the “quest” consciously, but one

“cannot avoid finding an object of worship,” however hidden from the conscious mind that object may be.

Worship’s Purpose

Pash asks the question: “Why this big, expensive chapel?” The Chapel of All Saints sits at the physical centre of the school, distinctive in its architecture, proportions, and decoration, and much less occupied than most other buildings on campus. One answer to the question, he says, is the symbolism of the object of the building itself. It stands less as a statement of the institutional identity of the School, than an acknowledgement that God sits at its centre, and at the core of each of its member’s, existence. God is the foundational rationale of School life. Noticing, however inadvertently, the chapel as students and staff move from class to class, extra-curricular activity to activity, is a tacit daily reminder of the potential of that core.

Another answer is the more deliberate discipline and potential of weekly worship. Exposure to the ritual and ceremony of religious service offers members of the school community the possibility of experiencing “a dimension of our life which far transcends us, which takes us out of ourselves involuntarily,” he says.

Pash notes how the School has a well-deserved reputation for offering its students “personal development in the widest possible areas,” of exposing students to opportunities designed to enable the discovery and development of their physical, social, intellectual and artistic talents. It is a “long British tradition,” he says, that can trace its origins at least as far back as the Victorian era. It is based on the concept of “salvation by...work.”

Worship is a counterpoint to that concept, he says. In the comparative stillness of the place,

we assert...that salvation - wholeness, meaning, well-being, peace (individual and corporate), welfare - whatever is not in the end something we achieve, not the product of work, but something which in the first place we receive - a grace given.

The building and its worship activities enable all members of the community “to see ourselves and speak of ourselves as created in the divine image.” The act of worship helps students and staff to “place a value on ourselves and others which we will not want to cheaply pervert or destroy.”

The Chapel, he says, is only one of four temples present in the School. The second is “nothing less than the universe itself...the whole creation. and should be treated with a worshipful attitude.” The third is “our very own selves — the whole of us: body, mind, and spirit — a portable temple.” And the fourth is “the community of believers,” those who acknowledge and esteem the sacred, the mysterious in the “worth” of each human being.

Pash noted the established role of education in training the mind and sometimes the bodies of students. The chapel represents the School’s aim to expose students, and staff, “to training, not for intellectual or physical pursuits, but for something more fundamental: our spiritual well-being...which we are rediscovering this century...underlies and helps bring about the other two.”

Language and Mystery

Pash acknowledges that a significant challenge in the ongoing conversation about meaning, purpose, and being is one of language. Not simply finding the right word, but the cultural use of language: sociolinguistics.

“Language,” he says, “constructs the world for us – be it the language of mathematics or physics or English literature.” We find understanding according to our ability to communicate in ways that resonate in the internal dialogue with ourselves and the external one with others. What I mean by a word or phrase may not necessarily be what you mean by it, he explains. That is true of many areas of life, but

when it comes to the spiritual life it becomes even more important and more difficult. Language is limited in the face of all the great mysteries of life. It finally fails us but it is all we have.

It is, for example, atypical in our post-industrial age to use parable or metaphor, a traditional form of Christian teaching. Consciously or unconsciously, we attach greater epistemic weight to the language, methods, and statistical generalisations of science. But, as one of the world’s legendary scientists, Albert Einstein said: “we count what we can measure, but not everything that counts can be measured.” And elsewhere he said: “the most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious; it is the source of all true art and science.” But the measurable has a material tangibility couched in practical, accessible language, which the mysterious lacks.

Part of the challenge of the “quest” for a spiritual life is the search for the language of its communication and understanding in contemporary western culture where belief often depends upon the materiality and tangibility that define the technological era.

Perhaps the central linguistic and cultural challenge lies in the word “God” itself.

Defining “God”

Pash refers to “the mystery we name ‘God.’” He cites a “sense of wonder, of the numinous – the tremendous mystery at the heart of life” as approximations to a definition.

