

Strong Trust Lecture – 2019

The *Terra Australis* Statement of the Heart *(Principles for Promoting Peace with Planet Earth)*



Introduction

I give this lecture in honour of Charles Strong, my mentor in the pursuit of peace. On Armistice Day 2018, we held an Armistice Day Convocation to honour Charles Strong as a pioneer pacifist in Australia and collected our reflections in a volume entitled, *Remembering Pioneer Pacifist Charles Strong* (Habel 2018).

Some key lines from his famous *Thoughts on Armistice Day* capture the essence of his faith:

Jesus said, 'Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; pray for them that persecute you.' I do not find in the celebration of Armistice Day any sign of this spirit, any prayer for Germans, Austrians, Serbians, Turks or Russians. Do they not need our prayers? Are they not our brothers? Are we not supposed, if one be overtaken in a fault, to 'restore such an one,' and so to 'bear one another's burdens?' (Habel, 2018, p.9)

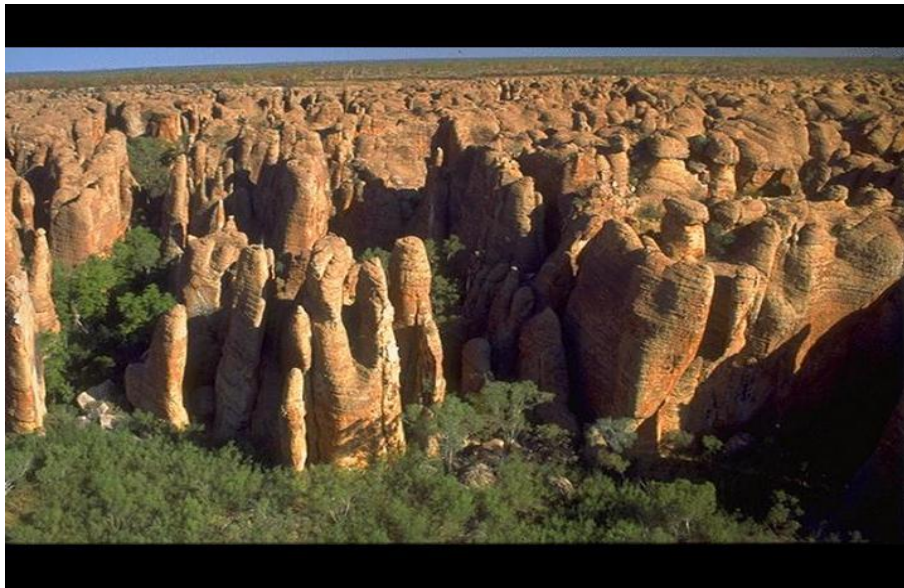
Strong was an ardent advocate of peace at all levels of society and international relations. He opposed the Boer War and the First World War, campaigning against conscription and refusing to sing the national anthem in church. For Strong, who was forced to leave the Presbyterian Church because of his stance on the doctrine of the atonement, God was not some omnipotent ruler on high but that almighty power called Love that permeates the cosmos and should govern all relationships in a society at peace.

In this lecture, I plan to extend the thinking of Strong to meet the current environmental crisis that requires re-thinking our relationship with nature and promoting peace with Earth. I am extending the pacifism of Strong from 'peace on Earth' to 'peace with Earth,' a perspective which I am sure he would endorse.

The basis of my presentation is a Statement I prepared at The Earth@Peace Conference in Melbourne earlier this year. The impetus for the form of this Statement is *The Uluru Statement of the Heart* made by Aboriginal leaders at Uluru in 2017. The new statement is called *The Terra Australis Statement of the Heart* with the subtitle *Principles for Promoting Peace with Earth*. And the Statement begins,

As Earth beings in Australia, we make the following statement of the heart as a step toward creating peace with Planet Earth, and especially with Terra Australis:

Principle 1: Terra Australis is the Home of Earth Beings



We confirm our identity as Earth beings who live in Terra Australis, a mother who has nurtured us and now calls us to make peace with her.

Principle One identifies *Terra Australis* as our home and the human beings living in this home as Earth beings, an identification that is vital if we are to move beyond the traditional mindset which identifies humans as superior to all other living beings on Earth. It is time to acknowledge Earth as the source of our being and *Terra Australis* as our chosen home.

The Challenge

This principle challenges us relate to Earth:

- as the source of our existence rather than a source of wealth
- as a living mother rather than lifeless matter
- as the source of our identity as Earth beings

This principle also challenges us to relate to *Terra Australis*:

- as a domain that is to be cherished as our home
- as a parent who has nurtured humans for millennia
- as a mother who urges us to make peace with her

Earth Mother

As children of Earth we recognise how Earth has nurtured us for millennia. Our daily existence is dependent on the magnetic forces of Earth as Macy reminds us:

Matter is made of rock and soil. It too is pulled by the magma that circulates through our planet heart and roots such molecules into biology. Earth pours through us, replacing each cell in the body every 7 years...we ingest and excrete Earth. We are made from Earth. I am that. You are that! (Macy, 1996, 501).

