



Our wide ranging theme for 2025 is, ***Challenges, Questions and Values we face in engaging with the Church and the World***. Thus far we have:

- Asked ***How can we live in a time of poly-crisis and hyper-connectivity?***
- Considered ***The God who doesn't exist***
- Asked ***What does it take for Christians and Muslims to talk together?***
- Wondered ***How do we deal with the reality of death?***
- Asked ***What might Christians learn from the Baha'i faith?***

Still a lot of challenging questions to tackle, (see [2025 FORUM Brochure FINAL](#)) so we look forward to welcoming you to the second half of PCForum 2025.

Videos of previous PCForum presentations can be viewed at
<https://effectiveliving.ucasa.org.au/podcasts/>

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Task Group 2025

Kym Bills	Fergus McGinley
Esmond Dowdy	David McDougall
Maureen Howland	Don Sinnott - Chair



The **July PCForum** has combined with the **Wilks Oration**, so the evening will begin earlier than usual at 6.45pm with drinks and nibbles, and a music performance by guitarist Caleb Lavery.

The program will begin at 7.30.

Fuzz and Carolyn Kitto from **Be Slavery Free** will speak on the topic, ***Why is modern slavery relevant in Australia and how can we help combat it?***

“Where do you come from and what makes you passionate about what you do?”

Fuzz and Carolyn have been on the justice journey for decades. It has taken them to 59 countries and has allowed them to meet the full spectrum of humanity. Both have had defining narratives that have shaped the direction of this journey, shaped their spirituality and helped them nurture generations of emerging leaders. This has helped people to discover the values and capacities that make the difference when you prioritise people, planet and purpose. These things feed their passion and fertilise their futures. They have both been youth workers, church staff, church and mission consultants internationally, as well as international and community development consultants. They travel the world collecting stories, creating stories and spreading rumours of hope.

More information:

<https://www.beslaveryfree.com>



PC Forum June 5th 2025: Tom Price on 'What might Christians learn from the Baha'i faith?' review by Kym Bills

For a couple of years in the mid-1980s I was Director of Refugee Policy in the Commonwealth Immigration Department when about 2,500 members of the Baha'í faith were accepted by Australia as refugees. That meant that they had demonstrated a 'well-founded fear of persecution' because their religion was considered offensive to the hard-line Islamic mullahs in Iran. But in 2025 I had little understanding of the Baha'í faith and what Christians may learn from it, and so was keen to learn more at the Progressive Christianity Forum presentation by Tom Price at Christ Church on 5 June.

Tom Price, aged 68 and an adherent of the Baha'í faith, is an amazing man. He was born and raised in New York City but studied musical composition at Sydney University and has been a dual US/Australian citizen for many years. His career as a musician included decades of conducting major symphony orchestras around the world, as musical director of the Sydney Bahá'í Temple Choir and the director of the international choir *The Voices of Baha* that sang in venues such as Carnegie Hall and the Mozart Concert House in Vienna. Price was also responsible for several pop and jazz hit recordings, including producing and co-writing *Bad Habits* by Billy Field which was the largest selling album in Australia in 1981. Recently he has been writing a book on the Science of Spirituality.

Adherents of the Baha'í faith believe that all the great religious traditions are divine in origin and a source of spiritual truth. Baha'í teachings include being encouraged to consort with followers of all religions with friendship and fellowship and thereby to seek mutual learning and insight. Tom Price explained that Baha'í worship is of a God who has regularly manifested on earth for more than 6,000 years through spiritual leaders such as Zoraster, Moses, Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed. These are all considered equal, but their religious truth is considered relative to their historical time and context. In response to my question about the Baha'í view of the Holy Spirit, Price indicated that this was viewed as important through the manifested spiritual leaders.

Price drew from two 'meta-historians' Arnold Toynbee and Will Durant to support a staged view of history in which the rise and fall of religions was central and that had a spirituality focus. In response to a question about Baha'í scriptures, he said that he had studied the Baha'í archives and established that the faith's founder Baha'U'llah (1817-1892), the most recent divine messenger, had written scores of books either in his own hand or using a secretary, one of which was hundreds of pages long and fully footnoted and completed in just a couple of days.

According to the Bahá'í Australian website (bahai.org.au)

A central theme of the Baha'i Faith is that humanity is one family bound together in a common destiny: a global society. Recognition of the oneness of humanity is the key feature of this age, an age in which humankind is approaching its collective maturity. People of goodwill need to come together to collaborate in building a just and peaceful global society in which all individuals can fulfil their potential.

Key faith principles are:

- *equality of women and men*
- *harmony of science and religion*
- *abolition of extremes of poverty and wealth*
- *elimination of all forms of prejudice*
- *equal standard of human rights for all people*

Tom Price used the analogy of a pendulum to suggest that the world today was poised to swing back from a period of atheism and war to a period of inevitable world peace in which nations would unite in a federation of collaborative harmony underpinned by spirituality and love. I wish that I could believe that this was likely, at least in the near term, given the growth of authoritarianism and the multiple threats to planetary existence. However, Christians believe that we can cooperate with the Holy Spirit to work towards God's kingdom on earth 'as it is in heaven' and look forward with hope to the second coming of Jesus when God's peace and justice will reign.

