



# Quest



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**Journal of the Australia New Zealand  
Unitarian Universalist Association**

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**Spring 2018**



## **THE UNITARIAN PRINCE**

At a time when Unitarians everywhere have joined with our confreres in Transylvania and Hungary to celebrate the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Edict of Torda, it is fitting that we revisit that pivotal event in the history of our denomination. It was on 12 January 1568 that Prince John II Sigismund of Transylvania (pictured at centre) issued that Edict, persuaded by the arguments of the Unitarian bishop, Francis Dávid, which affirmed the religious freedom of all of his Catholic and Protestant subjects. The history of Dávid's life and work has been related in previous articles, so the focus this time will be on Prince John, himself, and the critical geopolitical situation that was unfolding in Central Europe at that time.

The Kingdom of Hungary was much larger in 1500 than the country we know, taking in Slovakia, Croatia, parts of Serbia and, of course, Transylvania. However, the Ottoman Empire was by then the second most populous state in the world and, with its powerful armies, had been expanding in the Balkans for almost two centuries. Under the command of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, the Hungarian fortress at Belgrade was taken in 1521, followed by the disastrous Battle of Mohács in 1526, in which King Louis II was killed. The Ottomans then invaded central Hungary and sacked Buda, the capital, before withdrawing to the south.

The Hungarian crown was claimed by Archduke Ferdinand I of Austria, who was married to Louis II's sister, and by John Zápolya (pictured at left), the viceroy of Transylvania. The western magnates elected Ferdinand as king and he subsequently acquired his predecessors' titles in Croatia and Bohemia. Zápolya was crowned by the eastern and Transylvanian nobility with Suleiman's support, so he was able to make Buda his capital.

With the help of his brother, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, Ferdinand captured Buda and other centres on the Danube in 1527. Zápolya counter-attacked, but he lost two battles in the northeast of the country and had to retreat to Transylvania. Suleiman returned in 1529, recaptured Buda and besieged Vienna. The siege failed and a second incursion in 1532 was stopped before it reached the Austrian border. Despite those victories, Christian Europe was now acutely aware of the threat the Ottomans posed to their countries.

Reinstated in Buda, King John I Zápolya married Isabella Jagiellon (pictured second from left), the daughter of King Sigismund I of Poland, in 1539. He died the next year, two weeks after Isabella gave birth to a son on 07 July 1540, who was quickly declared King John II Sigismund. Again, Ferdinand attacked Buda and, again, Suleiman repelled his forces – this time, he annexed Central Hungary and allocated the remainder to John Sigismund under Ottoman suzerainty; that is, an annual tribute had to be paid to Suleiman.

However, Isabella was forced to abdicate on her son's behalf and they went to live in Poland, where her brother, Sigismund II Augustus, was now king. Young John Sigismund was tutored by two humanist scholars, Mihály Csáky, who had left Transylvania with him, and Wojciech Nowopolski of Poland, who aroused the youth's interest in theological debates. The Polish king was initially sympathetic to John Sigismund's claim to the Hungarian crown but, in 1553, he married Catherine of Austria, a daughter of Ferdinand I, after which he took a neutral stance.

In 1555, Suleiman demanded that the Transylvanian lords acknowledge John Sigismund as their king and they sent envoys to Poland to ask Isabella and her son to return. They were welcomed with great pomp and ceremony in Transylvania's principal city of Kolozsvár in 1556. The Diet confirmed Isabella's regency, as her son (now 16) was still a minor, and they ruled from Gyulafehérvár, as that town had been the political capital during most of this time.

Isabella adopted a tolerant policy toward religion, which enabled Calvinism to spread in her son's domain, particularly among the Saxon minority. Yet, she also started negotiations with Ferdinand to the effect that he could be the King of Hungary, provided that John Sigismund kept his domain as a principality and married one of his daughters. However, nothing came of this, as Isabella died in 1559 and John Sigismund ruled in his own capacity from that time onward.

While all of this had been going on, Ferenc Dávid, whom we call Francis David (pictured second from right), had returned to his birthplace of Kolozsvár in about 1542, after studying in the German states of the Holy Roman Empire. Though he was raised and educated as a Catholic, he found that Lutheranism had arrived in his absence and its relative simplicity appealed to him. He joined that movement, becoming a minister and then a bishop, while working as a high school headmaster. By 1557, he was the chief pastor of Kolozsvár.

Dávid's pursuit of the authentic Biblical Christianity was an ongoing process and, by 1559, he concluded that Jean Calvin's doctrines were more consistent with Scripture. He went over to the Reformed Church and was elected as the bishop of the combined non-Catholic Hungarian churches in Transylvania. John Sigismund initiated a series of debates between the various churches in his realm, starting with one between Lutheran and Calvinist clergy in 1560. He became a Lutheran in 1562 but the debates continued.

Events took a sudden turn in 1563, with the arrival of the controversial Italian doctor, Giorgio Blandrata, who had come to an anti-trinitarian position in 1557 (probably in Geneva in 1557, where he had dealings with Jean Calvin). He had been the court physician of the queen dowager of Poland (Isabella's Italian mother) and, while there, he had argued in the churches against the suppression of unorthodox opinions. When she died, he moved to Transylvania, where he became John Sigismund's court physician.

The king asked Blandrata to negotiate a reconciliation of the Lutherans and Calvinists, who had become increasingly fractious, even as Francis Dávid was trying to do the same. They presumably met at this time, but the churches formally split in 1564 and Dávid became the Calvinist bishop. Blandrata then recommended him to be the king's court preacher, after which John Sigismund gave Dávid access to the royal library for his research. Not long after that, the king became a Calvinist, even as Dávid was moving past that doctrine.

He continued to scrutinise the precepts of Christianity, keeping only those which originated from Scripture and were conceivable by reason. Unable to find any reference to the Holy Spirit or the Trinity in the Bible, Dávid rejected both as human inventions. With Blandrata, he co-authored polemic writings against Trinitarianism, the most important of which was *De falsa et vera unius Dei Patris, Filii et Spiritus Sancti cognitione* (False and True Knowledge of the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

With the king's permission, a series of debates were held across the country between 1566 and 1571, mainly between the Nontrinitarians (as the Unitarians called themselves at that time) and a united front of Lutherans and Calvinists. Dávid did well in the debates, winning a decision at the Synod of Torda in 1566 that the only definitive basis of the Christian faith was the Apostolic Creed. The next debate in that year was at Gyulafehérvár (presumably in the Royal Palace), where the question of the Trinity was openly raised for the first time. The Protestants had consistently argued that their faiths should be the official religion of the country, whereas Dávid maintained that all Christian faiths should have equal recognition and protection.

(Continued on p. 15.)



## ICUU NEWS

### International Leadership Conferences

#### EUU Fall Retreat

#### Parliament of the World's Religions



The ICUU Executive Director, Rev. Sara Ascher reports on the Pan African Leadership Retreat: “In late July 2018, leaders from nearly every African Unitarian/Universalist community gathered in Nairobi, Kenya for a 3-day retreat. This meeting was the culmination of a year-long process to connect our Unitarian/Universalist communities across Africa to one another; to share best practices, difficulties, successes, the wisdom of experience, and fellowship.

