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‘WE SHALL OVERCOME’

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the famous freedom march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capital of Montgomery on 21–25 March 1965. This pivotal event (and the violence that preceded it) became a mile-stone in the Civil Rights Movement and led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act later that year. While most people know the basic history of that period, there are many aspects to the events in Selma that have either faded from memory or were never known here – not least, the part that our Unitarian Universalist con-freres played in that tumultuous drama and the price that one minister paid.

The Civil Rights Movement had made impressive progress over the previous decade, starting with the Brown vs. Board of Education case of 1954 that led to the desegregation of the schools. A campaign of sit-ins in 1958–60 brought about the integration of lunch counters, museums, libraries, cinemas, swimming pools, beaches, parks and other public facilities across the country. However, the states of the ‘Deep South’ bitterly resisted these reforms, as seen from the violence that met the Freedom Riders in 1961. The perpetrators were usually members of the Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizens Council, but they had the full support of state and local authorities.

Alabama’s largest city, Birmingham, was the venue of a desegregation campaign led by Rev. Martin Luther King jr and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1963. Mass arrests were anticipated as men, women and even schoolchildren occupied public places with marches and sit-ins. Thousands were arrested, including Rev. King, but the infamous Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene ‘Bull’ Connor, also used high-pressure fire hoses and police dogs against the demonstrators. The resulting TV coverage shocked the nation and, ultimately, Connor lost his job and the city was desegregated.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 officially abolished segregation but many parts of the Deep South refused to change. Selma and the surrounding Dallas County were prime examples, with the colour bar still in effect and fewer than 1% of the black majority allowed to vote, sit on a jury or stand for public office. After two years of obstruction, arrests and violence, the Dallas County Voters League and organisers from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee asked Rev. King and the SCLC for help at the end of 1964.

Many prominent civil rights and civic leaders arrived in Selma and the Voting Rights Campaign began with an address by Rev. King to a mass meeting on 02 January 1965. Over the following weeks, SCLC and SNCC activists expanded registration drives and protests there and in adjacent counties. With the support of President Lyndon Johnson, Rev. King led the first ‘Freedom Day’ procession to the county courthouse in Selma on 18 January.

Interestingly, the white establishment in Selma was not uniformly racist – indeed, the new mayor, Joseph Smitherton, was a moderate who hoped to attract business investment from the North. His chief of police, Wilson Baker, also believed that avoiding conflict with the protesters would deny them the publicity they sought. However, the city police force had only 30 officers, whereas the Sheriff of Dallas County, Jim Clark, was a hardliner with a posse of 200 deputies, no few of whom were members of the KKK or the National States' Rights Party. Clark and his heavily-armed deputies had total control outside the city limits and of the block where the county courthouse was located.

Thus, when the marchers passed through the courteous city police, Clark refused to let any of them enter the courthouse. Rev. King was knocked down and kicked by a leader of the National States' Rights, who was promptly arrested by Chief Baker. Would-be-registrants continued to arrive at the courthouse every day, only to be arrested or beaten away even after a District Court order issued on 04 February that at least 100 people be allowed in.

The SCLC called for a mass procession from Selma to Montgomery, 54 miles to the east. On 07 March, as many as 600 people crossed the bridge over the Alabama River, only to be met by state troopers and county posse who charged them with horses, batons and tear gas. In an event still known as 'Bloody Sunday', many were severely injured and again the televised images horrified the country.

Rev. King and his colleagues then issued a call for clergy and citizens to come to their assistance while they awaited a restraining order from the Federal District Court against any further marches to be lifted. The second march, known as 'Turnaround Tuesday' was a purely symbolic event in which Rev. King led 2500 people onto the bridge – still heavily guarded at the other end – held a prayer session and went back. By then, UUA ministers James Reeb (pictured at the right on p. 1), Clark Olsen and Orloff Miller had arrived in Selma and were attacked by white racists armed with clubs after eating dinner in an integrated restaurant. Reeb died from brain injuries two days later.

On 15 March, President Johnson convened a televised joint session of Congress and outlined his new Voting Rights Bill. He called Selma "a turning point in man's unending search for freedom" and echoed Rev. King's language in saying "it is not just Negroes, but really it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome." Johnson's Bill was presented to Congress two days later.

On 17 March, the injunction was lifted with the qualification that no more than 300 marchers could use the two-lane highway that made up most of the route. Aware the Governor George Wallace in Montgomery had no intention of cooperating, Johnson federalised the Alabama National Guard and ordered that the marchers be protected by 1000 military policemen and 2000 army troops.

On Sunday, 21 March, some 8000 people of various races and creeds assembled at Rev. King's headquarters. Leading the march with him were a Greek Orthodox archbishop, two rabbis and at least one nun. By the end of the day, they had reached the two-lane stretch and all but the designated 300 marchers turned back. Those determined few continued for two more days through chilling rain, camping in muddy fields.

On the morning of 24 March, they approached Montgomery and the highway widened. All that day, more marchers were ferried in by bus or car until several thousand people reached the final campsite on the outskirts of the capital. That night, on a makeshift stage, they were entertained by Harry Belafonte, Tony Bennett, Frankie Laine, Sammy Davis jr., Joan Baez, Nina Simone and Peter, Paul and Mary.

By this time, there were other groups of marchers descending on Montgomery from all directions. When Rev. King's contingent arrived at the State Capitol building on 24 March, there were 25,000 people in attendance when he stood on the steps and gave his famous 'How Long? Not Long' speech:

"The end we seek is a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience. ... I know you are asking today, How long will it take? I come to say to you this afternoon however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long."

After that speech, Rev. King and the marchers attempted to deliver a petition to Governor Wallace but a line of state troopers blocked the door. Undeterred, the marchers remained at the entrance until one of Wallace's secretaries appeared and took the petition. So ended one of the greatest events in the struggle for civil rights.



ICUU NEWS

Emergency in Burundi

IWC Pilgrimage to Bolivia



From Rev. Steve Dick, Executive Director: Burundi is fast approaching a national election. There is a possibility that violence and civil discord may result if the present leader stands again, renouncing previous agreements. Unitarians in Burundi could be affected by any unrest. Personal safety may be threatened and shops and banks may be closed, making sustenance difficult. The Unitarian Church has not been involved in political activity, but it is sighted in a part of Bujumbura considered an opposition area.

ICUU has been working with the Unitarian Church in Burundi to prepare contingency arrangements in the event of the worst. A provision for onsite emergency funding is in place, plans for protecting members and the building are ready and an international appeal for support will be launched if needed. Special thanks to donors and congregations connected to the Mentoring Coalition partnered with the Burundi Church for their loans and donations to ICUU that have made the emergency funding provision possible.

ICUU is in continuing contact with our brothers and sisters in Burundi and will circulate further information when available. In the meantime, please keep the Burundi Unitarian Church, its members and all the other people with whom they share that beautiful country in your thoughts and prayers. Join with ICUU in our earnest hope this potential crisis may be averted in the interest of peace and humanity.

