



A Secular Continent? What We Can Learn About Doing Environmental Theology from the History of Antarctica

Adrian Howkins

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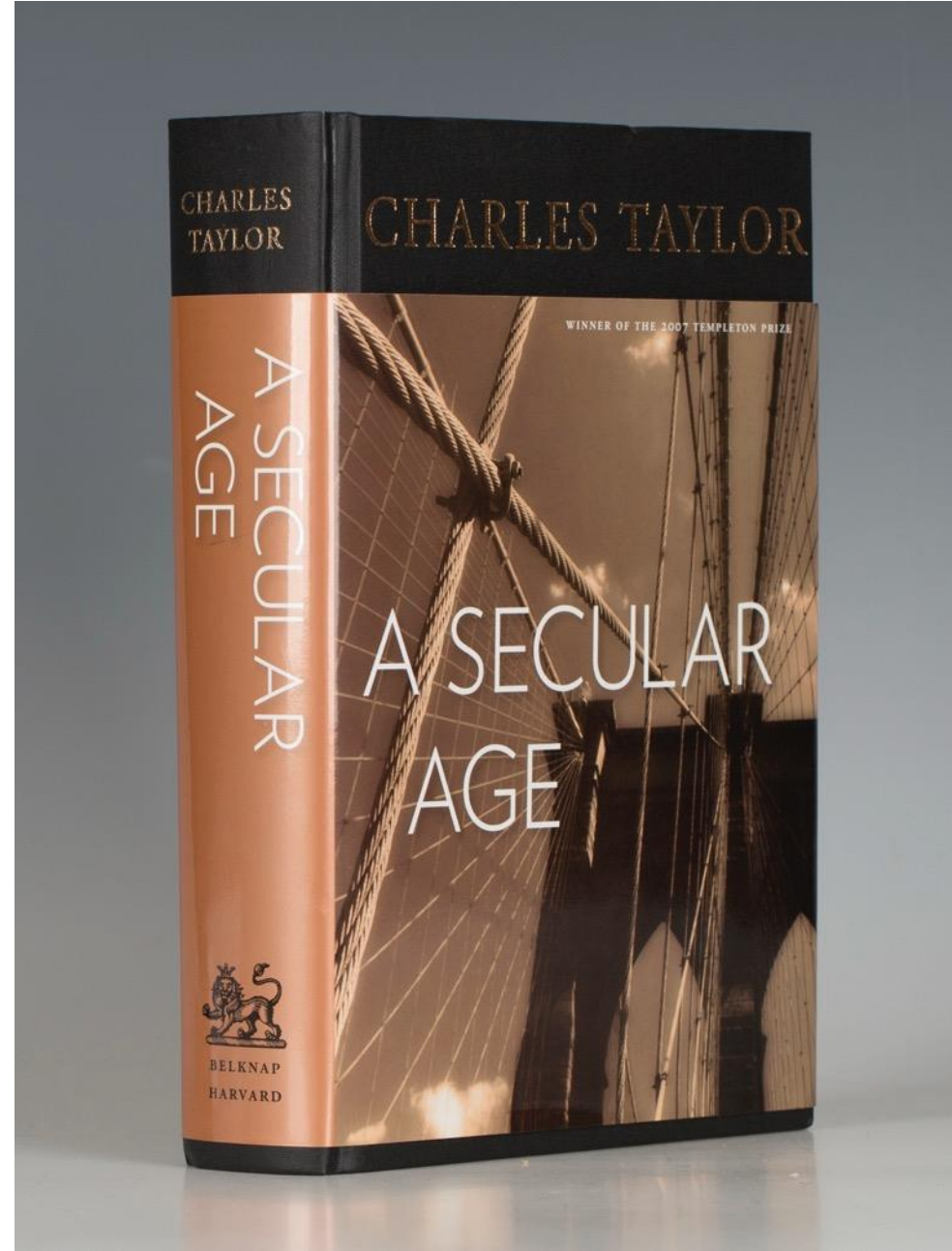
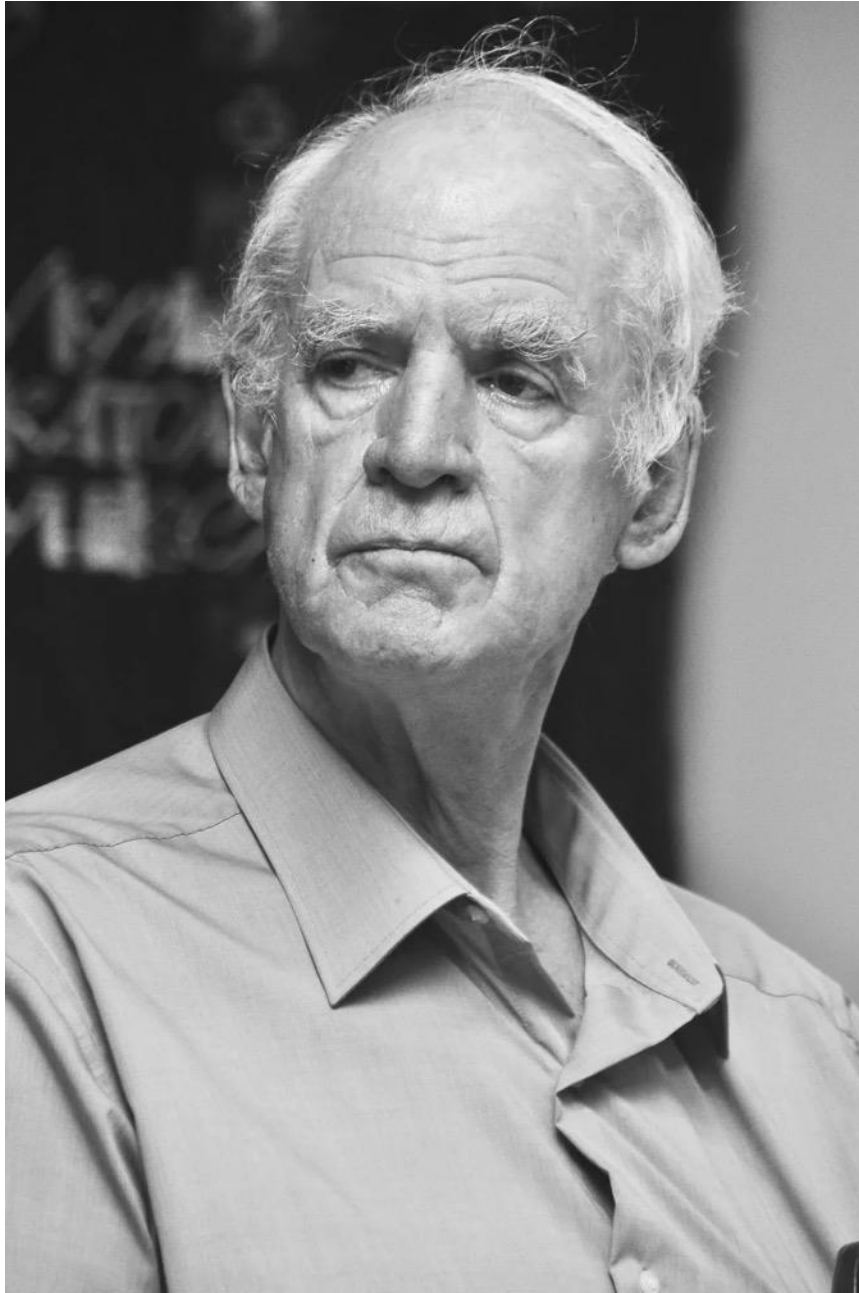
- 1) Background
- 2) Religion and the Environment in the History of Antarctica
- 3) Antarctic Science
- 4) Conclusion: The (Spiritual) Importance of Place