We gathered this summer in order to craft a collective African Unitarian/Universalist identity. The leaders from Burundi, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Africa spent several days discussing how their respective cultures influence their religious perspectives and beliefs. These deep and powerful conversations led to a complex and multifaceted understanding of how Unitarian/Universalist ideas interact with traditional African culture and a sense of urgency that there is great need for our liberal faith in Africa.

In order to help strengthen existing U/U communities in Africa as well as spread the word, the leaders decided to create an African Unitarian/Universalist Manifesto, in which they will express the diversity and power of the African U/U faith. Once the Manifesto is finalized and approved by the local African U/U communities, it will then be shared more widely and used to promote Unitarianism/Universalism in Africa.”

Also, a Latinx (no misspelling) U/U Encounter of Spanish-speaking leaders the Americas will be held in Cali, Colombia on 11–14 October, jointly organised by the ICUU and the UUA’s Latinx Ministry. According to their publicity: “Many of these leaders have been working together for years building Spanish language U/U presence across the larger Latinx community. The gathering comes at a critical time as these leaders and the groups they represent are striving to strengthen and widen the reach of our liberal faith within their respective countries. This is an opportunity for them to have the rare privilege of meeting in person to build community among themselves, to discuss how their cultures influence and inform their U/U identity, as well as strategize how best to serve the growing liberal Latinx community in a culturally appropriate way.”

The European UUs’ annual Fall Retreat will take place in Cologne, Germany, on 02–04 November. The venue is the Köln-Riehl Youth Hostel on the bank of the Rhine and the theme is ‘Building Trust, Building Peace’. The Keynote Speaker is Rev. Chris Hudson of the All Souls Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Belfast, who has worked for decades to resolve the sectarian conflicts in Northern Ireland. (The NSPC is largely Unitarian in its orientation and cooperates with the UK General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.)

As is usual for these family retreats, there will be music and entertainment sessions in the evenings, as well as religious education programs for children and young adults. Tours of the city and nature walks will also be available. (The larger European hostels are more like hotels, with private rooms, as well as the normal barracks.) Anyone interested in going should see: [www.europeanu.org/euu-gatherings/upcoming-retreats/euu-fall-2018-retreat-building-trust/](http://www.europeanu.org/euu-gatherings/upcoming-retreats/euu-fall-2018-retreat-building-trust/).

The seventh Parliament of the World’s Religions will be held at the convention centre in Toronto, Canada, on 01 – 07 November. Those who remember the fifth PoWR in Melbourne in 2009 will know that these are huge events – this one will be attended by some 10,000 people from 80 countries and 200 spiritual backgrounds. There will be some 500 presentations and workshops, as well as 33 keynote speakers! The PoWR works to end religious bigotry, racism, gender bias and other forms of intolerance, as well as to protect the environment.

Unitarians and Universalists have worked closely with the Parliament of the World’s Religions since its foundation in Chicago in 1893. Several U/U leaders have been involved in planning this year’s event, including Bruce Knotts, Director of the UU United Nations Office; Vyda Ng, Executive Director of the Canadian Unitarian Council; and Rev. Shawn Newton, Senior Minister at the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto. The Canadian Unitarian Council will also be hosting three of the workshops. For more information, please see: [www.parliamentofreligions.org/parliament/2018-toronto/2018-powr](http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/parliament/2018-toronto/2018-powr).

## OH GOD! – BELIEFS PEOPLE LIVE AND DIE FOR

By Goff Barrett-Lennard

[Text of an Address to the Perth Unitarians on 07 May 2017.]

I don't know why I can't pick a relatively easy and straightforward topic to talk or write about. I seem to need to start with something that I haven't got clearly figured out and then work on it until it gets clearer. An underlying issue here is "what *do we* believe or have ultimate faith in?" A still more difficult matter is "why do you or I have that belief or faith?" 'Whys' are almost always more difficult than 'whats' – which can be hard enough to pin down.

I promised to address in some way the idea of God and his/her influence. I say 'idea', because I'm a thinking creature. One of the things that distinguishes our species is that we think and reflect, as well as having the capacity to learn *or* be trained to do a lot of thing rather automatically, as many other species also do. As we go far down the evolutionary scale, most behaviours seem 'automatic'.

One might say that we sentient beings became thinkers on top of all the things we can learn to do unreflectively, and the vital processes in our bodies that go on outside consciousness altogether. The broad question I'm addressing is: *What is God's species nature? What kind of entity is God?* What part does s/he play in human life? Our views of God are experienced in and expressed through our human consciousness. Naturally, we are inclined to invest God or gods with human characteristics or extensions of them. (I doubt that we can help being anthropomorphic about God.)

We humans have moved, not entirely, but largely to systems of belief in one God. I am going to suggest a number of basic or core attributes of this God implied by a great many believers. Some of you know more about particular religious systems than I do. However, the life story emerging in the memoir I'm working on reflects (among many other things) a lot of evolution from childhood on in my religious or God-related thinking, and I do have a somewhat enquiring bent, so here goes (any of you, of course, might edit or add to my list). Here are seven usually implied attributes of God that I see in monotheistic religious philosophies.

### *1. God is envisioned as a supreme immortal being.*

'Being' implies that God lives. 'Immortal' acknowledges his/her permanence as a living being. 'Supreme' implies a standing above and beyond all other life, and indeed non-life. In some beliefs, God is able to assume human form, although basically a non-physical entity. (In orthodox Christianity, God is father, son and Holy Ghost all in one – a confusing notion, evidently born of compromise among early Christian sects who were required to come to some agreement. But even so, why father and not mother(?) – as in mother earth, and other early emphases on 'mother'.) Implicit in all beliefs, nothing stands above and governs God – which leads me to the second aspect:

### *2. God is the creator – of us and everything.*

This implies that our world and our distant ancestors, at least, were brought into being by God. In some beliefs (of which Genesis is an example) humans were created directly and fully formed. Since this is no longer tenable even to most Christian believers, one alternative is that God produced primitive organisms with the basic architecture of DNA and then left it to evolution? Or, perhaps, God as prime mover created simple elements such as hydrogen and the laws of physics, with foreknowledge that over time other elements and then elaborate molecules, some of them self-replicating, would develop. And then more and more complex life would emerge, eventuating (to date) in us. (I say 'to date' since continued evolution plausibly will lead to super-humans with qualities and powers beyond our present understanding.)

Astronomy is a fascinating field to me and has relevance here. We don't know how what is euphemistically called the 'Big Bang' occurred but we know more and more all the time how the universe has been evolving since then, and there undoubtedly is vastly more to know. The sheer enormity of the universe boggles the mind and it is no longer believable that there is no other advanced life among the myriad planets in each one of the billions of galaxies. A responsive God would seem to be impossibly stretched on Planet Earth alone. It is unimaginable that there could be one overseer of all individual life in the whole universe. Fallback positions might be that God is effectively a legion or is specifically God for our planet – or our solar system, since people will eventually live on one or more other planets.

3. *God is all knowing, with potential to be our ultimate guide.*

I will couple this with another characteristic, and speak of them together.