He cites Paul Tillich, a noted philosopher and theologian of the twentieth century, who referred to God as the “ground of our being” or “Being-itself” (Tillich, 1952).

“Being-itself” is a term that connotes something beyond physical existence. It is suggestive of a state, however rarely experienced, when each of the human dimensions of life – head, heart, senses – converge to produce a more profound intimation of life. Pash cites examples that may resonate with students and staff: for some in watching elite sports, for others seeing the sun set over Uluru, or some other entrancing natural landscape. For King Charles, perhaps witnessing those bush-covered mountain tops. These are physical keys to the spiritual “mystery,” glimpses of the numinous which can be both immanent and transcendent, both profoundly internal and extrinsic phenomena.

Those moments, says Pash, can be a catalyst to engage or persevere with the lifelong questing process, which is:

more important than any of the academic questions properly raised in this place is this other one – the quest for what it means to be human and what our destiny is: to find wisdom for living.

A recurring theme of his sermons to staff in the 1980s was that this was work that it could not effectively be done by the chaplain/s alone:

the challenge in our schools is to induct our students into the attitude and practice of worship. That isn’t simply/cannot be simply the work of the chaplain. It cannot be

manufactured once/twice a week! Rather it is a task in which physicists and chemists and biologists and geographers and mathematicians and artists and musicians and English teachers (not sure about sociologists)-a task in which all these can be participating, encouraging in our students the vision of something greater than themselves. Seen through a microscope, experienced in a Bach fugue, and formally and outwardly and publicly expressed in the practice of places like this.

Positive Education is a cultural product of the twenty-first century. It integrates the new knowledge of positive psychology and educational philosophy which evolved from social changes of the late twentieth century. The ways in which its objectives relate to the School's historical Anglican tradition, as exemplified in the sermons above, follows. The evidence for this will also be textual, drawing on the School's reference text *Positive Education: The Geelong Grammar School Journey* (Norrish, 2015).

Positive Education: The Geelong Grammar School Journey

Positive Education is framed by Positive Psychology (PP), founded by Seligman in 1998 (and credited to his five-year old daughter). Seligman and his team worked with the school from 2006 to 2009 to establish the foundations of PE, from which its current iteration evolved. It is expressly seen as a "work in progress," refined as it continuously adapts to the lived experience of its implementation. In this way it mirrors its message to students: to learn and adapt continuously in a lifelong process framed by the first principles of being and becoming themselves in the world.

Well-being and Achievement

Imagine schools which have the capacity to "teach both skills of wellbeing and the skills of achievement." Seligman asks readers in the introduction to the book. Acknowledging the well-established expectation that schools promote "achievement, thinking skills, success, conformity, literacy, mathematics, work, test taking, discipline," PE aimed also to develop skills needed for inner well-being: "confidence, contentment, fulfillment, balance, purpose, good stuff, kindness, health, satisfaction, love, being civilized, meaning," he said (Norrish, ix, x).

The book goes on to describe components of and the progress towards embedding core elements of the School's PE Model. The work informs the entirety of the School's curricular and extra-curricular life, and is overseen by the Institute for Positive Education, now an established centre of theory and practice at the School.

The two chapters which most directly address the proposition of PE's continuity with the School's Anglican tradition are those describing the School's PE Model, and one of its six domains: "Positive Purpose." These will be looked at in turn.

The Positive Education Model

The principal objective of the model is comprehensive: "whole-school flourishing." This requires an audience of learners and practitioners that is equally comprehensive: students, staff and parents. "Well-being" is a central mode of thought and action the skills for which staff and parents explicitly learn and model for students.

The model comprises six domains: "positive relationships, emotions, health, engagement, accomplishment, purpose", while the development of "character strengths" act as the

underpinning rationale of the model. These descriptors form a simple list, but the magnitude of the task is not underestimated by those leading its implementation. Mark Linkins, a US-based “master trainer” in PP at the School, described the process as “nothing short of a paradigm shift” (Norrish, 29).

