

# the BEACON

Journal of the  
Melbourne Unitarian  
Peace Memorial  
Church

February 2015  
Price \$2

## SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

**W**asn't it said in the Bible that 'Whoever is without sin can throw the first stone'? We can go back a long way in history to demonstrate that those with power in any country, in any generation, have never been in a position to 'throw the first stone'. But we don't need to go back that far – current experience clearly demonstrates that those in power will do anything, promote any cause, wield any weapon, distort any truth, employ the most bestial of torture and subjugate all who stand in the way of profit, so they are totally unfit to 'throw the first stone'.

Leaders of the so-called 'free world' utilise their media hacks to declare who is good and who is bad, what is acceptable and what is not. But there is never an articulated formula or standard for this 'goodness' – just vague comments, such as we stand for 'democracy' and 'justice', we are 'the free world'.

If there were an agreed standard or formula then the 'free world' leaders would stand publicly condemned. We need to judge, therefore, in these days of continuous anti-Muslim propaganda, of abhorrent terrorist acts against innocent people, of unjustified wars of aggression, what is right and what is wrong, and we don't need to be historians to make the correct judgment.

## WHO IS FIT TO THROW THE 'FIRST STONE'?



We need to consider Guantanamo Bay, Vietnam, Laos, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, amongst many others. We know of the atrocities, we know the lies, massacres and civilian deaths, including those of women and children that have occurred in those places. We all know that those who planned and carried out these atrocities are unfit to 'throw the first stone'. We also know that the hundreds of thousands that died so needlessly in those countries died not for democracy or freedom or civil rights but for profit and control of natural resources and strategic bases. Their deaths were simply 'collateral damage'.

We also know that massive profits are being accrued daily by the death manufacturers – the arms industry – who suck up the taxes that should be used to provide services that the people can no longer afford.

The world, it was said, was outraged by the recent slaughter of journalists in Paris. Heads of government linked arms and marched for democracy, freedom of speech and 'our way of life'. The French prime minister said the attack was 'against civilisation'. What of the horrific atrocities his country practised against the Algerian people? What is his standard or formula? Then there is the prime minister of Israel, in the front row. Whose democracy, freedom of speech and 'way of life' did he march for? Does he have a formula? Ask the Palestinians. The leader of Saudi Arabia, our most popular ally, sent a message supporting the aims of the rally! Is this the leader who almost weekly publicly lops the heads of his subjects when they don't please him and disallows women any civil rights? What's his formula for democracy?

The American president didn't attend ... there were fears for his safety! Perhaps he realised that America is not too popular anywhere in the world these days. (And we all know the US formula.) And furthermore ... our own government's commitment to democratic rights and justice: well, we are all currently grappling with that one.

We know that similar policies affecting the lives of the majority are being implemented around the world. These include attacks on the wellbeing of the ordinary people through savage cuts to social programs. The leaders who linked arms and marched for justice and democracy in Paris all support these anti-people policies at home. So what is the standard? What is the formula for a decent society? Perhaps we should ask the mass of the people ... only they can do the job our leaders won't. ■

# 'AS THE ARABS SEE THE JEWS'

## SUMMARY

*This fascinating essay, written by King Hussein's grandfather King Abdullah, appeared in the United States six months before the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. In the article, King Abdullah disputes the mistaken view that Arab opposition to Zionism (and later the state of Israel) is because of longstanding religious or ethnic hatred. He notes that Jews and Muslims enjoyed a long history of peaceful coexistence in the Middle East, and that Jews have historically suffered far more at the hands of Christian Europe. Pointing to the tragedy of the holocaust that Jews suffered during World War II, the monarch asks why America and Europe are refusing to accept more than a token handful of Jewish immigrants and refugees. It is unfair, he argues, to make Palestine, which is innocent of anti-Semitism, pay for the crimes of Europe. King Abdullah also asks how Jews can claim a historic right to Palestine, when Arabs have been the overwhelming majority there for nearly 1300 uninterrupted years. The essay ends on an ominous note, warning of dire consequences if a peaceful solution cannot be found to protect the rights of the indigenous Arabs of Palestine.*

By His Majesty **KING ABDULLAH**

*The American Magazine*, November 1947

I am especially delighted to address an American audience, for the tragic problem of Palestine will never be solved without American understanding, American sympathy, American support.

So many billions of words have been written about Palestine – perhaps more than on any other subject in history – that I hesitate to add to them. Yet, I am compelled to do so, for I am reluctantly convinced that the world in general, and America in particular, knows almost nothing of the true case for the Arabs.

We Arabs follow, perhaps far more than you think, the press of America. We are frankly disturbed to find that for every word printed on the Arab side, a thousand are printed on the Zionist side.

There are many reasons for this. You have many millions of Jewish citizens interested in this question. They are highly vocal and wise in the ways of publicity. There are few Arab citizens in America, and we are as yet unskilled in the technique of modern propaganda.

The results have been alarming for us. In your press we see a horrible caricature and are told it is our true portrait. In all justice, we cannot let this pass by default.

Our case is quite simple: For nearly 2,000 years Palestine has been almost 100 per cent Arab. It is still preponderantly Arab today, in spite of enormous Jewish immigration. But if this immigration continues we shall soon be outnumbered – a minority in our home.