4. *God speaks to us in an inner voice, if we but listen.*

God is a know-everything being, a quality off-putting in fellow humans but quite accepted in God. Indeed, this is crucial to inspire our trust. But do inner voices, come only or mainly from God? I think that listening within ourselves (as well as to others) can be vital to a fullness of life, but who or what are we listening to? We know that the human brain and its manifestations in personality are incredibly complex. Most of us experience inner conflict or argument at times, and it seems we are many as well as one. And we store a vast amount in our memories. We also have dreams that usually link in some way to our waking reality while being free-moving and unrestricted to the ways things work in waking life. How can we distinguish the voice of God from voices that come out of own complex being and experience? The inner voice, wherever it comes from, can help us to make wiser, better choices. Of course, it can also be frightening (as in a nightmare dream, or a person plagued by guilt), or even push someone in a very destructive direction.

5. *Although God is beyond human, he or she tunes to us lesser mortals and knows us in our own experience.*

A person may pray alone or in company with others. Many people find help through prayer – prayer that appeals to their sense of God. It is not difficult, however, to find naturalistic explanations for that helpfulness; e.g., prayer can be means of pinpointing and/or affirming what deeply matters to the person who prays, and could be a process of self- and collective guidance. God's ability to come down to a human level and be in touch in our own language and our feeling and struggle, in an almost empathic way, seems implied in most Christian views, at least. In some beliefs, God can be very stern, judgemental and even punitive. In either case, s/he knows us, as from the inside. To some people, this can be unnerving if they see God as a constant watcher.

6. *God gave us a degree of free will. We may be inspired to do good, but in most beliefs we also retain the potential to do great harm or evil.*

The idea of free will has been a great subject of debate. I entered that debate long ago in youthful reflections and then later in the first article I published in an Australian journal. I expect some others of you have been through a journey on this issue. God stands for goodness, including (for many) the principle of loving others as ourselves, but also sits back and lets us be the opposite. A good many people, perhaps the majority of us in some circumstances, clearly are capable of doing cruel and terrible things to others. This so patently happens that we couldn't believe in a God that excluded and didn't permit it. Most of us in childhood hear secular voices exhorting us to be good or do things in one way rather than another. God needs to stand above such exhortation, while in some way illuminating a constructive path without locking out a destructive one. Again, God cannot nullify our nature if we are to believe in him/her or have the chance of doing so. Basically, we have the creative capacity to form our idea of God as well as following it – even if, at times, with some rebellion.

7. *God brings us into community and **potentially** to harmony with each other, especially through worship and affirmation together.*

I emphasise '*potentially*' since this may not apply with perceived enemies. I'm thinking of ideologies such as ISIS where an afterlife – but also lifelike – paradise is promised to those who die in defence of their belief. This was virtually the case, too, with Christian Crusaders. However my 'talk', as it turned out, has not pursued this issue as a direct focus. I believe that it is in our nature, God-given or otherwise, to hunger for community belonging, as well as to be our individual selves. One way of achieving this is through worship together and, through this, of being drawn both more deeply into and beyond our separate selves. We can thrive on a sense of reverence, whether coupled with religious belief or a reverence for the natural world, or for babies and small children or animals coming into being, for created beauty, for wonderful music that lifts us beyond the everyday, perhaps for extraordinary athletes not demolishing their opponents but further inspiring them.

I personally assume that human consciousness is a property that emerges from the incredible complexity of our brains and that this consciousness is greatly influenced by our relationships and learning. It is different in kind from its biological underpinning in the same way, in principle, that water differs in kind from oxygen and hydrogen gases. Throughout nature interlocking combinations of things (not just mixtures) lead to new and often hugely different properties. Just one other example is the enormous release of energy in nuclear fusion. Our understanding of the *natural* world and what it encompasses is vastly different from existing knowledge in Christ's time. In another 2000 years many present understandings could seem primitive. To end here with a sideways step, I think we still need language in which 'soul' or its equivalent remains for the emergent ultimate depth and essence of human being, quite aside from notions of personal life after death.

## BREAK THE SEAL

By Rev. Rob MacPherson

I recently had to account for our U/U identity to a TV journalist of some standing and long tenure in Adelaide. He was doing a story on why I was publicly calling out the Acting Archbishop of Adelaide on his refusal to apply new South Australia laws on mandatory reporting<sup>1</sup> of child sexual abuse to the sacrament of confession. This challenge had recently hit the airwaves in an interview with Hamish MacDonald on *RN Breakfast*<sup>2</sup> a few weeks ago, and Channel 7 came to follow up on it.

“So are you a Christian church or what?” he asked.

“Not even Christians think of us as a Christian church,” I said.

“So...how do you explain your identity to people?” he asked.

“I tell them to Google it,” I said. “It avoids the appearance (and temptation) of proselytizing.”

“But how can I frame it as a quick grab in a one-minute story?” he asked?

I went to my go-to line about this. “I ask people to imagine what church would look like if the Reformation never ended, but continued into the present day,” I said.

“Oh, I see,” he said.

He didn't. So that night, on Channel 7 news, the story was run, the first bit of extended TV news exposure that I can remember in my time here. And he identified us forever and to all of South Australia as...*a Christian church*. Quick as I could, I texted him to ask for an on-air correction the next night. Too late. Too hard. Moving on... “Facepalm!”, as I believe the young'uns say. This one minute of fame may have done us more harm than good.

We're so unknown we might as well not exist at all. But no wonder, really. Our corporate identity in the antipodes (to the extent any shared identity among ANZUUA churches and fellowships even exists) is conflicted and problematic for a number of reasons and in a variety of ways.

There was, however, one key point of difference between U/Uism and Catholicism that I think might have got across to an unchurched public. Namely: we don't have sacraments like confession because we don't generally go in for magical thinking, especially when it contravenes human rights and the rule of law.

And the sacrament of the sealed confessional is magical thinking. As the Bishop would tell you, Catholics have an understanding of the sacrament that is '*persona Christi*' – that is, Jesus is himself personally present in the sacrament and is the source of absolution, channelled, as it were, through the priest. Thus, the sacrament is a personal encounter between a penitent and God, and so is above human intervention no matter what heinous thing is confessed. Hence the seal.

“Have an understanding of...” means: “We believe this claim that is contrary to observation and reason”.

Imagine you are a priest in a pre-Reformation parish. After a little while, you hold in confidence everyone's darkest secrets, from the lowly serf to the sainted Lady in the high tower. All the things which could cost the penitents eternal damnation, the fires of purgatory, or (if revealed) social disgrace, divorce, imprisonment, exile or even death at the hands of an angry mob. Since priests are just people, this sort of power proved pretty tempting. Result: the priestly class, using confession to indulge in sexual coercion, financial gain, political influence – the sort of institutional abuses of power that began the Reformation.

We don't normally cock a snook at any other faith tradition, preferring a 'live and let live' approach that has helped enable our obscurity. But I wasn't thinking about U/U identity, or our profile (or lack of it), when I wrote to the Bishop. I was thinking of generations of Catholic kids in South Australia whose sexual abuse will be enabled and concealed by the sealed confessional. And the nerve of anyone, even a man as good and wise as my former boss, the Acting Archbishop, using 'religious freedom' to flout the law. That is the logic of the suicide bomber, and it needs to be challenged and confronted.