Earth, however, is not only the source of our existence, but also a habitat in the cosmos. More specifically we are a unique domain on planet Earth, namely *Terra Australis*, our chosen home. The time has come to learn from Mother Earth about how to make peace with Earth by living at peace with *Terra Australis*.

There also needs to be opportunities to explore how our ancestors have been dependent on the care given them by Earth over the millennia. Our predecessors have all been dependent on Earth for their breath, their food, their habitat in different ways in different periods of history. Even the genes and the DNA that children have inherited have been developed over the years in generations of children born of Earth and more recently born of *Terra Australis*.

Earth Beings

Our identity as Earth children is also acknowledged in the Bible, as Charles Strong would testify. The story of the origin of human beings in Genesis 2 makes it clear that the 'stuff' of which Adam is composed is from Earth. Adam is made from *adamah*, the 'ground' of Earth. The root of the word *adam*, means brown or red, like clay. Adam is the first red man or clay man. According to the Bible, we are the descendants of the first clay being.

A key biblical text that is often ignored is found in Ps. 139.13-15:

*Thou didst form my inward parts,
Thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise Thee, for Thou art fearful and wonderful.
Wonderful are Thy works!
Thou knowest me right well;
My frame was not hidden from Thee,
when I was made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of Earth.*

In the words of this Psalmist, the depths of Earth are the womb in which humans are formed in secret by the mysterious mind of the Creator. Earth is indeed our mother and we are Earth beings, a principle we now need to acknowledge publicly.

Earth Peace Mission

If we are to make peace with Earth, we first need to learn how to take care of our home, *Terra Australis*. In the Biblical tradition Adam was commissioned to 'serve and preserve' his home, the forest in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2.15). We are commissioned to do the same in our home.

We can also learn from our Aboriginal elders, that *Terra Australis* is the mother of their people; they belong to country and are born of the land. The *Terra Australia*, however, is not only the source of their physical nature, but also their spiritual identity, their Dreaming. In his book, *The Land our Mother*, Patrick Dodson (1973) writes,

The land is a living place made up of sky, clouds, rivers, trees, the wind, the sand; and the Spirit has planted my spirit there, in my own country. It is something—and yet it is not a thing—it is a living entity. It belongs to me, I belong to it. I rest in it. I come from there (1973, 53).

We, like our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, belong to *Terra Australis*, our Mother and our home. Our mission, therefore is not only to acknowledge our identity as Earth beings, but to serve and preserve our home in such a way as to create a peace that means living in harmony with all the domains of *Terra Australis*, everything from the ants to the atmosphere, from the frogs to the forest.

Principle 2

Terra Australia is a Land Sustained in a Cosmic Sanctuary



We declare our intention to gain a deeper appreciation of how Terra Australis is nourished by a living planet called Earth who also functions as a cosmic sanctuary that protects Terra Australis.

Principle Two not only recognises *Terra Australis* as an amazing domain on planet Earth that was formed billions of years ago and nourished a world of living organisms, but also became a haven, a cosmic sanctuary where amazing forms of life have been protected. It is time to thank Earth for being a home where we are safe and *Terra Australis* for being a haven of hope for peace on Earth.

The Challenge

This principle challenges us relate to Earth:

- as a unique planet on which living organisms evolved
- as a cosmic sanctuary where these organisms have been sustained and protected
- as a piece of stardust quivering with living mystery

This principle also challenges us to relate to *Terra Australis*:

- as a domain of Earth we share with billions of living organisms
- as a unique safe space within a cosmic sanctuary
- as haven where we can celebrate the mysteries of life

Cosmic Sanctuary - Spatial

Planet Earth was once a blazing ball of gases spinning through space. On such a ball of fire no life was possible for billions of years. But now Planet Earth is a sanctuary, a safe place, a protected haven where living creatures can flourish and something precious or sacred can be preserved for posterity.

The principle that planet Earth is a safe place for life to flourish in the cosmos is grounded in space age science that has used the Hubble telescope and visited nearby planets to investigate why life can survive and flourish on planet Earth. Two of the reasons why Earth is a safe cosmic sanctuary are:

- *The thin blue line on the surface of Earth called the atmosphere.*
- *The invisible dark force in the depths of Earth called gravity.*

Unlike other planets, the atmosphere of Earth is capable of providing a protective blanket around the planet which wards off the harsh destructive forces of solar radiation, while retaining sufficient warmth from the sun for life to flourish. Planet Mercury has almost no atmosphere. Venus has an atmosphere of sulphuric acid. The atmosphere of Mars has been destroyed. The atmosphere is the shield that makes Earth an amazing sanctuary in our solar system.

Moreover, the atmosphere of Earth is oxygen rich, maintaining the necessary mixture of gases and movement for life to flourish, whether by breathing the air or swaying in the wind.

The other major factor that keeps Earth safe is gravity, that force which holds the atmosphere close to Earth's surface. Gravity projects an amazing magnetic force from the centre of Earth that protects planet Earth from the fierce solar winds that bombard all the planets. Earth is therefore a cosmic sanctuary, a safe place in the solar system.