Palestine is a small and very poor country, about the size of your state of Vermont. Its Arab population is only about 1,200,000. Already we have had forced on us, against our will, some 600,000 Zionist Jews. We are threatened with many hundreds of thousands more.

Our position is so simple and natural that we are amazed it should even be questioned. It is exactly the same position you in America take in regard to the unhappy European Jews. You are sorry for them, but you do not want them in your country.

We do not want them in ours, either. Not because they are Jews, but because they are foreigners. We would not want hundreds of thousands of foreigners in our country, be they Englishmen or Norwegians or Brazilians or whatever.

Think for a moment: In the last 25 years we have had one third of our entire population forced upon us. In America that would be the equivalent of 45,000,000 complete strangers admitted to your country, over your violent protest, since 1921. How would you have reacted to that?

Because of our perfectly natural dislike of being overwhelmed in our own homeland, we are called blind nationalists and heartless anti-Semites. This charge would be ludicrous were it not so dangerous.

No people on earth have been less 'anti-Semitic' than the Arabs. The persecution of the Jews has been confined almost entirely to the Christian nations of the West. Jews, themselves, will admit that never since the Great Dispersion did Jews develop so freely and reach such importance as in Spain when it was an Arab possession. With very minor exceptions, Jews have lived for many centuries in the Middle East, in complete peace and friendliness with their Arab neighbours.

Damascus, Baghdad, Beirut and other Arab centres have always contained large and prosperous Jewish colonies. Until the Zionist invasion of Palestine began, these Jews received the most generous treatment – far, far better than in Christian Europe. Now, unhappily, for the first time in history, these Jews are beginning to feel the effects of Arab resistance to the Zionist assault. Most of them are as anxious as Arabs to stop it. Most of these Jews who have found happy homes among us resent, as we do, the coming of these strangers.

I was puzzled for a long time about the odd belief which apparently persists in America that Palestine has somehow 'always been a Jewish land'. Recently an American I talked to cleared up this mystery. He pointed out that the only things most Americans know about Palestine are what they read in the Bible. It was a Jewish land in those days, they reason, and they assume it has always remained so.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. It is absurd to reach so far back into the mists of history to argue about who should have Palestine today, and I apologise for it. Yet the Jews do this, and I must reply to their 'historic claim'. I wonder if the world has ever seen a stranger sight than a group of people seriously pretending to claim a land because their ancestors lived there some 2,000 years ago!

If you suggest that I am biased, I invite you to read any sound history of the period and verify the facts.

Such fragmentary records as we have indicate that the Jews were wandering nomads from Iraq who moved to southern Turkey, came south to Palestine, stayed there a short time, and then passed to Egypt, where they remained about 400 years. About 1300 BC (according to your calendar) they left Egypt and gradually conquered most – but not all – of the inhabitants of Palestine.

It is significant that the Philistines – not the Jews – gave their name to the country: 'Palestine' is merely the Greek form of 'Philistia'.

Only once, during the empire of David and Solomon, did the Jews ever control nearly – but not all – the land which is today Palestine. This empire lasted only 70 years, ending in 926 BC. Only 250 years later the Kingdom of Judah had shrunk to a small province around Jerusalem, barely a quarter of modern Palestine.

In 63 BC the Jews were conquered by Roman Pompey, and never again had even the vestige of independence. The Roman Emperor Hadrian finally wiped them out about 135 AD. He utterly destroyed Jerusalem, rebuilt under another name, and for hundreds of years no Jew was permitted to enter it. A handful of Jews remained in Palestine but the vast majority were killed or scattered to

other countries, in the Diaspora, or the Great Dispersion. From that time Palestine ceased to be a Jewish country, in any conceivable sense.

This was 1,815 years ago, and yet the Jews solemnly pretend they still own Palestine! If such fantasy were allowed, how the map of the world would dance about!

Italians might claim England, which the Romans held so long. England might claim France, 'homeland' of the conquering Normans. And the French Normans might claim Norway, where their ancestors originated. And incidentally, we Arabs might claim Spain, which we held for 700 years.

Many Mexicans might claim Spain, 'homeland' of their forefathers. They might even claim Texas, which was Mexican until 100 years ago. And suppose the American Indians claimed the 'homeland' of which they were the sole, native, and ancient occupants until only some 450 years ago!

I am not being facetious. All these claims are just as valid – or just as fantastic – as the Jewish 'historic connection' with Palestine. Most are more valid.

In any event, the great Moslem expansion about 650 AD finally settled things. It dominated Palestine completely. From that day on, Palestine was solidly Arabic in population, language, and religion. When British armies entered the country during the last war, they found 500,000 Arabs and only 65,000 Jews.

If solid, uninterrupted Arab occupation for nearly 1,300 years does not make a country 'Arab', what does?

The Jews say, and rightly, that Palestine is the home of their religion. It is likewise the birthplace of Christianity, but would any Christian nation claim it on that account? In passing, let me say that the Christian Arabs – and there are many hundreds of thousands of them in the Arab World – are in absolute agreement with all other Arabs in opposing the Zionist invasion of Palestine.

May I also point out that Jerusalem is, after Mecca and Medina, the holiest place in Islam. In fact, in the early days of our religion, Moslems prayed toward Jerusalem instead of Mecca.