If not us, who? If not now, when?

<sup>1</sup> [www.news.com.au/national/south-australia/it-doesnt-affect-us-priests-to-defy-child-sex-abuse-confession-law/news-story/53e07c28a8248e21feb0adb84acbebdd](http://www.news.com.au/national/south-australia/it-doesnt-affect-us-priests-to-defy-child-sex-abuse-confession-law/news-story/53e07c28a8248e21feb0adb84acbebdd)

<sup>2</sup> [www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/change-position-on-child-abuse-confession/9905540](http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/change-position-on-child-abuse-confession/9905540)

(See also #breaktheseal on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/breaktheseal>.)

## REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

*Adelaide UC* has recently had a series of services in which Rev. Rob MacPherson took them on an inwards journey of discovery leading to greater understanding of themselves and others in their community. Also, two young members have filmed and edited one service per month, which is then shown on public television several times a week. They see this as a great way for a wider audience to experience the Unitarian way of thinking and reflecting on what it means to live meaningfully.

In July, there was a family camp at their historic Shady Grove Chapel in the Adelaide Hills. They also had a Branding Jam session on 01 July to discuss 'How do we describe who we are and what is our message?', the second of which will be held on 09 September. Their Vision 2020 Committee has also been working on this matter, as well as promoting an upcoming 'Catherine Helen Spence Oration' on 26 September, which will be a follow-on from the public event held during the ANZUUA Conference last year.

*Auckland UC* have had a quiet winter, growing and being present in a new Labour New Zealand which is more supportive of the Seven Principles. They have continued advocating for the Indian students they gave sanctuary to with some success and hopefully more to come. They have also joined many others in protesting hate speech against multiculturalism and diversity, and recently supported widespread demonstrations in support of teachers.

Their AGM was held with little controversy – generally, the congregation expressed support for the direction they are headed. Services have been varied, covering subjects like bullying, Trump, Unitarian salvation, choosing your life, creativity as a human right, and 'Does New Zealand still need Unitarianism?'.

*Brisbane UUF* heard about Theosophy in June and followed this with another exploration of love in a service by Kathryn Crissman titled 'Everyone has a super power - how to discover yours and practise using it'. This was an exploration of the transformational power of love as presented in Rob MacPherson's 'Love Begins with You' and also Bishop Curry's royal wedding sermon.

In July, they celebrated NAIDOC Week by viewing Miriam Rose Ungermer Baumann's film, *Dadirri* (Deep Listening), and a TEDx insight into the life of indigenous urban women by author and public speaker, Dr. Anita Heiss. Their Annual Retreat in the Gold Coast hinterland was as great success (see p. 13). They also plan to travel to Toowoomba in September to connect with two long-term members who moved there.

*Christchurch Unitarians* had a Midwinter Gathering on 24 June facilitated by Valerie Wycoff with the theme of 'Nurturing our Selves and our Community in Winter'. This service of reflection, meditation and music was followed by a sumptuous meal.

*First UU Melbourne Fellowship* heard services led in May and July led by Claire Butler on two mantras of Forrest Church, 'Want what you have' and 'Do what you can'. (Rev. Church was a legendary UUA minister who wrote twelve books.) Their service in August was led by Rev. Ernie Mills, Minister Emeritus of the UUs of Transylvania County in Brevard, North Carolina.

It is understood that their AGM was held in June or July, but no details are available.

*Melbourne UC* held a concert on 29 July to promote the circulation of their monthly journal, *The Beacon*.

On 06 August (Hiroshima Day), they co-sponsored a commemorative event at the Cardinal Knox Centre in conjunction with the Quakers, Pax Christi, Catholic Justice and Peace and other organisations. One of the speakers at that event, Dr. Tilman Ruff, spoke at their church on 12 August – he is a co-founder of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017. That same coalition of groups held a meeting at MUC on 15 August at which Dr. Joseph Gerson of the American Friends (i.e., Quakers) Service Committee spoke on 'How Nuclear Annihilation Stands in the Way of Peace'.

Before and after the service on 12 August, a special congregational planning meeting was held to examine the work of the church and their vision and goals in both the long and short term (see p. 12).

(Continued on p. 13.)

## THE AMPHIOXUS SONG



A fish-like thing appeared among the annelids one day.  
It hadn't any parapods nor setae to display.  
It hadn't any eyes nor jaws, nor ventral nervous cord,  
But it had a lot of gill slits and it had a notochord.

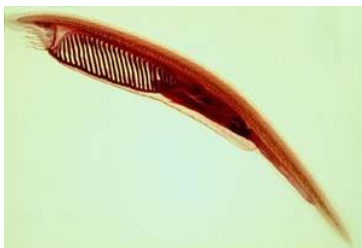
(Chorus:)

It's a long way from Amphioxus. It's a long way to us.  
It's a long way from Amphioxus to the meanest human cuss.  
Well, it's goodbye to fins and gill slits, and it's welcome lungs and hair!  
It's a long, long way from Amphioxus, but we all came from there.

It wasn't much to look at and it scarce knew how to swim,  
And *Nereis* was very sure it hadn't come from him.  
The mollusks wouldn't own it and the arthropods got sore,  
So the poor thing had to burrow in the sand along the shore.

He burrowed in the sand before a crab could nip his tail,  
And he said, "Gill slits and myotomes are all to no avail.  
I've grown some metapleural folds and sport an oral hood,  
But all these fine new characters don't do me any good."

It sulked awhile down in the sand without a bit of pep,  
Then he stiffened up his notochord and said, "I'll beat 'em yet!  
Let 'em laugh and show their ignorance. I don't mind their jeers.\*  
Just wait until they see me in a hundred million years.\*



My notochord shall turn into a chain of vertebrae  
And as fins my metapleural folds will agitate the sea.  
My tiny dorsal nervous cord will be a mighty brain  
And the vertebrates shall dominate the animal domain."

Philip H. Pope (1921)

\* The original words of these lines were:

I've got more possibilities within my slender frame  
Than all these proud invertebrates that treat me with such shame.

This item is presented from sheer desperation, as there was nothing more suitable to be found. Philip Pope had recently completed a PhD in herpetology (the study of reptiles) at the University of Pennsylvania when his fiancée, Louise Smith, heard marine biology students at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratories on Long Island, New York, singing a short song called 'It's a Long Way From Amphioxus'. It is set to the tune of 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary' and Louise suggested that Philip write some verses to go with it, which he did. They married in 1921 and went on to have lecturing careers at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington.

The song soon also became a favorite at the summer courses of the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and it was included in a collection by Frank R. Brooks, *Songs of Biology*, published by the Beta Beta Beta biological honour society in 1948. Still later, the song was popularized by marine biologist-cum-folk singer Sam Hinton, who recorded it on his 1961 record, *The Song of Men: All Sorts and Kinds*.

Just by way of a glossary, annelids are the phylum or ringed worms, which includes earthworms and leeches; parapods are the rings they use for traction and those have small stiff bristles called setae; notochords are the invertebrate equivalent of spinal cords. *Nereis* is a genus of mostly marine annelids and arthropods comprise crustaceans, insects, arachnids, centipedes and millipedes. Myotomes are groups of muscles controlled by a single nerve; metapleural folds enclose gill slits on either side; and the oral hood is a similar structure around the mouth that assists feeding. Some 32 species of amphioxi (also called lancets) exist to this day, living in shallow coastal waters between the Equator and the polar circles.