1) Background



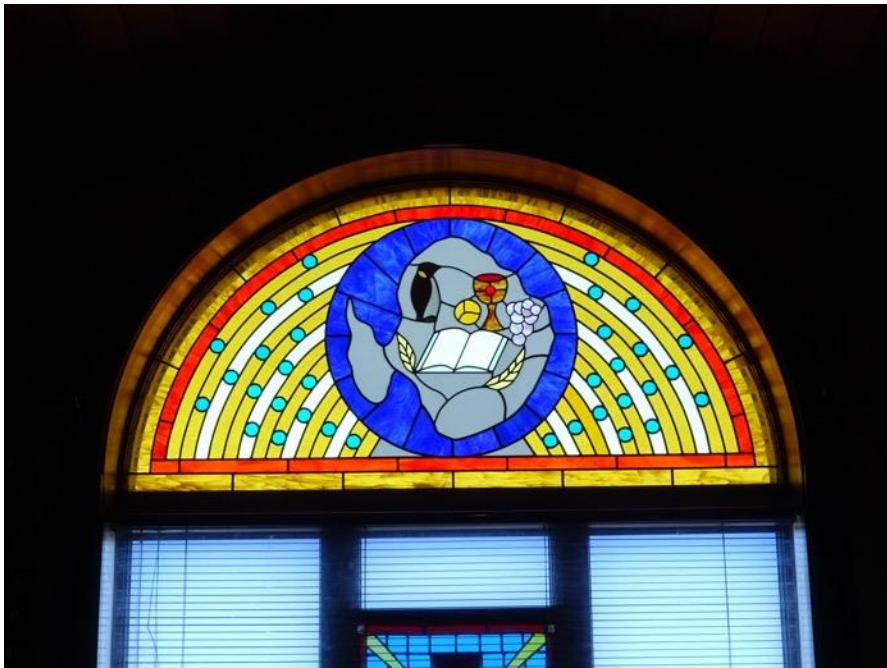
Cotham Parish Church and St Paul's Clifton





Tennyson's *Ulysses*:
'To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield'