And Terra Australis is a unique haven of hope within the cosmic sanctuary called Earth.

Cosmic Sanctuary – Spiritual

In the Biblical tradition planet Earth is not only a sanctuary that protects Life, but also a sanctuary for an underlying presence called the Creator Spirit.

Life is more than a collection of living things. Life is a sacred force. Life is a presence that permeates our planet, a mystery that we are summoned not only to sustain but also to celebrate with all other living things (Psalm 148).

The origins of life on our planet are amazing. Just as amazing is its deep-life dimension. Earth has, deep within, a life-force that animates and stirs life, a life-force that we associate with the Spirit of the Creator (as in Ps. 104.29-30). Earth is a living sanctuary filled with Life emanating from the Creator Spirit.

A fascinating insight from the Bible is that the Hebrew word for wind (*ruach*) is also the word for air, atmosphere, breath and spirit. The atmosphere we breathe is, according to the Scriptures, the very breath/spirit of the Creator Spirit. The breath of life that animated Adam, also animates us humans as well as the planet in which we live.

Planet Earth is also a sanctuary for the presence of the Creator Spirit, the source of life. The Presence of God (*kabod YHWH*), sometimes translated as ‘the glory of God,’ appears on Mt Sinai as a stunning fire-cloud, a burning presence that Moses experiences for forty days. That same fire-cloud then ‘fills’ the tabernacle, as a concentrated manifestation of God’s presence.

Later, however, when Isaiah is worshipping in the temple, he hears the famous chorus of the seraphim fly we associate with the *Sanctus*.

*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts,
The whole Earth is filled with his Presence.*

The message is clear! The whole Earth is ‘filled’ with a living Presence. Earth is therefore like the tabernacle and the temple of old, a sacred place to worship with the Creator Spirit. Earth is a shimmering sanctuary in the cosmos, a sacred site like Uluru in the Aboriginal world of *Terra Australis*.

Origins of Life

According to scientists, planet Earth was formed 4.6 billion years ago. It was then inhospitable, with no living organisms. One billion years later there were numerous embryonic life forms, our ancestors. Planet Earth had become a cosmic womb, a unique abode for life to be born and flourish.

Billions of years after the Big Bang came the Tiny Touch when the first chemicals and elements needed for life came together to create organic life, the first-born life forms of planet Earth.

David Suzuki reminds us that all the descendants of Earth, all our relatives, constitute a remarkable family on whom we ultimately depend for life to survive on planet Earth,

Earth’s family, though, is truly amazing. Great horned owls, African elephants, domestic cats, chestnut trees, killer whales, lady bugs, McIntosh apples—our relatives come in an incredible number of forms. There’s a word for that tremendous variety—biodiversity. Bio means life, a diversity means difference... This abundance of species is not an accident or waste. Like air, water, soil and energy from the sun, it seems that biodiversity is necessary for life (1999, p. 68).

The Survival of Life

Evolution reveals an exciting scientific story of the origins and development of life-forms on Earth, from genetic molecules to gigantic dinosaurs. The earliest tiny life-forms—our oldest ancestors—were born in the ocean. Some eventually make it onto the land and evolve into plants and then animals. Millions of species

evolved over millions of years. What a wild and wonderful family, a family we have learned to love in *Terra Australis*, a family of whales and wombats, kangaroos and koalas.

How all the subsequent life forms evolved from these primal ancestors is a mystery that scientists continue to explore. As we explore the need for Earth care, we are reminded that billions of years ago, all life forms survived in a very different world. Earth care was always part of the role of Earth as our primal ancestor.

Earth Peace Mission

If we are to make Peace with Earth, the fate and welfare of all species in *Terra Australis* are also our concern. We need to ask, what has happened to our kin in this continent in the past? We need to explore what is happening to our brothers and sisters of the animal world amid the trauma of climate change, whether these relatives live on the Great Barrier Reef, at the South Pole or in the remains of an ancient Tasmanian forest.

Scientists have identified five periods over the past 500 million years when large numbers of our relatives have become extinct, after which Earth recovers its previous level of biodiversity. We are now in a sixth extinction crisis, one which humans have created. We are killing off species—our kin—faster than ever before in Earth's history.

It is now part of our Earth care commitment to make our planet, our cosmic sanctuary, safe for all the threatened species in our living family tree. Earth care also means species protection in the haven of *Terra Australis*.

The task of an Earth-conscious community is to develop a peace mission that recognises that Earth is not just another puny planet in the ever-expanding universe, but an amazing cosmic sanctuary where we are given the unbelievable privilege of residing as living beings.

One plan of action for a peace mission is for community groups and organisations that are ready to recognise the nature of Earth as a cosmic sanctuary and the need for peace in the sanctuary, is to set

aside *t* to celebrate the wonders and mysteries of planet Earth as a cosmic sanctuary. On this day, artists, thinkers and visionaries unite to highlight the unique nature of *Terra Australis* in a cosmic sanctuary exploding with life in all its amazing forms and beauty.