## PRAYER POEM TO THE NAMES OF GOD

How shall we address thee who art the One of a thousand names yet ever nameless?

O Vishnu, Maya, Kali, Ishtar, Athene, Isis...  
Great Mother of Creation, womb of the universe,  
The Feminine Divine...  
Blessed art thou who hast given life to all  
And receiveth us at the end, forever thine...

Jupiter, Zeus, Apollo, Dionysius...  
Lord of creation, the masculine divine,  
In quest of the golden apples of Hesperides,  
God of ecstasy and wine, and reason sublime...

Amen, Horus, Aten, Ra...  
God of beginnings and endings, the soul, the ka,  
Soaring like a bird  
To the life-giving, light-giving power of the sun,  
All life is one...

Shiva-Shakti, Yin and Yang...  
The dance of life and death from hand to hand,  
In perfect balance the movement of forces,  
As the earth turns 'neath the stars in their courses...

Rama, Krishna, Varuna, Brahma...  
God of the Upanishads and Rig Veda,  
mystic priests and the Bhagavadgita,  
Om Shanti, the lotus, a holy vow,  
Creating our own karma and reincarnation, here and now,  
And the ever present realization, that art Thou...

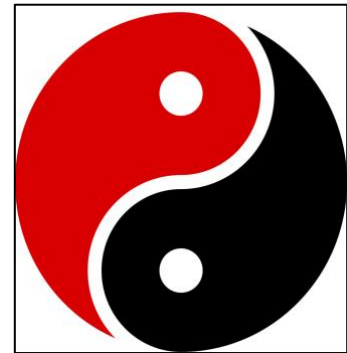
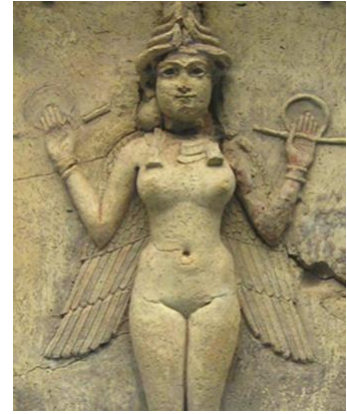
Buddha, Nirvana, the Enlightened One...  
Liberation sought and won, in daily life begun,  
Under a tree, in the sun,  
To a state of being indescribable, comparable to none...

Allah-Akbar and Ahura Mazda...  
There is no god but God, the All, Ah! the One,  
The Righteous One, purity of Fire.  
Goodness and Truth to inspire,  
Fight fire with fire, quench the evil desire,  
Let the call ring forth from minaret to spire...

El Shaddai, Adonai, Yahweh, Elohim...  
The God of Peace be with you, Shalom Haveyream  
Ten Commandments and the Law for Gentile and Jew  
The birth of conscience and a Day of Atonement  
To confess, to forgive, to begin anew...

Abba, Spiritus, Logos-Son...  
God in Three Persons, God in One,  
God in all persons: prophets, teachers, daughters and sons,  
The Kingdom of Heaven is within us, O let thy Kingdom come...  
How shall we address thee who art Alpha and Omega,  
The stars in their courses from Deneb and Altair to Sirius and Vega?

Thou of a thousand names and yet ever nameless,  
Let us confess the mystery of thy holiness,  
Let us proclaim the wonder of One without a name,  
Let the silence praise thee,  
And the nine billion stars of thy namelessness.



Rev. Richard M. Fewkes

[This poem by an American UU minister goes well with Goff Barrett-Lennard's article – more on p.16.]

# MEMORIES OF THE PRAGUE SPRING

By Peter Crawford

What were you doing on 20 August 1968? I know what I was doing, specifically being flown around in a Hercules aircraft out of Richmond Air Force Base. I was an air cadet in 22 Squadron at Sydney University and we were on our vacation camp. I had joined the CAF to avoid military conscription, which may have led to service in Vietnam. We had landed and returned to barracks late that afternoon when a fellow student and cadet looked me in the eye that cool afternoon and blandly stated, “See where the Russians have just invaded Czecho-slovakia.” At last it had happened, I thought, and so did most others who were politically aware.

As a young left-wing student I had followed the Prague Spring with great interest. Czechoslovakia and its leader, Alexander Dubček, seemed like the precursors of a new wave of civilising liberalism which would thaw the Procrustean Stalinism of Eastern Europe. It all seemed too good to be true and it was! The Soviet intervention we had feared had arrived in the form of a full-scale military invasion. We had hoped for something better but it was not to be.

For seven months since the ascension of Dubček in January 1968 (ironically a Slovak, not a Czech), a program of reform had been pursued: a more liberated press, freedom of speech, more diverse media, a more liberal and satirical film industry, and so it went on. The world was amazed how a Stalinist state living under Soviet suzerainty could so defiantly return to its liberal pre-war roots in the late 1960s. In fact, even in the wonderful pre-Hitler days of Presidents Tomáš Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, there had been democracy but nothing like the freedom of the press offered by Dubček's new vision of ‘socialism with a human face’.

You see, Czechoslovakia had been ruled by a virulent Communist Party leadership since 1948, under a succession of ruthless Stalinist apparatchiks. The Communists had, in fact, been democratically elected in 1946, the only Communist government to be installed in that manner. The Czech people (but less so, the Slovaks) were grateful to the Soviets for liberating them from Nazi oppression and disillusioned with the Western Allies after the Munich Agreement. They would pay a heavy price for their gratitude, as the Communists proceeded to squeeze out their Socialist and liberal coalition partners through their control of key ministries, finally declaring a ‘people’s democracy’ in 1948.

Poor Czechoslovakia! The country had for centuries been a downtrodden adjunct of surrounding empires. Even the ethnicity of the country, as well as its geographical limits, were compromised by its German neighbours. In the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, the Czech priest Jan Hus commenced the Reformation of the northern Catholic Church. As Martin Luther once quipped a century after Hus’ burning as a heretic in 1420, “We are all Hussites now.” The Hussites were, you could argue, the first Protestants of Germany and Bohemia.

Squabbles over religion and politics led to the Thirty Years War, which caused the deaths of perhaps two-thirds of the German population between 1618 and 1648. The Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia had been under Habsburg rule since 1526 but, after a revolt by the Bohemian Protestant nobility was crushed in the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, they became integral parts of the Austrian-dominated Holy Roman Empire. Slovakia had been part of Upper Hungary from the 1400s and it remained part of the Hungarian half of the great but shambolic Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918. This separation of peoples whose languages were very similar meant that the Czech lands became industrialised while Slovakia did not.

Like the Irish, the Czechs preserved their identity as a people but, unlike the Irish, they never lost their linguistic separateness. In 1850, Prague was only 5% Czech speaking and 95% German speaking, but by 1900 the proportions had been reversed. The Czech language never died out in the rest of Bohemia and Moravia and, for their part, the Slovaks had stubbornly refused to adopt Hungarian. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the many provinces of the Empire began to have nationalistic rumblings, and the Czechs and Slovaks were among them.

