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"This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come."

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## **Newsletter 28 (08/14)**

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### **Friends And Leaders Around the World, Greetings For The Last Time**

The time has come for us to say our good byes while we can. The world is in meltdown and no one can tell how long it has until it slides into the abyss altogether. What we can tell you though is that there is no turning back – the time of God's reckoning is at hand.

This is the last *Newsletter* we are sending out to you and the world. It has served its purpose and is no longer needed to remind people that a new edition of *The Christian Herald* has been placed online. More than 20 000 people, from 171 nations, are now frequenting our web site without any notice, and that is more than we could reach through our *Newsletters*.

We express our gratitude to you all for making this work a resounding success. We do not know how many had a direct hand in it, but that does not matter because it is with you that we began this work and from you that it spread out to the whole world.

When we began this work two and a half decades ago, some people thought we were mad, self-aggrandizing, wasting our time and money, and deluding ourselves to think that world leaders would pay much attention to a few stapled copies that we called *The Christian Herald*. We counted on people not to judge a book by its cover, and we have been proven right.

While we could not compete with the glossy publications of our competitors, we had something that no one else had: the truth of God and the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. Heaven emboldened us to take that Gospel to the world and we gladly obliged. We are exceedingly happy to announce that the Gospel of the Kingdom of God has been preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, just as Jesus Christ said that it would happen at this particular time in world history.

What does this mean for the world? Let us look at Jesus' words in their context.

Mat 24:11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

Mat 24:12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

Mat 24:13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be

Mat 24:14 preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then **the end will come**.

Many Churches and preachers claim that they had preached the Gospel of the Kingdom in all the world long ago, but the fact that the end has not come exposes them as false. They had preached gospels to the world indeed, but not the true Gospel, otherwise there would have been no need for a work like this, which preaches a Gospel that has not been seen and heard in the world since the early Churches of God.

When we began this work, we could never have imagined that it would be one of merely witnessing the Gospel, and not one of converting people as well. Jesus Christ knew the nature of this world better than we did, and that is manifested by the fact that two and half decades later we are still witnessing that Gospel and not converting anyone. Our competitors gloat about this; they should be crying. They love false gospels, and do not want to hear that there is such a thing as a genuine Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The time is at hand for every nation to face the Judgment of God Almighty. They will be judged by the standards that we have espoused in the pages of *The Christian Herald*. This is why it is so important that people, especially the leaders, familiarize themselves with the contents of *The Christian Herald*. We urge you all to download our magazines while they are still freely available on our web site. Your people will need them, and you will be held responsible for denying them this opportunity. The restored Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be found anywhere else, and we are experiencing increasing difficulties keeping this work alive.

As a last service to our readers we offer them a window into how their nations performed in our monthly statistics. Here are our top 25 best performing nations for the month of June 2014.

Bear in mind that this is not a social media outlet.

<u>Countries</u>	<u>Hits</u>
1. United States	22,133
2. France	2792
3. China	1559
4. Canada	1340
5. Russia	891
6. Ukraine	846
7. Saudi Arabia	495
8. Romania	494
9. Germany	492
10. Poland	452
11. Finland	345
12. Great Britain	286
13. South Africa	281
14. European Country [ <i>The Vatican</i> ]	270
15. Czech Republic	254
16. Australia	229
17. Brazil	207
18. Thailand	179
19. Sweden	152
20. Indonesia	142
21. Israel	136
22. Estonia	132
23. Colombia	127
24. Mauritius	120
25. Philippines	106

On the whole, with only minor variations, this table has remained constant for more than a year now.

France, the intellectual power house of Europe, is honorably sitting in second place, behind only America which has led the way from the beginning. Britain, which ought to be up there with France, and ahead of it given its language, lags behind many smaller non-English speaking nations. They should never forget that their country is an island and there is a heavy price for those who turn away from God.

Rev 16:17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

Rev 16:18 And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.

Rev 16:19 Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

Rev 16:20 Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

Saudi Arabia, the bastion of Islamism, has more faith in God and in our Gospel than the British. The so-called PIGS nations stand as follows: Spain 28 hits, Italy 11, Portugal 4, and Greece 3.

Finland has 345 hits, while Norway has just one. They should grant themselves a Nobel Prize for being the laggards of Europe. Estonia has 132 hits, while Latvia 26 and Lithuania 6.

We criticised Romania in the past for lagging behind its neighbors. Well, things have changed. In June, Romania had 494 hits, Hungary 36, Bulgaria 35, and Serbia 44. Pity, that the country still has a government unworthy of its people. They should pray that God does not apply the biblical principle of people paying for the sins of their leaders, for if He does none of them will survive the Great Tribulation.

Now, as a last reminder, *The Christian Herald No 29* is online at our usual web site: [www.thechristianherald.info](http://www.thechristianherald.info). Shortly afterwards, *The Christian Herald No 30* will be online too. Beyond that, only God Almighty knows how many more editions we will be able to publish. We still have much to say, but time is not on our side.

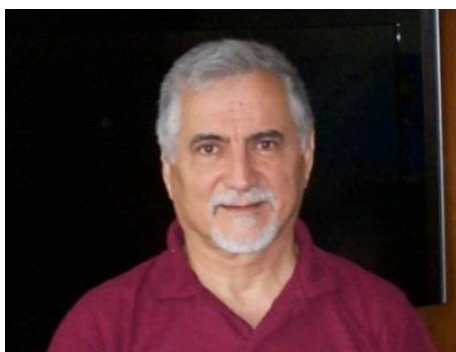
We conclude with the following fitting biblical injunction:

Mat 11:17 "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance."  
Now you will dance even though no one plays the flute.

In the service of Jesus Christ,

Grigore Sbarcea  
Coordinator A.O.C.F.

Good bye friends!



## **“Be Happy – Don’t Worry About The World”**

We put this title in inverted commas because it is not ours; it is a paraphrase of a popular song with the social media generation. The title reflects the attitude of today’s commentariat too: no matter how bad things may be, they always get better in the end and there is always a tomorrow.

Well, there may not be a tomorrow, because we are living in extraordinary times.

Imagine what would happen if a journalist started disseminating the view that this world is on its last legs. He would be hounded out of office and persecuted for spreading panic among the population, and the media that published his views would most likely be heavily fined if not completely shut down.

The question is why are they not doing this to us? We have been preaching for more than two decades that the world is heading towards a catastrophic end, yet we are still moving around unencumbered. The answer is simple: no one believes us. A lot of people are curious about our work; they come to us from all over the world, download our materials in large volumes, but beyond that no one wants to get involved.

It is just as well that we have been allowed to do our work in peace, because the times in which we live demand that the long lost Gospel of Jesus Christ needed to be restored and preached to the world “as a witness to all the nations”, after which, as Jesus Christ said, the end will come. Perhaps then the world will realize what has been going on in its midst, but because its values had been upside down it failed to take note and take the right measures in order to escape a calamitous end.

Another reason we have been left alone to complete this work is that most of our readers come from overseas from where they could not reach us easily if they got angry with us. Some have tried, reporting us for spam, defrauding us, or being a nuisance in many other ways, but on the whole they made little dent in our armor.

Australia and Britain, our natural pastures, have made barely a ripple among the pool of our readers.

In mid-2014, we sent out *Newsletter 28* with the following caption: “Friends And Leaders Around the World, Greetings For The Last Time”. In that *Newsletter* we pointed out that the world has reached a critical phase, being in meltdown, well on the way towards sliding into the abyss altogether.

We had some quick reactions to that; the most interesting one came from people who signed themselves simply as SDA [*Seventh Day Adventist Church for those who may wonder what SDA stands for. For whatever reason, they seem to be ashamed to add the word Church to their institution anymore*]

We often get religious tracts in our mail box, as I am sure you get them in yours wherever you are in the world, but this one was different for two reasons. First, they invited us attend an evangelical campaign which they held no less than 120 kilometers away. I was once invited to attend a Catholic Church theological discussion some forty kilometres away, which I attended, but these people took the cake with their meeting place 120 km away, which I chose not to attend, mainly because I would have had to face heavy traffic across Sydney.

Second, the wording of their leaflet indicated that they had knowledge of our *Newsletter*, which we had published less than a month earlier. They said, “Many people today expect/predict a Global meltdown”, and went on to imply that they had better information than that.

They moved on quickly to quash any idea that the world is in a meltdown. They did not even quote us properly, for we did not say that we “expect/predict a Global meltdown”. What

we said is that the world IS in meltdown right now. With every passing day, this becomes even more apparent, but only those who keep themselves informed would understand the truly perilous condition of this world.

In discussing His return and the end of this world with His disciples, Jesus Christ told them:

Mar 13:35 Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—

Mar 13:36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

Mar 13:37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

So what do we see in this world if we watch, as Jesus Christ said we should?

We see a world paralyzed by unprecedented violence, terrorism and never-ending wars;

We see humanity grappling with pestilences, diseases and epidemics on a global scale;

We see the globe ripped apart by earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, draughts and fires like never before;

We see a planet groaning under the weight of overpopulation, and megacities in which people live in utterly inhuman conditions;

We see famine and suffering, and angry crowds demanding improved conditions from governments who cannot provide them because of decreasing resources and diminishing agricultural land.

We see people around the globe breathing polluted air; eating food denuded of sustenance, and drinking water unfit for human consumption.

We see coastal nations losing ground to increasing sea levels because of melting polar ice caps;

We see ocean life dying because of pollution, acidification and depletion of oxygen as a result of global warming and climate change;

We see a polarization of wealth with the average people losing all to 'experts' in mega casinos called Wall Street and Stock Markets;

We see deception on a worldwide scale, chief perpetrators being the very people who are supposed to be the standard bearers of the world's moral, ethical and spiritual laws.

We see a world that has dispensed with God's life giving Law, and embraced Satan's 'human rights' law – the law of gross immorality, homosexuality, disrespect, blasphemy and death.

We see a world in which life is no longer worth living because instead of being saved, human beings are being led to perdition on a worldwide scale.

This is the world that SDA wants to bestow to future generations in the hope that perchance they might be ready to receive the returning Christ one day. But what did Jesus Christ say about that?

Luk 19:26 'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

Luk 19:27 But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay *them* before me.' "

Now how do other churches see the current world turmoil? Are they any different? You might be surprised.

## Rome No Longer An Eternal City

Since ancient times, long before Jesus Christ came into this world, and Rome became the capital of a vast 'invincible' Empire, it became a common belief among the Romans that their capital is an eternal city.

The Catholic Church embraced this belief wholeheartedly, even though it went contrary to the Bible and especially contrary to the Christian Gospel, which state that this world was created for a limited duration, and will come to an end when Jesus Christ returns to set up a new world, a world of 'peace, prosperity and progress' to borrow a phrase of optimistic politicians who thought that they could transform this world into that kind of paradise.

Rom 9:27 Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short

Rom 9:28 in righteousness, because the LORD will make **a short work upon the earth.**"

Mat 24:14 And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, **and then the end will come.**

So, the Lord makes a short work upon the earth, and its end will come when Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations.

Now who is it to witness that Gospel to all the nations in preparation for the return of Jesus Christ? Would the Catholic Church do it? There are at least three reasons why the Catholic Church cannot do that. One, the Gospel that is to be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations must be a newly "restored" Gospel.

Mat 17:9 Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead."

Mat 17:10 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

Mat 17:11 Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.

The Catholic Church claims that its Gospel has its roots in ancient times, Apostle Peter being its originator.

Therefore its Gospel needs no restoration. Now those who want to see why the Catholic Gospel is as false as any in the world today, should read *The Christian Herald No 25*.

Two, the Catholic Gospel is predicated on the notion that this world lasts forever, or at least as long as this universe lasts. Hence the notion that Rome is an eternal city. But, as we've seen, the main tenet of the biblical Gospel is that this world has an end and that when the true Gospel is restored people should prepare for the return of their Savior. The Catholic Church knows that when Jesus Christ returns to this world its reason for existence comes to an end too, hence their preaching that people should not put too much value on the Bible, and more on the pronouncements of the Pope. Among its disparaging statements about the Bible is that two books in particular are unreliable and must be avoided: Genesis and Revelation, the first and the last books, the very ones that portray a certain worldwide Church as doing the work of the Devil and not of Christ.

Three, restoring the true Gospel requires good knowledge of the Bible and of the history of Christianity so as to understand what and when things went wrong and what needs to be restored. No offence intended here, but my experience with the Catholic Church has indicated that its priests are not particularly good at either. And I am not talking of just run-of-the-mill priests, but of high ranking Catholic clergies. My readers may remember my ongoing diatribe with the Cardinal Pell of Australia. While I was pointing out from the Bible and from reputable scientific and world media reports that the world has entered the biblical warming of the planet, he kept quoting unbelieving sceptics and obscure media reports, mainly from Rupert Murdoch stable, who seem to have made an alliance with the Devil to deny global warming no matter what the facts show. This went on for years until, mercifully, the new Pope absconded him to a new post in the Vatican.

My attendance at a theological discussion, held by a former lecturer in a Catholic university, was another case which showed a man that was completely out of his depth on biblical matters.

These are only some of the reasons why the Catholic Church cannot do the end-time work of God in preparation for the return of Jesus Christ.

And while we are at this topic, let us have a brief look at what the Bible says about this Church and its leader. It has to be brief because this topic is huge, and one cannot do it justice in an article of this scope. However, we have covered it at length a number of times in our magazines, and those who wish to pursue it further can begin by looking at *The Christian Herald No 2*.

For a long time, biblical scholars have come to believe that the biblical “Mother of Harlots” spoken of in the book of Revelation is none other than the Catholic Church. Now hard to believe as this may appear to some, this fact has its roots in the Old Testament. In one of His discussions with His disciples, in order to understand when the time of the end would come, Jesus Christ told them to go to the book of Daniel. Now that book has a number of major prophecies, but we will look at one that has relevance to our topic. We intersperse some comments as we go along.