While I may have been skeptical of some elements of the talk, Tom Price gave a fascinating presentation about the Baha'í faith. Baha'í adherents (5 million worldwide) are tolerant peace-loving people who appear to be making a very positive contribution to our country and around the world.



THE AUSTRALIAN
Baha'í Community



DIVINE PROVIDENCE 2.0

By Fergus McGinley*

The question of divine providence – what exactly God provides for us in response to all those prayers we endlessly pray – has always been where the rubber hits the road as far as the maintenance or otherwise of our faith goes. What I mean is that if we start to develop a general feeling over time that our prayers aren't being answered, we're probably on that wide, slippery slope sliding down to a complete loss of faith – suddenly, one day, we look around and realise that we stopped believing in God long ago, and that it would be good to stop pretending to ourselves that we are anything but a common or garden agnostic/atheist, like just about everybody else!

Yes, the question of providence is very controversial. There's Providence 1.0, the old doctrine of providence, which, in the Christian tradition is based on the Hebrew Old Testament version of God, but is basically common to religions world-wide. Then there's Providence 2.0 (so-called by me) which, I would contend, supersedes or replaces the old version, and is something very much to do with the remarkable activities of one Jesus of Nazareth about 2000 years ago.

Our problem, it seems to me, with providence, and therefore with faith, is that the old idea still hangs around in the background, distracting and misleading our thinking, even when we've started to get a handle on the new one that comes through Jesus. But let me now try to explain all this, starting with an exposé of the old doctrine of providence, after which, you can rest assured, I'll go to town on the new one...

Interested in reading more? To continue go to [Divine Providence 2.0](#) or read the full item on the PCNetSA website.

*Fergus is an Adelaide writer, teacher, lay preacher, and a member of PCNet SA Task Group. His new book is *The God Who Doesn't Exist* (ATF Press, 2025) – see antiitheologia.com for more info.

Some thoughts on the use of AI in creative writing

My experience using artificial intelligence to prepare a meditation for Holy Week.

Esmond Dowdy

For the April meeting of the PCNetSA Task Group, I was rostered to give the reflection at the meeting. Being near the beginning of Holy Week, I decided to offer a progressive Easter contemplation/meditation/reflection. However, I was not able to find just what I wanted among my resources, so turned to ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence model, to prepare a suitable reflection for the occasion.

The instruction I entered was:

Write a 200-word progressive meditation for Holy Week, that could be used as a discussion piece, and include 2 pertinent questions for discussion.

In response, ChatGPT said:

Progressive Meditation for Holy Week

“Walking the Way of Love and Liberation”

Holy Week invites us into a story of suffering, courage, and radical love. As we move from the joyous palms of Sunday to the shadows of the cross, we are asked not just to remember Jesus’ final days, but to enter into them—to let the questions of justice, sacrifice, and hope stir us deeply.

What if Holy Week isn’t just about what happened to Jesus, but also about what happens in us?

In Jesus’ acts—washing feet, breaking bread, standing silent before power—we see a call to humility, solidarity, and nonviolent resistance.

The cross, stripped of glory, becomes a protest against injustice. The tomb, still and dark, becomes a place of waiting, where transformation begins.

And then comes resurrection—not as a flashy miracle, but as a quiet revolution. Love breaks through fear. Life rises where death thought it had the final word.

Holy Week is a mirror. What parts of us are still in Gethsemane? What systems today still crucify the innocent? And what does resurrection look like in our world now?

Let us walk this week awake, asking:

1. Where do I see crucifixion happening in the world today and how am I called to respond?
2. What might resurrection mean in the context of justice, healing, or personal transformation?

cont.

As it happened, at the end of that week, I conducted an Easter Day service, and used the above as a springboard for the sermon, particularly focusing on those two questions. In drawing attention to crucifixion today, I spoke about the way asylum seekers, refugees, and displaced people are treated; about the prevalence of racism; about the earth itself being crucified through environmental degradation, climate inaction, pollution and neglect; and about crucifixion happening in our churches when people are excluded because of their sexuality, identity, or beliefs.

In terms of resurrection, I spoke of the transformation of women prisoners' lives through their participation in a choir at the Adelaide Women's Prison (see further information at [Songs Inside](#)); and of the co-operative relationship between the Noor Mosque at Morphett Vale and the Noarlunga Uniting Church.

In celebrating Easter we are not simply commemorating events that took place 2,000 years ago. Rather, we are entering into a narrative that transforms us in the here and now. Like the Never-ending Story, Easter invites us into a narrative that keeps unfolding. In a similar way, Schubert's Unfinished Symphony echoes the Easter mystery. In the unfinished and the ongoing, Easter invites us to play our part as we live as resurrection people.

