Symbolising the Australian nation

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- April 2012 -



- The fifty cent coin with an interpretation of the Coat of Arms



- State Badges on the shield of the Coat of Arms

And wear your spray of wattle,
as a monarch wears his crown,
Its native gold, through testing fires,
has won to high renown.

- a refrain from Wattle Day, 1916

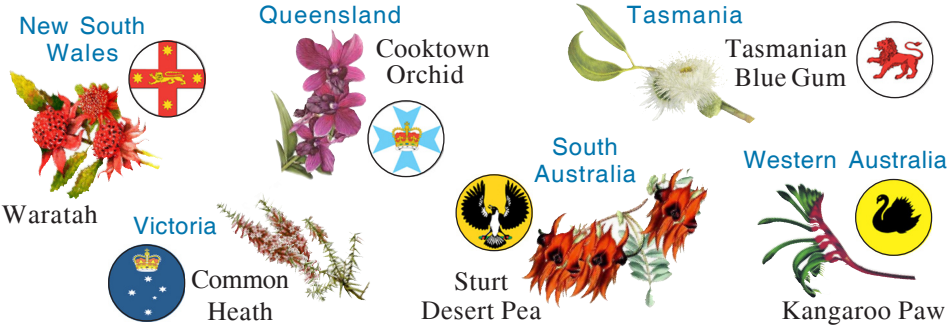
Recognising God's interest in the nations and their emblems

Since each nation is formed and sustained by Almighty God, the symbolic representation of various groups of people may be affirmed and celebrated. The goodness of national distinction is clear in the assertion of Job (12:23) that our God *makes nations great*, and from Paul's teaching in Acts 17:26: *From one man he made every nation of men ...* . As one of God's good gifts, nationality may rightly be identified and celebrated by civic symbols which could include the flag, coat of arms, floral motifs and gemstone emblems.

Hence the twelve tribes of Israel were denoted by their flags (Numbers 2:3), and by gemstones fixed on the High Priest's breastpiece (Exodus 28:17, 21):

> *"... mount four rows of precious stones on it. .... There are to be twelve stones, one for each of the names of the sons of Israel ...".*

As the nation of Israel was ordained to exist as a federation of twelve tribes, with each having its own representative motif, it is good for every partner in the Australian Commonwealth to have a **State Badge** and **Floral Emblem**:



Federation and Christian symbolism



Featured on Australian passports and citizenship papers, and shown on various federal documents and buildings, including as a shadow image on each polymer banknote, and reworked on most fifty cent pieces, the **Commonwealth Coat of Arms** contains a shield depicting the State Badges with their five crosses:

- The Southern Cross is displayed on the State Badge of Victoria;
- The Maltese Cross is shown on the Queensland State Badge;
- Two crosses surmount the crowns on those two State Badges;
- St George's Cross is on the State Badge of New South Wales;

Additionally, the rising sun (a resurrection symbol) provides a background for the State Badge of South Australia, and possibly Western Australia.



The **Commonwealth Star** denotes cooperative unity and individual state autonomy, founded on Christian esteem for variety and minority. As Paul has explained: *The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!"* (I Corinthians 12:21) and indeed ... *there should be no division in the body, but ... its parts should have equal concern for each other* (12:25). Hence all six States (large or small) are equally valued within the Federation and have equal numbers of upper house federal MPs - to protect States' rights.

Furthermore, a seventh point was added to the Commonwealth Star in 1909, so as to include Australia's various Territories - upholding an approach that arises in the Western tradition from a principle found in I Corinthians 12:23: *... the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour*.

Various other civic features indicate Australia's nationhood, and they attest to Christianity at the basis of our culture:

- Denoting foundational faith, the Australian Flag contains three Christian crosses on the Union Jack, and to this is added the Southern Cross;
- Our National Anthem has modest but significant spirituality as it calls the people to *rejoice* while working *Beneath our radiant Southern Cross*;
- Badges of the Australian Federal Police and the nation's military feature the Crown of King Edward the Confessor, on which is the Maltese Cross;
- The Victoria Cross is awarded as Australia's highest military medal.