Dan 7:1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head *while* on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts.

*God speaks to His prophets through dreams. “Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. Then He said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream” (Num. 12:5,6). Therefore Daniel’s dreams were not ordinary dreams, but God speaking to him.*

Dan 7:2 Daniel spoke, saying, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the.

Dan 7:3 Great Sea and four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.

*The first three beasts represent the Kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. But the fourth Kingdom puzzled Daniel and disturbed him greatly. We will see the reason in a minute.*

Dan 7:7 “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It *was* different from all the beasts that *were* before it, and it had ten horns.

*This beast has wondered scholars for ages. We are not aware of anyone who has penetrated this mystery until now. Some have guessed that this is the Roman Empire, but no one understood why this disturbed Daniel.*

Dan 7:8 I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, *were* eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

*Here we have the first clues why Daniel became sick when he understood the true nature of this beast with ten horns. This is none other than the nation of Israel with its twelve tribes. The little horn that came up among them is the High Priest, also known in ancient times as Pontifex Maximus, and in later times as the Pontiff or the Pope. Many people know that the descendants of Abraham received the promise that they would conquer the world and be both a blessing and a curse for the world: a blessing for those who accommodate it and a curse for those who hate and fight it. And so it has proved to be down through the centuries.*

Dan 7:9 “I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment *was* white as snow, And the hair of His head *was* like pure wool. His throne *was* a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire;

Dan 7:10 A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened.

Dan 7:11 “I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame.

Dan 7:12 As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

Dan 7:13 “I was watching in the night visions, And behold, *One* like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.

Dan 7:14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* Which shall not be destroyed.

*The pompous one who sits on top of the fourth beast is Pontifex Maximus, and the Son of Man who is brought before the Ancient of Days is of course Jesus Christ. During His ministry on earth, Jesus Christ called Himself many times ‘Son of Man’, and only a few times ‘Son of God’. He called Himself Son of Man for two reasons. One, to impress upon His disciples that although He had the seed of God – the Holy Spirit – within Himself, having been conceived by Him, He was a fully-fledged human being, just as they were.*

Dan 7:15 “I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me.

*Of course he would be grieved in his spirit in seeing that his “chosen people” would end up being such an awesome ‘beast’, a fact that he was not allowed to divulge at that time.*

Dan 7:16 I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things:  
 Dan 7:17 "Those great beasts, which are four, *are* four kings *which* arise out of the earth.  
 Dan 7:18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever  
 Dan 7:19 , even forever and ever.' "Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, *with* its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, *which* devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; and the ten horns that *were* on its head,  
 Dan 7:20 and the other *horn* which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance *was* greater than his fellows.  
 Dan 7:21 "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against  
 Dan 7:22 them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made *in favor* of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.  
 Dan 7:23 "Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all *other* kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces.  
 Dan 7:24 The ten horns *are* ten kings *Who* shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first *ones*, And shall subdue three kings.

*The three kings that are subdued by this horn and his powerful kingdom are the three tribes of Judah. The ten tribes of Samaria, which became the fourth Kingdom after transmigrating to Europe, and the two original two tribes of Judah make twelve tribes. However, the tribe of Joseph split into the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, making thirteen tribes. When Israel split into two nations, Samaria and Judah, Samaria abandoned the Law of God with its statutes, judgments and Holy Days and reinstated the religion of Egypt with all its pagan beliefs, holy days and idolatrous accoutrements. It also set up a High Priest in the manner of the Pharaohs, which in time became known as Pontifex Maximus, the Pontiff and the Pope. The tribe of Levy, which was assigned the role of priests and keepers of the Temple customs, abandoned Samaria when this returned to the pagan religion of Egypt, and went back to Judah where they served the Temple until this was destroyed and the nation was scattered among the nations of the earth by their brothers, the fourth beast under the leadership of the "little horn."*

Dan 7:25 He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand For a time  
 Dan 7:26 and times and half a time. 'But the court shall be seated, And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy *it* forever.  
 Dan 7:27 Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'  
 Dan 8:23 "And in the latter time of their kingdom, When the transgressors have reached their fullness, A king shall arise, Having fierce features, Who understands sinister schemes.  
 Dan 8:24 His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; He shall destroy fearfully, And shall prosper and thrive; He shall destroy the mighty, and *also* the holy people.  
 Dan 8:25 "Through his cunning He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; And he shall exalt *himself* in his heart. He shall destroy many in *their* prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; But he shall be broken without *human* means.

*Yes, his pompous man shall exalt himself, by acquiring God's title of "Holy Father", and shall rise against the Prince of princes, against Jesus Christ, and kill Him by crucifixion.*

Dan 8:26 "And the vision of the evenings and mornings Which was told is true; Therefore seal up the vision, For *it* refers to many days *in the future*."  
 Dan 8:27 And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.

Daniel said that "the pompous man shall persecute the saints of the Most High for a time and times and half a time". In the Bible, for prophetic purposes, a day usually means a year. But we have never found a plausible explanation as to what the term 'time' means. Well, in this case it can only mean one thing: one thousand years. If we count back 3 500 years, we come to the time of the Exodus, and the ancient pagan Egyptian beliefs: life after death, sainthood after death, immortality of the soul, purgatory after death, idolatry, worship of images, etc., all of which have been doctrines of the Catholic Church to our time, and all of which have nothing to do with the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This brings us to the New Testament.

For centuries the Catholic Church punished with death anyone who even owned a Bible let alone believed and practiced what was written in it. Daniel said that the “pompous” man shall remain in office until Jesus Christ returns and God’s everlasting Kingdom is set up. How extraordinary that this prophecy should be fulfilled in our time, just as the world has entered the throes of the end-time Great Tribulation.

Here now is what the book of Revelation says about a certain “Babylon the Great and Mother of Harlots”.

Rev 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

Rev 17:2 with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

*They did this not only in Christian times, but long before that.*

Rev 17:3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

Rev 17:4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.

Rev 17:5 And on her forehead a name *was* written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Rev 17:6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marvelled with great amazement.

Rev 17:7 But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

Rev 17:8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

*When Jesus Christ returns, and this beast is destroyed, her seed remains in the world, but it shall not prosper until the complete end of this world when Satan is released and in a last gasp rebellion rises up against God again.*

Rev 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

Rev 20:2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a

Rev 20:3 thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Rev 20:5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first

Rev 20:6 resurrection. Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand

Rev 20:7 years. Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison

Rev 20:8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea.

Rev 20:9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

Rev 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Rev 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Rev 20:13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Rev 20:14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Rev 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Amen!

## Revisiting the dilemma of the “Abomination of Desolation”

Given what we discussed above, it would not be hard for anyone to recognise in the “Pompous Horn” of the Old Testament and the “Mystery, Babylon the Great, and Mother of Harlots” of the New Testament the position of Pontifex Maximus and the ‘beast’ that carries him. No other position in the world that fits its descriptions has survived the passage of history from the time of Daniel the prophet to our time.

We discovered this fact during the papacy of John Paul II and promptly revealed it to the world. We’d been unveiling so many biblical mysteries we thought this was just another one that the world needed to know about. But this was not just another one; this was the big one that Jesus Christ spoke about in conjunction with the Great Tribulation and His return to this earth. To our bewilderment, instead of seeing this prophecy unfold before our eyes, we saw ourselves being turned into false prophets. Our nemeses have been having a field day ever since. We simply could not understand where we made the mistake much as we searched and looked for it.

Naturally, we assumed that if John Paul II was not the abomination of desolation surely the next Pope would be the one. But the unthinkable happened again. For the second time, our prediction proved wrong again. We just wanted to give up speaking for God, just like Jeremiah of the Old Testament wanted to do when his prophecies did not come true as he expected.

Jer 20:7 O LORD, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; Everyone mocks me.

Jer 20:8 For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, "Violence and plunder!" Because the word of the LORD was made to me A reproach and a derision daily.

Jer 20:9 Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name." But *His word* was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding *it* back, And I could not.

Jer 20:10 For I heard many mocking: "Fear on every side!" "Report," *they say*, "and we will report it!" All my acquaintances watched for my stumbling, *saying*, "Perhaps he can be induced; Then we will prevail against him, And we will take our revenge on him."

Jer 20:11 But the LORD *is* with me as a mighty, awesome One. Therefore my persecutors will stumble, and will not prevail. They will be greatly ashamed, for they will not prosper. *Their* everlasting confusion will never be forgotten.

Jer 20:12 But, O LORD of hosts, You who test the righteous, *And* see the mind and heart, Let me see Your vengeance on them; For I have pleaded my cause before You.

Jer 20:13 Sing to the LORD! Praise the LORD! For He has delivered the life of the poor From the hand of evildoers.

Just when Jeremiah thought that he had escaped the taunting of his contemporaries, and things could not get any worse, they did. He then cursed the day he was born.

Jer 20:14 Cursed *be* the day in which I was born! Let the day not be blessed in which my mother bore me!

Jer 20:15 Let the man *be* cursed Who brought news to my father, saying, "A male child has been born to you!" Making him very glad.

Jer 20:16 And let that man be like the cities Which the LORD—overthrew, and did not relent; Let him hear the cry in the morning And the shouting at noon,

Jer 20:17 Because he did not kill me from the womb, That my mother might have been my grave, And her womb always enlarged *with me*.

Jer 20:18 Why did I come forth from the womb to see labor and sorrow, That my days should be consumed with shame?

As his story is an interesting and instructive one, let us see a little bit more of it.

Jer 38:1 Now Shephatiah the son of Mattan, Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchiah heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken to all the people, saying,

Jer 38:2 "Thus says the LORD: 'He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but he who goes over to the Chaldeans shall live; his life shall be as a prize to him, and he shall live.'

Jer 38:3 Thus says the LORD: 'This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it.' "

Jer 38:4 Therefore the princes said to the king, "Please, let this man be put to death, for thus he weakens the hands of the men of war who remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man does not seek the welfare of this people, but their harm."

Jer 38:5 Then Zedekiah the king said, "Look, he *is* in your hand. For the king can *do* nothing against you."

Jer 38:6 So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king's son, which *was* in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the dungeon *there was* no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire.

Jer 38:7 Now Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs, who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon. When the king was sitting at the Gate of Benjamin,

Jer 38:8 Ebed-Melech went out of the king's house and spoke to the king, saying:

Jer 38:9 "My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon, and he is likely to die from hunger in the place where he is. For *there is* no more bread in the city."

Jer 38:10 Then the king commanded Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, "Take from here thirty men with you, and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he dies."

Jer 38:11 So Ebed-Melech took the men with him and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took from there old clothes and old rags, and let them down by ropes into the dungeon to Jeremiah.

Jer 38:12 Then Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, "Please put these old clothes and rags under your armpits, under the ropes." And Jeremiah did so.

Jer 38:13 So they pulled Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the dungeon. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Jer 38:14 Then Zedekiah the king sent and had Jeremiah the prophet brought to him at the third entrance of the house of the LORD. And the king said to Jeremiah, "I will ask you something. Hide nothing from me."

Jer 38:15 Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "If I declare *it* to you, will you not surely put me to death? And if I give you advice, you will not listen to me."

Jer 38:16 So Zedekiah the king swore secretly to Jeremiah, saying, "As the LORD lives, who made our very souls, I will not put you to death, nor will I give you into the hand of these men who seek your life."

Jer 38:17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "Thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: 'If you surely surrender to the king of Babylon's princes, then your soul shall live; this city shall not be burned with fire, and you and your house shall live.'

Jer 38:18 But if you do not surrender to the king of Babylon's princes, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans; they shall burn it with fire, and you shall not escape from their hand.' "

Jer 38:19 And Zedekiah the king said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the Jews who have defected to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they abuse me."

Jer 38:20 But Jeremiah said, "They shall not deliver *you*. Please, obey the voice of the LORD which I speak to you. So it shall be well with you, and your soul shall live.

Jer 38:21 But if you refuse to surrender, this *is* the word that the LORD has shown me:

Jer 38:22 'Now behold, all the women who are left in the king of Judah's house *shall be* surrendered to the king of Babylon's princes, and those *women* shall say: "Your close friends have set upon you And prevailed against you; Your feet have sunk in the mire, *And* they have turned away again."

Jer 38:23 'So they shall surrender all your wives and children to the Chaldeans. You shall not escape from their hand, but shall be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon. And you shall cause this city to be burned with fire.' "

Jer 38:24 Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Let no one know of these words, and you shall not die.

Jer 38:25 But if the princes hear that I have talked with you, and they come to you and say to you, 'Declare to us now what you have said to the king, and also what the king said to you; do not hide *it* from us, and we will not put you to death,' then you shall say to them,

Jer 38:26 'I presented my request before the king, that he would not make me return to Jonathan's house to die there.' "

Jer 38:27 Then all the princes came to Jeremiah and asked him. And he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they stopped speaking with him, for the conversation had not been heard.

Jer 38:28 Now Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken. And he was *there* when Jerusalem was taken.

The King did not listen to Jeremiah, and instead of giving himself up to the Babylonians as God said he should, he tried to escape. In so doing he lost everything: his life, his family, and the nation.

Jer 39:1 In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem, and besieged it.

Jer 39:2 In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth *day* of the month, the city was penetrated.

Jer 39:3 Then all the princes of the king of Babylon came in and sat in the Middle Gate: Nergal-Sharezer, Samgar-Nebo, Sarsechim, Rabsaris, Nergal-Sarezer, Rabmag, with the rest of the princes of the king of Babylon.

Jer 39:4 So it was, when Zedekiah the king of Judah and all the men of war saw them, that they fled and went out of the city by night, by way of the king's garden, by the gate between the two walls. And he went out by way of the plain.

Jer 39:5 But the Chaldean army pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. And when they had captured him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he pronounced judgment on him.

Jer 39:6 Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes in Riblah; the king of Babylon also killed all the nobles of Judah.