The Jewish 'religious claim' to Palestine is as absurd as the 'historic claim'. The Holy Places, sacred to three great religions, must be open to all, the monopoly of none. Let us not confuse religion and politics.

We are told that we are inhumane and heartless because we do not accept with open arms the perhaps 200,000 Jews in Europe who suffered so frightfully under Nazi cruelty, and who even now – almost three years after war's end – still languish in cold, depressing camps.

Let me underline several facts. The unimaginable persecution of the Jews was not done by the Arabs: it was done by a Christian nation in the West. The war which ruined Europe and made it almost impossible for these Jews to rehabilitate themselves was fought by the Christian nations of the West. The rich and empty portions of the earth belong, not to the Arabs, but to the Christian nations of the West.

And yet, to ease their consciences, these Christian nations of the West are asking Palestine – a poor and tiny Moslem country of the East – to accept the entire burden. 'We have hurt these people terribly', cries the West to the

East. 'Won't you please take care of them for us?'

We find neither logic nor justice in this. Are we therefore 'cruel and heartless nationalists'?

We are a generous people: we are proud that 'Arab hospitality' is a phrase famous throughout the world. We are a humane people: no one was shocked more than we by the Hitlerite terror. No one pities the present plight of the desperate European Jews more than we.

But we say that Palestine has already sheltered 600,000 refugees. We believe that is enough to expect of us – even too much. We believe it is now the turn of the rest of the world to accept some of them.

I will be entirely frank with you. There is one thing the Arab world simply cannot understand. Of all the nations of the earth, America is most insistent that something be done for these suffering Jews of Europe. This feeling does credit to the humanity for which America is famous, and to that glorious inscription on your Statue of Liberty.

And yet this same America – the richest, greatest, most powerful nation the world has ever known – refuses to accept more than a token handful of these same Jews herself!

I hope you will not think I am being bitter about this. I have tried hard to understand that mysterious paradox, and I confess I cannot. Nor can any other Arab.

Perhaps you have been informed that 'the Jews in Europe want to go to no other place except Palestine'.

This myth is one of the greatest propaganda triumphs of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the organisation which promotes with fanatic zeal the emigration to Palestine. It is a subtle half-truth, thus doubly dangerous.

The astounding truth is that nobody on earth really knows where these unfortunate Jews really want to go! ■

END OF PART ONE

Source: Information Clearing House

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION & DISARMAMENT

November 2014

STATEMENT ENDORSED BY THE CICD COMMITTEE

# STOP THE WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST



**W**e, the members of the Committee on behalf of the Campaign for International Co-operation and Disarmament (CICD), raise our collective voices against the ongoing war in the Middle East.

We believe that wars and militarism make us less safe rather than protect us. At war, people are killed, injured and traumatised.

A major motivation behind most wars is the desire to control resources that poison the earth, especially oil and gas.

The almost 30-year war in Iraq has left millions of Iraqis killed, displaced, injured. Wars imposed by the US and its allies (including Australia) in the Middle East are immoral, endanger lives and severely damage the natural environment, erode civil liberties and drain our economies.

Wars divide communities, promote racism and impoverish us.

We support nonviolent efforts to end all wars and preparations for wars and to create a sustainable and just peace.

We believe war threatens our environment and erodes our liberties.

We believe wars do not resolve political issues. We must work diligently to force the governments of our nations to use diplomacy, not weapons.

In wars, there are no winners, only losers. To flourish, humans need peace that cannot be created by war.

It is time for the abolition of wars. War is a cruel and untenable distraction. War is a crime against humanity.

When 90% of the casualties of war are civilians, including children, it's time to end all wars.

We like to believe that the people of the world will want peace so much that governments will have to get out of the way and let them have it.

The dark force of ISIS is apparently an unbeatable and unstoppable war that is mercilessly killing and conquering in pursuit of establishing an Islamic state in Iraq and Syria.

In reality, however, it is not as out of control as it appears. It is, indeed, carefully controlled and managed by its creators and supporters, that is, by the United States and its allies in the region – those who now pretend to have established a coalition to fight it! The US, Turkey,

Saudi Arabia and other allies in the region do not really need to fight ISIS to destroy it. All they need to do is stop supplying it with funds, mercenaries, military training and armaments.

We believe Australia should be independent and not follow the US to war. Australians expect the Parliament to act in the interests of the public who have elected them. A decision to commit troops should have full parliamentary approval and not be the Prime Minister's decision.

Is peace possible? Yes, we believe it is possible, but only when the people of the world recognise their power and unite and demand that the governments that they elect can't continue to kill and invade in their name. ■

Number of Iraqis slaughtered in US war and occupation of Iraq <b>1,455,590</b>	Number of US military personnel sacrificed (officially acknowledged) in US war and occupation of Iraq <b>4,801</b>	Number of international occupation force troops slaughtered in Afghanistan <b>3,477</b>	Cost of war in Iraq & Afghanistan <b>\$1,581,718,801,807</b>
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## US: KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THE MIDDLE EAST!