Psalm 147: 16-19

16 He sends forth his command to the earth ♦
and his word runs very swiftly.

17 He gives snow like wool ♦
and scatters the hoarfrost like ashes.

18 He casts down his hailstones like morsels of bread; ♦
who can endure his frost?

19 He sends forth his word and melts them; ♦
he blows with his wind and the waters flow.

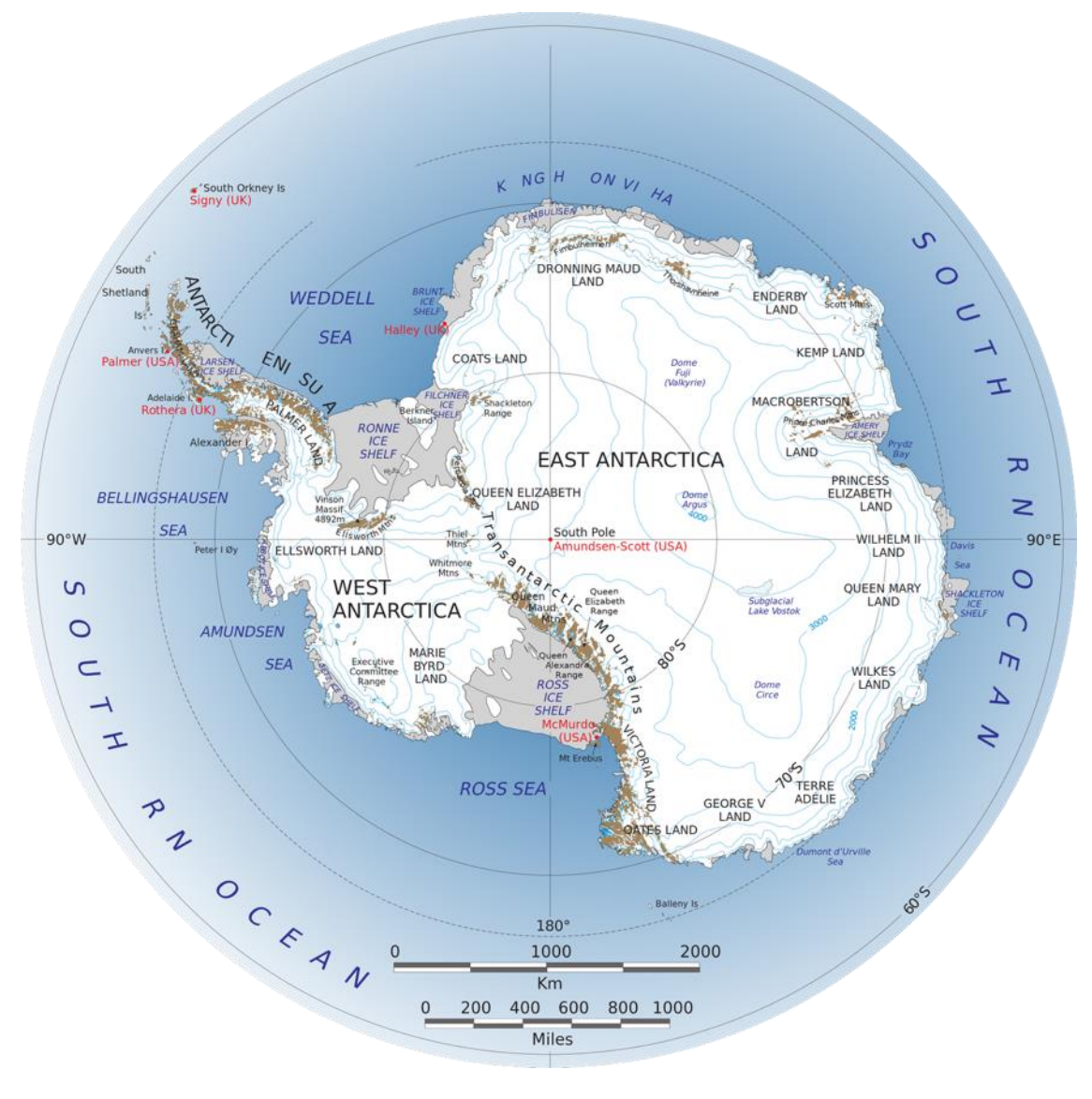
Ivan Kramskoi, 'Christ in the Wilderness'



Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.