(Churches might link this day with *The Season of Creation*, a festival that originated in *Terra Australis* and is now celebrated by many churches around the world in September. (See www.seasonofcreation.com.au)

Principle 3:

Terra Australis is an Eco-Wonder of Planet Earth



We need to discern afresh the deep web of ecological impulses that animate planet Earth and learn to cooperate with them to create a harmonious planet community on Terra Australis.

Principle Three recognises that *Terra Australis* is an ecological wonder on planet Earth, an amazing web of interrelated forces, mysteries and mazes in which each of us is connected and to which we belong. The time has come to embrace ecology as an exciting journey in which to discover our intimate connection with the impulses of the cosmos so as to create peace with Earth.

The Challenge

This principle challenges us to find the amazing ecological interconnections that affect our relationship with Earth, including,

- the forces of gravity and the survival of the planet
- the worms in the ground and the food we eat
- the ocean currents and wild weather patterns

This Principle also challenges us to relate to *Terra Australis*:

- as a domain of Earth interlaced with ecological wonders
- as a land interconnected with all the forces of nature
- as a place where we can discern our close relationship with every living thing.

A Web of Life

Planet Earth has been likened to a living organism. The numerous different life forms are dependent on each other in a mutually beneficial way. In other words, it can be said that planet Earth is tantamount to

- *A living community where biodiversity enhances health, happiness and peace.*
- *A vibrant habitat where, through death, all materials are recycled for life!*

The interconnection of all species is made clear in a quote of David Suzuki, a quote that is itself a valuable maze of mysteries worth exploring.

*No species exists in isolation from all others. In fact, today's estimated 30 million species are all connected through the intersection of their life-cycles—plants depend on specific insect species to pollinate them, fish move through vast expanses of the ocean feeding and being fed upon by other species, and birds migrate halfway around the world to raise young on the brief explosion of insect populations in the Arctic. Together **all species make up one immense web of interconnections** that binds all beings to each other and the physical component.*

A Web of Eco-systems

When it was discovered that the Earth was round, the flat-Earth cosmology of humans changed radically. Embracing ecology is basic to our very existence means; we must again embrace a new

cosmology, an understanding of the world as a maze of inter-connected mysteries—both physical and spiritual.

Today we are confronted by the mystery of how every force in the cosmos is somehow connected, whether through light-years of time, across wide worlds of space or dark masses of matter. In our home web, the forces of gravity, motion and anti-gravity bind us together in a tiny planet where life is possible. Amid the wide web of cosmic ecosystems, our home in *Terra Australis* is an amazing local eco-wonder amidst a universe of eco-mysteries.

Planet Earth is not a lifeless ball of stardust but a vibrant community of forces and presences that interact and communicate with each other to enable life. All of Earth's components, from the mountains to the forests, from the seas to the ice caps, are part of a complex living entity called Earth. In other words, the wondrous web of inter-related forces called planet earth, is a web of living wonders, a community of communicating forces, a maze of endlessly moving mysteries. In *Terra Australis* we live in a wondrous eco-web of close relationships, both local and cosmic, from the sand hills of the Red Desert to the black holes in space.

Biblical Eco-Wisdom

In the past we have tended to read the Bible from a dualistic perspective in which the components of the cosmos were all separate. Heaven was separate from Earth. The sun was separate from Earth. Humans were separate from other creatures. The sea was separate from the land. Ecology challenges us to discover how everything is connected and related. Is this challenge found anywhere in the Bible?

According to the Book of Job, God takes Job on a tour of the cosmos, a tour which might well be designated an eco-tour (Job 38-40). Job is challenged, at the outset, to grasp the 'design' of the cosmos, how the components of the cosmos belong together in one grand plan.

Job is confronted, not only with a mass of wondrous domains in creation, but also with the mystery of where they belong in the cosmos and how they are interrelated. Job's experience on that

journey is tantamount to what today we would call an ‘ecological conversion’ (See Job 38-39).

Job is also confronted by the mysteries of astronomy, the architecture of Earth, the relationship of the ocean to the land and the Innate Wisdom that guides the forces of the weather.

The ecological dimension of God’s design is especially evident when God challenges Job to grasp how the laws of space are related to, and involved in, establishing order or peace on Earth (38.31-33). What is the connection between forces in space and the design of Earth? That is a challenge that astronomers still face. In these verses we sense how ancient scientists, called the wise, explored the interrelationship of external forces such as gravity and their influence on Earth.

Earth Peace Mission

An eco-peace mission requires that we move beyond viewing our planet Earth and our home in *Terra Australia* as consisting of a series of discrete domains that may be viewed in isolation and analysed separately. We need to create an everyday awareness that each of us is connected to a fascinating web of mysteries linking the eco-systems of the planet and our local landscapes.

One helpful activity involves inviting members of the local community, whether church, town or neighbourhood, to take an eco-tour of the location in which we live. In this tour, we explore how all parties and domains are interconnected. There may be only a few degrees of separation between humans, but there will also be close connection in terms of features of the location—landscape, roads, homes, trees, gardens, compost bins, people, pets and more.

