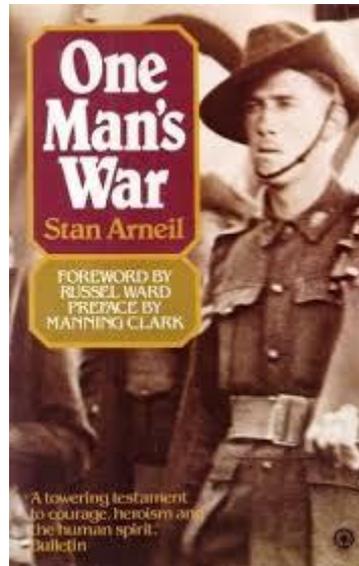


## “THE VERY AIR WE BREATHE IS GIVEN TO US”



Before the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, succumbing to neo-atheistic influences in the late 1980s, axed the radio program *The Search for Meaning*, presenter Caroline Jones conducted a number of interviews with former soldier Stan Arneil, survivor of the Burma Railway and Changi prison after the fall of Singapore in February, 1942. In the course of the interviews Stan spoke of the significance, inculcated in him by his father, of the great feast of Easter when the Church celebrates Christ's Resurrection from the dead. Stan proclaimed his Catholic faith fearlessly and told how it had sustained him through his years of suffering at the hands of the Japanese. He left an indelible memorial of what Australian soldiers had undergone for their country and for its people.

In one of these interviews he uttered the words that constitute the title of this article as he insisted on our utter dependence on God for both *what* we are and *that* we are. It is timely to recall his words when millions are suffering breathing and eye difficulties from the smoke produced by this summer's appalling bushfires. It is timely to recall the words as we struggle under the mindless dictates of those who reject God's existence and their utter dependence on Him; who reject the moral principles which are part of their very essence; and whose dictates are working to degrade our existence and our love of this great country.

The soldiers of the Second World War who spent themselves in defence of human freedom and the common good, even to giving up their lives, would have been revolted by the descent into paganism and moral anarchy at which their offspring, just three generations on, have arrived, killing the innocent and celebrating their indulgence in sexual perversion. Were they alive today they would surely question the benefit of their having suffered for offspring who treat the freedom won for them

so hardly with such disdain, who embrace ideologies that emulate those of the Germans and Japanese against whom they fought, and who waste the lives that have been given them.

The day that Stan died, Easter Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1992, I was one of a party that walked from the Catholic Bushwalking Club shack on Scott's Main Range in the Boyd-Kanangra National Park, not far from Greenwattle Creek the source of one of the current fires, to a campsite in Gingra Creek as we headed for Kanangra Walls and our cars.



Stan Arneil—1918-1992

Former New South Wales Deputy Premier, Pat Hills, died just three days later and, predictably, the secular press focused its attentions on the politician, Hills, rather than on Arneil. Yet, arguably, Stan Arneil had done much more for the common good of his country than Hills ever did.

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On Saturday morning last I attended Mass at Inveralochy near Goulburn for the intentions of those about to suffer the day's expected horrendous weather. I went out to the car for a drink of water before Mass began and as I passed the pamphlet display in the atrium there was a noise. When I returned I discovered three items on the floor in front of the rack, lying face down. The three were copies of a pamphlet entitled *The Immaculate Heart of Mary*. Back in the chapel, as he moved to descend the altar steps, the priest said he would be offering the votive Mass of the Immaculate Heart of 22<sup>nd</sup> August.

There was no air movement in the atrium that could have precipitated the fall from the display. The petulant prince of darkness was clearly venting his ire over the great work priest and people were about to embark on while invoking his arch-enemy, the Mother of God, to intercede for those in need because of depredations he had been instrumental in precipitating.

Michael Baker

January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020—*Epiphany of the Lord*