The exploration and discovery of individual and collective “character strengths” are at the heart of the work. These are described as “morally valued traits that come naturally to a person and lead to a sense of fulfillment and authenticity when used” (Norrish, 31). Paying deliberate time, effort, and attention to the cultivation of these strengths is seen as essential to the task of building self-knowledge and confidence in “students of all ages.” The shared language of PE seeks “a culture of connectedness and respect across the School community” (Norrish, 32).

Seligman and Peterson’s work, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (Seligman and Peterson, 2004, 601), deals briefly with the philosophical rationale:

Although the specific content of spiritual beliefs varies, all cultures have a concept of an ultimate, transcendent, sacred, and divine force.

“Positive Purpose”

The chapter titled “Positive Purpose” most explicitly refers to the link between the School’s Anglican tradition and PE.

This domain “involves understanding, believing in, and serving something greater than the self, consciously engaging in activities for the ‘benefit of others’” (Norrish, 256). Altruism is the focus of this domain. Students are encouraged to reflect on ways in which they can use their character strengths for the benefit of others. While keeping in balance the need to develop one’s own character strengths, this chapter shifts its primary attention to matters of the common good (Norrish, 252).

Constructive critical questioning of popular social values forms part of this domain. Students are asked to think and articulate what a “good life” means to them. They are invited to interrogate cultural assumptions about achievement and success: do material possessions, physical beauty and external success constitute the sole purposes of life (Norrish, 257)?

Professor George Vaillant, American psychiatrist and Professor at Harvard Medical School, introduces the chapter. Vaillant outlines the current neuroscience relevant to character development. “The conscious brain, the frontal cortex,” he says “enabled the process of establishing considered and heartfelt purpose.” As this part of the brain continues to mature into the third decade of life, formal schooling is a unique opportunity to explore and encourage the development of meaning and purpose. A sense of purpose is “critical to the management of wellbeing.” There are several known contributors to the latter, he declares, but “forgiveness...has been established as a transcendent strength in the Values in Action character strengths model, as have kindness and gratitude” (Norrish, 253).

Vaillant notes the apparent paradox of care for others through the application of one’s character strengths. By giving oneself to others, individuals in fact care for themselves, as long as the dynamic is held in balance. An act of forgiveness, for example, “permits a healthy way forward both for the individual being forgiven and, perhaps more critically, for the person who is forgiving” (Norrish, 253). What at first may seem to be self-denial, giving something of

yourself away so that you end up with less, can contain a deep reciprocity of giving. It all depends on “intentionality,” he says (Norrish, 252). “Contributions that are freely given... add value to the caregiver in a wellbeing sense.” The intersection of Vaillant’s observations and Pash’s on the relationship between self-love and the love of others is striking.

The Role of Religion

The chapter explains that, through both chapel services and religious education classes, students are encouraged to discover and explore meaning and purpose, through a “sense of faith and spirituality” (Norrish, 256).

Echoing Vaillant’s concept of the significance of “intentionality,” the Reverend Eleanor O’Donnell explains that living a life of purpose “must *feel*/worthwhile.” Noble deeds may seem meaningless if they don’t “ignite a sense of passion or involve the use of signature strengths.” They must have some basis in the authentic emotional makeup of the actor. But that inner depth of motivation must also have an external rationale. Purpose, she asserted, “must also *be* worthwhile - it must be of benefit to the community and the larger world.” This is loving thy neighbour as thyself in action. Christianity, she says, is more than simply a set of beliefs, it is a “framework for living a meaningful life – a life that serves a higher power” (Norrish, 257).

Another senior chaplain, the Reverend Dr. Hugh Kempster, in recognition of the cultural diversity of the student population, encourages the students to be “open to God’s mysterious Spirit.” If the Christian God is not true to their cultural inheritance, he asks that students, parents, and staff “be open to the great spiritual traditions from your own background.” In this, he implicitly affirms the common essential truths across those traditions. By exploring “profound truth,” beyond the more superficial daily realities with which they are surrounded, access to a “reality that nurtures goodness and wellbeing in your own and in the lives of those around you” becomes possible (Norrish, 267).