A part of this project could be determining the ecological footprint of the community and its various members. These connections may form an eco-map of a given location which will help people to realise how they are connected not only with fellow Earth beings on *Terra Australis*, but also with the wind, the atmosphere, the soil and the gravity of where we live.

Telling stories of past connections between people and nature also helps us to remember just how vital our past bonds with nature have been and helps us to encourage new positive relationships.

Another course of action is to explore the many ways in which the forces, laws, domains and realities of nature are interconnected. For example, how is my breath connected with the ocean? How is my body connected with the worms in the soil? How is my brain connected with gravity?

Principle 4

Terra Australis is a Wounded Child of Mother Earth



We regret the numerous acts of violence that Terra Australis has experienced at the hands of invading settlers and we seek means of regeneration and restoration of the land we have so unjustly damaged.

Principle Four focuses on the suffering experienced by Terra Australis, the child of Mother Earth, at the hands of invading settlers and current inhabitants. The time has come to publicly recognise these acts of violence and find ways both locally and nationally to rejuvenate and restore the damages inflicted on the child of Mother Earth.

Challenge

This principle challenges us to recognise that:

- we have wounded Mother Earth in many ways
- we need to identify the extent and depth of these wounds
- we ought to search for new ways to heal the wounds

And challenges us to relate to *Terra Australis*:

- as a child of Mother Earth who has been badly wounded
- as a child on whom we have inflicted suffering
- as a child whose serious wounds we need to heal

The Wounds

The wounds of our mother, Earth, are numerous. The exploitation of her forests in many countries is tragic. The pollution of her oceans like the Pacific is painful to behold. Once fertile soils are now saline. Many species, children of Earth, have become extinct and others are threatened. The magnificent Barrier Reef is severely diminished.

The pollution of the Pacific by masses of plastic involves more than an accumulation of plastic waste. The plastic gradually decomposes and fragments of plastic are imbibed by fish and other sea creatures. Se, then, consume these plastic fragments when we eat sea creatures.

Especially painful is the way that global warming is now creating wounds that may never heal. Ice scientists, for example, can now measure the decrease in the ice at both the North and South poles. Ice thickness is now half what it was in 1980. Artic warming is twice as fast as in other parts of the planet and now affects the seas surrounding *Terra Australis*. Longer summers make life difficult for creatures such as polar bears. The wounded daughter of Mother Earth is crying out to end global warming.

The Healing

The task of healing *Terra Australis* is not easy. Scientists can identify the wounds, the ways that humans have treated our land as if she were but lifeless matter. Soil degradation, habitat destruction, erosion and salinity are evident across the globe.

The difficulty is that most nations, including Australia, are bent on economic progress, unlimited growth and exploitation of the planet. Healing the *Terra Australis* requires a complete change of heart and economic policy, a readiness to cease abusing nature and relating to

our land as a daughter of Mother Earth, rather than product to be exploited. The resources of the planet are limited and the current over-use of these resources means that life on the planet may be limited.

There has been some effort to confront the cause and effects of climate change, but most leaders are unwilling to face the fact that global warming is an environmental crisis that requires bold action, not token promises. Economic forces tend to control the decision making process, even in *Terra Australis*.

Cries for Help

The Psalmists often hear the domains and creatures of Earth praising God and they invite us to join them (e.g., Ps. 148). Many of the prophets, however, also hear Earth crying, mourning and weeping because of her pain. Jeremiah not only experiences pain when he feels the anguish of Earth (Jer. 4.19-28), he also relates that God too hears the cry of Earth when God's vineyard has become a wilderness (Jer. 12.10-11). Joel even hears the wild beasts crying out to God because their pastures have been consumed (Joel 1.19-20).

The Aboriginal Peoples of this land can also testify that they have heard *Terra Australis* crying in pain because of her wounds. The trashing of Maralinga with atomic explosions is but one of the many wounds in our land. The Rainbow Spirit elders cry,

The Creator Spirit is crying because the blood of the Aboriginal people has desecrated the land. The land is crying out because the blood on the ground has not been heard, and the sacrifice of those who died has not been remembered (1997, 48).

The cries of *Terra Australis* have reached the heart and soul of sensitive women surrounded by apparently heartless mining companies. As we listen, we may well hear the cry of one such Aboriginal woman, Mary Duroux,

*My mother, my mother, what have they done?
Crucified you like the Only Son!
Murder committed by mortal hand.
I weep my mother, my mother, the land (1990, 89).*

Earth Peace Mission

A peace mission to heal the wounds of *Terra Australis* is not easy, given the forceful economic worldview of our government and much of our society. One of our first tasks is to expose the wounds visually and emotionally through the media and throughout the community. We need not only to see that violence that has been inflicted but also to feel the pain experienced by the daughter of Mother Earth.