### DID YOU KNOW...

#### AP: CHAVEZ WASTED HIS MONEY ON HEALTHCARE WHEN HE COULD HAVE BUILT GIGANTIC SKYSCRAPERS

BY JIM NAURECKAS 7 MARCH 2013 'INFORMATION CLEARING HOUSE' – ONE OF THE MORE BIZARRE TAKES ON VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ'S DEATH COMES FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS BUSINESS REPORTER PAMELA SAMPSON (3/5/13):

Chavez invested Venezuela's oil wealth into social programs including state-run food markets, cash benefits for poor families, free health clinics and education programs. But those gains were meager compared with the spectacular construction projects that oil riches spurred in glittering Middle Eastern cities, including the world's tallest building in Dubai and plans for branches of the Louvre and Guggenheim museums in Abu Dhabi.

That's right: Chavez squandered his nation's oil money on healthcare, education and nutrition when he could have been building the world's tallest building or his own branch of the Louvre. What kind of monster has priorities like that?

Data from World Bank

Poverty headcount ratio at \$2 a day (PPP) (% of population)



Source: NACLA's Keane Bhatt

In case you're curious about what kind of results this kooky agenda had, here's a chart (NACLA, 10/8/12) based on World Bank poverty stats – showing the proportion of Venezuelans living on less than \$2 a day falling from 35 per cent to 13 per cent over three years. (For comparison purposes, there's a similar stat for Brazil, which made substantial but less dramatic progress against poverty over the same time period.)

Of course, during this time, the number of Venezuelans living in the world's tallest building went from 0 per cent to 0 per cent, while the number of copies of the *Mona Lisa* remained flat, at none. So you have to say that Chavez's presidency was overall pretty disappointing – at least by AP's standards.

# SEEK THE TRUTH

BY PETER FERGUSON

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT OF ANZUUA

**T**his address is divided into two sections: first, seeking the truth about life and our place in the wider scheme of things; second, it is about serving humanity, especially the poor and disadvantaged.

First, then, seek the truth reminds us of Pontius Pilate's response to Jesus, What is truth? ... a good question and one that has always interested me. Perhaps that is the main reason why I studied theology – I was fascinated with the plethora of strange religious ideas.

One of them I found in the 1662 Prayer Book of the Church of England: sickness and death are described as visitations from God.

And strange as it may seem, people actually found consolation in this idea – it showed them that their disease and dying were part of God's larger plan for why sickness and death happen.

In the Garden of Eden death was the punishment for eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

In the 1960s, I was drawn for a while to the notion that God is in all things: panentheism. It seemed logical. But when my hero, the Bishop of London, John Robinson, was dying of cancer, he stated that God was in his cancer. That I could not believe!

Unitarians and other freethinkers are more like the old pagan Stoics. We accept the changes, chances and accidental events and when they take place, we dust ourselves off and say, 'Oh well, shit happens'.

My search for the truth only took off when around fifteen years ago I was challenged by the environmental scientist James Lovelock who points to the alarming fact that we humans have now colonised every habitable part of the Earth. Over the past three centuries our numbers have risen from around 500 million to over 7,000 million – and still growing!

Lovelock reminds us that we are just one of 8.7 million species that inhabit this planet.

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## Seek the truth and serve humanity

is the all-encompassing catchphrase of the Melbourne Unitarian Church. It is a slogan that has encouraged generations of its members to maintain an unblinkered and sometimes radical response to many of the great issues that impinge upon our lives.

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Humans have now grown so large in number that our presence has brought us to a point where we are disturbing the equilibrium of the body – i.e. the Earth. Humans have reached plague proportions – like locusts, mice and rabbits have in the past.

Our evolutionary success has brought disaster, ruin and extinction to countless other species. Many scientists believe the stage is being set for another great extinction such as that which brought about the demise of the dinosaurs and three-quarters of all species 65 million years ago.

Climate change and the release of vast amounts of carbon dioxide, methane and other gases are irreversibly altering the Earth's ecosystems.

Lovelock suggests climate change may be the way in which the Earth gets rid of its human burden!

In his book, *Straw Dogs*, John Gray, Professor of European Thought at the London School of Economics, points out that in the ultimate scheme of things, humans have no more meaning than slime mould – they are simply part of the evolutionary drift.

Prof. Gray describes us 'not as Homo Sapiens', but rather 'Homo Rapiens', the greediest and most insatiably destructive species on the face of the Earth. We threaten the Earth itself.

According to Gray, humanism shares Christianity's cardinal error in the belief that humans are different from all other animals. He sees humanism as the stepchild of Christianity. He dismisses the belief in inevitable progress that humans can transcend and free themselves from the limitations of other animals. Our knowledge will increase but we will continue to be the same predatory and destructive species as ever. 'Obviously we are not worth preserving. Later or sooner, we shall become extinct. When we are gone, the Earth will recover ... the Earth will forget mankind. The play of life will go on.'

Nobel Laureate and astronomer Fred Hoyle agrees with John Gray. 'It is my belief that we are not in charge of our future. Our species has arisen from an evolutionary process. Nothing has changed. We are still in the grip of natural processes. We are not in charge of our own destiny.'

In his ominous sounding book, *Our Final Century*, Sir Martin Rees, the British Astronomer Royal, declares that 'Humanity is more at risk than at any earlier phase of history. The idea that science can transform the human condition is to believe in magic.'