[As most of us know, Burundi has been beset by internecine strife and military coups since its independence in 1962. In 2005, Pierre Nkurunziza became president after 12 years of civil war and, such was the peace and reconstruction achieved in his first term, he was re-elected in 2010 with a 91% majority and won a number of international awards for his leadership. However, in 2014, he banned jogging in the outskirts of the capital as a subversive activity and 21 members of the opposition were sentenced to life imprisonment for doing that. The constitution allows only two presidential terms but Nkurunziza's supporters argue that he was elected by the parliament the first time, rather than by a popular ballot, so it doesn't count.

The Burundi church eschews politics but it is located in a suburb of Bujumbura where many opposition supporters live. The last reports received indicated that some violence and shooting had broken out there and some of our confreres were relocating to safer areas. The church was looking for a temporary shelter for its members where it could provide them with food, water and medicines.]

The International Convocation of Women (formerly the International Convocation of UU Women) has a three-part tour of Bolivia and Peru organised for November 2015. The main event on 12–15 November is the Gathering of Liberal Religious Women in Yungas, near La Paz, where participants will learn about the work of various women's, environmental and indigenous rights groups.

The Pre-Extension tour on 05–11 November starts in Cusco, Peru, with a day-trip to the Sacred Valley and Machu Pichu. It proceeds to Lake Titicaca on the border with Bolivia and the archeological site on Sun Island. The journey to La Paz goes through the pre-Incan ruins of Tiwanaku, with their mysterious architecture and monoliths.

The Post-Extension tour on 16–20 November involves a flight to Sucre, the official capital, and a day at Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt flat. Once a salt lake, it has the rocky former island of Incahuasi in the middle and the Tunupa volcano on one side. The overland trip goes through Potosí, the highest city in the world, with its sad but fascinating history of silver mining.

The host will be Olga Flores, human rights activist and leader of a Unitarian Universalist community in La Paz. We will doubtless be hearing more about this event because James and Renee Hills of the Brisbane Fellowship plan to attend. For more information, go to: www.intlwomensconvo.org/convocation/bolivia-2015/ and click separately on the headings under the pictures.

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION

By Rev. Clay Nelson

Last Monday, I spent six hours at the Human Rights Commission in a mediation that ultimately seeks to abolish religious instruction in public schools. It is known as 'Bible in Schools'. I joined David Hines, a member of this congregation, and three others to engage three members of the Ministry of Education. While to actually abolish religious instruction will require a law change, the hope going in was to seek policy changes that would make the programme less onerous in the meantime. While the proceedings are confidential, I can say the meeting was positive overall and promising, but far from conclusive. Much work still needs to be done.

Each of us who participated expressed different motivations for being there. The two most moving were by parents of young children who have been targeted and bullied by staff, teachers and peers for having opted out of the programme. One mother told of enrolling her child in a local public primary school where no mention was made that there was religious instruction. After some weeks their five-year old daughter came home repeating Christian doctrine. Things she would tell them were: "Somebody came to our class to talk about God." "Today we learnt about Jesus." "Today we learnt how the world was created by God." Perhaps the most troubling day was when she came home from school saying she wanted to meet God and asking her parents to attend church.

The mother went to the teacher to get answers, who explained that it was the school's 'Values in Action' programme and that it was not "religious". "It just happens to use Bible stories to demonstrate values." She was prepared to accept this answer but her partner was more sceptical and increasingly concerned that this programme was inappropriate. The issue became a source of tension between them.

Finally, to reassure her partner, she attended a 'Values in Action' class. She did not find what she expected but a very evangelical presenter who at one point threw her hands up in the air in good televangelist fashion and called Jesus a hero. At that point she conceded her partner was right and they removed their daughter from the classes.

This upset their daughter, who had to go to what her friends called the 'naughty room'. She promised her parents she wouldn't be naughty any more if they would let her go be with her friends. They felt under pressure to put her back in the class. They eventually would take time from work to take their daughter out of school during the class to protect her from being mistreated. That did not fully resolve the issue. While packing up at the end of Bible class, the volunteer would target their daughter and impart such ideas as:

- People who have children should be married (her parents weren't).
- People of the same sex should not be allowed to get married.
- The earth is 6000 years old.
- Dinosaurs never existed.

She was also encouraged to evangelise her family.

Shortly after my arrival in New Zealand I was made aware of the Bible in Schools programme. Coming from a country founded on the importance of separation of church and state (no matter what the Tea Party and the likes of Pat Robertson say to the contrary), I was quite taken by surprise that such a programme existed in our public schools. I knew such a programme violated at least the spirit of New Zealand's Bill of Rights and was clearly contrary to the Human Rights Act that promotes freedom of religion and which requires freedom from religion. I was mystified how a Sunday school class that would be more at home in a conservative Evangelical church became commonplace in many public schools in a country where nearly half of its citizens indicated in the last census no religious affiliation.

It didn't start out that way. The Education Act of 1877 established that primary school education would be "free, secular and compulsory" in New Zealand. This did not sit well with conservative Christians who wanted religious observances in school and their form of Christianity taught. They maintain to this day that secular did not mean anti-Christian but anti-denominational because of the rivalry between Christian religions since colonial days. They formed the Bible in Schools League to push for a change to the Education Act. Between 1877 and 1935, 42 bills were placed before Parliament calling for the inclusion of religious exercises and Bible readings as a part of the curriculum in schools.

The battle for keeping public schools secular was extremely polarising. In 1912, *The Observer* newspaper published a cartoon showing a fine upstanding secular state schoolteacher being held at gunpoint by a member of the Bible in Schools League. The gun is labelled Act of Parliament. He's saying, "Either you drop your conscience or your living!" Secular education was under threat from religion. If the proposed Act had been passed there was a legitimate concern that teachers might have been dismissed or may have been denied appointment if they refused to give religious instruction.

The Education Act of 1964 was intended to resolve this debate in a pragmatic way by legalising what is called the Nelson System (I confess I find its name a little embarrassing). This system allowed for the "closing" of schools so that volunteers (not qualified teachers) can teach Bible in Schools under the guise of being values education. It also let the Ministry of Education drop responsibility for what had become a hot potato. Essentially the Act set in stone the polarisation. From then on secular has come to mean having nothing to do with religion and furthermore being hostile to it and religious education is now equated as the "Bible in Schools." It established the conservative Christian position as normative, confirming the privileged status of Christianity in New Zealand by legitimising confessional Christian instruction in state schools.