Even before the Austro-Hungarian Empire was dismantled after World War I, the Allies had recognised the Czechoslovak National Council, led by Masaryk and Beneš (Czechs) and Milan Štefánik (Slovak). The new republic was proclaimed in Prague on 28 October 1918 and Masaryk was made president after a temporary constitution was agreed to. The union was objected to by the German minority in Sudetenland and by the Hungarians who lived in Slovakia, and there were also border disputes with Poland and Hungary to resolve. Despite all this, a robust democracy of mostly moderate parties emerged.

The more serious complication, however, was that the Czechs and Slovaks had many economic, social and cultural differences. The Slovaks were mostly Catholics; the Czechs mostly Protestant. The Czechs were far more urban and sophisticated; the Slovaks less modern in their cultural tendencies. However the two peoples, maintained an acceptable unity in the inter-war years and the new republic achieved a number of progressive reforms in such areas as housing, social security and workers' rights.

In fact, the nation became one of Europe's most successful intellectual and industrial centres, ranking tenth in the world for industrial production. The Škoda works became one of the great military and automobile manufacturers of Europe. Its leaders, like Masaryk and Beneš, numbered among the most impressive statesmen in Europe in the 1930s. By 1933, it was the only democracy left in Central and Eastern Europe.

But there was a hitch, ruthlessly exploited by Adolph Hitler. The presence of nearly three million Sudeten Germans gave him the excuse, with the disgraceful connivance of Britain and France, to partition and then invade the country in 1938–39. Masaryk had died in 1937 and Beneš resigned immediately after the Munich Agreement was signed, later to lead a government-in-exile in London. Some Czechoslovak military units managed to escape and fought with the Allies during World War II.

The subsequent Nazi occupation largely the same as what other occupied countries experienced, with the exception that what remained of the country was dismembered. Slovakia seceded, though still under German control, and it was made to give up one-third of its territory to Hungary. After the war, the country's borders were restored and the German minority was expelled and there was also an exchange of Hungarian and Slovak populations that reduced the tensions along the border. Beneš became the president again but, after the 1946 elections, he was obliged to make the Communist Party leader, Klement Gottwald, his prime minister.

So, when Alexander Dubček displaced the much-reviled Antonin Novotný as First Secretary of the Communist Party at the beginning of 1968, the world was given great hope for the future. But the hopes were premature, as the old gang in the Kremlin became nervous. Although they were in no way the murderous thugs who filled Stalin's coterie, they were nevertheless an insular and bureaucratic lot, fearful of the West and still aiming to spread their failed system to the world.

At first, Brezhnev tried conciliation at a conference held in Bratislava in August 1968, which much of the Soviet leadership attended and also some satellite leaders like Władysław Gomułka of Poland. There seemed to be hope, but fear prevailed and patience grew thin. The Soviet leaders, Brezhnev and Kosygin, returned to the tactics they understood and that had served them well in the past. On 20 August, 250,000 Warsaw Pact troops from the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria entered the country (later increased to 500,000) and, with them, 2000 tanks.

Dubček very wisely pleaded for acceptance and thus avoided bloodshed on a mass scale, as happened in the Hungarian uprising of 1956. While several hundred Czech resisters were killed in the invasion, it was followed by a massive campaign of passive resistance. All over the country, citizens played games with the invading troops, painting over road signs so they wouldn't know where to go. It took the Warsaw Pact forces eight months to take full control of the country, not the four days that the Soviet planners had expected.

Dubček had been taken to Moscow in handcuffs but he was returned to his position until April 1969. He then became the chairman of the Federal Assembly, was made ambassador to Turkey for a year (in the hope that he would defect), and was finally consigned to the life of a private citizen. Eventually, a very intelligent but moderate Communist bureaucrat called Gustáv Husák took command. Dubček lived long enough to be reinstated as chairman of the national parliament after the Velvet Revolution of 1979 and died in 1992.

The consequences for the Soviet's image across the world was catastrophic. The invasion was denounced by Communist governments in China, Romania and Albania, though for different reasons. The Communist parties of Western Europe, including electorally strong ones in Italy and France, fiercely condemned that action. In Australia, Canada and the US, the Parties either split or suffered massive losses of members. Communism as a force in the democratic West began its long not-so-slow decline to oblivion.

In 1968, the invasion seemed to demonstrate the might of the Soviet Union but, in retrospect, it was the beginning of the end. For those who miss the USSR, if only as a counterfoil to the US, the crushing of Dubček's reforms could be seen as a missed opportunity that, if they had been adopted more widely at the time, might have prevented the collapse that happened after Gorbachev's too-little-too-late attempts to do the same.

## **(Reports From Member Groups, cont'd.)**

*Perth Unitarians* bade a fond farewell in June to Prof. David Mitchell and his family, of the Saint Cloud UU Fellowship in Minnesota, who returned to the US after spending a few months in Perth. Their speakers in June and July were Goff Barrett-Lennard on 'The Value of Personal Stories' and their minister, Rev. Peter Ferguson, on 'Locking the Gate of Heaven' On 19 August, the guest speaker was Rev. Douglas Kuhl, who is taking a break from his studies at the University of the Holy Land in Jerusalem to visit his family in Perth. He recounted stories of visions of Jesus and miracles of healing which occur around him wherever he travels.

Their AGM was held on 01 July and their annual retreat at the Benedictine Monastery in New Norcia is planned for 28–30 September.

*Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship* have enjoyed talks from such regular speakers as Martin Horlacher, Rev. Geoff Usher, Rev. Rex Hunt, Helen and Colin Whatmough, and Jan Tendys. Martin has a particular interest in the significance of the ancient Greek culture; Colin and Helen give them insights into the basis of our political system; while Geoff and Rex present on a variety of topics with ethical and spiritual interest. Jan gave an update on an earlier talk on progress, or lack of it, in the fight against climate change.

The guest speakers in that period were Dr. Max Lawson and Morandir Armson. Max draws upon his literary knowledge to examine the spiritual lives of famous literary figures, while Morandir tells them about various cultures and religious groups.

They are also concentrating on their online presence through their website ([www.sydneyunitarians.org/](http://www.sydneyunitarians.org/)) and FaceBook page, which you are invited to follow. Their Kiva microloans in developing countries continue to tick over – in all their years of participating in this program, only one borrower has been unable to repay.

*Sydney UC* had a very diverse program in this quarter, starting in June with talks on the philosophies of writers Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Albert Camus. In July, author Walter Mason spoke on Mesmerism, explaining that hypnosis was quite incidental to Dr. Mesmer's medical theories. A Music Service in August featured Art Songs from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. There were PowerPoint presentations (mostly first-hand) on Southern Europe, China and Austria/Hungary.

Their AGM was held in July, where it was reported that the most recent donation to their partner church in the Philippines was put to particularly good use. The congregation installed electricity and glass windows in their building, which will improve their comfort during the day and enable them to use their little church at night.