Contemporary science's gloomy prognostications about the future of humanity are nothing new. They are reflected in the ancient apocalyptic visions of the New Testament. For instance, the second Epistle of Peter states that on the day

of the Lord, God will destroy the Earth with fire. 'When the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.' 2 Peter 3: 10

Shakespeare's Prospero imagined something similar: 'The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples, the great globe itself. Yea, all which we inherit shall dissolve like this insubstantial pageant faded and leave not a rack behind.'

I am persuaded that James Lovelock and John Gray are correct in their apocalyptic visions about the direction we are heading. Climate change, new patterns of disease, the side effects of wars, and other still unknown factors could see the human population plunge to around 500 million – about what it was in the 1600s.

The warnings of our secular prophets, however, carry far more weight of evidence than religion or poetry ever did.

When 97% of our most sober and respected environmental scientists tell us that there is trouble ahead, we need to sit up and listen!

Our position is far more fragile and dangerous than we had imagined.

The uncompromisingly bleak picture of the human predicament is actually nothing new. We know that we have no perpetual leasehold on this planet. We learnt at school that in the course of its evolution, the sun would morph into a 'red giant' and swallow up the entire solar system, including the Earth and all its myriad forms of life.

But it seemed always to be millions of years away in the future – not something in our grandchildren's lifetimes.

The assertion that science or humanism can perfect humanity is a cruel self-imposed illusion. We will always act out of self-interest and from the often destructive compulsions of the moment.

Science can advance our knowledge but it cannot make us cherish truth.

Of course, we believe that all religions are the product of the human imagination. Yet, there is much in religion that makes life bearable. At their best, all the great religions as well as the myths of humanism and science, condemn injustice, hatred and cruelty.

Seeking the truth in all things is religion at its very best.

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## **THE SECOND PART OF THE CATCHPHRASE IS ABOUT OUR RELIGION IN ACTION – SERVE HUMANITY.**

Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) has probably influenced me more than anyone else has. He was an accomplished organist, an interpreter of Bach and a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. The hospital he founded at Lambarene, in present day Gabon (Equatorial Africa), is a model of what colonialist Europeans might have given to Africans. Schweitzer was a talented and compassionate human being, philosopher, humanitarian and a liberal rebel in the conservative Lutheran denomination.

In 1962 George Marshall, then minister of the Church of the Larger Fellowship, invited Schweitzer to become an honorary Unitarian.

Schweitzer responded, 'I thank you cordially for your offer to make me an honoured member of the Unitarian Church. I accept with pleasure.'

However, he never gave up his membership of the Lutheran Church.

Albert Schweitzer wrote, 'In the history of the universe, man is on the earth for a second. Who knows but that the earth will one day circle round the sun once again without man upon it? Therefore we must not place man in the centre of the universe.'

Schweitzer's response to the human condition was his commitment to a life of service. Stephen H Fritchman, an American Unitarian minister and philosopher of the mid-twentieth century, stated that the appeal of Schweitzer is that he believed that 'the impoverished, the sick and the needy have first claim on the conscience of mankind'.

Schweitzer had contempt for the things that motivate much of the political and religious leadership today. He dedicated his life to the poor and illiterate people of French Equatorial Africa.

Albert Schweitzer is described as a prophet of environmentalism. His teaching 'Reverence for Life', once dismissed by critics as naïve is now regarded as deeply realistic for our present generation where arrogant humans continue to damage and pollute the biosphere of the planet.

Schweitzer would totally agree with present-day scientists like Lovelock and Gray.

Denying climate change, and the threats to the Great Barrier Reef, and ignoring the fact that ocean levels are rising as the icecaps and glaciers are melting is part of the 'ostrich with its head in the sand' syndrome.

Recent claims by our leading politicians that burning coal for the next fifty years will be environmentally viable are the subject of ridicule even among conservative politicians.

Fossil fuels are not intrinsic to our future prosperity – alternative sources of energy must be exploited.

It was in 2003 that I first spoke in this church. I soon discovered that your mission was overtly about social justice and in line with what I had learned about in Unitarian history.

Theologians would call your ministry prophetic. Not in the sense of the fundamentalists and some evangelicals who teach the nonsense that the Bible contains clues and codes for predicting future events and the return of Jesus Christ.

A true prophetic ministry is one that challenges the political powers and ideologies of a particular age and generation.

The prophets of ancient Israel were speaking and writing to the people of their own lifetimes. The books they wrote do not contain hidden messages for people living in the 21st century. The prophets challenged the political and religious rules of their own time. Their messages were political, economic and religious.

For example, when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, the message of Moses to Pharaoh was, 'Let my people go'. Nothing could be more political than that demand.

Looking at the corruption of the rulers of his time, the Prophet Micah cried out, 'He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness'. As valid today as it ever was!

Micah looked forward to a time when 'they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nations shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore'. Wow! No more military academies.

Jesus stated that his mission was to serve humanity because God had anointed me to bring good news to the poor ...'

The thrust of the ministry of this church stands at the centre of the age-old Judeo Christian tradition.

The prophetic voice of this church is heard not only from the pulpit but through membership of several progressive

organisations, including Pax Christi, a world-wide peace initiative of the Jesuits.