The curricula for these classes are developed, maintained and promoted by the Churches Education Commission (or CEC), which is the former Bible in Schools League. I have to hand it to them. The materials I've seen are slickly produced. They are values-oriented and age-appropriate, but they are clearly evangelical and designed to proselytise our primary age children. After I lent my name to the Secular Education Network action to end Bible in Schools in 2012, the media quickly came knocking. How could an Anglican priest be against teaching the Bible in schools? After one interview on TV One's Breakfast programme, I was inundated by hostile email and phone calls. One correspondent who was a Bible in Schools volunteer ecstatically referred to the schools as being "a rich mission field". I couldn't pass up a gift horse. I, of course, made the media aware of it. Simon Greening, the head of the CEC, followed me the next day on TV One to say that the volunteer had been chastised – I believe for his honesty. He had let the cat out of the bag.

In 2006, staff at the Ministry of Education made an attempt to mitigate the worst abuses in the Nelson system by developing new policies that included requiring all parents to be fully informed about the curriculum being taught and requiring them to opt their child into Bible in Schools, not "out" as is presently the case. We have learned through requests to the Official Information Act that shortly before the proposed policy changes were to be announced they were withdrawn after the Minister of Education received a letter from two Anglican Archbishops, David Moxon and Brown Turei, denouncing the changes. It is not surprising, as Anglicans are members of the ecumenical Churches Education Commission. But the first Anglican bishop of New Zealand, George Selwyn, might have been surprised. Selwyn was opposed to New Zealand having an established church and rejected efforts by Parliament to make the Anglican Church a state-supported institution.

I suspect Selwyn's views were shaped more by the flaws, failures and corruption of the established church in his homeland than by the writings of American revolutionaries such as Thomas Paine, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, who midwived the idea of separating church and state. But his resistance to Parliament's efforts recognised that it was unhealthy for both the state and religion to be hand in glove. Perhaps he was aware of Thomas Paine's observation: "Persecution is not an original feature in any religion; but it is always the strongly marked feature of all religions established by law."

From my American experience, I have known that author Robert Heinlein had it right when he wrote: "Almost any sect, cult, or religion will legislate its creed into law if it acquires the political power to do so." James Madison lamented: "[T]here remains [in some parts of the country] a strong bias towards the old error, that without some sort of alliance or coalition between Govt. & Religion neither can be duly supported. Such indeed is the tendency to such a coalition, and such its corrupting influence on both parties, that the danger cannot be too carefully guarded against." Later he would condemn the establishment of the chaplainship in Congress as "a palpable violation of equal rights as well as of Constitutional principles. The danger of silent accumulations and encroachments by ecclesiastical bodies has not sufficiently engaged attention in the U.S."

Madison was prescient about what would happen in the US. The religious right never accepted Jefferson's belief that a wall of separation between church and state was intended by the Constitution. They never stopped trying to breach it. Two notable successes under the Eisenhower administration were inserting "*under God*" into the Pledge of Allegiance and changing the motto of the country from *E pluribus unum* (out of many one) to 'In God We Trust', which is now printed on US currency.

During Reagan's terms in office the religious right had a strong ally. He believed, "If we ever forget that we're one nation under God, then we will be one nation gone under." Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority flourished during his time in office. Disappointed that self-professed Evangelical, Jimmy Carter was not willing to bridge the church-state divide, they endorsed Ronald Reagan before the Republican Convention. According to Carter, in the autumn of 1980 "a group headed by Jerry Falwell purchased \$10 million in commercials on southern radio and TV to brand me as a traitor to the South and no longer a Christian."

Reagan repaid them by supporting a Republican platform which included opposition to media outlets like National Public Radio that they believed promoted an "anti-family" agenda, the Equal Rights Amendment and Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, state recognition or acceptance of homosexual acts, abortion, even in cases involving incest, rape or in pregnancies where the life of the mother is at stake, and support for Christian prayers in schools. Their support of Reagan was rewarded with an important plum. Reagan appointed the Executive Director of the Moral Majority to the Department of Education.

All of this paled when George W. Bush became the first openly "born again" president, who believed "God wants me to be President". As President he prayed daily that he be as "good a messenger of His will as possible". He called his agenda "compassionate conservatism", which launched faith-based initiatives that provided government funds to churches offering social services to the needy, opposed stem cell research, sex education beyond calling for abstinence, abortion, and same-sex marriage. He believed Intelligent Design should be taught alongside evolution and strongly supported charter schools that often had a strong evangelical focus.

His evangelical idealism came to the forefront after 9/11. He was adamant that evil must be resisted, defeated, and he and his country have been called by God to do it – to be freedom's champion. As far as I was concerned his 'War on Terror' was no different from Osama Bin Laden's call for a jihad and it was the last straw. It was time to leave what was becoming a theocracy. While the election of President Obama, a constitutional lawyer, has slowed the dismantling of the wall between church and state, the foothold of conservative Christians in Congress and the courts makes them more than troublesome as they make governing nearly impossible.

That is the future I fear for New Zealand. The CEC, having succeeded in getting the Nelson System into law, has done its best to hide its agenda by giving cute names to its curricula, like *Cool Bananas*. Schools fail to communicate to parents that their children are even in the programme and if they don't like it they must go through different hoops to get their children out of it. They and the schools have rarely provided an attractive alternative for children who are opted out. They now brag on their website that they have instituted a school chaplaincy programme. Chaplains are there to "counsel" children at times other than the Bible in School class. There have been numerous complaints that they have been actively proselytizing our most vulnerable children on the playground and at lunch.

As abhorrent as I find these abuses by the CEC and the schools in league with them, I believe there is a bigger threat. The CEC agenda has given the word 'secular' a negative connotation. A connotation that implies that being secular has nothing to do with religion when, in truth, it has everything to do with protecting freedom of religion. At a time when adherents to various religions are shedding blood around the globe in the name of their God, often in horrific ways, it is incumbent on us to understand the place of religion in society if we are to develop tolerance and understanding in our increasingly multicultural country.

But that is not happening in New Zealand schools. According to Helen Bradstock, a University of Otago scholar, "Recent studies in Europe and the United Kingdom concluded that inter-religious education has real potential to promote multicultural awareness, social inclusion and an active form of tolerance which is evidenced in relationships with others. However, this research shows that religious education is most effective when difficult questions relating to conflicting worldviews are grappled with, debated and not avoided in the classroom."

However, she notes, while the New Zealand education system encompasses a radical strategy of critical multiculturalism and affirmative action for Maori culture, there is a conservative strategy of monoculturalism and majority-rule with regard to religious culture. In other words, knowledge of world religions does not routinely form part of a child's formal education in New Zealand. According to Bradstock, a search for the word 'religion' in the curriculum document yields a zero result.

Although cultural diversity is now embedded in the curriculum there are no curriculum guidelines, minimal resources and no training available for primary school teachers in the area of religious diversity. This is not the kind of freedom from religion we as Unitarian Universalists need to seek for the next generation. In my view, not until the Nelson System is abolished from the Education Act will teaching religion be replaced with teaching about religion. Preserving precious human rights depend on it. A more peaceful world depends on it. Making it happen depends on us.