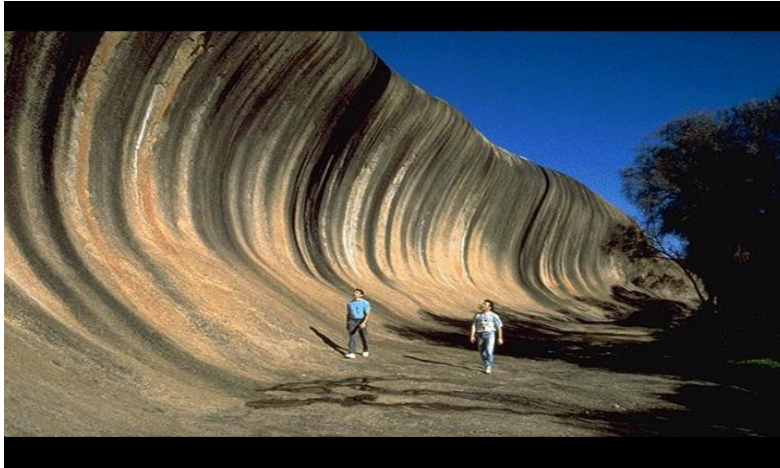
A given community may wish to function like a medico and identify the wounds of *Terra Australis* in a known location.

In each case the diagnosis would involve determining the cause of the local wounds of Earth, the severity of the wound, past efforts, if any, to heal the wound, and ways of exposing the severity of the wound to the wider community, including religious, social and political leaders. In short, we need committed peace advocates to become ‘disaster doctors’ or ‘Earth medics’ who are willing not only to identify the nature of the wounds of *Terra Australis*, but also to publicise their findings regardless of the consequences.

In the Christian context, the religious leaders need not only to cite the compassion of Christ, but also how that compassion moves them to find ways of healing *Terra Australis* as well as the people who have been wounded.

Principle 5

Terra Australia is a Land with a Voice/Rights



We ask that the voice of Terra Australis and her Aboriginal custodians be heard so that the government of this land becomes acutely aware not only of the environmental crisis but also of the sovereignty and rights of Terra Australis and her original custodians.

Principle Five links our concern with that of the Aboriginal Peoples outlined in *The Uluru Statement of the Heart*, a document that calls for the people of *Terra Australis* to listen to the voice of the Aboriginal Peoples and incorporate that voice in the constitution of Australia. This principle ask for the voice and rights of *Terra Australis* be given comparable recognition as we seek peace with the land.

The Challenge

This principle challenges us to recognise that *Terra Australis*:

- is a domain of Earth whose voice needs to be heard
- has sovereign rights as a discrete continent of planet Earth
- ought to be treated as subject rather than an object

And challenges us to acknowledge the Aboriginal Peoples

- as having sovereign rights in *Terra Australis*
- as peoples whose voice should be heard in our constitution
- as the traditional custodians still awaiting a treaty

Voice

The voice in the natural domains of Terra Australis is a mystery few seem to hear. Birds voices may be heard in the forest, but the voice of the forest is rarely the focus of attention. Animal voices may be heard but the voice of the field is ignored.

We need to listen to the voices of Earth and her domains whether they are songs of celebration or cries of anguish. The diverse voices of Terra Australis are a mystery of nature we are called to articulate to our community. We need to be prophets for our land and our kin in the land.

Ecology has now revealed that not only are all eco-systems interrelated, but that the elements, entities and beings of these systems communicate. Thomas Berry claims that planet Earth is also a ‘community’ in which each being and domain has a voice:

In reality there is a single community of the Earth that includes all its component members, whether human or other than human. In this community every being has its own role to fulfil, its own dignity, its inner spontaneity. Every being has its own voice. Every being declares itself to the entire universe. Every being enters into community with other beings. (Berry, 1999, 4)

Rights

The voice of a being or a domain of Terra Australis can readily be affirmed as a mystery of nature, an expression of the identity of that reality. Voice, however, can also mean a recognition of the rights of that entity, an expression of its right to exist, express its character and be free from domination.

If we dare to consider establishing peace with Terra Australis and its diverse domains, we may well ask whether we have considered the rights of these entities:

Have we considered not only the flow of the Mighty Murray but also her right to flow freely, to remain unpolluted or to sustain the diversity of life in her waters?

Have we recognised not only the beauty of the rainforests but also their right to exist as vibrant expressions of life in *Terra Australis*?

Have we acknowledged not only the wonders of our amazing landscapes but also texts with a voice expressing their right to be heard communicating their message about how to sustain their future.

If we are to seek peace with Earth and the domains of earth we need to recognise them as subjects with rights rather than objects to be exploited. We need to relate to the domains of *Terra Australis*, whether it be the Mighty Murray or the soil in our garden, as entities that deserve to be treated as valuable partners in the eco-community of Earth where we live.

The Aboriginal Voice

For millennia the Aboriginal Peoples of *Terra Australis* have been reading the landscape, discerning the laws of nature and hearing the voices of the spiritual realities in the land. But their capacity to hear and read the landscape has been dismissed. They also hear the voices of the land suffering as Yunupingu writes,

Even when I am not on my tribal land I am able to speak sign language. I do the same by looking at hills with no trees. I understand that those hills are suffering. I understand that Mother Earth is suffering because there is so much suffering (1996, 9-10).