Jer 39:7 Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon.

Jer 39:8 And the Chaldeans burned the king's house and the houses of the people with fire, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem.

Jer 39:9 Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive to Babylon the remnant of the people who remained in the city and those who defected to him, with the rest of the people who remained.

Jer 39:10 But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left in the land of Judah the poor people, who had nothing, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

Jer 39:11 Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, saying,

Jer 39:12 "Take him and look after him, and do him no harm; but do to him just as he says to you."

Jer 39:13 So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard sent Nebushasban, Rabsaris, Nergal-Sharezer, Rabmag, and all the king of Babylon's chief officers;

Jer 39:14 then they sent *someone* to take Jeremiah from the court of the prison, and committed him to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, that he should take him home. So he dwelt among the people.

Jer 39:15 Meanwhile the word of the LORD had come to Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

Jer 39:16 "Go and speak to Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will bring My words upon this city for adversity and not for good, and they shall be *performed* in that day before you."

Jer 39:17 But I will deliver you in that day," says the LORD, "and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you *are* afraid.

Jer 39:18 For I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword; but your life shall be as a prize to you, because you have put your trust in Me," says the LORD.' "

The lesson from Jeremiah's story is that God's prophecies are not meant to please his prophets, they are meant to send a lesson to the people for whom they are intended. Eventually God's prophecies came true, and Jeremiah did well in the end.

Now what is the lesson for us from all that? That just as in the case of Jeremiah, where his prophecies appeared to be wrong at first but proved right in the end, our predictions were wrong at first, but the prophecy as a whole was right in the end. A keen biblical scholar would have understood for the first time ever who would become the abomination of desolation and where the place is where he would arise. The thing that we got wrong was when that would happen, and we got it wrong because we did not connect all the Scriptures as we should have. Have a look at this.

Lev 18:22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It *is* an abomination.

Does this ring a bell? We could never have imagined the unfolding events in the Vatican over the next few years. We assumed that the man who held the position of Pontifex Maximus at the time the prophecy was unveiled to us would be the abomination of desolation. However, in the Bible you must never assume anything unless the Scriptures back it.

A great danger for the people of God is when they unwarily succumb to the sin of pride and arrogance. Our Father in heaven saw that this is where we were heading and so He let us eat some humble pie.

As it turned out, neither the John Paul II nor the next Pope, Benedict, were abominations of desolation, both condemning homosexuality, Pope Benedict in very strong terms calling it “evil and unnatural”.

Not so the next Pope, who said that homosexuals are his brothers and sisters and called on the world to treat them as equals. How could we ever have imagined that a Pope who called homosexuality “evil and unnatural” would be forced out of office and replaced by one who refuses to “judge” homosexuals?

Now let us have a look at that statement in its full context, and see how strongly it applies to our time.

Lev 18:22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It *is* an abomination.

Lev 18:23 Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It *is* perversion.

Lev 18:24 'Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you.

Lev 18:25 For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants.

Lev 18:26 You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit *any* of these abominations, *either* any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you

Lev 18:27 (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who *were* before you, and thus the land is defiled),

Lev 18:28 **lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that *were* before you.**

Lev 18:29 For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit *them* shall be cut off from among their people.

Lev 18:30 'Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that *you* do not commit *any* of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I *am* the LORD your God.' "

The land vomited out those who engaged in this unspeakable sin in the past. In the course of history, this happened more than once, as an example to us.

Jud 1:3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Jud 1:4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jud 1:5 But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

Jud 1:6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;

Jud 1:7 as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Since the whole world is now in the grip of this abominable sin, the whole world will “suffer the vengeance of eternal fire”, hence the impending Great Tribulation.

Rome is not an eternal city after all.

## Fundamentalist Churches' response to God's call

The Catholic Church has ruled itself out of doing the end-time work of God since it does not believe in an end of his world, at least not one in a foreseeable future. Other mainstream Churches: Orthodox, Protestant, etc. are in the same boat since their beliefs and doctrines are virtually the same as those of the Catholic Church from which they had sprung.

We are left with the fundamentalist/evangelical Churches which have always claimed that they follow the Bible more accurately? The question is which one of them would be willing to undertake the end-time work of God. We've already seen that the Seventh Day Adventist Church is not going to be the one. But we can always count on the Churches that sprung from Worldwide Church of God, the most fundamentalist of fundamentalist Churches.

During my membership in that Church, some four decades ago, the common belief among its members was that H W Armstrong and his son, Garner Ted, were the Two Witnesses of Revelation, and that the Church as a whole was doing the end-time work of Elijah of witnessing the Gospel of the Kingdom to all nations.

Unfortunately, instead of becoming the all-powerful Two Witnesses, the two men became implacable enemies of each other, dying in disgrace without reconciling with each other. This is what happens with the people who take upon themselves to do the work of God for which God has not appointed them.

I have stated from the very beginning that I did not take it upon myself to do this work, that two decades after separating from that Church, God Almighty emboldened me to start publishing *The Christian Herald*.

In the beginning, people were entitled to be skeptical about it and ridicule us in seeing our difficulties and poor results, but not anymore, because by now our results speak for themselves. We have both restored the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a Gospel from which the world's Churches had departed long ago, and witnessed it to all the nations, the one and only sign that Jesus Christ specifically linked with the end of this world and His return to set up His Millennium Kingdom.

All other signs are general in nature, many of which could have happened at any time in history, but the one about witnessing the Gospel to all the nations could not have happened before the advent of the World Wide Web. This is the door that no one can shut, as Jesus Christ said, even though many have tried.

Rev 3:8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

It is an extraordinary fact that H W Armstrong and his hirelings, who continue to preach his gospel, a gospel that has nothing to do with Jesus Christ and everything to do with Satan, would claim that he was the man of little strength even though he had a worldwide religious empire that brought him a reported annual income of \$300 million. He also claimed that Rev 11:3, which says that the Two Witnesses are "clothed in sackcloth", referred to him too even though he wore the most expensive suits that money could buy.

Rev 11:3 And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

Now compare that with our resources. We have done this work from an annual pension of about \$20 000. The Satanists of the WCG knew this, yet they never stopped trying to defraud us and derail this work. That is how they think that they endear themselves to God. Do they ever read the Bible?

Rev 22:14 Blessed *are* those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

Rev 22:15 But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

Now I do not call these people Satanists because that is my whim. I call them Satanists because that is how Jesus Christ called them; Satanists being the members of a synagogue of Satan.

Rev 3:8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

Rev 3:9 Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

In the early days of our separation, I tried to keep track of developments in the WCG, until Jesus Christ let me know that He did not want me to have anything to do with them anymore. So I distanced myself from them and stopped reading their publications. However, from time to time people I know send me materials which they think might be of interest to me. Shortly after we published Newsletter 28, we received the July-August edition of *Tomorrow's World*, a magazine published by the Living Church of God. A cursory look through its pages drew my attention to a short article by its Editor. See if you notice anything unusual about it.

### “Are You Ready for Tough Times Ahead?”

“If you have been following world news, you surely know that the seeds are now being sown to bring about the prophesied “Beast” of Revelation! As Russian-sponsored men in black masks occupy and hold police stations and other facilities in the Ukraine, the European powers are reminded of *how impotent* they really are. Having depended upon the nuclear umbrella provided by the United State since World War II, the nations of central Europe now realise that they *cannot depend* upon America’s support in the future.

“Increasingly, America is seen around the world as a “paper tiger.” As we at *Tomorrow's World* have pointed out repeatedly, the God of our forefathers warned long ago, “But if you do **not obey** Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant . . . I will break the **pride** of your **power**; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze” (Leviticus 26:14-15, 19). Yes, although it is rapidly declining, America still has a great deal of power. But as the U.S. has as a whole turned its back on the Creator who gave the nation the power and almost unparalleled wealth it has possessed, its people have become less cohesive, less competent, and increasingly confused about how to use the wealth and the power bestowed upon them.

### “Talk, Talk, Talk”

“Russia, Ukraine and many other nations around the world are seeing more clearly than ever that the U.S. is now a nation that will do a lot of “talking” – but will not act vigorously to protect its friends as it would have done a generation or two ago.

“With such a “power vacuum” created by American weakness, a full-scale European Empire cannot be too many years off! For, as America continues to deteriorate in its morals, and become more and more a hedonistic society seemingly without purpose, Almighty God has decreed that a coming “Beast Power” will be His “tool” in humbling us and *teaching us lessons*!

“It is not that this superpower led by the “Beast: will be filled with “bad” people; rather, it is simply that God uses different nations at different time as *His instruments* to humble those who rebel against Him, and teach the rebels some much-needed lessons. The Bible is full of such warnings. We in this Work have *specifically warned about this* for many decades. Even back in the 1950s when assisting Mr. Armstrong, I was conducting evangelistic campaigns and strongly **warning** all those who would listen about a coming “Beast Power” in Europe—headed by a revived and heavily armed Germany. At that time, many scoffed at this, thinking that Germany could never become a powerful nation again. But it **is**! [*Some are right to still scoff at this idea. Ed*]

“We have shown you repeatedly in the pages of this magazine how Almighty God warned the descendants of ancient Israel that, **if** they would “despise” His statutes and His commandments—as *we certainly have done*—He would then “break the pride of your power” (Leviticus 26:19). That very prophecy is now being fulfilled **big-time**! As you watch world events moving swiftly, I hope all of you begin to **really understand** what is happening to those nations originally composed of the British-descended and American peoples—the descendants of the “Lost Ten Tribes” of Israel! ( . . . )

“As hard as it may be for many to believe, Scripture teaches plainly that most of mankind at the end of this age will actually fight **against** the returning Jesus Christ! “These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:14). It is hard to imagine how **massive** the deception of countless millions of human beings will be in order for them to be willing to literally **fight Christ** when He returns as King of kings! Yet that is the deception we must all be preparing to resist!” (Roderick C Meredith, Editor-in-Chief, *Tomorrow's World*)

For the average person, this might look like a very good sermonette. No one will ever suspect that he is dealing with a deep rooted Satanist: Satanists being those who are members of a Synagogue of Satan, or those who preach and practice “doctrines of demons”. It so happens that this “Editor-in-Chief” is guilty of both.

Herbert W Armstrong maintained until his death that his Worldwide Church of God was the Philadelphia Church of God of the book of Revelation. Let us look at that passage.

Rev 3:7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "HE WHO HAS THE KEY OF DAVID, HE WHO OPENS AND NO ONE SHUTS, AND SHUTS AND NO ONE OPENS":

Rev 3:8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

Rev 3:9 Indeed I will make *those* of the **synagogue of Satan**, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

Rev 3:10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Rev 3:11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Rev 3:12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And *I will write on him* My new name.

Rev 3:13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' '

This passage tells us that in this Church there are two kinds of members: one large group which are not genuine Christians but a “synagogue of Satan”, and a small group, or perhaps even a single person, of little strength, who was persecuted by the first, but who remained faithful to the end.

Now could a Church that claimed to be ‘Worldwide’ be considered to be a small Church?

Herbert W Armstrong and his acolytes thought so.

Now consider the consequences of what happened in the Worldwide Church of God four decades ago.

A man who went to the headquarters of the Church to show the leaders grievous errors in their preaching, was expelled from the Church, robbed of everything, and thrown out mercilessly in the cold of Canadian winter. Is that the work of a Church of God, or of a synagogue of Satan?

R C Meredith was a high ranking evangelist in that Church when they did that dastardly thing.

Out of their Church, the man received the Spirit of Elijah, restored the Gospel of the Kingdom, and then witnessed that Gospel to all the nations, all while the members of that ‘synagogue of Satan’ continued to hinder and do everything in their power to derail his work, robbing him along the way a little bit more.

Here are the words of Jesus Christ about the work of Elijah. Unmistakably it is linked to the end time.

Mat 17:9 Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead."

Mat 17:10 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

Mat 17:11 Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.

Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Rev 3:10, tells us that Philadelphia Church of God, formed by those of little strength, and certainly not by those of the “synagogue of Satan” [*Jesus Christ said that when two or three people are gathered in His name He is there in their midst. So a Church could be formed by as few as two people*], will be in existence and protected during the “hour of trial” – the Great Tribulation - that envelops the whole world.

It so happens that throughout the time of this work I always had only one supporter and no more.

Now while we have been telling the world to prepare for its returning Savior, those of the “synagogue of Satan”, aka the remnants of the Worldwide Church of God, have been countermanding our message by telling their followers not to bother because that event is still a long way off into the future.

How extraordinary that the man who was expelled from the Worldwide Church of God was given the Spirit of Elijah, restored “all things” pertaining to the Kingdom, and then witnessed that Gospel to all the nations, telling them that the end is near, yet no one believes him because those who ought to be with him and support him, who claimed to be ministers of Jesus Christ turned out to be the ministers of Satan.

The second proof that this Editor-in-Chief is a minister of Satan and not of Christ comes from the fact that his Church and all Churches that hold on to the teachings of the Worldwide Church of God unashamedly preach and practice what the Apostles of Jesus Christ have called “doctrines of demons”.

1Ti 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,  
1Ti 4:2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,  
1Ti 4:3 forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.  
1Ti 4:4 For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;  
1Ti 4:5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.  
1Ti 4:6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

You will never get a member of the Churches that ensued from the WCG to eat a juicy pork chop, a rabbit stew, prawns, lobsters, and hundreds of other “unclean” animals. They forget that “every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” Also they never mention this statement from Jesus Christ.

Mat 15:11 Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.

Meredith went on to say that: “Scripture teaches plainly that most of mankind at the end of this age will actually fight against the returning Jesus Christ.” The Scripture says no such thing, plainly or otherwise. It does not say that “most” people will fight Christ at his return, but that “***all people***” will fight Christ.

Rev 19:17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God,  
Rev 19:18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of ***all people***, free and slave, both small and great."  
Rev 19:19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

The difference between “most” and “all” is extremely significant.