But if you speak out prepare for acts of intimidation and being maligned and bullied. Freedom comes at a cost.

[This is the text of an address to the Auckland Unitarian Church on 01 March 2015, where Rev. Nelson has been the minister since October 2014. He has a most unusual background, starting with a BA in political science from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a Master's in student personnel administration from Ohio State University. He worked a number of years in higher education at Ohio State, Western Michigan University and George Washington University in the District of Columbia.

He later attended the Virginia Theological Seminary and was ordained as an Episcopalian priest. He served in parishes in New York, Michigan, New Jersey and California, finally becoming Archdeacon of the San Diego diocese. He then became the Administrator of the UU Society of Santa Barbara while preparing to become a UU minister.

Rev. Nelson has actually been in New Zealand since 2005, working as the manager of communications and marketing (later adding the duties of Priest Associate) for an Anglican church in Auckland since 2005. In that capacity, he oversaw the production of numerous controversial billboards, some of which went 'viral' around the world.

Somehow, while still in the US, he found the time to work on Habitat for Humanity projects in northern Mexico and Appalachia, organise faith communities in Michigan and New Jersey to provide shelter to homeless mothers and their children, and found an inter-faith hospital chaplaincy. He describes himself as a "progressive Christian" but also a non-theist who believes each of us must take responsibility for nourishing and developing our own spirituality.

ANZUUA NEWS

Melbourne UC' sub-committee working on the 2015 ANZUUA Conference on 16–18 October have not yet finalised the program but all of the other arrangements are in place (see p. 16).

ANZUUA has received a request from two American UU women, Elaine and Lisa, in Darwin for help to publicise the spiritual explorers group they have formed there. Clive and Jane Brooks of Adelaide recently met with them and spoke well of their capabilities. Anyone planning to travel there should contact them at: elaineweaver611@gmail.com.

Pauline Rooney, Vice-President of the ICUU reports that its Executive Director, Rev. Steve Dick, will be attending the UUA's General Assembly at the end of June and the Synod of the Hungarian Unitarian Church in mid-July. Pauline, herself, will be attending the ICUU Executive Meeting in The Netherlands, also in July, which will be the venue of the 2016 Council Meeting and Conference.

(The ICUU has also just announced the publication of *Humble in Front of God: Words for Worship from Transylvanian Unitarians in 2014* in partnership with the Hungarian Unitarian Ministers Association. This is a collection of prayers and sermons translated into English, launched with a limited print run at the ICUU Council Meeting and Conference in New York in 2014. It is intended as the first in a series of collections of worship materials from ICUU member groups.)

In breaking news, ANZUUA has been invited to send a representative to the inaugural Federal Interfaith Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast in Canberra on 17 June. Organised by the Australian Catholic University and to be held in the Old Parliament Building, this event is expected to involve 150 speakers from different faith groups. Our president, Peter Abrehart, will deliver a Unitarian reading to this event and this will be a great opportunity to put ANZUUA on the national religious map.

I AM THE VERY MODEL OF A DEVIOUS CREATIONIST



I am the very model of a devious creationist
I've made a film that's best described as stolen-animationist.
I know the use of rhetoric when facts are unavailable
To render the impossible into the unassailable.

I'm very well acquainted, too, with data manufacturing;
I'll claim I stand on solid granite even as it's fracturing.
I document complexity, like when it's irreducible
And think my movie's in the league of Arthur Miller's *Crucible*.

I'm very good at lying, both the verbal and statistical –
Like Darwin in his later years, I'm openly theistical.
In short, you might describe me as a mental masturbationist;
I am the very model of a devious creationist

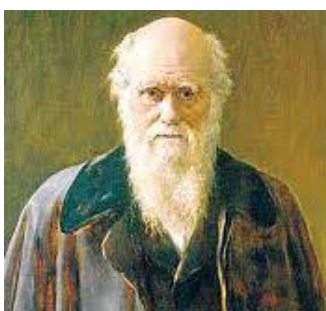
My evidence, in volumes that would baffle a librarian,
Is not so much orthogonal as utterly contrarian.
Presented with a problem like the claw of a *Deinonychus*,
I pause for just a moment, then it's "Dammit, bring it on!" I cuss



My scientific colleagues have been banned from universities;
Expecting them to publish was just one of their adversities.
They've parried the attacks of retroviruses endogenous,
Maintaining all the while that Darwinians are dodgin' us

My evidence is solid as a fossil of triceratops
Presented with the humor of a monologue of Carrot Top's.¹
In short, you might describe me as a mental masturbationist;
I am the very model of a devious creationist

In fact, when I know what is meant by "cinemas" and "enemas",
When I can tell by sight the harmless serpent from the venomous,
And claim I found the evidence in Chapter One of Genesis,
You'll see, compared to Darwinists, which one of us the menace is.



When I have crack'd a book on Evo-Devo² or Biology
Enough to understand instead of mutter simply "Golly gee!"
And understand my argument is simply false dichotomy,
You'll say that this creationist does not deserve lobotomy.

For the science that I know was not updated for millennia,
Not since the latest virgin birth or genesis parthenia.³
But still, you might describe me as a mental masturbationist;
I am the very model of a devious creationist.

¹ A red-headed American comedian whose real name is Scott Thompson.

² Evolutionary developmental biology

³ Presumably Latin for 'parthenogenesis', which normally refers to asexual reproduction but its literal derivation from Greek means 'virgin birth'.

This a parody of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General' from their 1879 operetta, *The Pirates of Penzance*, has many listings on the Internet. The writer is unknown but this version was found on the website of one Digital Cuttlefish (www.digitalcuttlefish.blogspot.com), who also doesn't identify him/herself. The photographs above are of William Schwenck Gilbert (right), Arthur Sullivan (left) and Charles Darwin, himself a Unitarian.

ONLY A PAWN IN THEIR GAME

A bullet from the back of a bush took
Medgar Evers' blood
A finger fired the trigger to his name
A handle hid out in the dark
A hand set the spark
Two eyes took the aim
Behind a man's brain
But he can't be blamed
He's only a pawn in their game

A South politician preaches to the
poor white man
"You got more than the blacks, don't
complain.
You're better than them, you been
born with white skin," they explain.
And the Negro's name
Is used it is plain
For the politician's gain
As he rises to fame
And the poor white remains
On the caboose of the train
But it ain't him to blame
He's only a pawn in their game

The deputy sheriffs, the soldiers, the
governors get paid
And the marshals and cops get the
same
But the poor white man's used in the
hands of them all like a tool
He's taught in his school
From the start by the rule
That the laws are with him
To protect his white skin

To keep up his hate
So he never thinks straight
'Bout the shape that he's in
But it ain't him to blame
He's only a pawn in their game

From the poverty shacks, he looks from
the cracks to the tracks
And the hoofbeats pound in his brain
And he's taught how to walk in a pack
Shoot in the back
With his fist in a clinch
To hang and to lynch
To hide 'neath the hood
To kill with no pain
Like a dog on a chain
He ain't got no name
But it ain't him to blame
He's only a pawn in their game.