Both/And

The criticism of the place of PE at the School, mentioned at the beginning of this paper, is acknowledged in the book. The predominance of the PE ethos is seen by some to override, even contradict, its Anglican tradition and theology. The chapter offers a defence of complementarity between the “science of wellbeing” and the “integrity of the Anglican tradition” (Norrish, 267). Beyond mere co-existence, there is a sense of a dynamic relationship between the two. It is asserted that the “language that has long had a home within the Chapel-the discussion of Virtues such as love, gratitude, forgiveness, hope, and spirituality” has now become pervasive. It has found daily expression in the classrooms, Boarding Houses and, perhaps, even on the sports field (Norrish, 268).

Echoing Seligman and Peterson’s foundational rationale, the chapter concludes that:

In particular, the Values in Action character strengths, based on virtues present in the religions and cultures that have helped shape humanity, can be seen as a place where ancient wisdom meets modern science and psychology.

Discussion

This paper has juxtaposed essential themes of the School’s Anglican tradition of the second half of the twentieth century with those of the PE ethos adopted in the twenty-first in order to test the School’s assertion of the continuity of the first with the second. It has done so to

examine the validity of the criticism that PE has diminished, even superseded, its Anglican identity.

In the School's principle resource *Positive Education*, the most explicit explanation of the intersection between the two is found in the sixth domain of the model: "Positive Purpose."

The School's assertion of continuity is reaffirmed in the paper. In fact, the comparison indicates a more extensive philosophical overlap between the themes of the sermons and the domains of the model. In particular, the themes of identity, self-love and love, identity; of the location of real power and authority; of a proper questioning of conventional notions of achievement, also inform the description of PE in the book.

The dynamic between identity, self-love, and love is a key theme of the sermons. This challenges a stereotype of the Anglican, or Christian, tradition as a mechanism for preserving the elite status of the School, a misguided form of power and authority. Suggested instead is the critical questioning of such notions of status against the tenets of Christianity. Individual and collective empowerment is described in the sermons, not in the popular conception of material or hierarchical status, but in their apparent opposites: gentleness, compassion, kindness, and forgiveness. These are all features too of the PE model.

Similarly, the concept of morality is not discussed in the sermons as the exercise of judgement over one's own or others actions – the deliverance of a sense of righteous superiority, or inferiority. Pash highlights another common stereotype which equates religion principally with this dispensation of a moral code. Jesus' example was one of hope and possibility in love, rather than judgement. This too is strongly aligned with the PE model.

These examples of the ways in which the School's Christian tradition coincides with elements of the PE Model suggests the possibility of making the intersection more explicit in the text, that is taking it beyond the chapter "Positive Purpose." This concentration of references to the former may have the undesired effect of reinforcing another stereotype of Christianity: that it demands a self-denial and self-sacrifice entirely to the service of others. It's a stereotype dismissed by Pash as unhealthy.

The Christian narrative is the School's version of what Seligman and Peterson call the "transcendent, sacred and divine" – common features of the world's religions. So, in the context of the School's education, the Christian story forms the particular institutional rationale for PE. It offers a consistent spiritual language and framework that precedes and underpins the instruction in PE.

While several themes of the sermons can be seen throughout the domains of PE, two, in particular, sit beyond it (at least in the text): suffering, and its relationship to wisdom; and the foundational concept of God. Expanding on these in the description of PE may not only draw more explicit connections between the Anglican tradition and PE, but usefully add to the impact of both. The reality of negative emotions is acknowledged briefly in the text. But an elaboration of the notion of suffering in its Christian meaning may, paradoxically, also have a positive effect.