The symbolic value of the Golden Wattle

While the dying and rising Christ is exemplified by all plants which spring from seed, our National Flower the Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) is the first plant to rise after a flood or bushfire, as Christ was first to rise. The wattle also serves to protect the other seedlings growing underneath. Esteem for the well-loved Golden Wattle developed according to the following timeline:

1899 - A Wattle Club was formed in Victoria to promote Australia's famous green and gold flowering plant - as a patriotic civic symbol;

1910 - The first Wattle Day was held [- officially from 1st September 1992];

1912 - The revised Commonwealth Coat of Arms received a stylised image of Golden Wattle, along with a shield of the six State Badges;

1914 - Gum leaves and sprigs of Golden Wattle were included with letters to soldiers in the First World War, as a reminder of things loved at home;

1954 - A newly crowned Elizabeth II presented herself to our great island continent as **Queen of Australia**, beginning and ending the tour in her **Wattle Dress**;



1975 - The Order of Australia began, with a wattle emblem and with Queen Elizabeth II as its Sovereign Head;

1984 - Green and gold became the official national colours after their use by Australian athletes since the 1920s;

1988 - The Golden Wattle was named as National Flower;

2003 - Many people wore Golden Wattle sprigs to mark the first anniversary of the Bali bombings, in which 88 Australians were killed.



The meaning of Australia's gemstone emblem

Australia produces the best quality opals and nearly the entire global supply. Moreover, opal can display all the colours of the rainbow, and every opal is unique. Proclaimed as National Gemstone in 1993, each opal may serve to remind us of the light of Christ shining in our land: *an opal-hearted country* (as the poet Dorothea Mackellar noted). Indeed, Australia excels like opal that will be mounted with other gemstones on the New Jerusalem:



> *The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone* (Revelation 21:19).

Using civic symbols to share our faith and build the nation

The spiritual significance of Australia's civic symbols may be instrumental to encouraging faith in Jesus Christ as personal saviour and Lord of the nation. As each heart may be shaped powerfully by images, the value of civic symbols can be shared in homes, churches and schools. Suggestions are as follows:



Discuss the Godly people and Christian motifs on Australian coins and banknotes when giving children money, or while making purchases;



Construct a flagpole in carpentry lessons and use it to fly the Australian flag, which could be hand-made in sewing classes or art instruction;



Wear rosemary (as it grows at Gallipoli), each Anzac Day (25th April);



Bake Anzac biscuits in cooking lessons, and donate them to the needy;



Link the Rising Sun military badge to the gospel - in letters of thanks to military personnel abroad, that can be sent via the Defence Department;



Identify the Commonwealth Coat of Arms on documents or buildings;



Highlight National Wattle Day (1st September) by planting saplings of Golden Wattle, and by wearing a spray of that national floral emblem;



Buy a poppy (a new life motif) on Remembrance Day (11th November).

Using gemstone and floral motifs to encourage and warn

Awareness of gemstone motifs may provide a warning, since eleven of the Hebrew tribes were *scattered* like *the sacred gems* (Lamentations 4:1). Yet finding and cutting gemstones may encourage the virtues of discovery and tenacity, since *to search out a matter is the glory of kings* (Proverbs 25:2).

Civic floral emblems may remind us about God's provision for nations and individuals who *consider how the lilies grow* (Luke 12:27) and are clothed beyond *Solomon in all his splendour* - as God prunes each fruitful branch *so that it will be even more fruitful* (John 15:2). While Christ as Lord may rebuke nations and peoples like the barren fig tree (Matthew 21:19), it is said of him as Saviour: *a bruised reed he will not break* (12:20) since he was *crushed for our iniquities* (Isaiah 53:5) - like a flower yielding its perfume.

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