Today, Medgar Evers was buried from the
bullet he caught
They lowered him down as a king
But when the shadowy sun sets on the one
That fired the gun
He'll see by his grave
On the stone that remains
Carved next to his name
His epitaph plain:
Only a pawn in their game

Bob Dylan (1963)



Medgar Wiley Evers was a World War II veteran from Decatur, Mississippi, who attended a black college (probably under the GI Bill) and became a civil rights activist in the early 1950s. In 1954, he applied to the Law School of the (segregated) University of Mississippi in a test case for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and was duly rejected. He became the NAACP's first field secretary for Mississippi, organizing boycotts and forming new local chapters.

By the early 1960s, Evers' many public activities had made him a prominent black leader and a target for white supremacists. Now living in Jackson, the state capital, his carport was firebombed in May 1963 and, on 07 June, he was nearly run down by a car outside the NAACP office. When he returned home on the night of 12 June, he was shot in the back and died at the local hospital, which had initially refused to admit him on the grounds of his colour.

Evers was buried with full military honours at Arlington National Cemetery on 19 June. A member of the White Citizens' Council (and, later, the Ku Klux Klan), Byron de la Beckwith, was charged with his murder but two trials before all-white juries failed to reach a verdict. Only in 1994, when new evidence emerged, was he convicted and sent to prison, where he died in 2001.

The above song was recorded on Bob Dylan's third album, *The Times They Are a-Changin'* (1964). However, he first performed it at a voter registration rally in Greenwood, Mississippi, and again at the March on Washington in 1963. Anyone who doesn't know the tune should search the title on YouTube (www.youtube.com). Other artists have recorded the song but purists will want to hear Dylan's voice.

CONSTRUCTING AN HONEST GOD

By Rev. Rob MacPherson

Last week we began this series of themed services, which offer a more useful and progressive way to think about God beyond the fractious, either/or, theist/atheist deadlock in our current religious discourse – a discourse which produces much heat but little light. We started by clearing the ground to construct an honest, if provisional, God of our personal understanding. First by recognizing that the idea of, and the longing for, God are not going away; second that there is much flux, nuance, and grey area in those two categories anyway; and third that what we may mean by the word ‘God’ is just a kind of shorthand for the All and our connection to it.

We further acknowledged the reality, variety, and power of personal religious experience, noting that such experiences are also elusive and fragmentary and changeable. We shared a few various readings, fragments of contemporary popular theology that were neither conventionally theist nor atheist. I could see many of them resonated with many of you. All those fragments pointed to a third and more inclusive way to think about Ultimate Meaning. I invited you to take of these what spoke to you and to shore those fragments against the ruins of old religion in our secular wasteland. Now, today, we’re going to talk about how we might construct a God of your understanding, one that you might openly endorse, raise to worth, and be honest and humble about.

Look, there are two basic ways to figure out truth from data provided by your experience, through Deduction or through Induction. Deduction means you work from the top down, from some accepted, higher authority and figure out how it applies to your experience. In conventional theology, deduction means you already have been given a pretty good idea of what God is to begin with and figure out how that manifests in your experience. It’s starting from a hypothesis and adjusting that hypothesis through your experience and perception. So shall we start with a judging, creator-man with a beard on a cloud? Bad place to start, it seems to me, but that’s often where conventional atheism begins and ends.

Instead, I’m advocating for us a theology that’s *inductive*. In theological terms, it means you work from the bottom up, from your perception and experience of life toward more generalized truths. These truths of course can change as your experience changes. This is the approach that has distinguished Unitarianism and made it a novel, original, even revolutionary, approach to theology. We say: “There is no authority high above, all that stuff we’ve been told is a description of somebody else’s experience. All we reliably know is only the individual experience we live. And this is the firm foundation we build upwards with.” This approach allows for diversity (since peoples’ experiences differ), authenticity (since it’s easy to hold fast to what you’re sure of), and flexibility (since we grow and change and evolve through life).

But how do I know the theology I build is the absolutely *right* one, the one that matches the way things really are ‘up there’? You don’t, but then no one does. Or ever has. Or ever can. To compare your idea of God to God *itself*, you’d need to be able to take a God’s eye view, to stand outside your own experience, which of course is not possible. All you’ll ever have is the idea. So don’t worry – Inductive theology is what we’ve all been doing anyway, since it’s all we *can* do, ever since we could think abstract thoughts. There is not nor has there ever been a neon sign pointing to *the right way*. Unitarians just admit this, and try to work with it.

So we needn’t worry about whether the God of our understanding matches the reality past our knowing, but only whether or not the God of our understanding is coherent, and well...*Godly*. Does it accord with our sense of highest worth or value? If we say, for example, that ‘God is love’ and are not ourselves committed to loving, or imagine that there are limits on God’s loving mercy that don’t include certain folk, our theology is neither coherent, nor is it worth raising to worth. It needs further reflection and adjustment.

If all this sounds like a purely intellectual exercise, relax. What is required is not a huge brain, just enough common sense and self-honesty to see contradiction, inconsistency or gaps. Of course, it’s good to know things, to read and consider and critique the best of what others have thought. You should read widely, and reflect deeply and honestly. But *building* a God of your understanding, requires more than just collecting data about it – it’s more crucial you do awake your imagination, the inmost, freest, most life-affirming part of you. *Binding up* your fragmentary and partial experience in the wasteland of faith is the heart of religion.

Re-ligiere means ‘to bind up again that which has been broken’, to make coherent connections, and so to *create* meaning. Creative imagination is vital in the inductive approach.

When the ancients looked at the scatter of stars in the night sky, they began to see not what was there, but what as *in them*, in their experience – bears and dippers, scales and serpents, heroes and gods. All pattern involves projection. If you were to observe the constellation Orion from another point, it would not look like what we see as Orion. In fact, this pattern is not ‘there’ at all, but is *in us*, in the way we are positioned relative to it. In the end, we see less of what it is, and more what and where *we are*. When you look at the infinite mystery of all that is outside us, what you see, what you feel, says more about *you* than about *it*. So it pays to look at what patterns *you* see emerging. If, for example, the universe seems to me to be bereft of meaning, utterly random and empty and cruel, I’d first want to ask myself: What is it in me that makes me want to see it that way? If all pattern involves projection, all theology *begins* as psychology.

The whole of human theology has been like one long human Rohrschach test. The trick is not to discard it as empty of meaning, to say “it’s just random ink”, but to see it better by *understanding ourselves better*. How many of you as kids, on a sunny bank on a summer’s day, idly watched the clouds going by and saw shapes? The God of our understanding we create is like this – a shape you see emerging through data. Now, do you see why we might need to be humble about insisting others see God the same way we do? All we’re ever going to come up with is a virtual model of god, not God himself – *a model that reveals much about us*. But that’s not necessarily a bad thing. To learn about ourselves is to learn about the All.