Central to the narrative of Christianity, is the concept of suffering, told in the story of Easter. Pash puts into an adolescent context the notion of crucifixion by describing the ordinary "deaths," occasions of deep suffering, with which his student audience are likely familiar. As counterpoints are those moment of resurrection, of being alive joyfully. The inevitable cycling

of suffering and joy is part of the human condition, as is the courage often demanded by the first. Students are arguably more exposed by virtue of their inexperience and emotional intensities to this cycling and so in need of reassurance of its normalcy.

It is understandable that, in a programme titled “Positive Education” limited attention is paid to the idea of suffering in the book; that there is a focus on what Seligman calls “good stuff.” On the other hand, simply acknowledging the inevitability of suffering, the inescapable existence of those adolescent “deaths” outlined by Pash, may act as some relief through validation to those experiencing it. Positioning it alongside the inevitability too of its opposite, may add to students’ capacity to development tolerance, resilience, and endurance.

Associated with suffering is the possibility of wisdom. The school motto, “Christus nobis factus sapientia” translates as “For us, Christ was made wisdom.” Pash argues that wise people are those who not only acknowledge the reality of human suffering, but are grateful for the emotional totality of life’s experience. If embraced all experience can lead to a more profound appreciation of life. Philosopher, Michael Brady argues that suffering is intimately linked to wisdom for at least two reasons. If sat with, it can produce a more discriminating understanding of life’s events and their impact. “Negative events seem to demand explanation” compared to positive events. Research has demonstrated that the suffering produced in negative events results in more cognitive activity and more mental and emotional effort in causal reasoning than the positive (Brady, 2019). And it is in the willingness to reflect upon cause and effect that wisdom can be generated.

In attempting to articulate the mystery of God, Pash points to the inadequacies of language. But he also points to examples, which might resonate with the students’ experience, and that represent experiential glimpses of apprehending God. They are rare moments of profound, inexpressible connection with one’s “ground of being” or “Being-itself,” at once deeply personal to the self and universal as a human possibility. “Questing” for thought and action which aligns us with that profound inner connection, with the core of ours and others being, is what sits at the heart of, makes deep sense of, PP and PE.

Seligman and Peterson begin with the assumption that some notion of the transcendent, sacred, or divine is a universal experience. Grappling with, and in spite of the impediments of language in understanding the concept of Christian Being or God, offers the opportunity to expand and deepen the rationale for PE at the School.

In several of his sermons to staff, Pash makes the plea that the work of the chapel — the development and modelling of a Christian-inspired love and justice — become embedded in every facet of the School’s life. It is an impossible task for the chaplains alone, he says. This paper suggests that, contrary to its critics, PE has been an instrument for responding to that plea. It has taken the lived philosophy of a spiritual life expressed in the Christian story and mostly confined to the chapel in the 1980s, and articulated it through the daily lives of students and staff. But that story goes beyond acts of service to others, however important this principle is. Its tenets and concepts are those that implicitly inform much of the PE Model. And, in the central teachings about suffering, wisdom and God in the School’s Anglican tradition, is contained opportunities to extend, rather than limit, the reach of PE.

Charles: Tradition and Contemporary Character Leadership

A very personal and historically unprecedented element of Charles’ coronation service was the King’s prayer:

God of compassion and mercy whose Son was sent not to be served but to serve, give grace that I may find in thy service perfect freedom and in that freedom knowledge of thy truth. Grant that I may be a blessing to all thy children, of every faith and conviction, that together we may discover the ways of gentleness and be led into the paths of peace. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (Authorised Coronation Liturgy, 2023).

In a message to Australia received after the devastating floods of 2011, he referred to the impact of his time at Geelong Grammar School as foundational to his character development. Did he mean the stamina needed to hike for tens of miles in all weather, to deal with daily blisters produced by chopping wood, to ward off the infamously dangerous insect-life of the Australian bush? Or did he mean also being accepted at the School for those innate traits he displayed: of gentleness, shyness, diffidence, humility, wondering “if they would like me?”