Another bold step was the setting up of the People's Audit in response to the federal government's Commission of Audit, which is the think-tank of the far right and has been responsible for the nasty surprises that the Abbott government has sprung upon many of its more disadvantaged citizens.

The People's Audit was put together by the Canberra-based Australia Institute and was funded by this church.

The government's National Commission of Audit represents the largely foreign-owned corporations, big business and big mining.

This church has the distinctive reputation for being biased on the side of the workers, the poor and the marginalised.

For this you have been libelled and labelled as being too left wing.

I say to you, wear it as a badge of honour!

The reports of the government's commission pay virtually no attention to Australia's ever-rising 'greenhouse' emissions or to the economic needs of millions of its citizens.

The People's Audit calls on Australians to make choices.

To have the world's best low cost education and health system or the world's lowest taxes.

To continue to outspend our neighbours on defence or underspend on tackling climate change.

To maintain the incomes of the elderly and disabled or to cut the taxes of our wealthiest citizens and corporations.

The People's Audit shows that the government-sponsored Commission of Audit seeks to scare people into supporting the policies that are preferred by big business that effectively managed the Audit.

The big question is why an Australian government would want to sponsor predominantly foreign companies who want to pay as little tax as possible and at the same time oppose genuine improvements to our social and environmental policies. It is indeed a narrow and lopsided perspective.

Being in the prophetic stream makes you an activist community.

Here are some areas where your commitment is desperately needed.

## 1. ABORIGINAL JUSTICE

According to the latest figures from the Law Institute of Victoria, Aboriginal prisoners in Australia numbered 1,914 per 100,000. The figure for non-indigenes was 109 per 100,000.

If the non-indigenous population had the same level of incarceration as their fellow Aboriginal citizens the figure would be nearly half a million Australians in our jails, instead of 35,000.

Young Aboriginal people comprise 53% of Australia's prison population even though they comprise less than 3% of the population as a whole.

A recent edition of the *Medical Journal of Australia* includes a study of Aboriginal prisoners when they are released from jail: three-quarters of them expect to have no secure accommodation on release, and about one-third reported being homeless before they were jailed. Shame on us!

## 2. REFUGEES

If your life is in danger, you get out in any way you can. If it is your government that persecutes you, you then cannot get a visa. If our government were fair dinkum about refugees, it wouldn't turn them back; rather it would intercept their

rickety boats and bring them to safety in Australia where their application for asylum could be duly processed.

## 3. FOREIGN AID

The biggest single saving in the 2014 Federal Budget was the reduction in foreign aid spending. According to Tim Costello, the cut made up one-fifth of the overall budget savings. Tim Costello accused the government of trying to balance the books on the backs of the poor.

In recent times, government, big business and the media have focused our attention on the Great War (1914–1918) as never before. 2015 is also the centenary of the ill-fated and ill-considered Gallipoli landing of 1915.

Apparently it will be a four-year campaign of commemoration as we celebrate the long list of battles that Australian forces have been involved in.

These activities will cost over \$500 million. Why so much? Is it to promote patriotism or is it to ensure an uncritical attitude to war?

Better by far than ANZAC commemorations is the symbol of the Eureka flag that was raised at Bakery Hill, Ballarat, on 29 November 1854 by a much earlier generation of Australians to rally the miners to fight for their rights and protest against the injustices that they suffered.

They met under the Eureka flag, symbolising the Southern Cross with its five shimmering white stars against a clear blue background.

Italian digger Raffaello Carboni spoke at Bakery Hill that fateful day.

He recalled, 'I took the stage that morning and I called on all my fellow diggers irrespective of nationality, religion and colour, to salute the Southern Cross, as the refuge of all the oppressed from all the countries on earth.'

The mining community of Ballarat called the new ensign the Australian flag.

Today for many Australians the spirit of Eureka stands for defiance in the face of injustice, collective action to right wrongs, and democratic social inclusion in the body politic of the state. The ideas and values that underpin Eureka are justice, political representation and fairness and they are not less vital than they were 160 years ago.

During Australia's sesquicentenary events in 2004, then prime minister John Howard made his own political statement by refusing to fly the flag at Canberra's Parliament House, despite the fact that it was flown in every state and territory parliament and hundreds of town halls across Australia.

On 3 December 1973, it was the late Gough Whitlam who unveiled the newly restored Eureka flag at Bakery Hill.

This is what the great Australian said:

'The kind of nationalism that every country needs ... is a benign and constructive nationalism that has to do with self-confidence, with maturity, with originality, with independence of mind.

If Australia is to remain in the forefront of nations ... if it is determined to be a true source of power and ideas in the world, a nation respected for its generosity and tolerance, then I believe that something like the new nationalism must play a part in our government and in the lives of us all.'

May we all work towards that great day! ■



# WE ARE THE ENEMY: IS THIS THE LESSON OF FERGUSON?

BY JOHN W WHITEHEAD

If you dress police officers up as soldiers and you put them in military vehicles and you give them military weapons, they adopt a warrior mentality. We fight wars against enemies, and the enemies are the people who live in our cities – particularly in communities of colour.

**THOMAS NOLAN, CRIMINOLOGY PROFESSOR AND  
FORMER POLICE OFFICER**

**S**hould police officer Darren Wilson be held accountable for the shooting death of unarmed citizen Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, on 9 August 2014?