Luke Chapter 4:1-2









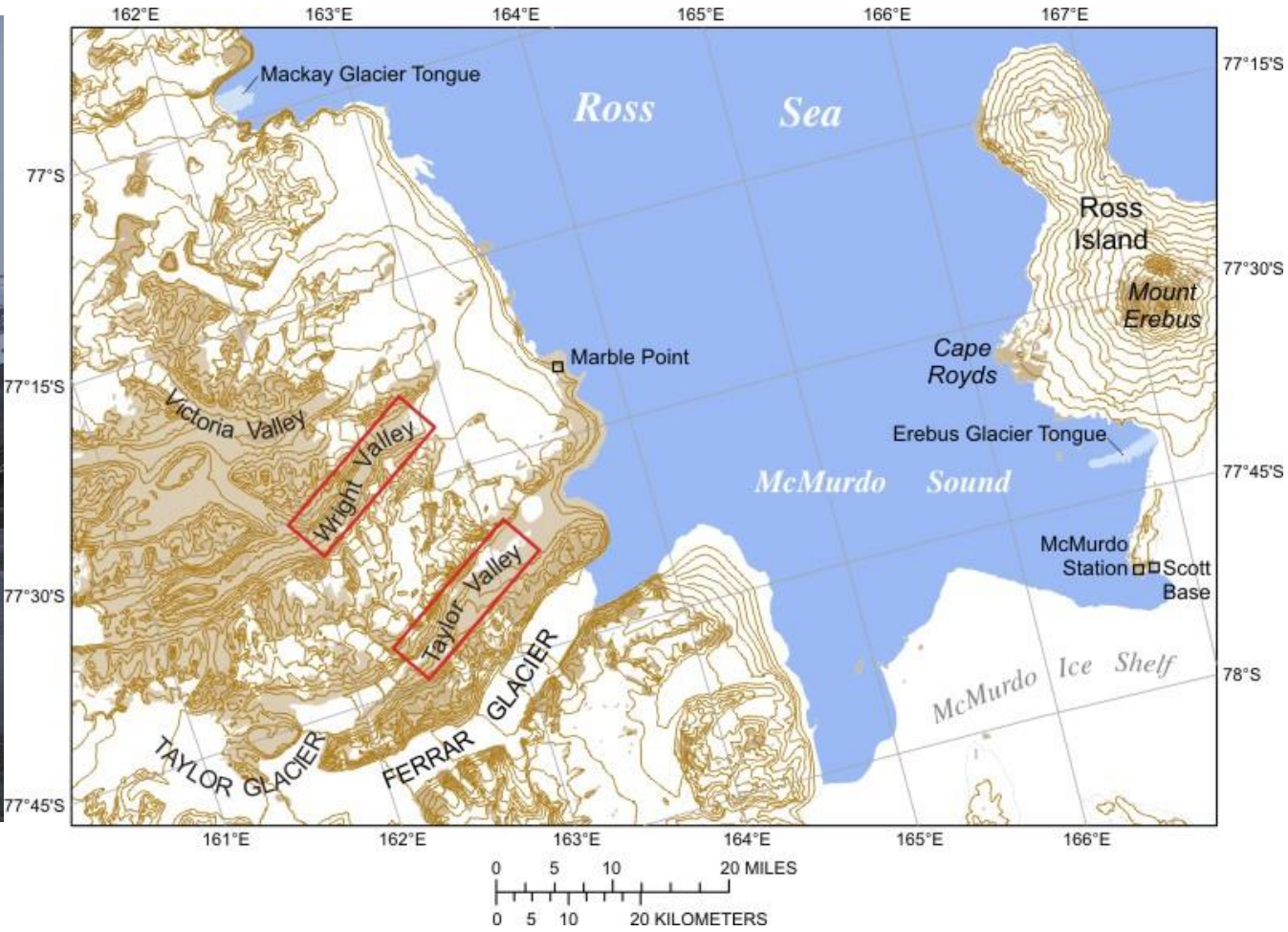




Photo Credit:
Chinn

2) Religion and the Environment in the History of Antarctica



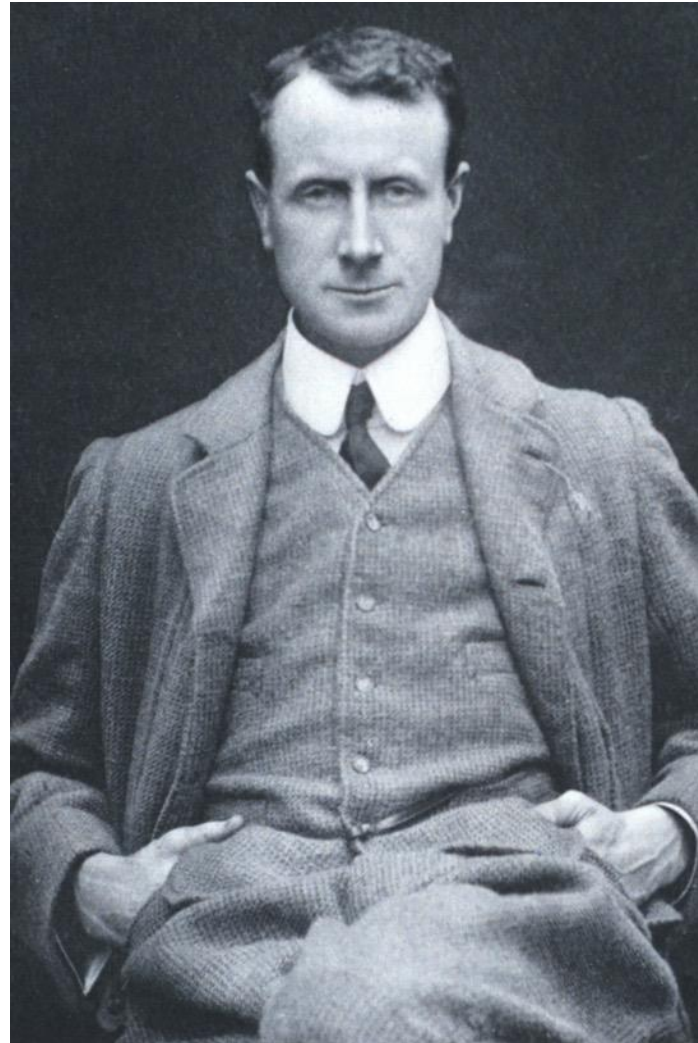
Oates, Bowers, **Scott**, Wilson, **Evans**

Captain Scott, *Voyage of Discovery*, 567 (18 December 1903)