The first descriptors fit with a traditional notion of “manly” character development. The second with concepts of character that were becoming refined in the second half of the twentieth century by a more complex appreciation of what it means to be truly human. Notions of visceral power and leadership, historically male, began to be informed by their apparent opposites: spiritual qualities of kindness, forgiveness, and generosity. There was a generational change in progress between the education of Charles’ father and his own. One that became further refined into the twenty-first century.

Prevailing cultural mores will always frame the interpretation and dissemination of religion. The present historical moment, a result of the humanising social revolutions in the western world in the second half of the twentieth century, has enabled the expansion of the principles of Christianity through the language and practice of Positive Education in the twenty-first century. In spite of its largely secular origins, the tenets of PE as practised at Geelong Grammar, can be seen as a sympathetic vehicle for disseminating and embedding the tenets of its Anglican tradition.

It has meant that one of its more famous alumni can confidently declare his leadership as monarch and head of the Church in terms of the character strengths of “gentleness and peace.”

References

News.com (12 September 2022). Accessed January 2023 from <https://www.news.com.au/entertainment/celebrity-life/royals/inside-king-charles-time-as-aussie-schoolboy-at-timber-top-geelong-grammar/news-story/d25f3b3dbf73c4e074ca275a6908dec0>.

The Sydney Morning Herald (27 January 2011). “Pommy bastard” Prince Charles reveals “huge affection” for Australia. Accessed November, 2022 from <https://www.smh.com.au/world/pommy-bastard-prince-charles-reveals-huge-affection-for-australia-20110127-1a5na.html>. accessed November 2022.

Pash, The Reverend Stephen James (2015). Private Papers, Geelong Grammar School Archives. <https://www.ggs.vic.edu.au/explore/history-and-heritage-2/archives-heritage-collections/>.

- Norrish, Jacolyn (2015). *Positive Education: The Geelong Grammar School Journey*, Oxford University Press.
- British Broadcasting Commission. “Timbertop: The Australian bush campus that educated King Charles.” Accessed November 2022 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-64113876>.
- Prince Charles’ Speech (2005). Geelong Grammar School Sesquicentenary dinner, Geelong Grammar School Archive.
- The Age* (11 September 2022). “King Charles and the confiscated cigarettes: A Geelong Grammar tale.” Accessed November 2022 from <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/king-charles-and-the-confiscated-cigarettes-a-geelong-grammar-tale-20220911-p5bh65.html>.
- The Conversation* (21 September 2022). “King Charles, defender of faith.” Accessed December 2022 from <https://theconversation.com/king-charles-defender-of-faith-what-the-monarchys-long-relationship-with-religion-may-look-like-under-the-new-sovereign-190766>.
- The Washington Post* (24 December 2002). “The Happy Heretic.” Accessed January 2023 from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/wellness/2002/12/24/the-happy-heretic/c1400e76-847d-4c6e-842b-3ab1ab7c4694/>.
- Tillich, Paul (1952). *The Courage to Be*. Yale University Press.
- Seligman, Martin & Peterson, Chris (2004). *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*, Oxford University Press.
- Brady, Michael (2019). Why Suffering is essential to Wisdom. *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 53:467–469.
- Carey, Peter. “Exceptional Stories.” Accessed March 2023 from <https://www.ggs.vic.edu.au/explore/history-and-heritage-2/100-exceptional-stories/>.
- Welby, Justin, The Archbishop of Canterbury (6 May 2023). “The Authorised Liturgy for the Coronation Rite of His Majesty King Charles III.” Accessed May 2023 from <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/23-24132%20Coronation%20Liturgy.pdf>, 9.
-

About the Author

Elizabeth Summerfield

Elizabeth Summerfield is a Visiting Fellow at the Stretton Institute of the University of Adelaide, Australia. Her research interests are in the history of leadership and its application to contemporary problems of sustainability, education, and gender. She has published in science, leadership, and education journals. Her books are *Transmitting Gender across Generations* and *Educating Leaders in Sustainability using History*. She can be reached at: elizabeth.summerfield@adelaide.edu.au.