## **SPECIAL REPORT FROM MELBOURNE**

A very successful all-day forum was held on 12 August to discuss: 'The Way Forward for the Melbourne Unitarian Church'. The forum examined every aspect of church life based on two overarching themes; namely, our internal workings (growing church membership, services ,etc.) and our external interaction (working with religious and secular organisations on issues of common interest, etc.). In a word, our church has a lot to offer but we can do better.

The forum broke up into four working groups covering:

1. Youth and Recruitment (church growth, the 'Beacon' journal, Radio 3CR, etc.)
2. Services (audio/visual use, music, content, etc.)
3. Sub-Committees and activities (films, discussion groups, excursions, concerts, etc.)
4. Promotion of the Church (networking, working with peace groups, other churches, unions, etc.)

Although discussions in each group inevitably overlapped, the important feature was open discussion on all aspects of church life. A multitude of proposals and action points resulted, and these will be monitored by a congregational 'Implementation Sub-Committee'.

We all felt very pleased after the forum, not just about the quality and quantity of contributions but also the broad demographic involvement (a good spread of the young and not so young members).

[Information provided by Peter Abrehart.]

## SPECIAL REPORT FROM BRISBANE UUF

Our Annual Retreat on 19–21 July at the Theosophical Retreat Centre, Springbrook Mountain was a relaxing break from daily routine, conducive to productive discussion, personal connection and a general sense of wellbeing.

We welcomed the input of visitors Paula Morelli, a founding BUUF member who now lives in Canberra and David Bede, previously of the Singapore UUs and now living in Melbourne. We also welcomed Jenny May, a seeker from Toowoomba, and Patty Sierra and her daughter, Wendy, from the Gold Coast. Patty has attended UU groups in US and Auckland.

We began with a discussion of social justice. Wendy Eastwell described a project she helped initiate in Nepal, where women are now sewing bags for sale in Australia suitable for groceries. James Hills reported on the Kiva philosophy and our active fund. We also revisited information on Micah Projects and some indicated interest in helping at their café for the homeless.

Saturday morning focussed first on personal hopes from the Fellowship. These included:

- Expressing and living our values (from the principles); making them conscious
- Being supported by the group to do this; drawing courage and support from the group for our own path; the group can be a mirror as we search for truth; it's also a way of reclaiming community.
- Children's program
- Connecting with wisdom from all ages
- Making space and time for the bigger questions (interdependent web)
- Person-to-person connection is so valuable
- To be uplifted and inspired by services (add live music?)
- Ways of coping with despair caused by man's desecration of Earth
- Balancing openness/acceptance in a small community
- Practical social justice action
- Engaging the big issues
- Exemplary governance of group
- Post-Christian sense of going beyond, not being limited

We then asked how can we can help shape BUUF to answer these needs/desires and came up with these ideas:

- Quarterly newsletter to our full email list
- FaceBook pages help with outreach and in-group connection
- More intentional pastoral care
- Covenant groups to be investigated:
  - Children and Religious Education
  - 'Building Your Own Spirituality'
  - Race, gender conversation
- Focus on the Seven Principles in services and practices
- Quality services including possible live music
- Possible outreach to Toowoomba and Gold Coast

There was ample time in our program for walking in the forest to the top of a nearby waterfall and driving to other scenic sights and walks. We concluded with a service on Sunday morning.

[Information provided by Renee Hills. The Retreat Centre is adjacent to the Springwood National Park, about two hours' drive from Brisbane, and has its own natural setting. It is well inland of Coolangatta and has an altitude of 1000 m. Owned by the Theosophical Society, whose Brisbane headquarters the BUUF use for their meeting, the catering is vegetarian and smoking and alcohol are not permitted.

The Centre's four accommodation blocks of six rooms each can house up to 29 people and are equipped with showers, doonas and electric blankets. There is also a dining hall and a large meeting hall with a sound system. Please see: [www.theosophyqld.org.au/sbrook.htm](http://www.theosophyqld.org.au/sbrook.htm) for pictures and more information.]

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### What is ANZUUA for?

Members of the ANZUUA Council have been considering and having refreshing discussions about ANZUUA's purpose. Maybe you, dear reader, would like to chime in?

On the face of it, ANZUUA has already identified itself constitutionally as essentially a networking organisation, whose prime purpose has been to facilitate communication and coordination among its member churches and fellowships. This has been achieved, to whatever extent it has been achieved, through the Biennial Conference, the *Quest* journal and the website. There is more we can do in this regard, of course, and we are currently discussing online solutions to providing networking material that relates to the U/U experience in this region, as opposed to material from the USA or the UK. Watch this space...

Another stated purpose has been to found new groups. In the 20 years I've been associated with U/Uism in the region, ANZUUA has started 'from scratch' only one new group that I am aware of – the Perth Unitarians. Of course, new groups have emerged in Sydney and Melbourne, but organically rather than through ANZUUA 'seeding' them. So, really, achieving this purpose would seem to be largely eluding our organisation.

Finally, a third purpose has been to help grow existing groups. This would be, I suppose, an especially urgent aim as it relates to small and emerging groups. In this goal, ANZUUA has probably not been especially useful. Can anyone out there think of a way in which membership of ANZUUA has played a role in growing an existing group? If so, what did ANZUUA contribute to that ongoing project? If we are not meeting this expectation, how might we do so?

But growth in general has been eluding us. Our total numbers of members seem to have been hovering around 400 or so for about 10 years. Relative to regional population growth, this means we're shrinking. We have lost fellowships in Canberra and Nelson. Other groups, as some of you may know all too well, are hanging on by the skin of their teeth (or, more likely, by the unpaid labour of a few dedicated individuals).

So, of those three general aims, we are meeting one in three of our own expectations.

Assuming we recover the Bottomley funds, we only have a bit less than \$50k in the kitty. If we do not, we will have about one-third less than that. How might these funds be best deployed to meet these stated purposes? Again: any thoughts out there?

One thing we might add to these purposes which might help them along, would be to clarify and promote the public identity of regional U/Uism. Engaging in strategic partnerships with other like-minded religious organisations, getting a seat at the table of national and regional religious forums, making bolder public statements about our shared values and traditions – these might be ways of achieving this with the funds we have.

We all want to see U/Uism thrive in the region and it is up to all of us to help make this happen. So, over to you, dear readers. Send me your thoughts and I will pass them around the Council, which will consider them in due course. Contact me at [robmacpherson1@hotmail.com](mailto:robmacpherson1@hotmail.com) or on 0419 550543. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in faith and service,

Rev. Rob MacPherson, President

## THOUGHT FOR TODAY

“Ignorance and prejudice are the handmaidens of propaganda. Our mission, therefore, is to confront ignorance with knowledge, bigotry with tolerance, and isolation with the outstretched hand of generosity. Racism can, will, and must be defeated.” Kofi Annan, 21 March 1999

[Kofi Annan was Secretary-General of the United Nations during 1997–2006 and died on 18 August.]

## (The Unitarian Prince, *cont'd.*)

In January 1568, King John Sigismund brought his entire Diet and court to Torda, ironically using the local Catholic church as the meeting place. After a week of proceedings, in which Dávid argued fervently for toleration and freedom of conscience, the Diet approved a motion to that effect, which the king made official as the Edict of Torda on 13 January. While the focus of the Edict was more on congregations than on individuals, and its provisions did not extend to Orthodox Christians, Jews or Muslims, it is still seen as the first proclamation of its kind in the history of the world. Even more significant was its recognition of such a radical denomination as Nontrinitarianism, which would have been anathema anywhere else in Europe at that time.