But, for those of you that only trust science, you’ll be glad to know that this inductive theology accords with contemporary physics. The Quantum has replaced Newton. I’ll spare you the details of string theory and computing the energy of the event horizons of black holes, but recent studies at the forefront of physics show that the physical universe is more like a hologram. Its energy fields are decoded by our brains into a 3D picture to give the illusion of a material world. Physics is showing that the building blocks of reality are behaving in ways which are inexplicable and can only make sense if we think of the universe, not as an empty container filled with objects, but as an energy field which gives the appearance of a physical world to organisms with brains like ours. (Plato’s allegory of the cave, anyone?) Thus our brain – the most evolved thing we know of in creation – is a way (maybe not even the best way, but *a way*) for *creation to look at itself*. Thus, our mind mirrors the universe that gives rise to it.

To build a God of our understanding is to engage in the creative, pattern-forming imagination unique to the human mind. And the way *you* do it is unique to *your* mind. And this is all we’ve ever been doing, anyway. It’s all we can do. The same forces and properties that create stars and galaxies are contained in this finite orb (head), just as we sitting here are also bound up in the infinite. The infinite is manifest and mirrored in the finite. We *are* thus deeply and firmly connected to the All – be assured of that.

Here’s a way of putting that:

“God doesn’t ‘look’ like anything. God is what makes possible all kinds of looking. Just as consciousness can’t be seen, but makes it possible for you to see. Consciousness can’t be thought of, but is responsible for thinking. The ultimate ground of existence is formless, it’s inconceivable, it has no name. But without that, there would be no names, no forms, no concepts.... All scriptures describe experiences of transcendence, a sudden awareness of this reality, which reveals ultimate values (truth, beauty, goodness, the unity of all things), and the loss of the fear of death. If you’re having this experience, you’re having a religious experience.” (Deepak Chopra, *God 2.0*)

This is what UUs mean when they’ve said God is not *a* being, God is being itself. So far so mind-blowing! But like you, I’m not so much interested in what it all means, I just want to know how to live in it. Theology is all very well, but it means nothing if it doesn’t help us discover how we conduct ourselves rightly. A way forward, I think, is in a much-maligned and much-misunderstood practice.

Let me ask: How many of you have pets? How many of you talk to your pets? How many of your pets have answered you back in clear, unambiguous, spoken language? If your pet answers back in clear language when you speak to it, you don’t need a church so much as a shrink. During our month of spiritual practice, it occurred to me that the praying I was doing was not much different from this – just a way of reaching out in words for a felt connection to what’s outside my own head. Is this magical, supernatural thinking?

Not really, it's natural...we all do it – shout at the TV, talk to your goldfish, ask the moon where those you loved who are now dead have gone. Children do this imaginative talking to things without being taught. So is prayer childish? Maybe, but perhaps this is what Jesus meant by not being able to get into the kingdom heaven until you become as a little child. Prayer invites us to re-enter that innocent, open, *imaginative* space that seeks connection to the all.

Talking to that which cannot answer back is fundamentally an act of imagination. To engage in creation imaginatively, to imagine the universe, the All, has a *personality* with whom we can connect and have a relationship with, is a pretty good reason to suspend your critical thinking once in a while. You have to feel a *connection* to things outside yourself to *care* about things outside yourself. To care about nature or the environment, say, and so prayer offers us a way to grow a sense of reverence for all other people and all of creation with which we are deeply connected. This is what the existentialists call acting 'as if'. Praying is putting things into words *as if* someone's listening, just to you, in a quiet time, speaking your needs, your concerns, your dreams, regularly, routinely. Uttering the words 'as if' can be incredibly healing.

Articulating a blessed spirit through singing words is an imaginative act, and constructs a 'blessed spirit' to whom you speak. Of course, this doesn't mean a *being* is out there, but the imaginative act gives us the opportunity of raising to worth our deepest longings and highest aspirations and thus bringing them into being, making them real.

We each see things slightly differently and so will have different projections of the notion of God, of course. Interestingly the Hindus – authors of the world's most ancient religious songs and utterances – can teach us something here. They have many deities representing one Reality, and they treat the images of these many deities in their temples *as if* they were real people, dressing them, giving them food offerings, garlands, and bathing them, as children do with their dolls. While this is certainly not rational behavior, it is the opposite of stupid – they use their imagination to cultivate human connection to the *unknowable reality* that lies beyond these images and subsumes us all. We need our imagination, the willing suspension of critical thinking, to connect to the all, and to cultivate a sense of that very real, deep inter-connectedness of all of creation. Another word for feeling deeply connected is *love*, which is the point of the entire mad project we call religion. To love, to be connected to, it all. And whyever not? Our consciousness is an expression of the All and the way in which it can understand itself. That's connectedness!

So, yes, I guess I'm saying that when I pray, God is my imaginary friend! But all friendships are imagined connections anyway. Since I try to cultivate a personal relationship, a felt connection, to the All, I have a stake in more than just my ego and a direction (though not a detailed map of doctrine!) by which to live my days. So since you are the finite which contains the infinite, you are, in a real way, God incarnate. Every human being – not just baby Jesus – is an incarnation. Thus, in this life, *Gods' work is truly our own*. There is no God but as *we* imagine it, no divine love but what *we* scatter like seed into the world, no kingly justice but the justice *we* make, no heavenly mercy except the mercy *we* shower down like the gentle rain. The Christian mystic, St. Theresa of Avila, put it better than I ever could when she said:

God has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
God has no body but yours.

What I've offered you over these past two weeks is neither conventional theism nor atheism, but a reflection of contemporary progressive theology. What it most definitely is NOT is anti-theism, a self-defeating tearing down instead of a building up, as if we needed more of that. God was never an app. You don't just buy it or not buy it, or buy it and press it and get things delivered. God is only god as he is *created* in every moment you become alive to the connections running through your fragmented experience, and in that connectedness, feel that real, over-arching connectedness that is greater than you, and also present in you. 'Re-liegere' – binding up, this is the religion behind all religion.

[This is the text of Rev. MacPherson's address to the Adelaide Unitarian Church on 30 November 2015. A podcast of Part 1 can be seen at: unitariansa.podbean.com but you need to scroll to the bottom of the first screen and click on 'Older Posts'. A native of the US, Rob trained for the ministry at Unitarian College Manchester and became Adelaide's minister in 2011. He also has a blogsite called 'Will Preach for Food' (www.robmacpherson1.blogspot.com), which is well worth a visit.]

REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

Adelaide UC's minister, Rev. Rob MacPherson, attended a UUA 'Excellence in Ministry' conference in California in February. He returned with many new ideas for the church to consider, including 'crowd-sourced' services involving members of the congregation which were given a trial run in May. Over 30 member households contributed to ShelterBox for the Vanuatu Cyclone Appeal, for which their target of \$3000 was met.