First, because no one is allowed to add or take anything away from the Scriptures.

Rev 22:18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;  
Rev 22:19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

Second: if he had quoted the Scriptures accurately, the members of his Church may well have asked what about us? Are we going to fight Christ at His return? That is the awful truth – the whole world has been brought to the stage in which not a single person will recognise the Savior, treating Him as an alien to be fought against.

Not a single Church in today’s world accepts all the tenets that make a true Church of God (See *TCH* 25 for a test that reveals a true Church of God).

It is an extraordinary fact that while traditional Churches do not want Jesus Christ to return at all so that Rome remains an eternal city, fundamentalist/evangelical Churches do not want Him to return at this time. Why not? Because they don’t want us to be right, for that would expose them as false and be the end of them.

They love this world so much they want it to continue as long as possible. The cesspool of immorality, violence, social unrest and terrorism that surround them mean nothing to those who have ensconced themselves in cushy clerical positions. They don’t want anyone to rock the boat, and we have done just that. This is why they have opposed us and unleashed their fury on us so many times.

What about current world developments? How does this preacher see them? He briefly mentioned Ukraine and Russia, treating their conflict as if it was just of local significance, and moved quickly to his forte point – the notion that Germany will rise to superpower status, able to destroy the Anglo-Saxon nations of this world. Their prejudice against Germany has blinded them to the true messages of the Bible, especially to the end-time prophecies. We can do no better than to quote here a couple of edited articles that we published a decade and a half ago. It is good and safe that important articles are made available in more than one edition.

## **“Mystery of the Philadelphia Church of God”**

Before this year [1999], we knew nothing about Gerard Flurry and his church, except that he was just another offshoot of the Worldwide Church of God. But then, a friend of ours, knowing that our teachings were diametrically opposed, handed us some of his publications and asked us to comment on them. It was then we discovered that we were wrong to have dismissed this man so lightly in the past. He does not want to be considered just another offshoot of the WCG; he claims nothing less than the mantle of Herbert W. Armstrong, and the leadership of the Philadelphia Church of God.

Before the death of its founder, Worldwide Church of God members believed that their Church was none other than the Philadelphia Church of God of the book of Revelation, but even Herbert W. Armstrong hesitated to make that official, fearing perhaps what other Churches may think, or that they might scoff at the idea. Not so Gerard Flurry. He did away with all pretenses and came out into the open. After considering all the facts, we believe that he is right. He is indeed the rightful inheritor of Armstrong's mantle, and the head of the Philadelphia Church of God. *[That is, the leader of those whom Jesus Christ described as a synagogue of Satan within that Church, not of those of little strength who persevered in doing the end-time work of God]*

On the back of the title page of his *Philadelphia Trumpet* he makes the following statement:

*“The Philadelphia Trumpet has no subscription price – it is free. This is made possible by the tithes and offerings of the membership of the Philadelphia Church of God and others. Contributions, however, are welcomed and are tax deductible in the United States, Canada, and New Zealand. Those who wish to voluntarily aid and support this worldwide Work of God are gladly welcomed as co-workers in the effort to “hold fast” to the traditions established in the true church by Herbert W. Armstrong and to proclaim a final warning to the world. Contributions or letters of interest may be sent to one of our offices nearest you.”*

He “holds fast” to the traditions established in the “true church” by Herbert W. Armstrong. He did well to put the words “hold fast” in inverted commas, but forgot to do the same with the words “true church”.

After the death of Herbert W. Armstrong, when his sins, excesses, and false doctrines were exposed to the world, not one of his top evangelists wanted to have anything to do with him anymore. The result was that the Worldwide Church of God collapsed and went out of existence. The top evangelists, and quite a few lesser preachers, took their flocks and formed their own “Churches of God”. They soon discovered that the doctrines of the WCG, false as they may have been, had served them well, and so we soon had more than three hundred new “Churches of God”, virtually all carbon copies of the WCG.

Out of that chaos, arose a white knight, which hardly anyone knew, who determined to preserve the memory of his mentor and restore his religious empire. Hence, the Philadelphia Church of God. He succeeded beyond his wildest dreams, surging ahead at phenomenal rates of growth. His message is now being broadcast by more than 120 television stations around the world. In the January 1999 edition of *The Philadelphia Trumpet*, we found this:

*“For over 50 years, the late Herbert W. Armstrong taught a strong prophecy message which included God's prophecies about a “beast” power comprised of ten nations or groups of nations (Dan. 2:28-43; Rev. 13). That multi-national religion-led superpower is now rising to the forefront of world economic news before our very eyes, and will soon dominate the world and all of its inhabitants (Rev. 13:16-17). A European economic and military powerhouse led by Germany and a “universal” church will soon take mankind down its final and most deadly pathway of destruction! (Read Rev. 13:11-15; Ezek. 5; Jer. 9:12-16; the entire book of Lamentations, and many other prophetic scriptures dealing with the “latter days.”)*

It was Herbert W. Armstrong who first began the polemic against Germany. He preached about the danger coming from that country as early as the 1930s. He was justified in doing so then, but failed to understand the new geopolitical realities that arose from the Second World War.

When he saw Germany making great strides in rebuilding itself after the war, he assumed that this country would once again rise to become a world power and a threat to his people. Germany, however, developed into a stable democratic country, thoroughly integrated into the European Community, and unilaterally renounced nuclear weapons. These developments however were totally out of line with Armstrong's preaching, nevertheless he held on to his beliefs until he died. In the new world only two countries counted as great military powers, the Soviet Union and the USA, yet he continued to speak of the threat coming from Germany and ignored the one coming from Russia.

After his death, if some of his followers had doubts about his preaching, they were quickly forgotten when they saw the catastrophic collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990. They were convinced then that Germany's time had come. That is when both Gerard Flurry and us began our works in earnest. He has been telling the world ever since that Germany represents a great danger to world peace, while we have been telling it that the danger comes from Russia and its allies. Now if success is measured by the number of people converted to one's cause, we are an abysmal failure. Flurry on the other hand, could rightly claim to be the most successful preacher in the world at present. Since both Flurry and I were once baptized into the Worldwide Church of God, let us see where we stand in relation to the Philadelphia Church of God of the book of Revelation.

Rev 3:7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "HE WHO HAS THE KEY OF DAVID, HE WHO OPENS AND NO ONE SHUTS, AND SHUTS AND NO ONE OPENS":

Rev 3:8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

Rev 3:9 Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

Rev 3:10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Rev 3:11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Rev 3:12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And *I will write on him* My new name.

Rev 3:13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '

Notice carefully verses 9 and 10. They speak of two kinds of people in this church. On the one hand, you have a group of people who claim to be "Jews" (spiritual Jews or Christians), but who are in fact a "synagogue of Satan". And on the other, you have one man of little strength who persevered and kept Jesus' word and not denied His name, before which the first are made to come and worship before his feet.

The word "synagogue" helps us identify who is who in this scenario. In ancient times, this word identified the Jews who preserved the Torah and observed the sacrificial and dietary laws of the Old Testament. But in the New Testament, after the abolition of the sacrificial laws through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2: 14, 16; Heb. 7:11-28), these dietary laws became doctrines of demons. This is what Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to Timothy:

1Ti 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

1Ti 4:2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

1Ti 4:3 forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

1Ti 4:4 For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;

1Ti 4:5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

1Ti 4:6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

So then a "good minister of Jesus Christ" would never preach "doctrines of demons" such as "forbidding to marry, and commanding *people* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth". Anyone who preaches otherwise obviously does not know the truth. For Flurry and his followers it is as if these Scriptures do not exist, as they did not exist for Herbert W Armstrong and the many "Churches of God" that he originated. They make a great virtue out of keeping dietary laws more strictly than the Jews. In so doing, they deny both the name and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Can you see now why Jesus Christ spoke of two kinds of people in His Philadelphia Church? There are some who claim to be "Jews", but who are instead a synagogue of Satan. Bear in mind that Jesus Christ called His followers Jews not Christians. That is in line with the point made earlier in His ministry that salvation belongs to the Jews.

Joh 4:22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

Now a few words about "forbidding to marry". This interdiction must be seen in context of the changes that occurred between the Old and the New Testaments. In the Old Testament, the Jews were forbidden to

marry people of other races, but in the New Testament this distinction no longer applies.

Gal 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:29 And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The only restriction in the New Testament for the people of God is that they must marry from among those who are members of the Congregations of God.

1Co 7:39 A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

2Co 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

2Co 6:15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

2Co 6:16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God.

As God has said: "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM. I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE."

2CO 6:17 THEREFORE "COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM AND BE SEPARATE, SAYS THE LORD. DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAR, AND I WILL RECEIVE YOU."

2CO 6:18 "I WILL BE A FATHER TO YOU, AND YOU SHALL BE MY SONS AND DAUGHTERS, SAYS THE LORD ALMIGHTY."

In the New Testament, we have a marriage covenant with God, just as the Jews of old had a marriage covenant with Him.

Jer 3:14 "Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

Jer 3:15 And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

Gerard Flurry holds on to the Old Testament marital restrictions by forbidding people of different races to intermarry even if they are baptized and full members of his congregation. Once again, in so doing he annuls the New Testament and denies the name of his Savior. You may have noticed the word "unclean" in 2 Cor. 6:17. This is often used to justify maintaining the distinction between "clean" and "unclean" foods, and hence their observance of dietary laws. But what is it that the people of God must not touch, unclean foods or idols? This passage is not about food, but about marriage; it does not refer to food, but to idols (see verse 16).

We can destroy our marriage with God by going after idols. That is what makes us spiritually unclean, not the eating of foods. Apostle John told us to test the spirits to find out which are true and which are false.

1Jn 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

And Apostle Paul warned us not to be deceived by those who come disguised as ministers of Christ, but who are ministers of Satan instead.

2Co 11:13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.

2Co 11:14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

2Co 11:15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

We hope you are in a better position now to distinguish between the true and the false ministers of Jesus Christ." (*The Christian Herald* No 8, 1999)

What we want to do now is look at another publication that claims to speak "the truth". Like Meredith's *Tomorrow's World* and Flurry's *Philadelphia Trumpet*, this also has its roots in the Worldwide Church of God. We refer to the *Good News* magazine of the United Church of God.

In their November-December 2011 edition, they wrote:

*“In 1933 Winston Churchill chillingly warned, “No one can watch the events which are taking place in Germany without increasing anxiety about what their outcome will be.” With an economic crisis now plaguing the Eurozone, will Berlin’s troubled history repeat itself? What is Germany’s destiny? Does Bible prophecy give us any indication of where events in Europe are leading?”*

Now just as Meredith and Flurry transposed the prophecy of 738 BC to today’s Germany, so do the wise men of the United Church of God transpose the words of Winston Churchill of pre-war Germany to today’s Germany. The *Good News* magazine went on:

*“Rather than constraining Germany’s geopolitical potential, the European Union now enhances it; Germany is on the verge of once again becoming a great power. . . .*

*How is it that the entire national debts of Greece, Portugal and Ireland amount to less than 5 percent of euro-zone debt, and yet the entire euro-zone can be seriously shaken by their debt problems? This points to major structural flaws in the way the euro was originally constructed as a new currency beginning in early 1999.*

*This probably has some bearing on why just prior to the establishment of Jesus Christ’s future rule on earth, the Bible speaks of a future European-centered superpower where the component countries are symbolically described as iron mixed with clay, “partly strong and partly fragile” (see Daniel 2:40-44) . . .*

*Ultimately a new and powerful European superstate, labeled in symbol as “the Beast,” will astonish a largely unsuspecting world. An imposing bloc of nations will coalesce as one final revival of the ancient Roman Empire (Revelation 13:1-8; 17:8-18; Daniel 2:27-45; 7:15-27)*

*Ten member nations (or groups of nations) will relinquish their own national sovereignty to become part of this astonishing end-time superpower. “These are of one mind, they will give their power and authority to the beast” (Revelation 17:13) . . .*

*Seeing the stage set for the fulfillment of end-time prophecies should motivate each of us to examine our spiritual condition in the light of God’s Word. An understanding of prophecy ought to lead us to repentance and to dedicate our lives to seeking God and serving Him. Mere academic Bible knowledge is far from enough!”*

As you can see, the theme is the same. There are more than three hundred “Churches of God” that have ensued from the WCG which continue to preach the fallacies of Herbert W Armstrong.

There is no prophecy in the Bible that gives Germany, either in its modern name or as Assyria of old, a major role in the end-time Great Tribulation. Here are some examples of how these false prophets misapply biblical prophecies. They said:

*“the Bible speaks of a future European-centered superpower where the component countries are symbolically described as iron mixed with clay, “partly strong and partly fragile” (see Daniel 2:40-44).*

So let us look at Daniel 2:40-44 to see if it says what they say.

Dan 2:40 And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, *that kingdom* will break in pieces and crush all the others.

Dan 2:41 Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay.

Dan 2:42 And *as* the toes of the feet *were* partly of iron and partly of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile.

Dan 2:43 As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.

Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Do you see a *European-centered superpower* in this passage? No indication whatsoever of the geographical location of this fourth kingdom in this reference. One cannot ascribe prophetic roles to countries as he wishes without some form of identifying marks. Certainly not when it comes to God’s prophecies!

Now since all these prophets have been so brainwashed by that master of deception, HW Armstrong, that they cannot let go of outdated and inappropriate prophecies, let us look at another article that we published a decade and a half ago that is more relevant now than it was then. That is because then we were dealing with prophecies, whereas now we are dealing with facts.

## **“Mystery of the Worldwide Church of God”**

During my brief period in the Worldwide Church of God, in the early 1970s, I found it hard to believe that its leaders would regard Germany as a great threat to America, yet treat Russia (then incorporated into the Soviet Union) as if it did not exist. To me that represented a major fault in their preaching, but I could do nothing about it because, 1) I did not know much about biblical prophecies, and 2) My English was merely at a rudimentary stage.