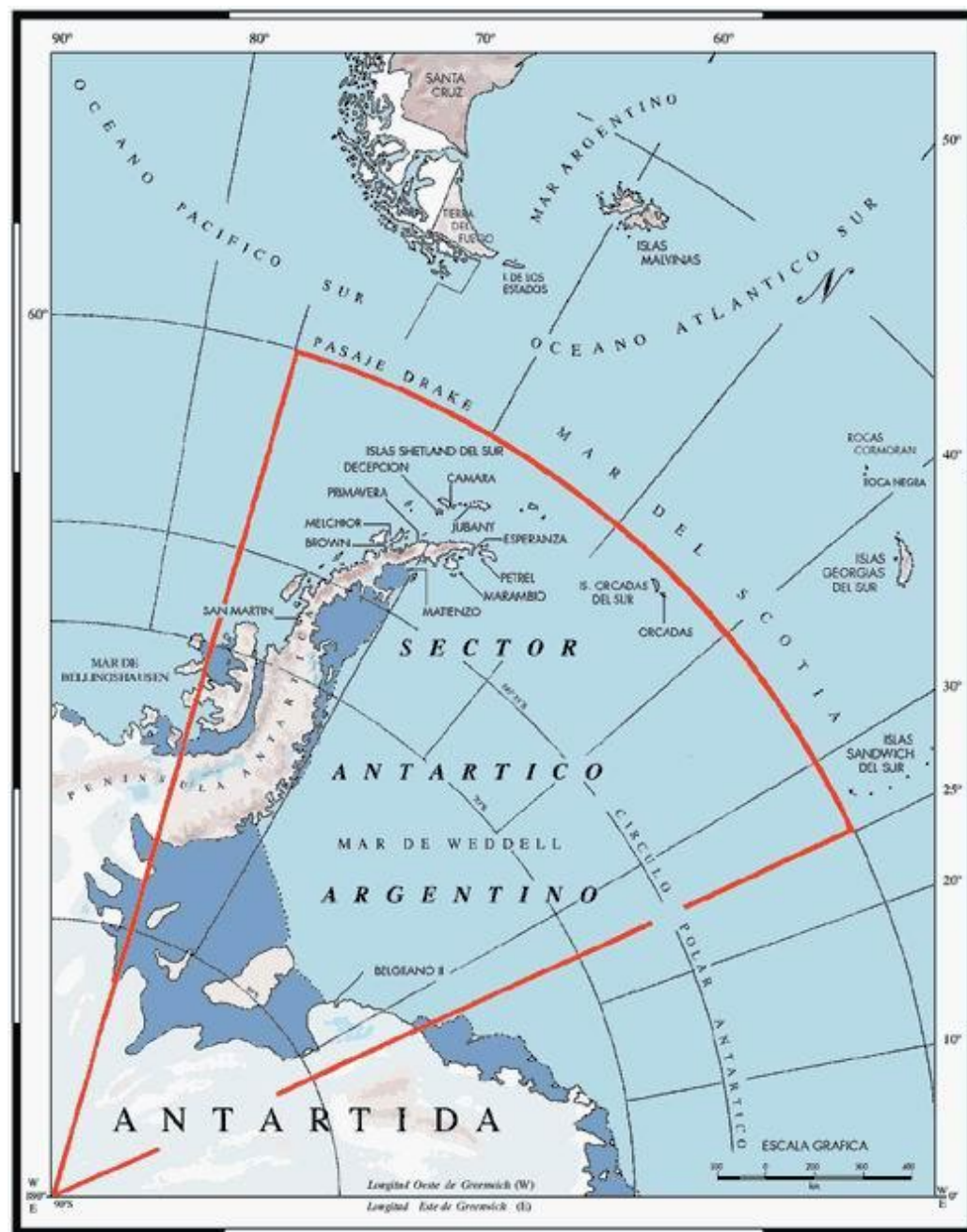
“I cannot but think that this valley is a very wonderful place. We have seen today all the indications of colossal ice action and considerable water action, and yet neither of these agents is now at work. It is worthy of record, too, that we have seen no living thing, not even a moss or a lichen; all that we did find, far inland amongst the moraine heaps, was the skeleton of a Weddell seal, and how that came there is beyond guessing. **It is certainly a valley of the dead; even the great glacier which once pushed through it has withered away.**”

The silence was deep
with a breath like
sleep
As our sledge runners
slid on the snow.
And the fate-full fall
of our fur-clad feet
Struck mute like a
silent slow
On a questioning
'hush', as the settling
crust
Shrank shivering over
the floe;
And the sledge in its
track sent a whisper
back
Which was lost in a
white fog-bow.

'The Barrier Silence'
Edward Wilson



AND this was the through that the
Silence wrought
As it scorched and froze us
through.
Though secrets hidden are all
forbidden
Till God means a man to know,
We might be the men God meant
should know
The heart of the Barrier snow,
In the heat of the sun, and the
glow
And the glaze from the glistening
floe,
As it scorched and froze us through
and through
With the bite of the drifting snow.



Eugenio Orrego Vicuña, 1947, Base O'Higgins

There was an inexpressible emotion that brought together the landscape and the ceremony; it was like a return to the days of early Christianity, when the sense of love overcame divisions, transcended class, and annihilated prejudice. In that moment, before the altar of snow-covered mountains whose summits merged with the sky, in communion with a special sense of infinite solitude, those men far away from their homes, interests, and appetites, intuited, as in rare moments of their lives, that *something* that goes beyond *everything*



Capilla de Santa María Reina de la Paz
King George Island

Bishop Mons. Santiago Olivera Visit to Antarctica, February 2019



Richard E. Byrd (1888-1957)



Richard E. Byrd, *Alone* (1938) [1933-34]

For all my realism and skepticism there came over me, too powerfully to be denied, that exalted sense of identification – of oneness – with the outer world which is partly mystical but also certainty. I came to understand what Thoreau meant when he said, “My body is all sentient.” There were moments when I felt more *alive* than at any other time in my life. Freed from materialistic distractions, my senses sharpened in new directions, and the random or commonplace affairs of the sky and the earth and the spirit, which ordinarily I would have ignored if I had noticed them at all, became exciting and portentous.