Phase 2 of the Vision 2015 plan will begin in July, when we will begin to advertise, invite and engage with the wider community over six months. Members of the congregation have been invited to send in their ideas. In preparation for this outreach, some of the changes they are making in Phase 1 are an extension of the children's Religious Education program, a revamp of the website, renovations of the front wall and carpark, and the installation of a data projector for use during services.

Auckland UC have done major repairs on their storm-damaged roof and now have a comprehensive risk-reduction program in place for the building. Their Religious Education class is going well, with 15–20 attendees meeting twice a month and currently learning about Islam. Attendance at services is also improving with the help of a new pianist and the 'Unitarian Singers' choir.

Brisbane UUF had a good address on International Women's Day (08 March) from a representative of Zonta on their organisation and social justice activities (see: www.zonta.org.au). Their Annual Retreat in the Gold Coast hinterland will be on 03–05 July, with some of the sessions led by Derek McCullough of the Christchurch UUs.

Recently, Google and some anonymous donors offered to match contributions to their Kiva microloans campaign, so BUUF reinvested \$350 and provided a net \$700 to assist women's groups with microloans in Timor-Leste, Philippines, Vietnam, Bolivia and Peru. The Butterfly Childcare Centre in Nepal that they support (and in a large part exists due to one of their members, Wendy Eastwell) was unscathed by the earthquake, for which they are grateful.

Melbourne UC hosted the second ANZAC Centenary forum in March, moderated by the Quakers and with the usual capacity crowd. In related Interfaith activity, they have recently had speakers from the Islamic Council of Victoria and the Islamic Museum of Australia. Ralph Catts, the Unitarian Pastor in Hull (UK) will be speaking in coming weeks on 'On being spiritual, not religious'.

Perth Unitarians' minister, Peter Ferguson, is presently in South Africa and will take over as their representative to ANZUUA from June onwards. This year they are concentrating on religious sermons rather than half social issues and half religious topics as they did in 2014. While the former attracted larger audiences on a one-off basis, only the latter produced a following of regular attendees.

Spirit of Life UF have been paying to boost their Facebook page and more people are subscribing to their on-line journal through their website. They continue to have interesting talks at their services which give rise to much discussion and their Kiva loans in Lebanon and Timor-Leste have been going well.

Sydney UC had a former Federal MP and Minister, Peter Baldwin, speak on 22 March and, in May, their secretary gave a two-part PowerPoint presentation on his recent trip to Burma. Music Services are being held every two months, which usually involve singers and/or instrumentalists. Their AGM was held on 17 May, at which it was decided to make a donation to the Nature Conservation Council of NSW. They have also sent another donation of \$500 to the Nagbinlod congregation of the UU Church of the Philippines to pay for a young female student's final year of primary teacher training.

JAN HUS AND THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE

By Mike McPhee



Six hundred years ago, in June/July 1415, some pivotal events in the Roman Catholic Church took place in Konstanz, now Germany but then an independent Imperial City in the Holy Roman Empire. While the actual Council of Constance lasted from November 1414 to April 1418, those months witnessed a papal abdication, a heresy trial and an execution at the stake.

The Church (and most of Europe) had been in a fractious condition for over a century, starting with the election of Raymond Bertrand de Got, Archbishop of Bordeaux, as Pope Clement V in 1305. Due to an earlier bitter dispute between Pope Boniface VIII and King Philip IV of France, Clement declined to come to Rome and, instead, moved the Curia (papal court) to Avignon. Located in the south of France, that town had been sold to the papacy in 1348 and seven popes, all Frenchmen, ruled from there until 1376.

The Avignon Papacy ended when Pope Gregory XI moved to Rome, only to die a year later. The College of Cardinals then elected Bartolomeo Prignano, Archbishop of Bari, as Pope Urban VI. Unfortunately, his autocratic manner soon alienated many cardinals and the French king, so the French cardinals left Rome and elected one of their number as Pope Clement VII. They returned to Avignon but Urban survived a decade of chaotic warfare in Italy and was succeeded in turn by Popes Boniface IX (1389), Innocent VII (1404) and Gregory XII (1406).

While the original Avignon popes came under increasing French influence, Clement VII and his successors were totally controlled from Paris. The resulting Western Schism divided the whole of Europe into opposing camps, largely along an east-west divide. Bearing in mind that the nations of Europe were quite different at that time, the supporters of Avignon were France and its vassal kingdoms in southern Italy and Cyprus, the Spanish states of Aragon and Castile, Scotland and Wales. Aligned with Rome were Denmark, England, Flanders, the Holy Roman Empire (Germany, Austria, Bohemia and Switzerland), Hungary, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Poland, Sweden and the city-states of northern Italy.

The situation festered for thirty years until the cardinals in Avignon and Rome revolted against their respective Popes Benedict XIII and Gregory XII. With the general support of the bishops and universities across Europe, they met at the Council of Pisa in 1409 and, after lengthy debate, repudiated both popes (neither of whom were present). They chose an Italian cardinal, Pietro Philarghi, as Pope Alexander V.

Ironically, this only made things worse! – Benedict and Gregory still had their local power bases and they insisted that the Council of Pisa was invalid because it wasn't convened by a pope. Amongst others, King Sigismund of Germany and Hungary (pictured at left) called for this three-way schism to be resolved once and for all. As the son of the previous Holy Roman Emperor, Charles IV, and expected to succeed him, Sigismund was able to persuade John XXIII (Alexander V's successor, pictured second) to summon a Council in 1413. Attended by 29 cardinals, 183 bishops and archbishops, 134 abbots and 100 'learned doctors of law and divinity', the Council's objectives were reunification of the Church, reformation of ecclesiastical governance and repression of heresy.

John XXIII presided over the first two sessions (there would be 45, in all) but he then tried to flee when he realized that the majority view was that all three claimants should resign. Sigismund took the chair for the next twelve sessions, during which John was deposed in March 1415 and condemned to indefinite imprisonment. Gregory XII (pictured third), whose proxies had been present almost the whole time, announced through them his abdication after retrospectively convoking the Council in his own name for the sake of appearances. This was accepted on 09 July and Gregory was appointed as Cardinal Bishop and Dean of the College of Cardinals. He died in 1417, a month before the next pope was elected.

While all of this was going on, certain sessions of the Council focused on reformation and heresy. The eighth session on 04 May condemned the writings and doctrines of the English anti-clericalist, John Wycliffe, and ordered his books to be burned. As Wycliffe had died in 1384, his body was to be removed from holy ground and disposed of, which was done (his remains were burned) in 1428.

However, Jan Hus of Bohemia (fourth picture) was alive and present in Constance, having been summoned to the Council under safe passage when it started. Like Wycliffe, Hus was a reformist churchman (though later Protestants claimed them as their own), but their proposals so threatened the wealth and secular power of the Church that Hus had been excommunicated in 1411. Supported by King Wenceslaus IV of Bohemia (Sigismund's brother), he continued to preach and write until the summons came in late 1414.