But as I grew in “grace and knowledge”, I became more and more convinced that they were wrong in their prophetic understanding, and tried to tell them about it. But the ministers in that church would have none of it. It was inconceivable for them that a newcomer could see things better than their great prophet.

So successful was Herbert W Armstrong in his brainwashing techniques that his followers still believe his prophecies even now when the whole world could see that they had failed.

My conviction about the danger coming from the Soviet Union at that time was based not on prophetic understanding, but on firsthand experience. I grew up in Romania at the time of the Russian occupation, and later under the strictest of the communist regimes, and knew what they were preaching and aiming at.

Having been indoctrinated in the communist ideology for no less than seventeen years in various educational and vocational institutions, it is nothing short of miracle that I am now preaching Christ instead of Marx.

When I arrived in the West, many people were interested in my story. I remember how at one time, at a party in Vancouver, Canada, people sat around me for hours, asking dozens of questions: how I escaped from the Iron Curtain, how I survived in the West, how was life in the communist world, in the communist army, in the navy, what was I planning to do in the West, etc. At the end, many people advised me to write it down and publish it, but of course I could not do that. It was one thing to tell a story at a party in a broken language, and quite another to publish it.

After that evening, I toned down my story and seldom talked about it, preferring instead to look to the future than to dwell on my past trials and those of my family. It was the best thing I could have done for myself, opening up a new world of possibilities and freeing myself from the shackles of the past. I feel sorry for the people who relieve long past injustices and injuries every time they remember or talk about them.

What could I have achieved if I had remained bitter about the injustices of the past? I and my family were victims of the communist system, not of Nazism, and we all know that Russia cannot pay billions to its victims, as does Germany to the victims of Nazism. Besides, Germany lost the war and Russia won it, and that is why one has to pay and the other doesn't. That is why for me it was better to forget the past than hope in vain for justice which no one could deliver.

Those who had illusions that this world can deliver justice, must have come down to earth with a thud when they saw what happened to Pinochet of Chile. If the man is guilty of crimes against humanity, let him face the courts indeed, but who will arrest the people on the left of the political spectrum for their millions of victims? Dare anyone dare lay his hands on Fidel Castro for example? Or on Mengistu of Ethiopia who took refuge in the “paradise” of his close friend Mugabe of Zimbabwe? Or on Jiang Zemin of China, for that matter, for the blatant violations of human rights that continue to take place in that country, not to speak of the millions of people who lost their lives during their Cultural Revolution?

Who will bring to court Ion Iliescu for taking revenge on my mother for the articles I wrote in this magazine when he became President of Romania by crooked methods, or for the victims of his collectivization when he was second in command under Ceausescu, which ruined the country and brought misery to millions?

And just the same, who will bring to justice the Judges of Australia who put me in the street on a disability pension and gave my house to my millionaire wife who divorced me because I had “squandered” the money on this work? Can one get justice for preaching Christ when he is judged by Jews, and divorced by a wife who also happens to be Jewish? In Australia there is supposed to be no religious persecution, but as they say, there is more than one way to skin a cat. But woe to that country whose Judges look for profit and deliver crooked justice.

The Judge in my case even had the temerity to acknowledge before the court that he was delivering a crooked justice when he said in the hearing of all: “I am sorry to do this to you, Mr. Sbarcea!”

To which I replied, also in the hearing of everyone: “You are doing it to yourself, Sir!”

Of course, he did not believe me then, but he will shortly. For had he applied God's righteous principles, and used the Bible for guidance, he would have known that one must not “judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24), because “with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you” (Mat 7:2), for one does “not judge for man but for

the LORD” (2 Chr. 19:6).

No, not much has changed since the time of Jesus Christ. Christians are still getting the same raw justice their Lord got two thousand years ago. And this from the people who ought to know better, who themselves endured great injustice only half a century ago.

If “justice” is the name of the game, then let there be justice for all not only for those who fought the evils of communism and Satanism. We wish the Jewish victims of the Holocaust good luck with their compensation, but we advise them to spend it quickly, for their billions will be worthless in just a few, very few, short years.

And before anyone starts jumping up and down, accusing me of anti-Semitism, let me make one point clear: I happen to believe that I come from the same stock as the Jewish people, though I cannot prove it. Not that I care to. (. . .)

It may well be that the reason the ministers in the Worldwide Church of God began to give me cold shoulders after I was baptized in their church, was that we were beginning to speak a different language.

I could no longer accept their notion that in order to be a Christian one had to keep the Jewish dietary laws and obey the law of tithing practiced in ancient Israel. I chose instead to follow the example of the other Jews – the Apostles of Jesus Christ – who never even mentioned these laws let alone enforce them on their followers.

Another reason, of course, was that no story was allowed to overshadow that of their great leader. He was the one who had succeeded against all odds during the great depression; he had suffered great hardship during much of his life; he had risen from great poverty to lead the greatest institution on earth. Now he was entitled to all the accolades and adoration he was receiving from his grateful followers for whom he was preparing a “paradise” on earth.

No one was allowed to cast even a shadow of a doubt over the validity of his doctrinal teachings.

My salvation came from the fact that I did not allow others to determine the path of my life forever. Anyone who exercises his brains in the minimum can see that churches serve as the babysitters in the early stages of one’s spiritual growth. But then one must stand on his own feet or forever be a slave to others. What else could the following Scriptures mean?

Mat 23:15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

Mat 7:13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate

Mat 7:14 and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. "Beware of false

Mat 7:15 prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

Mat 7:16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

Mat 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Mat 7:22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them,

Mat 7:23 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Who are they who prophesy in Jesus’ name, cast out demons in His name, and do wonders in His name, yet still practice lawlessness, if not those who are leaders in His churches? Those who claim to be “Jews” [Christians] yet are a ‘synagogue of Satan’ inside the very churches that carry the name of our heavenly Father – Churches of God!

Every single one of the seven Churches of God mentioned in the book of Revelation, had problems with these people. This is the great mystery of our world, that God Almighty has allowed the children of the Wicked One to rule in His churches over His children who needed to be chastened in order to develop the character suitable for His eternal Kingdom.

Heb 12:5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

Heb 12:6 for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

Heb 12:7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father

Heb 12:8 does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

Heb 12:9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

Heb 12:10 For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness.

Luk 17:1 Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe *to him* through whom

Luk 17:2 they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

2Pe 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift

2Pe 2:2 destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

2Pe 2:19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

2Pe 2:20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

2Pe 2:21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

2Pe 2:22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A DOG RETURNS TO HIS OWN VOMIT," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

So take hold of a good Bible and "work out your own salvation", for if you rely on others all your life you will not make it into the Kingdom of God any more than they will." (*The Christian Herald* No 8, 1999)

## **"THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND"**

Herbert W. Armstrong did not live to see the changes that took place in the world in late 80's and early 90's, but his hirelings saw them and were heartened by them, believing that their master's prophecies were finally beginning to come true. But as the years passed by, the unthinkable occurred. Instead of Germany rising to new heights of power, it was Russia which started to assert itself again. So they had to do something about it. They had to find an explanation and a new role for this country in their scheme of things. This is what Gerard Flurry came up with:

"Germany is soon to inflict great destruction on this world. God is going to use that nation—called Assyria anciently—as His tool to punish the nations of Israel today—mainly America and Britain. Then, about three years later, God is going to use the Russians and Chinese to destroy Germany. Finally, comes the battle called Armageddon, when Jesus Christ returns to rule this earth. We are getting dangerously close to the dreadful day of the Lord! But we also need to look beyond that time to the glorious rule of God!" (*Nahum. An end-time prophecy for Germany*, published by the Philadelphia Church of God).

So after demolishing Britain and America, Germany will still be such an insurmountable power that Russia alone could not destroy it. It will need a helping hand from China, a country in the other side of the world, to destroy this average size country in central Europe, when only a fraction of Russia's missiles could virtually pulverize that country.

Now did you notice how many biblical references they gave us to prove these assertions? None! None, because there aren't any. And there aren't any because this is pure fantasy not biblical prophecy. That booklet was published in 1996, but by 1999 Flurry and his ministers had another change of heart. "This former superpower [*Russia*] is now a dead man standing and has all but totally collapsed from the same economic phenomenon which has swept the other global emerging markets". (*The Philadelphia Trumpet*, February 1999, p. 10). But then, realizing that this new position did not square well with their earlier pronouncements, they performed yet another somersault.

“Over the past year the Western press has presented the world with a picture of an ailing Russia, its economy in tatters, its president on the brink of death, International Monetary Fund aid disappearing without trace, its foreign policy enfeebled—an impression that Russia is a basket case with no means of recovery evident in the foreseeable future. But gullible Western journalists have forgotten one thing: the expertise of the Russians in manufacturing and perpetrating disinformation. All of a sudden, the Russians are back.” (*Philadelphia Trumpet*, May 1999, p. 20).

Breathtaking hypocrisy! It is the Western media which presented a false image of an ailing Russia; the gullible Western journalists who forgot the Russian expertise in manufacturing and perpetrating disinformation, not they themselves. In the ensuing editions of their magazine, they went back to their thesis that Russia in conjunction with China would destroy Germany after this destroys Britain and America first.

People pay up to thirty per cent of their income, under the same ruinous tithing regime invented by Herbert W. Armstrong, to hear this kind of utter trash. Flurry gave us Isaiah 10:5-7 as proof that Germany would rise one more time to become a mortal threat to Britain and America. But when we checked that reference we found that it said nothing of a kind.

Isa 10:5 "Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hand is My indignation.

Isa 10:6 I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

Isa 10:7 Yet he does not mean so, Nor does his heart think so; But *it is* in his heart to destroy, And cut off not a few nations.

Does this confirm his point? It would except for a couple of things: Flurry and his hirelings know neither history nor the protagonists of the end time Great Tribulation.

This prophecy was written in about the year 738 BC, which is about twenty years before Assyria trashed Israel and took the Ten Tribes that comprised Samaria into captivity. Henceforth, they became known as the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. We know now that they did not disappear from the earth, but transmigrated to the fertile lands of Europe, where in time they became the harbingers of Christianity.

Although all Tribes had the blessings that God bestowed on Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Britain and America became inheritors of additional primogeniture blessings from Jacob.

Exiled from their Middle Eastern land by Assyria, in their new land the Ten Tribes overtook their captors and became the mighty world Empires of Britain and France.

As it is well known, full of envy, Assyria (modern day Germany) began two World Wars in order to bring the Ten Tribes to heel and regain its long lost greatness. But no one could overturn God's order of things. The proverbial time of 'Jacob's trouble' had not yet come. That time comes in the context of the end time Great Tribulation, and Germany has no role to play in that conflict. It is Russia and her Gentile allies that will face Jacob's Tribes in that worldwide devastation.

We stood by this prophetic statement even when Russia was in 'tatters', to use Flurry's term, and have never changed our position, unlike Armstrong's disciples, and Flurry among them, who change with the politics of the day. Then he gave us Revelation 13:16-17 as proof that "a multi-national religion-led superpower is now rising to the forefront of world economic news before our very eyes, and will soon dominate the world and all of its inhabitants". Well, let's check this reference too; maybe we are luckier this time.

Rev 13:16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right

Rev 13:17 hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Rev 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number *is* 666.

Do you see a "multinational-led superpower rising before our very eyes" in this passage? Both these references are outright misquotations. Our "watchman of God" does not appear to be very sure of his Bible. Could it be that his inability to prove his points is because he did not take them from the Scriptures but blindly accepted them from Herbert W. Armstrong?

We added verse 18 to that quote to make it even more clear, and because this verse is closely linked with the previous two verses. We do not know why they left this one out, except perhaps because it tells us to calculate the number 666 which identifies the "beast".

By assigning numerical values to letters, the Pope's title, "VICARIUS FILII DEI" ("Vicar of the Son of God") in Latin, adds up to 666. The letters "Lateinos" (the Latins) in Greek also add up to 666. And, astonishingly, the letters "ROMIITH" (the Romans) in Hebrew also add up to 666. This is how Joseph F. Berg presented them in his book, *The Great Apostasy*.

V .....	5	F.....	0	D .....	500
I .....	1	I .....	1	E .....	0
C .....	100	L .....	50	I .....	1
A .....	0	I .....	1		
R .....	1	I .....	1		501
I .....	5				112
U .....	0		53		53
	112				666

#### GREEK – Lateinos

Α .....	30
Α .....	1
Τ .....	300
Ε .....	5
Ι .....	10
Ν .....	50
Ο .....	70
Σ .....	200
	666

#### HEBREW – Romiith

η .....	200
ι .....	6
ρ .....	40
τ .....	10
τ .....	10
π .....	400
	666

“Now we challenge the world to find another name in three languages : Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, which shall designate the same number”, wrote Joseph F. Berg.

If this superpower is rising up “before our very eyes”, how did the ancients know about it too? We find similar explanations in Christian writings as early as the third and fourth centuries AD. Does not this tell you that this prophecy has long since been fulfilled?

Whose purpose then does it serve to hide the true identity of this “beast” by telling people that it is yet to rise when in fact it has already risen long ago? Who is interested in keeping Christians unprepared for the return of their Savior by making them believe that there are still many years before these prophesies are fulfilled?

Verses 16 and 17 of Revelation 13 do not speak about a “multi-national religion-led superpower”, but about a man who would cause all human beings to receive the mark of the “beast” on their right hand and on their foreheads. That man has spread his religion over the whole world long ago. Worship of the dead, life after death, worship of the sun, profanation of the Sabbath and the Holy Days of God, etc., trace their origin to pagan Egypt, whose religion was carried over by Pontifex Maximus [*High Priest- the Pontiff*] to the Roman Empire and then to the Catholic Church and the rest of the ‘Christian’ world, and indeed to the whole world.

Most people never check other people’s references because they think they are true as a matter of fact. But true they aren’t, because we are not dealing with honest people but with deceivers, “whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame”.