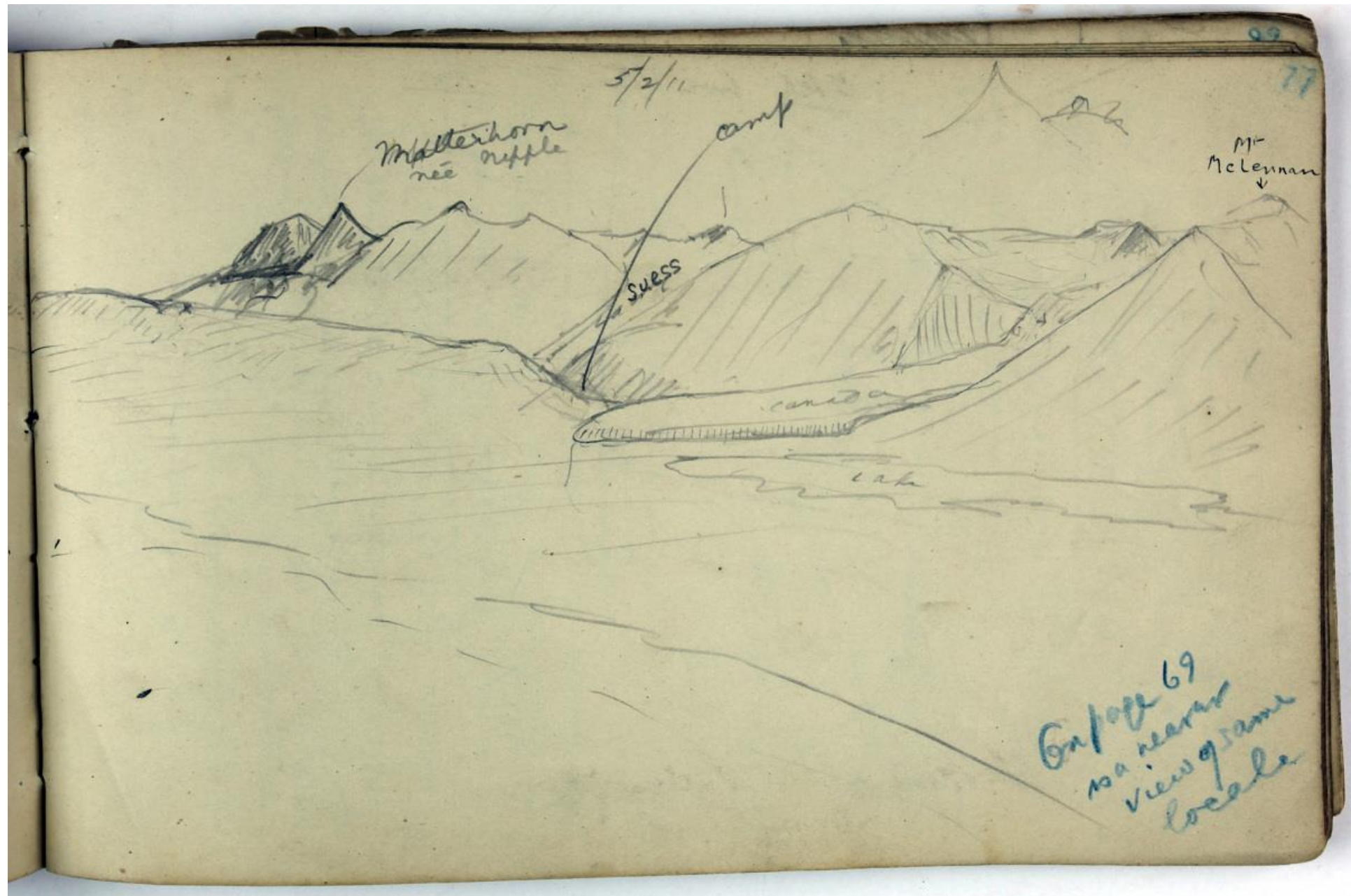
3) Antarctic Science



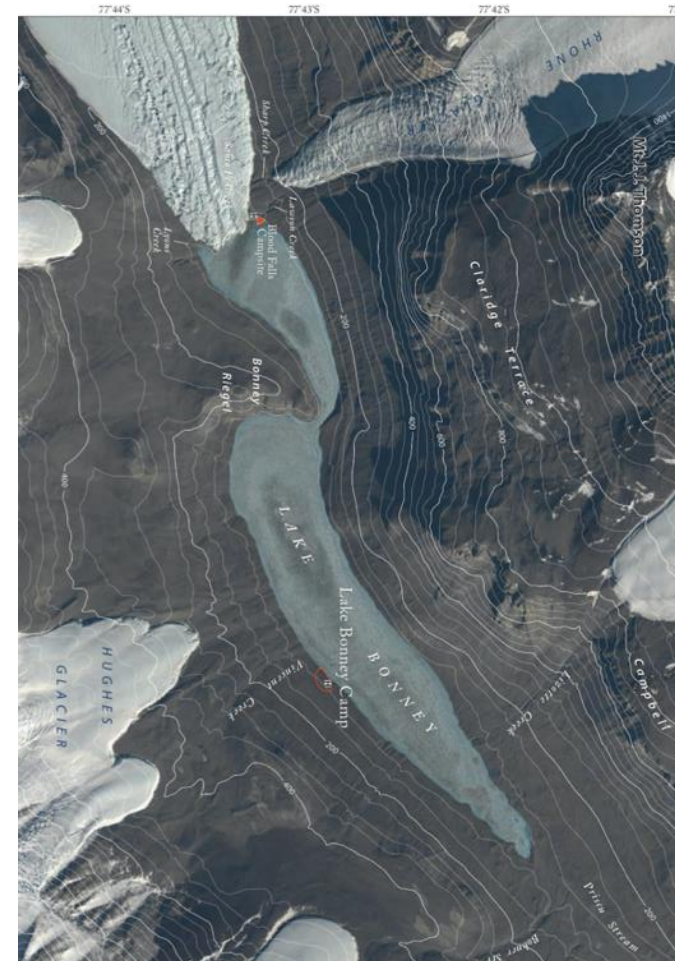
Canada Glacier and Lake Fryxell from Andrews Ridge (1911 and 2013)



Photo Credit:SPRI/
Hassan Basagic



Debenham Sketch Map of Lake Bonney and Modern Image



Pictures: SPRI and PGC

Lake Level Rise of Lake Bonney, 1903-2010 (16m)