Despite orders to the contrary, Hus celebrated Mass and preached in Constance, so he was imprisoned while a case for prosecution was being prepared. His first trial was held on 05 June, whereat he denied defending Wycliffe's more controversial doctrines and said he would only recant his own alleged errors if they could be refuted from Scripture (rather than by papal authority). Similarly, at his second trial three days later, Hus refused to recant views he had never held or those which he did believe. On 06 July, before the assembled Council in the Cathedral, Hus was declared a heretic, defrocked (literally) and given over to the secular authorities to be burned at the stake.

The outstanding matter of Benedict XIII (fifth picture) remained to be resolved, even though he had become increasingly isolated since the Council of Pisa. Abandoned even by France, he had been living in Perpignan (then part of his native Aragon) since 1408. King Sigismund and some deputies of the Council conferred with him there in September/October 1415 but he stubbornly refused to abdicate. Benedict then fled to the rocky islet of Peñíscola near Valencia, just before the Spanish states resolved to join the Council.

For a variety of reasons, the Spanish deputies did not arrive in Constance until the twenty-seventh session on 15 October 1416. Then the lengthy canonical process of removing Benedict began and, eight months later, the thirty-seventh session declared him heretical and schismatic on 26 July 1417. Finally, it was possible to elect a new pope, though it took months of debate over the reforms that earlier sessions had proposed before a suitable mechanism was agreed to. Thus, in mid-November 1417, the 23 cardinals and 30 delegates from the Council met for three days, finally electing the Roman Cardinal, Oddone Colonna, on 11 November. Having only been a subdeacon before he was made a cardinal, he needed to be ordained as a deacon, a priest and a bishop before his coronation as Pope Martin V ten days later.

The new pope convened a third and final commission to recommend reforms to the church's governance, chiefly in the areas of revenue, property and church-state relations. These had been debated at length over the duration of the Council but vested interests had prevented any consensus from being reached. Finally, seven points of agreement were presented at the forty-third session on 21 March 1418 and Martin V closed the Council on 22 April.

The Council of Constance had some major consequences in both the short and long terms. Benedict XIII and John XXIII were declared antipopes, so their numbers were vacated and popes by those names reigned in 1724–30 and 1958–63, respectively. The previous John XXIII was released in 1418 and, after he paid homage to Martin V, became a Cardinal-Bishop, while his Spanish counterpart died in isolation four years later. King Sigismund finally became Holy Roman Emperor in 1433, after outliving all the other claimants, and died in 1437. Gregory XII was the last pope to abdicate until Benedict XVI did so in 2013.

However, the most serious outcome was the reaction in Bohemia to the execution of Jan Hus. The entire nobility of the country sent a strongly worded letter of condemnation to the Council, much to the consternation of King Wenceslaus and his brother, Sigismund. Disorder spread widely, driving priests from their parishes as the Hussites formed their own church – and, later, an army. After Wenceslaus died in 1419, the Hussite Wars began in earnest with a Royalist defeat in 1420.

Pope Martin V proclaimed five crusades against the Hussites between that year and 1431 (the first led by Sigismund, now also King of Bohemia.) None were successful and, in fact, by 1427 the Hussites had made an alliance with Poland and were attacking hostile neighbouring countries. After the abject failure of the fifth crusade, the Hussite leadership was invited to the Council of Basel in 1431 and, after five years of negotiations, a compromise was reached. Bohemia became a land of religious tolerance and, to this day, the centre of the Old Town in Prague is called Hus Square.

ANZUUA CONFERENCE 2015

The 2015 ANZUUA Conference on 17–19 October is rushing inexorably toward us. We would, therefore like to make the following points as the host church:

1. The theme of the Conference is *'The Church and Social Justice'*. We use 'the church' in an ecumenical sense, as all churches are involved in some areas of social justice.
2. In order to avoid a situation where resolutions do not have time to be debated by church and fellowship members, we are asking that all resolutions reach our church by the end of June and we will undertake to send them out to all churches and fellowships in ANZUUA.
3. We have set the registration fee at \$150 which will cover all meals, including the Saturday night dinner, entertainment, and other resources. We would appreciate knowing numbers as soon as possible for final catering purposes.
4. Details of reasonably priced accommodation close to the church – City Edge Apartment Hotels – can be found at: www.cityedge.com.au to book online or you can email: info@cityedge.com.au for advice. If you require further information regarding this or other matters, please don't hesitate to contact our Office Manager, Donna Sensi, Monday to Thursday, 9.30 a.m.–4.00 p.m. on (03) 9417 4178 or email: admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au.

As we consolidate the program for the 2015 Conference, we will keep in touch and we welcome any input you may like to contribute.

[Sent by Marion Harper, Honorary Secretary of the Melbourne Unitarian Church. Registration forms will soon be sent to the member groups and they are asked to indicate how many of their people plan to attend as soon as possible. Thus, anyone who is interested in attending should get a form from their group's leadership immediately and see the 'Conference 2015' page on the ANZUUA website for updates.

Needless to say, these conferences are wonderful occasions to meet fellow Unitarians from all over the region, hear stimulating speakers and take part in discussion groups, the Business Meeting (which includes the election of the next Executive) and the worship service on the Sunday.]

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Pleased as I am with the eventual outcome, I don't want to tell you how much research went into this particular issue. My thanks to the contributors of the major articles and I hope to receive more from them in the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, 'my cupboard is bare' and I appeal to all member groups and individuals to send me anything you have at your earliest convenience: michael.mcphee@optusnet.com.au.

Unfortunately, I didn't leave myself enough space to write the article I had promised on *Quests* of yesterday, partly because that will now be longer than I had expected. I have now learned from the State Library of New South Wales that they actually go back to 1950 (rather than 1960) – the 'first generation' of our journal was produced by the Unitarian Fellowship of Australia, a self-styled group in Melbourne that had contacts with, and contributions from, most of the Unitarian and kindred groups in the country.

The Australian Assembly of Unitarian and Liberal Christian Churches that I mentioned last time, founded in 1960, merged the Melbourne publication with a journal produced by the Sydney Unitarian Church called *The Unitarian*. Thus, the magazines I now have are actually issues of *The Unitarian Quest*, which was produced until ANZUUA took the place of the AAULCC in 1974.

It now appears that I am producing the fifth generation of this venerable journal and I have found that the first and third generation material in the State Library make fascinating reading – especially when I see the struggles (mainly monetary) that the early editors went through. You'll get the full story in the September issue but I ask the older churches to see if their archives contain old issues, especially those of 1961/64 or 1974/2009. The State Library doesn't have these, probably because they weren't printed in Sydney and so didn't need to be lodged there. We are dealing with some important history of our movement here and I think we should do what we can to recover it.