Php 3:18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the

Php 3:19 enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

Php 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus

Php 3:21 Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Now let us look at Revelation 13:16-17 from another angle. Let us accept that this prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. How long would it take Germany to become such a colossal power capable of destroying Britain and America?

It took these countries more than 50 years to reach their present awesome nuclear capabilities. Now even if Germany has the know-how and the resources to build such an arsenal, it would take it at least half that long to catch up with the USA, let alone overtake it. But what does the Bible say about the time element? Let us look at the preceding 15 verses.

Rev 13:1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

Rev 13:2 Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

Rev 13:3 And *I saw* one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.

Rev 13:4 So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

Rev 13:5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority

Rev 13:6 to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

Rev 13:7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

Rev 13:8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Rev 13:9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

Rev 13:10 He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Rev 13:11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and

Rev 13:12 spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

Rev 13:13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the

Rev 13:14 sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth—by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

Rev 13:15 He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

Here we have two “beasts”, one arising from the other. The first “beast” lasted for forty-two months, during which time it blasphemed God and made war with the saints. Then the second “beast” arose from the first and made those who dwell on the earth to worship the first “beast”. Now which “beast” is supposed to rise “before our very eyes”, the first or the second?

If Germany is the second “beast”, which is the first one from which it is supposed to have arisen?

But if it is the first “beast” which rises “before our very eyes”, then it must reach its potential in just forty-two months. That is, if we take the forty-two months to mean 1260 days, but if they mean 1260 years – a day for a year, as it often does in biblical prophecies – then that would make this prophecy impossible in our time.

If, on the other hand, this “beast” is the ancient Roman Empire, as we have proven after extensive historical and biblical research (See *TCH* 3&4), is it a mere coincidence that from the foundation of Rome in about 750 B.C. until the collapse of that empire in about 510 A.D. there are 1260 years?

The second “beast”, of course, is the Holy Roman Empire, which arose from the first “beast”, the Roman Empire. The connecting link between these empires was Pontifex Maximus. He was the religious leader of both empires. He still is the head of the religious Roman Empire – the Catholic Church – today.

Remember, the prophet Daniel said that this empire would be different from the previous three – the Babylonian, Persian and Greek – and would last until the end of this age. Now we know what he meant. This empire is different in that it transformed itself from an expanding military power into an expanding religious power. Its doctrines and beliefs, false and dangerous as they are, have penetrated every corner of the world.

It is this “beast” which has stamped its sign on people’s foreheads long ago by imprinting its pagan beliefs in their heads, and on their hand by forcing them to work and dishonor their God-given Holy Days after imposing on them its own pagan holy days.

Flurry’s *Philadelphia Trumpet* gave us another reference which is supposed to prove that a superpower of ten nations will arise in Europe now.

“For over 50 years, the late Herbert W. Armstrong taught a strong prophecy message which included God’s prophecies about a “beast” power comprised of ten nations or groups of nations (Dan. 2:28-43; Rev 13).

Let us do the usual and check Daniel 2:28-43.

Dan 2:28 But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your

Dan 2:29 bed, were these: As for you, O king, thoughts came *to your mind while* on your bed, *about* what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be.

Dan 2:30 But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for *our* sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

Dan 2:31 "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor *was* excellent, stood before you; and its form *was* awesome.

Dan 2:32 This image's head *was* of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze,

Dan 2:33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

Dan 2:34 You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.

Dan 2:35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Dan 2:36 "This *is* the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O King, *are*

Dan 2:37 a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory;

Dan 2:38 and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given *them* into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you *are* this head of gold.

Dan 2:39 But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.

Dan 2:40 And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, *that kingdom* will break in pieces and crush all the others.

Dan 2:41 Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay.

Dan 2:42 And *as* the toes of the feet *were* partly of iron and partly of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly

Dan 2:43 strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.

Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Convinced by it? Do you see in this passage a 'beast' power of ten nations rising in our time in central Europe? If so, what is Nebuchadnezzar doing there? Daniel told this Babylonian king that there would arise three new kingdoms after his, the last one being more powerful than all the others. This would remain in existence until the Kingdom of God will be established, and rulership will be given to the saints of the Most High. Is it not clear that this prophecy also refers to the Roman Empire? Once again, Flurry's reference lets him down. Not only is it not proving his point, it proves the very points that we have been making all along.

A 'best' power will indeed arise shortly; in fact it is rising before our very eyes, but not in central Europe, and not around Germany, but much further east. Not involving the countries mentioned in Armstrong's and Flurry's writings, but the ones we have mentioned – Russia, China and their allies (For details of this prophecy, see *The Christian Herald* 2&4).

Roderick Meredith, Gerard Flurry and those who publish the *Good News* are children of the same feathers, all faithful disciples of the one we identified as the "worthless shepherd" of the prophet Zechariah.

Zec 11:15 And the LORD said to me, "Next, take for yourself the implements of a foolish shepherd.

Zec 11:16 For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land *who* will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces.

Zec 11:17 "Woe to the worthless shepherd, Who leaves the flock! A sword *shall be* against his arm And against his right eye; His arm shall completely wither, And his right eye shall be totally blinded."

People could look to Germany to become a superpower capable of destroying Britain and America until they get blue in their faces; it will never happen.

On the other hand, the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine is nothing but a proxy war between two nuclear armed superpower blocks – the East versus the West or as God sees it: the children of Greece versus the children of Zion. The children of Zion being the nations of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, while the children of Greece being the nations of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Russia will never allow Ukraine to become a member of NATO, a member of the children of Zion, because Ukraine is Russia's backwater, or as Russian leaders see it, their brothers and sisters.

Hence the danger coming from this "local" conflict!

## Mystery of the Disappearing Christians

Today's Churches tell us that since the time of Jesus Christ, the number of Christians has continually increased in the world to the point that there are now more than two billion people who call themselves Christians. The Bible, however, gives us a different picture.

The book of Revelation, which deals in large measure with the end times, tells us that by the time of the end there won't be a single Christian left in the world, and that the whole world will take up arms to fight the returning Christ. Here is just a part of this account.

Rev 19:11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

Rev 19:12 His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

Rev 19:13 He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

*[The Word of God is none other than Jesus Christ. He was the One who said: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Gen 1:26), and the One of whom Apostle John wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (Joh 1:1-3), and the One of whom Apostle Paul wrote: Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness" (1 Cor. 10:1-5). So Apostle Paul believed that Jesus Christ was God: "that Rock was Christ, but with most of them God was not pleased")]*

Rev 19:14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

Rev 19:15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Rev 19:16 And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Rev 19:17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God,

Rev 19:18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of **all people**, free and slave, both small and great."

Rev 19:19 **And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.**

Since "all people" gather together to make war against the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, it stands to reason that there are no Christians among them, for we cannot imagine that they would rise up against their Savior.

At one time, at a session of questions and answers after a religious service, I asked an Anglican priest who was high up in the Anglican hierarchy, about those prophecies. He quickly replied that we should not worry about those things for they are for a long time in the future, and turned away to other people with more convenient questions.

The man seemed to be unaware of what is going on in the world at present, for the reason I asked him that question is that virtually all the signs that Jesus Christ gave as signifying the end of this age can be seen in the world at present: wars and rumors of wars, droughts, famine, pestilences, natural disasters, crime, violence, gross immorality, global warming, falling away from the truth of God, and of course, false preachers and religious deception.

Religious leaders would talk about anything in their Churches, and they are good at it, except what it matters most – the end of this age. And if the leaders don't talk about it, members of their Churches don't know anything about it either, and won't listen to anyone who tells them otherwise. This is why it took us more than two decades to bring this topic to the attention of this world, and why the greatest world conflagration in the history of this world will take the world by surprise.

Mat 24:11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

Mat 24:12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

Mat 24:13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Mat 24:15 "Therefore when you see the 'ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

Mat 24:16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Mat 24:17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.  
 Mat 24:18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.  
 Mat 24:19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!  
 Mat 24:20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.  
 Mat 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.  
 Mat 24:22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.  
 Mat 24:23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or 'There!' [*He is in this Church or in that Church*] do not believe *it*.  
 Mat 24:24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible,  
 Mat 24:25 even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.  
 Mat 24:36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.  
 Mat 24:37 But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.  
 Mat 24:38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know  
 Mat 24:39 until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.  
 Mat 24:42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

This is where the problem lay: people are not watching, and those that are watching do their best to deny what they see and feel. I am sure you've all heard of the global warming and climate change sceptics. They scorch themselves in heatwaves after heatwave, yet they insist that there is no global warming. The polar ice caps are melting at frightening speed, large swathes of the world suffer drought while others are drowning under torrential rains, cyclones, and tornadoes as never before, yet they say that there is no climate change.

Every year, ninety five per cent of the scientists that work in these fields tell us that things are getting visibly worse all the time and that the world is in far worse condition than in previous findings. Unless humanity takes drastic measures to reduce carbon emissions and keep global warming below 2C degrees, humanity will be in a fight for its survival by the end of the century. They give humanity more than eighty years to mend its ways if it wants to survive and keep on messing up this planet as it has done so for millennia. But people don't listen to them, but rather to the five per cent of sceptic scientists who tell us that there is no global warming and climate change in spite of what we all see and feel.

Now even if no carbon dioxide emissions are released into the atmosphere at all from now on, global warming and climate change WILL NOT STOP let alone be reversed. That is because what affects the world at present are not emissions from the last few years or even the last few decades, but what has been put into the air more than a century ago. It takes that long for carbon emissions to be recycled in nature. And given the fact that the world's forests which absorb carbon are fast being destroyed and the marine organisms which do the same are dying because of pollution, acidification, overfishing, and global warming, even that cycle is now in doubt.

The scientists who know these facts can't insist too much that the world is already in dire straits because the world listens to those who give it good news, and they would put themselves in danger of being ostracised and losing their livelihood. And so, the world is being kept in perpetual ignorance by those who ought to know better - secular and religious people alike. And so, it is left to minnows like us to tell the truth and cry aloud the sins of this world, per chance some may listen and do something about it while there is still a chance. But does anyone listen? Or are we like this poor man?

Ecc 9:14 *There was a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares around it.*  
 Ecc 9:15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that same poor man.  
 Ecc 9:16 Then I said: "Wisdom *is* better than strength. Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom *is* despised, And his words are not heard.

What people do not know is that the major cause for this world's problems, which gnaws at the edifice of everything that this world stands for, is sin. Nothing that human beings can do will bring a change for the better, including a reversal of global warming and climate change, short of repentance and wholehearted return to our Creator.

Now who is Jesus Christ going to blame when He returns and finds this world in such an abysmal state of affairs?  
 Not the scientists who out of self-interest speak with half voices;

Not the world leaders who are more concerned with upholding the "human rights" of homosexuals than saving humanity from utter destruction;

Not the political leaders who hardly know better and do not want to alienate their electorate;

Not even the false preachers whose fate they themselves had sealed long ago.

No, He is going to blame those who called themselves 'Christians' for not doing what His disciples must always do: watch, pray, keep the Commandments, worship the true God and keep the faith of Jesus Christ.

Rev 14:1 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred *and* forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.

*[These are those who are resurrected in the first resurrection, who are brought to heaven to be trained to judge the world and be priests and kings in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ]*

Rev 14:2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps.

Rev 14:3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred *and* forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

Rev 14:4 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

*[Although this statement can be taken literally, as we know that sins of the flesh destroy the soul if not repented of, then term "women" in this case refers more to false churches which preach and practice idolatry. For God, the sin of idolatry, a sin of the mind and heart, is far worse than the sins of the flesh, for it is much more difficult, if not impossible, to repent of.]*

*Psa 135:14 For the LORD will judge His people, And He will have compassion on His servants.*

*Psa 135:15 The idols of the nations are silver and gold, The work of men's hands.*

*Psa 135:16 They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see;*

*Psa 135:17 They have ears, but they do not hear; Nor is there any breath in their mouths.*

*Psa 135:18 Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them.*

*Psa 135:19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel! Bless the LORD, O house of Aaron!*

*Psa 135:20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi! You who fear the LORD, bless the LORD!*

*Psa 135:21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, Who dwells in Jerusalem! Praise the LORD!]*

Rev 14:5 And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Rev 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—

Rev 14:7 saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

Rev 14:8 And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

Rev 14:9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand,

Rev 14:10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

Rev 14:11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

Rev 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints; **here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.**

Rev 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

As you can see, "Babylon . . . that great city . . . has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." This fornication does not refer to the sins of the flesh, but fornication with other false churches and religions.

If you do not know yet which "great city" is this Babylon is, whose false doctrines and idolatry have spread to all corners of the earth, we are not going to tell you. Watch out for a great religious leader, who thinks of himself as God, as he "Holy Father" of the Christin world, who said recently that all religions are right and wants to make an alliance with them all against the evils of this world.

Little does he know that he is the greatest evil this world has ever seen.

## Answering the question that people have wanted to know since the beginning of time

At one time, the disciples of Jesus Christ asked Him why He was speaking to the people in parables, instead of telling them plainly what His teaching was about.

Mat 13:10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

Mat 13:11 He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

Mat 13:12 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

Mat 13:13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Mat 13:14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'HEARING YOU WILL HEAR AND SHALL NOT UNDERSTAND, AND SEEING YOU WILL SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE;

Mat 13:15 FOR THE HEARTS OF THIS PEOPLE HAVE GROWN DULL. THEIR EARS ARE HARD OF HEARING, AND THEIR EYES THEY HAVE CLOSED, LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, LEST THEY SHOULD UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEARTS AND TURN, SO THAT I SHOULD HEAL THEM.'

Mat 13:16 But blessed *are* your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;

Mat 13:17 for assuredly, I say to you that **many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.**

Mat 13:18 "Therefore hear the parable of the sower"

You should read the rest of this parable in your Bible, for it is very instructing. For our purpose, however, we stop here, as we just wanted to show you that the mystery of God's Creation, the purpose for which He created the world in the first place, has not been given to human beings and kept secret until now.