An anonymous writer had this to say of Jesus:

He came singing love.
He lived singing love.
He died singing love
He rose in silence.
If the song is to continue
 we must do the singing.

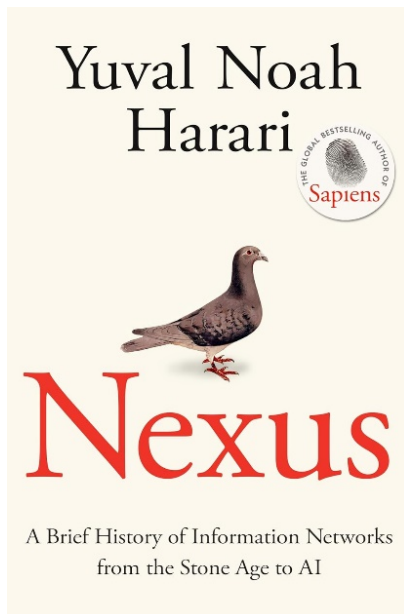
This is the essence of Easter.



Image courtesy Seacliff UC

Not AI generated!

NOT a Book Review... musings on Nexus



This is not a book review—it would take one far more knowledgeable and skilled than I am to write a useful review of such a profound book. And I doubt that my recommendation would carry much weight beside effusive back-cover comments from luminaries like Stephen Fry and Mustafa Suleyman, CEO of Microsoft AI. This short article is best described as musings on issues raised for me by Harari's book.

Prof Harari has a PhD in History from the University of Oxford and lectures at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, specialising in World History. He's obviously an exceptionally smart guy, but he writes in an engaging and accessible way, with lots of anecdotes, stories and quotations from many cultures and times. His books have

sold more than 45 million copies in 65 languages.

Nexus was recommended to me by a friend—a 'must-read' he said, aware of my career experience in engineering and computers. But I'm writing for a Progressive Christianity News Letter, and you may well ask how information networks relate to matters of Christian faith. Well, it turns out, quite a bit.

Harari's *Nexus* is a big-history book, journeying from before the stone age to the present. A central thesis is that gathering and processing information can, but does not necessarily, lead to truth and hence wisdom; it can, and often does, lead to power as an end-product. Information-fed power can be used creatively or destructively and Harari gives examples of both in societies within a spectrum from democracy to totalitarianism.

Information has a unique ability to connect people, for good or ill, and the growth of networks enabled by the internet and mass media today represents an existential challenge to humanity. Particularly chilling is the last chapter of the book, in which the author employs sub-headings like 'Algorithmic Takeover' in describing the continually evolving impact of artificial intelligence.

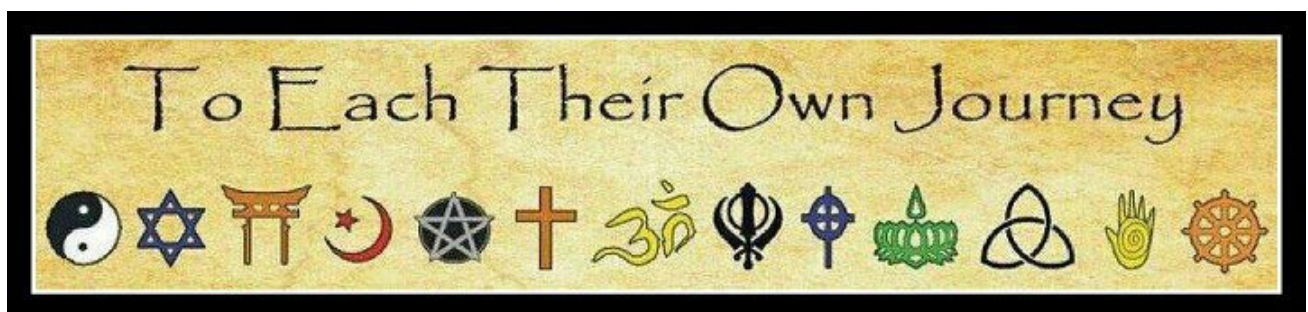
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Harari is critical of any form of religion, including Christianity. To quote from chapter 4, 'At the heart of any religion lies the fantasy of connecting to a superhuman and infallible intelligence.' The author then proceeds to describe in some detail the making and canonising of first the Hebrew Bible, then the Christian scriptures as documentary examples of claimed 'infallible intelligence'. The ambiguities and internal inconsistencies he exposes, plus the misuse of the bible in support of crusades, witch-hunts and the Spanish Inquisition, lead him to conclude that holy books lack any capacity for 'self-correcting mechanisms'. There is, he would say, no room in religions, most particularly Christianity, for doubt and dissent.

And this is, of course, where the rubber hits the road for a progressive Christian. Absence of dogmatism, room for dissent and a capacity to entertain multiple viewpoints are fundamental to a Progressive Christian position.

This is a challenging book, running, with notes and index, to almost 500 closely argued pages. If you're open to a challenge, I recommend you read it.

Don Sinnott June 2025



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email contactpcnetsa@gmail.com