Or as the Rainbow Spirit Elders assert,

The Creator Spirit is crying because the blood of the Aboriginal Peoples has desecrated the land. The land is crying out because the blood on the ground has not been heard, and the sacrifice of those who died has not been remembered (1997, 48).

It is one thing to recognise that our Aboriginal custodians can read the landscape and recognise its right to be heard, it is quite another to realise that the sovereign rights and voice of the Aboriginal Peoples themselves have still not been fully acknowledged as the *Uluru Statement of the Heart* makes very clear.

Earth Peace Mission

Just as there is now a strong move among various organisations to have the Australian government acknowledge the sovereign rights and voice of the Indigenous Peoples of *Terra Australis*, we believe that a similar movement ought to be initiated to acknowledge the sovereign rights and voice of *Terra Australis* itself. Such a movement would be vital in the promotion of peace with the land which is our home, the source of our being as Earth beings and the locus of our future on planet Earth.

Principle 6

Terra Australia has a Sacred Site at its Centre



Uluru, a Sacred Site for Aboriginal Peoples in Terra Australis, is a potential symbol of peace with Terra Australis for peoples of diverse faiths and orientations who may view the site from a geological, spiritual or personal perspective.

The Challenge

This principle challenges us to recognise that *Terra Australis*:

- has a sacred site recognised as such by Aboriginal Peoples
- has a sacred site that could be recognised as such by peoples of diverse faiths and perspectives

- has a sacred site that could become the symbol of peace with *Terra Australis* and with planet Earth

The Rock

Uluru, often identified as The Rock, is an amazing geological phenomenon is the *centre* of *Terra Australis* that readily evokes a spiritual response of awe and wonder. The Rock is a magnificent golden monolith that emerges from the vast flat landscape of the Outback, the Red Centre of Australia. If we watch the Rock at sunset, with each stage of the sunset, the Rock changes colour from gold to orange to burning red to purple. The sun seems to be setting inside the Rock with a Presence emanating from within.

The Aboriginal Peoples of *Terra Australis* have a deep consciousness of the spiritual dimensions of the Rock, a place that houses not only the spirits of their ancestors but is also a pivotal point in the landscape of country from which the Creator Spirit emanates to sustain the life lines of *Terra Australis*. The Rock is indeed a sacred site that visitors would do well not to climb or conquer like Everest, but to embrace with wonder and reverence.

The Creator Spirit

The Creator Spirit is a term to identify that spiritual force that people of many faiths discern in creation, whether it be outer space or *Terra Australis*. According to the Rainbow Spirit Elders,

The Creator Spirit is known to Aboriginal Australians by many names, including Yiirmbal, Biame, Rainbow Spirit, Paayamu, Biiral, Wandjina and, in Christian times, Father God (2007, 31).

According to the Rainbow Spirit Elders, the Rainbow Spirit has been present deep within the land from the beginning. The Rainbow Spirit is the Creator Spirit who fills the land with numerous life-forces and spiritual forces. Human beings were also created from the land by the Creator Spirit and have the responsibility to cooperate with the

Creator Spirit to both care for and to activate the life-forces within the land. These spiritual forces are concentrated at sacred sites, including Uluru. The Creator Spirit is the true owner of Terra Australis and its water. (2007, Ch. 3).

The Creator Spirit is discerned by believers in numerous faiths. And in many faith traditions the Creator Spirit is a force or presence that permeates the land, but is often experienced at sacred sites. In the Wisdom School of the ancient Near East, the Creator Spirit employs Wisdom as the blueprint in creating the cosmos. Wisdom is a force innate in creation, an expression of the permeating presence of the Creator Spirit (Habel, 2015).

In Stoic thought, logos is the Creator Spirit that creates, permeates and sustains creation. In Colossians, the writer identifies the logos with Christos, the Spirit that creates, permeates and reconciles all creation.

*For in him all things were created, in heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible....He is before all things and in him all things hold together...For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on Earth or in heaven, **making peace** by the blood of his cross (Col. 1.15-20).*

The claim that Christos, as the Creator Spirit, is before all things, in all things, unites all things and makes peace with all things is a spiritual consciousness that is not only parallel with that of the Rainbow Spirit Elders, but also relevant for an appreciation of the presence of Christos as the Creator Spirit present in *Terra Australis* and in Uluru.

Symbol of Peace with Earth

If people of faith and other perspectives can not only view the Rock with a deep wonder consciousness but also appreciate the option of a Creator Spirit consciousness or its secular counterpart, then Uluru may well have the potential for being a symbol for all peoples in *Terra Australis*.

Some years ago, when I visited Uluru, I wrote a poem, the close of which, I believe, is relevant today.

*I sensed what many had sensed
in other lands before me,
the point of spiritual concentration,
the navel of Earth
where spirit is incarnate in the Rock,
the intrinsic worth of Earth is revealed
and presence means peace with country.*

If we dare to recognise that Uluru is equivalent to the ‘navel of Earth,’ and a site that reveals the ‘worth of Earth,’ it is possible to take the next step and recognise the Rock as a vital symbol of peace with Earth and especially with *Terra Australis* in the current tumultuous context.