Rev 10:5 The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven

Rev 10:6 and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer,

Rev 10:7 but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.

Now let us go to another encounter between Jesus Christ and His disciples.

Mat 24:1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.

Mat 24:2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

They pondered about that answer until they arrived at the Mount of Olives where they often went for prayer and discussion. Then they asked Him to explain that answer to them.

Mat 24:3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Mat 24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

Mat 24:5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

He went on to list many more signs of which our readers would know about for we have often spoken about them. Now we go to yet another encounter between Jesus Christ and His disciple.

Act 1:4 And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me;

Act 1:5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Act 1:6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Act 1:7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

Act 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Act 1:9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

Act 1:10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white

Act 1:11 apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Jesus Christ told His disciples many secrets and mysteries that the wise men and prophets of old could not know, yet the answer to the question about His return and the end of this age He couldn't tell them.

It may surprise people to hear this, but we can know that time now.

Undoubtedly, my nemeses will be jumping up and down now, shouting: "we got him, we finally got him. Did not Jesus Christ say that no man knows the day and hour of His return? Here are the Scriptures."

Mat 24:29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Mat 24:30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Mat 24:31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Mat 24:32 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near.

Mat 24:33 So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!

Mat 24:34 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

Mat 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

Mat 24:36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

Indeed, these are the Scriptures which tell us that only the Father knows the day and hour of Jesus' return, but what everyone seems to ignore is the season of His return, the time when he fig tree puts forth tender leaves. Otherwise all the signs that He gave us about the imminence of His return would make no sense.

We are not looking for the day and hour of Jesus' return, indeed it would be foolish for anyone to try to guess that. What we are looking for is the season, or perhaps the year, of His return. It would not be a sin for anyone to do that, but more likely than not he would be made a fool, as so many have become, especially in America after telling their followers to sell everything and head to the mountains and wait for their Lord.

The disciples of Jesus Christ, including His Apostles, believed that He would return in their time.

This is what Apostle Paul wrote:

1Th 4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

1Th 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

1Th 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

1Th 4:17 Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

And this is what Apostle John wrote:

Joh 21:20 Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"

Joh 21:21 Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what *about* this man?"

Joh 21:22 Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me."

Joh 21:23 Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you?"

Joh 21:24 This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.

As time went by and they endured many trials and tribulations, the Apostles understood that Jesus Christ would not return in their time and reconciled themselves to the fact that they would die and not see Him until the resurrection time. Later, after Apostle Paul, was brought to Rome in chains to be judged by the Emperor, wrote this.

Php 1:12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard,

Php 1:13 and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord,

Php 1:14 having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Php 1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:

Php 1:16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

Php 1:17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defence of the gospel.

Php 1:18 What then? Only *that* in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

Php 1:19 For **I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer** and the supply of the Spirit of

Php 1:20 Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

Php 1:21 For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

Php 1:22 But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.

Php 1:23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better.

Php 1:24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you.

Php 1:25 And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy

Php 1:26 of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

Php 1:27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

Php 1:28 and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.

Php 1:29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

Php 1:30 having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is* in me.

To the very last, Apostle Paul believed in “deliverance through their prayer” but that was not to be, for shortly afterwards he was executed for “profaning” the Temple in Jerusalem, and the Temple of Diana in Ephesus, as his contemporaries denounced him for.

He then told the Philippians that they must endure suffering, “for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me”.

You won't hear the impostors of today telling their listeners that the Gospel has been spread through suffering, and that “some preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction”.

After all that he endured at the hands of his enemies, it is not surprising that Apostle Paul would rather die and “be with Christ”, but that it was better for the disciples if he remained alive. So is he with Christ now? Of course not! He is dead and shall remain dead until the resurrection time which takes place at the end of this age.

Now here is the crux of the matter. The Apostles did not know when the resurrection would take place, nor that there would be two resurrections: the first for those who are raised to be trained as Kings and Priests, and a second for the rest of those who are to be saved.

Why then did Apostle Paul say that he would rather die and be with Christ if no one ascends to heaven until the resurrection time? The Apostles believed that they would either be alive or be dead a short time, and since they would be unconscious of the passage of time it would be like they had just died.

1Th 4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

1Th 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

1Th 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

1Th 4:17 Then **we who are alive and remain** shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

1Th 4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The question is why did even the Apostles have such a hard time to understand the truth about the end of this age and the return of Jesus Christ? For one simple reason: they did not have the book of Revelation.

That book was given by Jesus Christ to Apostle John, the youngest of His Apostles, when he was old and when all the other Apostles had disappeared from the scene. We can now know things that even the Apostles could not know.

You may be surprised to know what that Book is telling us. The reason other Churches do not know it is because “Babylon the Great” has been telling people that two books of the Bible are not to be trusted: Genesis and Revelation, the very books that reveal it as the “Mother of Harlots”.

Rev 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

Rev 17:2 with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

Rev 17:3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*

Rev 17:4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.

Rev 17:5 And on her forehead a name *was* written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Rev 17:6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marvelled with great amazement.

Rev 17:7 But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

Rev 17:8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Biblical scholars have known that for prophetic purposes, God used the principle of a day for a year, and a day for a thousand years depending on the context of the prophecy. Here are some examples of a day for a year.

Num 14:34 According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, *namely* forty years, and you shall know My rejection.

Eze 4:4 "Lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it. *According* to the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their iniquity.

Eze 4:5 For I have laid on you the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days; so you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

Eze 4:6 And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days. I have laid on you a day for each year.

And here are some examples of a day for a thousand years.

Psa 90:4 For a thousand years in Your sight *Are* like yesterday when it is past, And *like* a watch in the night.

2Pe 3:8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

And here are some examples in which numbers 7 and 40 play important roles in the Bible.

Creation took seven days (Gen. 2:2).

Noah took seven pairs of clean animals and seven pair of birds on the Arc (Gen 7:1-3)

The rain for Noah's Flood fell for forty days and forty nights (Gen 7:4).

The Flood itself lasted forty days and forty nights (Gen. 7:12)

Jacob served seven years for each of his two wives, Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:27; 29:30).

Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt (Ex. 16:35, Deut. 8:2).

Moses spent 40 days on the mountain twice to receive the Ten Commandments (Ex. 24:18, 34:28).

Jesus Christ spent 40 days in the wilderness without food (Mat. 4:2).

And if I may say so, it took me forty years after parting company with the Worldwide Church of God to complete the work of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom as a witness to all the nations, another sure sign of the end of this age?

Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

There are many more examples like these in the Bible. However, the one that concerns us at this point is number seven for the Creation week. Some biblical scholars have come to understand that there is a parallel between the physical creation and a spiritual creation.

In the Genesis week, God created everything that is in this physical world, including human beings. During the seven thousand years that He has allocated for this world, He is performing a Spiritual Creation. At the end of seven thousand years, a new member is added to the heavenly dynasty – the Holy Spirit. Here are the last words of Jesus Christ before He ascended to heaven.

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Mat 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things

Mat 28:20 that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

Prior to this, the only time Jesus Christ mentioned the Holy Spirit was in a the context of blasphemy against Him.

Mat 12:30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

Mat 12:31 "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men.

Mat 12:32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come.

Mat 12:33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known

Mat 12:34 by *its* fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

There is one major difference between these two accounts. In Matthew 12, the Holy Spirit is the Father, or the Spirit of the Father, or the Angel of the Lord. When God sends an Angel to speak or act for Him he is taking the identity of God Himself.

Jdg 2:1 Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you.

In Matthew 28, and thereafter, the Holy Spirit is a separate entity in the heavenly Trinity. It is only after Jesus Christ overcame the Devil, was resurrected from the dead and raised to heaven that He could speak of the Holy Spirit as a separate entity.

The entirety of the New Testament is about the Holy Spirit becoming the bride of Christ. And who is the bride of Christ in the world today? The Church of God – the real and true Church of God, which only God and Jesus Christ know, not the ones that masquerade as Churches of God these days.

My readers may remember the ongoing controversy that I've had with the enemies of Christ over this issue. For decades they have confronted me with all sorts of falsehoods and misreading of the Scriptures to prove that there is no such a thing as a heavenly Trinity, and only a Duality of Father and Son. They would say that, wouldn't they? They serve their master, Satan, well, who hates the Holy Spirit for taking his place in heaven.

At one time, Jesus Christ said: "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (Joh 5:17). Now how has the Father been working if the book of Genesis tells us that after the six days of creation God rested the seventh day? The assumption was that ever since that time God has been resting, yet Jesus Christ gave us a different picture.

Herein lays one of the greatest mysteries of the Bible: The end of the physical creation was the beginning of a spiritual creation, during which time God has been creating a new member for His family – the Holy Spirit.

There is a parallelism between the seven day physical creation and the seven thousand years spiritual creation? The six working days of the week parallel the six thousand years of spiritual creation, while the weekly Sabbath parallels the thousand years Millennium Kingdom. When the Holy Spirit is raised to heaven, Satan is cast out, never to be heard of again.

Rev 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

Rev 20:2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Rev 20:3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

Rev 20:7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison

Rev 20:8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea.

Rev 20:9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

Rev 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Rev 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book* of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Rev 20:13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Rev 20:14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.  
Rev 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

In the next chapter Satan does not appear anymore, while the Holy Spirit becomes the bride of Christ.

Rev 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.  
Rev 21:2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared **as a bride adorned for her husband**.  
Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.  
Rev 21:4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."  
Rev 21:5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."  
Rev 21:6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.  
Rev 21:7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.  
Rev 21:8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."  
Rev 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you **the bride, the Lamb's wife**."

Now if Satan is bound for a thousand years, during which time the land enjoys a **sabbatical rest** (2Ch 36:21), then the Great Tribulation and the return of Jesus Christ cannot occur at any other time except at the end of six thousand years of human history and the beginning of the thousand years Millennium Kingdom.

Biblical chronology tells us that we are in the midst of this transition period. However, Jesus Christ allowed for the possibility of a delay in His return.

Mat 25:1 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.  
Mat 25:2 Now five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish.  
Mat 25:3 Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,  
Mat 25:4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.  
Mat 25:5 But **while the bridegroom was delayed**, they all slumbered and slept.  
Mat 25:6 "And at midnight a cry was *heard*: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'  
Mat 25:7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.  
Mat 25:8 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'  
Mat 25:9 But the wise answered, saying, '*No*, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'  
Mat 25:10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.  
Mat 25:11 "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!'  
Mat 25:12 But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'  
Mat 25:13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

How long will this delay be? No one can tell. Only the Father knows this. However, it cannot be more than a few years at the most. We are certain that it will happen during the reign of Vladimir Putin of Russia. We have identified him as the man of destiny long before he appeared on the scene.

He has a mission from God against the wayward western civilisation, which has abandoned any pretence of obedience to the Law of God and embraced Satan's law of "human rights".

If the world refuses to take note of God's examples in the Bible, in which He destroyed all those who had gone after strange flesh, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the tribe of Benjamin being the most obvious examples, then the whole world will suffer their fate; hence the Great Tribulation which will cleanse the world of its physical, moral and spiritual pollutions in preparation for the Millennium Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

# STATE OF THE WORLD

## Society and Culture

### Seriously, your kids should not be watching this

SEX and violence are at an all-time high in the movies our children watch, the music they hear, and the games they play.

And, in bad news for mums and dads a new study, published this week in *Pediatrics*, suggests that it is parents who are unknowingly dropping the ball. The researchers asked 1000 parents of children between 6-17 years to watch eight movie clips in a random order. Each clip contained either sexual content or strong violence. Parents were asked what age their children would have to be before being allowed to watch these scenes. The first clip was always rated as being suitable for an older child. The final clip was always rated as being appropriate for younger children. Regardless of the order of viewing, parents consistently reduced their age recommendations as they watched more clips. The more of a particular kind of content we watch, the greater the level of desensitisation we experience. What was once shocking eventually barely registers. Like a drug, the more violence or sexual content we take in, the more of it we need to get the same “shock” factor. Don’t watch the news for a couple of months, and then sit through a full bulletin. It will assault your senses. Is there really a problem with our children seeing sex and violence? Does it really affect them? In my work I regularly speak with parents of children as young as six who are watching *Game of Thrones*, *The Wire*, or *Breaking Bad*. Their parents wonder why their child is having “behaviour issues.” Many adults claim that they’ve watched violent movies all of their lives, played violent games, and never killed someone. In fact they’ve never even acted aggressively. They’ll say the ‘wowser-brigade’ is making mountains out of molehills.

They’ll point to all the things we watched as children that never affected us because we never understood it. What is the harm of allowing a 6-12 year-old to see sex and violence in their lounge room? These arguments persist in spite of hundreds of studies over several decades showing that sexual and violent content are genuinely influencing our behaviour — and our morality. We may not kill people because we watched Bruce Willis or Arnold Schwarzenegger shoot bad guys by the thousands. But research tells us that violent and sexual content do impact the way we behave towards others. As one neat example, a 2009 study demonstrated that exposure to gratuitous violence in either a game or a movie led to a reduced willingness to help someone who was in pain. Participants in two different experiments took longer to come to the aid of an injured victim, saw a violent act as less serious, and were less likely to even hear that a fight was occurring when compared with those who played a non-violent video game or watched a non-violent movie. Additionally, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, prolonged exposure to violence increases agreement with the idea that violence is an acceptable way of solving problems. It also promotes acceptance — in children — of the ‘mean world’ syndrome: a belief that the world is a dark and sinister place.