That the police officer was white and his victim black should make no difference. In a perfect world, it would not matter. In an imperfect world such as ours, however, racism is an effective propaganda tool used by the government and the media to distract us from the real issues.

As a result, the national dialogue about the dangers of militarised, weaponised police officers being trained to act like soldiers on the battlefield, shooting first and asking questions later, has shifted into a largely unspoken debate over race wars, class perceptions and longstanding, deep-seated notions of who deserves our unquestioning loyalty and who does not.

Putting aside our prejudices, however, let's not overlook the importance of Ferguson and this grand jury verdict. Tasked with determining whether Wilson should stand trial for Brown's shooting, the grand jury ruled that the police officer will not face charges for the fatal shooting.

However, the greater question – whether anything will really change to rein in militarised police, police shootings, lack of accountability and oversight, and a military industrial complex with a vested interest in turning America into a war zone – remains unanswered.

Ferguson matters because it provides us with a foretaste of what is to come. It is the shot across the bow, so to speak, a warning that this is how we will all be treated if we do not tread cautiously in challenging the police state, and it won't matter whether we're black or white, rich or poor,

Republican or Democrat. In the eyes of the corporate state, we are all the enemy.

This is the lesson of Ferguson.

Remember that in the wake of the shooting, Ferguson police officers clad in body armour, their faces covered with masks, equipped with assault rifles and snipers and riding armoured vehicles, showed up in force to deal with protesters. Describing that show of force by police in Ferguson, Senator Claire McCaskill, Democrat of Missouri, stated, 'This was a military force, and they were facing down an enemy.'

Yes, we are the enemy. As I point out in my book *A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State*, since those first towers fell on 9/11, the American people have been treated like enemy combatants, to be spied on, tracked, scanned, frisked, searched, subjected to all manner of intrusions, intimidated, invaded, raided, manhandled, censored, silenced, shot at, locked up and denied due process.

There was a moment of hope after Ferguson that perhaps things might change. Perhaps the balance would be restored between the citizenry and their supposed guardians, the police. Perhaps our elected officials would take our side for a change and oppose the militarisation of the police. Perhaps warfare would take a backseat to more pressing national concerns.

That hope was short-lived.

It wasn't long before the media moved on to other, more titillating stories. The disappearance of a University of Virginia college student and the search for her alleged abductor; the weeks-long man-hunt for an accused cop killer; the Republican electoral upset, a *Rolling Stone* expose on gang rapes at fraternity parties, Obama's immigration amnesty plan, and the rape charges against Bill Cosby are just a few of the stories that have dominated the news cycle since the Ferguson standoff between police and protesters.

It wasn't long before the American public, easily acclimated to news of government wrongdoing (case in point: the national yawn over the NSA's ongoing domestic surveillance), ceased to be shocked, outraged or alarmed by reports of police shootings. In fact, the issue was nowhere to be found in this year's run-up to Election Day, which was largely devoid of any pressing matters of national concern.

And with nary a hiccup, the police state marched steadily forth. In fact, aided and abetted by the citizenry's short attention span, its easily distracted nature, and its desensitisation to anything that occupies the news cycle for too long, it has been business as usual in terms of police shootings, the amassing of military weapons, and the government's sanctioning of police misconduct. Most recently, Ohio police shot and killed a 12-year-old boy who was seen waving a toy gun at a playground.

Rubbing salt in our wounds, in the wake of Ferguson, police agencies not only continued to ramp up their military arsenals but have used them whenever possible. In fact, in anticipation of the grand jury's ruling, St Louis police actually purchased more equipment for its officers, including 'civil disobedience equipment.'

Just a few weeks after the Ferguson showdown, law enforcement agencies took part in an \$11 million

manhunt in Pennsylvania for alleged cop killer Eric Frein. Without batting an eye, the news media switched from outraged 'shock' over the military arsenal employed by police in Ferguson to respectful 'awe' of the 48-day operation that cost taxpayers \$1.4 million per week in order to carry out a round-the-clock dragnet search of an area with a 5-mile radius.

The Frein operation brought together 1,000 officers from local, state and federal law enforcement, as well as SWAT teams and cutting edge military equipment (high-powered rifles, body armour, infrared sensors, armoured trucks, helicopters and unmanned, silent surveillance blimps) – some of the very same weapons and tactics employed in Ferguson and, a year earlier, in Boston in the wake of the marathon bombing.

The manhunt was a well-timed, perfectly choreographed exercise in why Americans should welcome the police state: for our safety, of course, and to save the lives of police officers.

Opposed to any attempt to demilitarise America's police forces, the Dept of Homeland Security has been chanting this safety mantra in testimony before Congress: Remember 9/11. Remember Boston. Remember how unsafe the world was before police were equipped with automatic weapons, heavily armoured trucks, night-vision goggles, and aircraft donated by the DHS.

Contrary to DHS rhetoric, however, militarised police – twitchy over perceived dangers, hyped up on their authority, and protected by their agencies, the legislatures and the courts – have actually made communities less safe at a time when violent crime is at an all-time low and lumberjacks, fishermen, airline pilots, roofers, construction workers, trash collectors, electricians and truck drivers all have a higher risk of on-the-job fatalities than police officers.