Earth Peace Mission

In the words of George Rosendale, my Aboriginal mentor,

I am spiritual. Inside me is spirit and land, both given to me by the Creator Spirit. There is a piece of land in me, and it keeps drawing me back like a magnet to the land from which I came. Because the land too is spiritual (Rainbow Spirit Elders, 12).

If we dare to recognise Uluru as a spiritual symbol, a central sacred site of *Terra Australis*, we may well sense that we are being drawn back to by this magnet of the land to promote peace not only with the Aboriginal Peoples of the land but with the land itself, the spiritual and biological source of our being as Earth beings and land beings.

The task remains how do we stir the consciousness of Australians to move beyond viewing *Terra Australis* as territory to create wealth rather than a home with which and in which we create peace.

The *Terra Australis* Statement of the Heart

(Principles for Promoting Peace with Earth)

As Earth beings in Australia, we make the following statement of the heart as a step toward creating peace with Earth, and especially with Terra Australis:

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Principle 1: Terra Australia is the Home of Earth Beings

We confirm our identity as Earth beings who live in *Terra Australis*, a mother who has nurtured us and now calls us to make peace with her.

Principle 2: Terra Australia is a Land Sustained in a Cosmic Sanctuary

We declare our intention to gain a deeper appreciation of how *Terra Australis* is nourished by a living planet called Earth who also functions as a cosmic sanctuary that protects *Terra Australis*.

Principle 3: Terra Australia is an Eco-Wonder of Planet Earth

We need to discern afresh the deep eco-wonder of *Terra Australis*, explore the ecological impulses that animate planet Earth and learn to cooperate with them to create a harmonious community.

Principle 4: Terra Australia is a Wounded Child of Mother Earth

We regret the numerous acts of violence that *Terra Australis* has experienced at the hands of invading settlers and we seek means of regeneration and restoration of the land we have so unjustly damaged.

Principle 5: Terra Australia is a land with a voice/with rights

We ask that the voice of *Terra Australis* and her Aboriginal custodians be heard so that the government of this land becomes acutely aware not only of the environmental crisis but also of the sovereignty and rights of *Terra Australis* and her original custodians.

Principle 6: Terra Australia has a Sacred Site at its Centre

Uluru, a Sacred Site for Aboriginal Peoples in *Terra Australis*, is a potential symbol of peace with *Terra Australis* for peoples of diverse faiths and orientations who may view the site from a geological, spiritual or personal perspective.

A Strong Response



Ecology and the environmental crisis were not dominant concern in the world of Charles Strong before 1900 and during the turn the century. Strong was vehemently opposed to any form of violence and a forceful advocate of creating a community at peace. Recently summarised his vision as follows:

1. Jesus interpreted the Kingdom of God to be the Kingdom of cosmic Love, or in popular terms, ‘the Way’ of the Spirit animating the world.
2. The Way is a spiritual path that is free from the demands of doctrine, dated beliefs in the Bible or ecclesiastical control.
3. Following the Way involves a conscious life of love, social justice and goodwill between all members of the community.
4. The goal of living the Way is to enable an active community to become a society of compassion, reconciliation, moral change and, above all, of peace.
5. Consistent with this goal is the work of the community to counter violence, expose injustice and oppose all forms of war.
6. By living the Way an individual can experience the impulse of the Spirit incarnate deep within each of us reaching out to the universal Spirit at large in Nature and society.
7. The future ought to anticipate a society in which the Kingdom of Love and the universal Spirit governed its moral and social values (Habel, 2017, 5-6).

The vision of Strong was to create a community at peace governed by the universal Spirit. While the vision of Strong focused primarily on the community at peace locally, socially and nationally, there is clear evidence that for Strong that peace with nature and Earth is implied. I believe therefore that, in the light of the *Terra Australis Statement of the Heart*, his vision could be reformulated as follows:

1. Jesus interpreted the Kingdom of God to be the Kingdom of cosmic Love, or in popular terms, 'the Way' of the Spirit animating the world to bring peace on and with Earth.
2. The Way is a spiritual path that is free from the demands of doctrine, dated beliefs in the Bible or ecclesiastical control, a Way that makes ecology vital for developing a peace conscious relationship with Earth.
3. Following the Way involves a conscious life of love, social justice and peace between all members of the community both in society and in Nature.
4. The goal of living the Way is to enable an active community to become a vehicle of compassion, reconciliation, moral change and, above all, of peace in society and with Earth.
5. Consistent with this goal is the work of the community to counter violence, expose injustice and oppose all forms of environmental destruction.
6. By living the Way an individual can experience the impulse of the Spirit incarnate deep within each of us reaching out for peace the universal Spirit to create peace at large in Nature and society.

To summarise, in the language of Charles Strong, we need to discern Cosmic Love permeating *Terra Australis* and cooperate with that Spirit in creating peace on and with Earth.

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