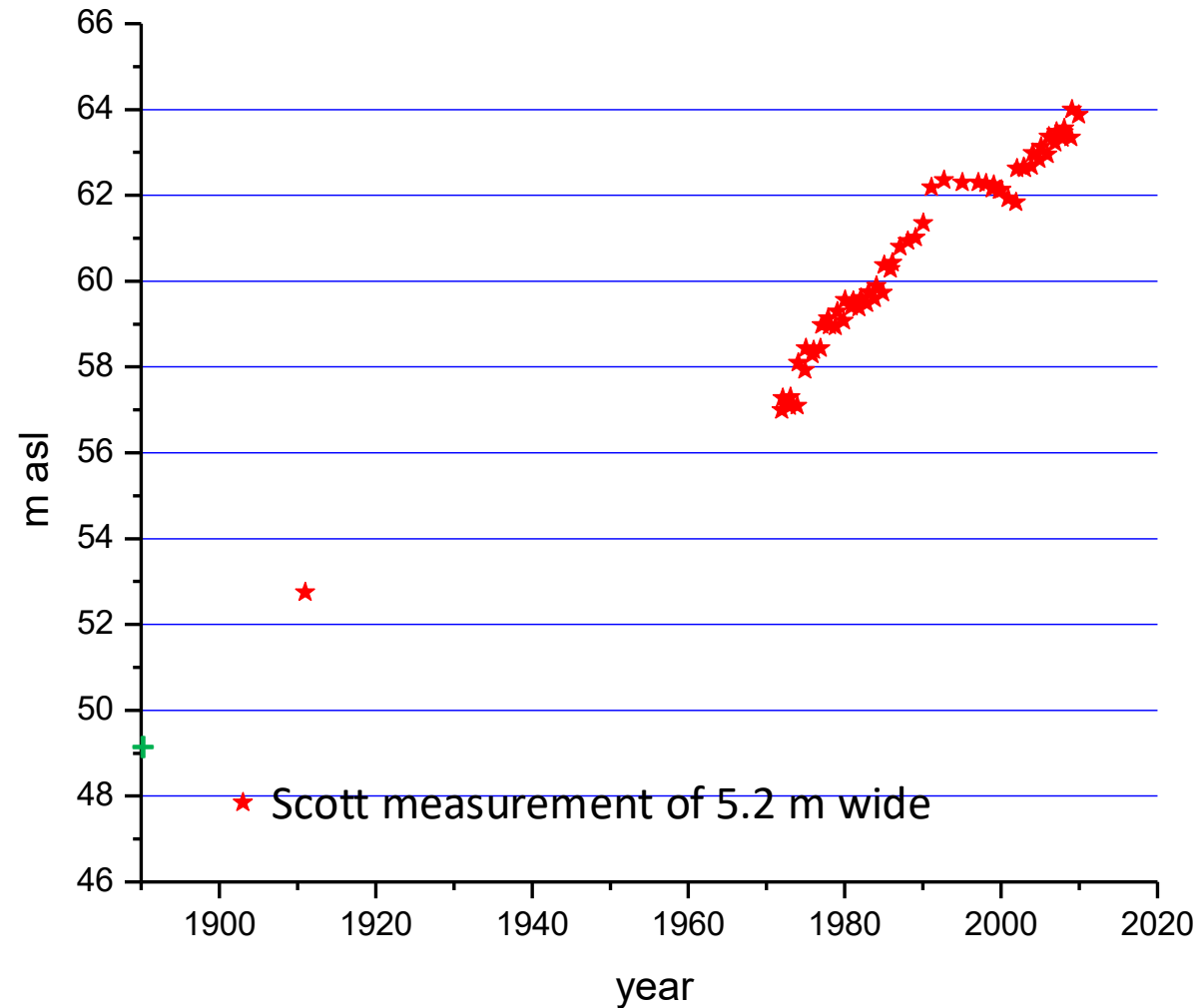


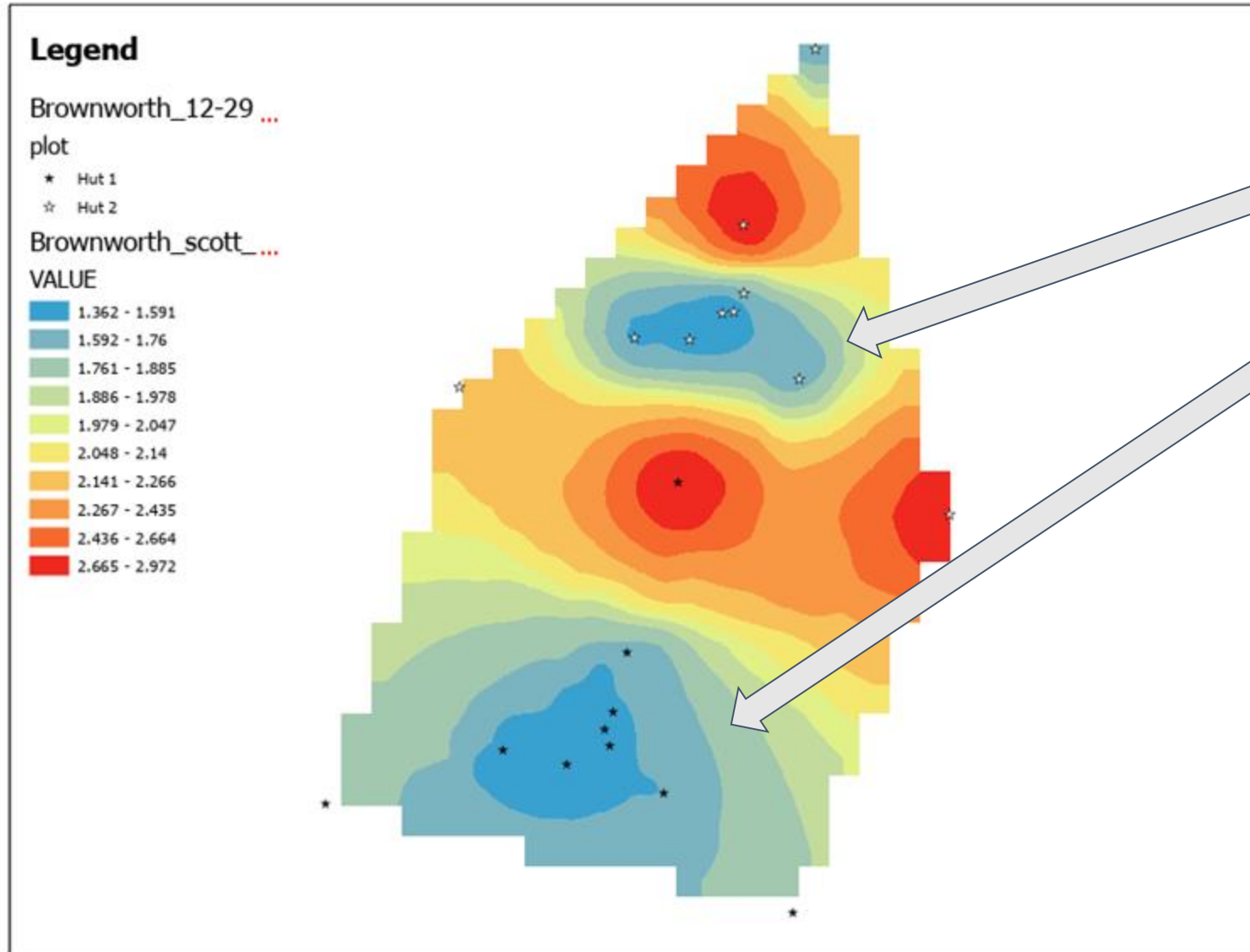




Photo Credit: ANZ

Long-term impact after just 1 year?

Brownworth Hut



Brownworth Hut blew down the year after it was built (1968-69) and was rebuilt nearby until it was removed in 1984-85.

Both sites show considerably lower fecundity today.

4) Conclusion: The (Spiritual) Importance of Place

Ivan Kramskoi, 'Christ in the Wilderness'

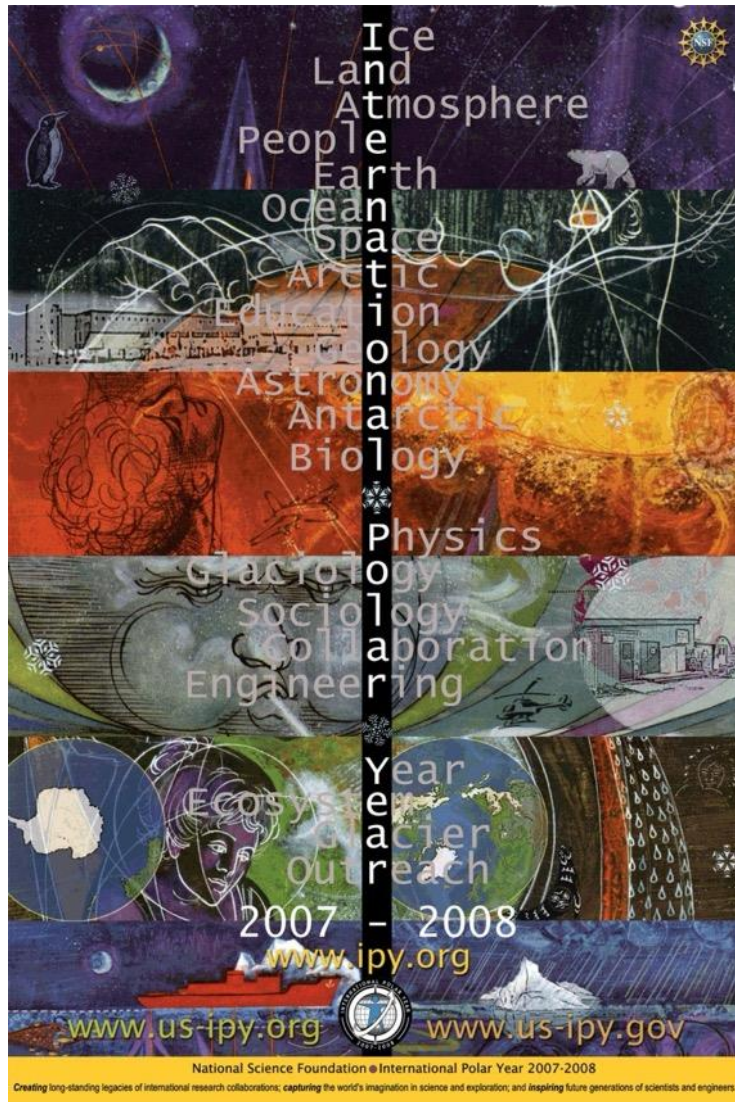


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Luke Chapter 4:1-2



“The protection of the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems and the intrinsic value of Antarctica, including its wilderness and aesthetic values and its value as an area for the conduct of scientific research, in particular research essential to understanding the global environment, shall be fundamental considerations in the planning and conduct of all activities in the Antarctic Treaty area.” (1991 Madrid Protocol)





Towards an Interconnected Theology of Place