The Unitarians (while still not using that name) acquired a school in Kolozsvár which, with the support of the king and the city, Dávid developed into a college of high standing. His printing house published books of his sermons, a Unitarian hymnbook, and pamphlets from the works of both local and foreign Unitarian writers. The new religion spread quickly across the country and even into Hungary, winning over aristocrats, Protestant ministers and even Gáspár Heltai, Dávid's main opponent in the earlier debates. (The king, himself, had become a Nontrinitarian in 1569.)

Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand I, died in 1564 and was succeeded by his son, Maximilian II. In 1570, John II Sigismund came to an accommodation with Maximilian, whereunder the latter became King of Hungary while John Sigismund would be the Prince of Transylvania. Suleiman agreed to this arrangement, but only after a joint Ottoman-Transylvanian army annexed some western lands that had historic ties with John Sigismund's realm. Unfortunately, he died in 1571 from injuries sustained when his carriage overturned – and without an heir.

The Diet elected István Báthory (pictured at right) as the *Voivode* (governor) of Transylvania, though he later called himself its prince. Báthory was a Catholic and he promptly dismissed Dávid and Blandrata from his court; the Unitarian printing house was confiscated and all religious publications were subjected to censorship. In 1572, Báthory proclaimed the Law of Innovation, which forbade any further religious reforms. He became the king of Poland in 1576 and was succeeded in Transylvania by his brother, Kristóf Báthory, who proceeded with the Catholic Counter-Reformation. The Unitarian Church remained a recognised denomination, however, with Dávid as its bishop, but it was only allowed to hold synods in Kolozsvár and Torda.

When Dávid first concluded that the Holy Spirit did not exist, he left the question open as to how literally 'God, the Son' should be taken. However, by the mid-1570s, he came to reject infant baptism and praying to God through the mediation of a non-divine Jesus. This left a truly unitary conception of God, which horrified Blandrata to the point that the two men parted company. Not only was the latter insistent about the divinity of Christ, he also feared that the denomination would be disestablished under the Law of Innovation.

However, the synod held at Torda in 1578 confirmed the principle of free inquiry and declared that the Law of Innovation was not being violated by the questioning of matters which the church had not yet decided. In spite of this, Blandrata denounced Dávid to Prince Kristóf, who was happy for the excuse to ban Dávid from preaching, place him under house arrest and bring his case before the Diet. He was tried for 'blasphemous innovation' at Gyulafehérvár in 1579 and sentenced to life imprisonment in the Fortress of Déva, in the far south of the country. Already ill from months of house arrest, Francis Dávid died five months later.

We can deplore the fact that the Unitarian 'golden age' in Transylvania was so short-lived and ask ourselves what might have happened if Prince John Sigismund and Francis Dávid had lived longer than they did. In my opinion, the forces of reaction were so powerful at that time that the end result would have been essentially the same. In any case, the Edict of Torda still stands as a landmark of religious freedom that all Unitarians should be proud of and it is no disgrace to be the descendants of a movement that was born ahead of its time.

[Sorry for a longer-than-usual feature article but, hopefully, readers will agree that this is an important story that all Unitarians should know. A more detailed explanation of these events, complete with illustrations and maps can be accessed at: [www.sydneyunitarianchurch.org/Torda.pdf](http://www.sydneyunitarianchurch.org/Torda.pdf). The Unitarian Church survived in Transylvania to the present day, but it disappeared in Hungary for 200 years.

Avid students of history may also like: [www.sydneyunitarianchurch.org/UnitarianismEarlyEurope.pdf](http://www.sydneyunitarianchurch.org/UnitarianismEarlyEurope.pdf), which tells the story of early Unitarians from Miguel Servetus through Dávid and Blandrata to Paulus Socinus. It also relates how the Polish Brethren were expelled from Poland in 1658 and their members dispersed across Europe, with some of them settling in Amsterdam and importing Unitarian publications into England.]

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Some of the articles in this issue fit the pages so tightly as to leave no space for me to identify the writers. Firstly, Goff Barrett-Lennard (pp. 4/5) is a founding member of the Perth Unitarians, as well as a retired psychotherapist and counsellor. Secondly, Peter Crawford (pp. 10/11) is the Vice-President of the Sydney Unitarian Church and also its most regular speaker. He is a retired English teacher who also served a term in the State Parliament of New South Wales.

However, I have not been able to find out a great deal about Rev. Richard M. Fewkes (p. 9), except that he became a minister at the First Unitarian Society of Middleboro in Massachusetts in 1964. He then served at the First Unitarian Parish in Norwell, also in that state, from 1969 to 2000, becoming its Minister Emeritus. He was still making guest appearances as recently as January 2018 and it appears that he has written other poetic and liturgical works.

## SPECIAL REPORT FROM ADELAIDE

In addition to Rev. Rob MacPherson's addresses in church, giving us shared thought direction, he writes 'Ministers Message' articles in our monthly newsletter, which we think all Unitarians should consider:

**July** - In the 'Candles of Joy and Concern' segment of our Services, we share both positive and negative issues in our lives, but important questions to consider are:

- Will this bind up the community or divide it?
- Will this lift or deflate?
- Is this something I should talk about with the minister or a trusted member first?
- What am I trying to achieve with this? It may be about me but is it just for me?

**August** - Why meditation and not prayer?

We have all enjoyed our weekly meditation, led by a member who is well-versed in Buddhist practice. This does not mean that prayers are gone forever but, for this time, many have embraced our quiet meditation which sets up our inner thoughts for the address and 'church experience' which follows. We also have an ongoing series on 'Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy'.

**September** - What sort of music is appropriate for our worship?

We are fortunate in having amongst our congregation a wide variety of musical talent, including remarkable pianists, playing from a broad range of genres, a range of stringed instrumentalists and many skilled vocalists. We are very lucky to be able to enjoy a wide variety of live music to enhance our services, but is any form of music more 'religious' than another? The recent retirement of our organist of many years prompted has given us food for thought!

[Information provided by Pauline Rooney.]

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This has turned out to be an unusual edition, though I was concerned when I started work on it that the only actual articles were so short. Instead, so many items were received from our President and various groups that I barely had space for all of them. It seems that there has been a lot of introspection lately at both ANZUUA and local levels. While this is sure to be a good thing, I can't expect that to continue, so I will collect some longer articles for the next issue.

Just on a personal note, the UUA's International Office has named Rev. Fred Muir as its Interim Director until a replacement for Rev. Eric Cherry can be appointed. Rev. Muir retired at the end of last year after 34 years as minister of the UU Church of Annapolis, Maryland, and has been the ICUU's ambassador to the UU Church of the Philippines for fifteen years since he did a lengthy study tour there and wrote a history of the UUCP. I met him at the ICUU Council Meeting and Conference in that country in 2012.

As always, I thank the writers who provided so many articles. Please send any material you have for the next issue to me at: [michael.mcpheee@optusnet.com.au](mailto:michael.mcpheee@optusnet.com.au).