Moreover, as Senator Tom Coburn points out, the militarisation of America's police forces has actually 'created some problems that wouldn't have been there otherwise.' Among those problems: a rise in the use of SWAT team raids for routine law enforcement activities (averaging 80,000 a year), a rise in the use and abuse of asset forfeiture laws by police agencies, a profit-

driven incentive to criminalise lawful activities and treat Americans as suspects, and a transformation of the nation's citizenry into suspects.

Ferguson provided us with an opportunity to engage in a much-needed national dialogue over how police are trained, what authority they are given, what weaponry they are provided, and how they treat those whom they are entrusted with protecting.

Caught up in our personal politics, prejudices and class warfare, we have failed to answer that call. In so doing, we have played right into the hands of all those corporations who profit from turning America into a battlefield by selling the government mine-resistant vehicles, assault rifles, grenade launchers, and drones.

As long as we remain steeped in ignorance, there will be no reform.

As long as we remain divided by our irrational fear of each other, there will be no overhaul in the nation's law enforcement system or institution of an oversight process whereby communities can ensure that local police departments are acting in accordance with their wishes and values.

And as long as we remain distracted by misguided loyalties to military operatives who are paid to play the part of the government's henchmen, there will be no saving us when the events of Ferguson unfold in our own backyards.

When all is said and done, it doesn't matter whose 'side' you're on as far as what transpired in Ferguson, whether you believe that Michael Brown was a victim or that Darren Wilson was justified in shooting first and asking questions later.

What matters is that we not allow politics and deep-rooted prejudices of any sort to divert our efforts to restore some level of safety, sanity and constitutional balance to the role that police officers play in our communities. If we fail to do so, we will have done a disservice to ourselves and every man, woman and child in this country who have become casualties of the American police state. ■

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# from our readers



## **Dear Unitarians**

I do enjoy receiving the *Beacon* – so many interesting, high quality articles.

Many thanks.

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**G Barrett, Vic**

## **The Editor Beacon**

Enclosed please find cheque to the value of \$15 (being \$10 subscription to the *Beacon* and \$5 donation for your peace work).

I received my first copy of the *Beacon* last week. Thank you. I am happy to begin the subscription now. I do not need to receive the two more free copies.

Thank you.

**M Jewell, Qld**

## **The Editor Beacon**

Please find enclosed a cheque for \$20 being my subscription for one year plus a small donation.

Keep up the good work.

Yours in unity.

**W Lees, Qld**

## **Iraq, a continuing nightmare**

The United Nations Refugee Agency Australia reported in September 2014 that the ongoing brutal civil war between the Sunni-inspired fundamentalist Islamic State movement (IS) and the fledgling Western-backed Baghdad government has so far forced 1.8 million Iraqis from their homes. Only around 47% of these displaced people are fortunate enough to have found shelter in makeshift emergency camps erected by the UNHCR within IS-free Kurdistan of northern Iraq along the Turkish and Iranian borders. The rest are still in limbo.

A US-led coalition (incorporating a few Arab and Western nations) is currently attempting to restore political, social and religious stability in Iraq through an open-ended strategy based predominantly on the deployment of sophisticated tactical airpower against identified IS military and administrative targets. This strategy invariably causes further destruction of vital infrastructure, unintended deaths and hardship among the traumatised population, who (like most Arab communities) resent the presence of foreign troops on their soil. Australia supports this US-led initiative at an annual cost to its taxpayers of several hundred million dollars.

It seems that the Coalition partners have forgotten the lessons of the 1964–75 civil war in Vietnam between the Communist north and the US-backed capitalist south. This

disastrous war ended only after foreign military occupation and political interference had ceased, thereby creating the opportunity for a free and independent Vietnam to be realised. The villains during that war were the clandestine 'National Liberation Front guerrillas (or Viet Cong)' fighting alongside 'ruthless North Vietnamese communist troops'. The Western media, and various political analysts, had asserted that these 'despicable rebellious elements' needed to be destroyed by all means available (including chemical warfare) in order to safeguard south-eastern Asia and Australia from the scourge of communist dictatorship.

The irony is that these Vietnamese 'villains' never threatened any of their neighbours after the war. Instead, they cooperated with the largely Christian South Vietnamese and established a politically stable nation that nowadays is peaceful and attracts thousands of tourists each year from around the world, including Americans! Hopefully, the Iraqi people can emulate the Vietnamese example and rebuild their shattered country into a modern peaceful nation, free of foreign domination and in accord with moderate Muslim traditions and tolerance for alternative faiths or non-religious views.

**Fred Neumann, Vic**

## **Dear Marion**

The enclosed subscription is from long-time comrades of Paula and I who were visiting our place at the time the September issue of the *Beacon* arrived and they were very impressed with the magazine.

I found the October issue the gutsiest and most hard-hitting little magazine I've read anywhere and I therefore request that you send that issue to the Crams as their first issue.

With best wishes and appreciation of your work.

**S Sharkey, NSW**



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Julie Stafford

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Website: [www.melbourneunitarian.org.au](http://www.melbourneunitarian.org.au)

Monthly journal of the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church  
Est. 1852

Registered by Australia Post

Post Print Approved  
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