Ongoing (or even periodic and accidental) exposure to sexual and violent content is empirically proven to have a desensitising impact on both children and adults. The more we watch it, the less concerned we are about it — and the greater the potential impact on us, on our children, and on our society. We may not become “violent” or “sexual”, but our behaviour and our responses are impacted by what we have seen. Empathy is reduced. Objectification is increased. Morality erodes. Our digital diet is desensitising us. The violence and sex we see is glamorised, and often consequence free. But there ARE consequences we are not aware of. We need to wake up. By not only enduring it, but embracing it — and endorsing it for our children’s entertainment — we act to their detriment. (*Justin Coulson Opinion*, The Daily Telegraph, October 24, 2014) Dr Justin Coulson is a parenting researcher, speaker, author and father of six.

### Patriotism not a cause for shame

PATRIOTISM has been declared racist. Just when we must insist Australia is worth defending, we’re told only scum would say so. Greens deputy leader Adam Bandt was outraged this week that two Woolworths outlets sold singlets printed with the Australian flag and “If you don’t love it leave”. Bandt reposted a tweet blasting these “racist singlets”, fanning the fury of the Twitter Left. Woolworths took instant fright, declaring the patriotic slogan “totally unacceptable” and promising to never again sell such a wicked thing. But exactly how is the singlet racist? Which “race” does it attack? Which “race” does Bandt think hates Australia so much that they are the obvious target? No, the haters of the singlet are not trying to protect some Australia-hating “race” they cannot even identify and would insult if they tried. They are instead offended by patriotism. They are instead vilifying proud Australians who cannot understand why people who openly shout they loathe this land don’t try their luck somewhere else in a world full of options.

Yet it was only nine years ago that this sentiment was still acceptable enough for even Australia’s longest-serving treasurer, Peter Costello, to voice it. Costello was puzzled why some extremist Muslims, especially immigrants, were demanding sharia law — extremists such as Hizb ut-Tahrir leader Ismael al-Wahwah, who wants Australia under a caliphate in which “those who are guilty of apostasy ... from Islam are to be executed”, according to his party’s website. Said Costello: “Our laws are made by the Australian Parliament. If those are not your values, if you want a country which has sharia law or a theocratic state, then Australia is not for you.” Or as the Woolies singlet sums up, if you don’t love us, leave. But now the invitation Costello offered is “totally unacceptable”. What’s helped to change the climate is the media coverage of the 2005 Cronulla riot. That was mischaracterised as a racist uprising by flag-waving white Australians, rather than an ugly reaction to a minority of ethnic Lebanese youths throwing their weight around.

Now the flag, flown from a house or car, is seen as the summoning to a racist riot. Adding to the angst is that mass immigration and the Age of Terror have left us with more ethnic tensions than ever since Federation. The Left particularly seems to fear that peace is now so fragile that just showing the flag is like showing a red rag to a paddock of foreign bulls.

And yes, some Australians do indeed now feel threatened by what immigration and multiculturalism have wrought. The backlash one day could be ugly. But the trashing of patriotism goes far beyond this often exaggerated fear of bogans carrying flags. Take the campaign even by schools to promote a retribalising of Australia, symbolised by the flying of the Aboriginal flag alongside the Australian one. Add also extreme multiculturalism, which most rewards the ethnic groups that most keep their distance. Then add the constant preaching of a largely invented history of genocide, “stolen generations”, racism and environmental devastation until Australia seems faintly disgusting. So it’s not surprising that Prime Minister Tony Abbott’s appeal for a “Team Australia” was widely mocked by the Left, even though I’m sure most voters backed it. In fact, the very idea of such a nation state is starting to strike “progressives” and the “alienated” as so last century.

LAST weekend, the ABC’s *Encounter* program explored what life would be like under a caliphate instead.

“If you’re not a Muslim, it might seem all rather in-house and speculative,” presenter David Rutledge conceded.

“But if you consider that the nation state — like many other products of secular modernity — is beginning to look like a concept whose time could be drawing to a close, then suddenly the caliphate seems less like a medieval fantasy and more like, well, the future.” It may be crude and even provocative, but “if you don’t love it leave” begins to sound like Socrates against this exhausted toying with totalitarianism. It is also more likely to be just what we need.

Powerful forces today threaten to tear Australians apart, with calls for jihad, sharia law, treaties with the “First Australians”, new racist divisions in the constitution and more mass immigration of the kind that now looks like colonisation.

No society can survive such threats without prizing its past and its symbols and without insisting what members have in common is far greater than what divides them. Sure, we must stay open to criticism, to make a great country greater.

But don’t love it? Then, please, feel free to leave. (Andrew Bolt, *Herald Sun*, October 15, 2014)

### **T-shirt debate shows progressives shun any display of patriotism**

“IT is a strange fact, but it is unquestionably true that almost any English intellectual would feel more ashamed of standing to attention during *God Save the King* than of stealing from a poor box.” So wrote George Orwell. His sentiments could scarcely be more applicable in modern Australia. On patriotism, as with other national characteristics and policy strategies, Australia sits between individualist, nationalist America and collectivist, patriotically reluctant Europe. Recent stormy debate over a T-shirt bearing an Australian flag and the slogan ‘Love it — or leave’ illustrates how difficult it is for Australian progressives to embrace outward displays of patriotism, lest they be stained by, or confused with, chest-beating hypermasculinity or perceived exclusion of minority groups.

Patriotism is a dirty word. Indeed, hip-hop artist Matt Colwell not only labelled the Australian flag “racist” on the ABC’s *Q&A*, he said later: “The way those people have used the flag has so tarnished the flag for me personally that it stands for a sort of swastika symbol in my mind.” American social psychologist Jonathan Haidt writes in *The Righteous Mind* that conservatives have a broader matrix of moral worlds than progressives, who are skewed towards caring for the weak and distributing wealth. He compiled a catalogue of six fundamental ideas that commonly undergird moral systems: care, fairness, liberty, loyalty, authority and sanctity. When psychologists talk about authority, loyalty and sanctity, those who identify with the Left spurn these ideas as the seeds of racism, sexism and homophobia.

Two world wars left a deep scar on the European psyche, especially on the notion of nationalism, which was seen as causing the rise of fascist Italy and Germany. This ambivalence spawned a belief that countries such as Britain should be a culturally blank canvas; that patriotism is an old fashioned trapping of empire and countries such as Britain could be shaped afresh with new cultures living side by side in unity. While we may lack the imperial guilt, there can be little doubt this view is apparent in Australia, perhaps even more so given our relative youth and more malleable historical and cultural foundations. Orwell made a clear distinction between nationalism and patriotism. He qualified nationalism as “the worst enemy of peace”, the belief one’s country was superior to others while patriotism was an attachment to and admiration of a nation’s way of life and “of its nature defensive, both militarily and culturally”. While Islamic terrorism is attractive to a very small proportion of the population, it highlights a weakness of liberal democracies in their lukewarm, sometimes conflicted promotion of a collective identity. The gap for Islamists is filled by the fierce transnational identity that the Islamic notion of the ummah can build, a piety so strong they are prepared to sacrifice their lives. Macabre, evil and disgusting the actions may be, but the intensity of belief is in stark contrast to the relative apathy of mild-mannered secular atheists.

French philosopher Michel Onfray said in an interview last year on the topic of the decline of the West: “Who is ready to die for the values of the West or the values of the Enlightenment?” Onfray questions the will of Westerners to fight for anything, believing we have been numbed by consumerism in a secular age that creates no attachment to God and country. The strong patriotism of the US that integrates its extremely diverse population so successfully may explain why so few American-Muslims, as a proportion of the population, have gone to fight in Syria, compared with many thousands from Europe. The several hundred estimated to have travelled from Australia, as a percentage of our Muslim population, are many multiples greater than in America. While an Australian republic is traditionally derided in conservative circles, there is a direct correlation with Tony Abbott’s Team Australia rhetoric and the intensification of patriotism a republic is likely to promote. It holds promise as a key plank in fostering a greater collective identity. Race Discrimination Commissioner Tim Soutphommasane championed a greater patriotism for the Left in his 2009 book *Reclaiming Patriotism: Nation-Building for Australian Progressives*. The reaction to a harmless T-shirt promoting love of country suggests the task has a considerable way to go. (Tanveer Ahmed, *The Australian*, October 24, 2014)

### **“If you are saddled with an idiotic name you should just learn to love it”**

“WHAT’S in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” So wrote some chap called William Shakespeare 400 years ago. Meaning, it doesn’t really matter if you’re called Petunia or Poohead, you’ll still be your fragrant self. Probably. So to all the mums of little girls called Isis, who are currently recoiling in horror that their beautiful name of the Egyptian goddess of magic has garnered a whole new meaning, I say, don’t panic. Although I do concede it’s akin to the parents in the 1930s who must have been utterly dismayed when their little Adolfs gained a notorious namesake. I imagine thousands became Alans at the end of World War II. Last week The Daily Telegraph ran the story of Isis Leskien and her mum Sheridan, who are fighting back along with US woman Isis Martinez to reclaim the name. But not everyone is so brave. I know of at least one Sydney mother who has officially changed her baby daughter’s name from Isis and many more will be ripping that page out of their 1000 Best Baby Names book. When good names go bad you only have two choices. You can ride it out or you can change it. But if you’d lived your life for 48 years perfectly respectably as Mr J Bieber, you might be a little peeved at sacrificing your identity because some twerp keeps monkeying around in public.

I pity all the Harold Potters of the world. Oh how they must laugh when every time they go to the shops the cashier asks them where their wand is. Or what about people whose names become notorious for all the wrong reasons — the other David Hicks and Edward Snowdens for example, must breeze through passport control. Similarly, it’s very unfortunate when your perfectly unassuming name takes on a new meaning in another language. Not a problem if you never travel, big problem if you emigrate. The international football scene is the perfect arena to see this phenomenon at play — take for example the Korean footballer Kim Dong-Suk. Dong-Suk is a standard name in South Korea, a little less successful in Australia. He joins some of my personal favourites — Argentine striker Mario Turdo, Czech defender Milan Fukal, ex-Brazilian defender Argelico Fucks and German striker-turned-chairman Stefan Kuntz. All have provided wonderful fodder for the juvenile sniggering supporters of the away side, I think you’ll agree. But what are Messrs Kuntz and Turdo supposed to do? Change their names on the off chance they leave the country or, as I suspect, just put up with the ridicule every time they go on a mini-break. When I first moved to Australia from the UK 20 years ago, I was surprised to be informed by everyone I

met that I “had a man’s name”. And not only did I have a man’s name, but the most famous man in Australia. I even had the temerity to have his initials. Back in 1994 I decided that I would meet and marry James Packer, thus becoming Kerry Packer, which, I’m sure you agree, would be very amusing. Unfortunately this did not come to pass due to the fact that (a) I was not a supermodel and (b) I never met him. However, this wasn’t the first time my name had met with censure — in fact, when I was born and my parents proudly announced my name to the family, my great-grandma was disgusted and informed them Kerry was a dog’s name. She never wavered from this conviction until one day, when I was about five, we visited her to see her new poodle puppy.

“What’s his name?” I asked. “Kerry,” she replied, stony faced. There was a long, awkward silence and no one ever mentioned it again. Ironically, great-grandma went by the name of “Pete”, which, unless I am very much mistaken, is a man’s name. One day, I vow, I will get a dog just so I can call it Pete, for revenge. To be honest, I think naming a child is a minefield. Even if you think you are selecting the most anodyne one possible, it is bound to offend someone in your extended family or friends. Everyone loves to pass judgment on the names we choose, especially when people get a bit creative and call their kids Hurricane or Dude (both names I have encountered), or watch too much *Game of Thrones* and go for Daenerys and Tyrion. So really, you just shouldn’t care. Because you know what, it doesn’t matter one jot what you are called; your name melds into you and before you know it seems perfectly normal to everyone anyway. And if someone else pops up with your name, well just own it. Apologies here to the Sydney-based GP Kerri Parnell, who may on occasion get censured for the unfunny columns she writes in *The Sunday Telegraph*. At least she can take consolation that I haven’t committed any crimes, other than those against journalism. (Kerry Parnell, *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 04, 2014)

### Ending animal testing in cosmetics a win for consumers

I want to see a worldwide end to animal testing for cosmetics before I die. That’s not too much to ask is it? It certainly shouldn’t be when you consider how easy it is to produce cosmetics without any animal testing at all. I should know, I’ve been doing it for more than 30 years and you could say it’s worked out quite well. LUSH cosmetics now has more than 900 stores in 51 countries, 25 of them in Australia, and being entirely free of animal testing is one of our core ethics. Always has been, always will be. I’m thrilled to say we are no longer alone either. In fact, it’s getting rather crowded on the cruelty-free side of the cosmetics industry. There are now hundreds of companies just like us, producing fabulous, innovative, safe beauty products without the stain of animal testing. I know from first-hand experience that that’s what consumers want. When new customers discover LUSH and hear that our products are not tested on animals, they are horrified to learn that some cosmetics companies are still killing and harming animals. But that’s the ugly truth of animal testing, and it brings shame on an industry that I’m otherwise very proud to be a part of. Ending animal testing in cosmetics is a no-brainer, whichever way you look at it. It’s outdated science; mice and rats are not mini people so animal test results are notoriously unreliable when it comes to assessing how real humans will react to substances. I sometimes wonder if my industry prefers these tests just because they are so unreliable. It’s very difficult to work out the health hazards of synthetic hair dyes, sunscreens and preservatives using animal tests.

In July, the Labor Party launched a public consultation on ending cruel cosmetics in Australia. This comes hot on the heels of Greens senator Lee Rhiannon introducing the End Cruel Cosmetics Bill, the United States introduced the Humane Cosmetics Act, and the one-year anniversary of Europe banning the sale of cosmetics tested on animals anywhere in the world. The 28 countries of the European Union, together with Norway, Israel, India and the Brazilian state of Sao Paulo, have all banned animal testing for cosmetics. Global momentum is building towards eliminating this unnecessary practice, and now it’s Australia’s opportunity to play its part. I really hope it grabs it with both hands. This week I have been happy to add my name to an open letter, which has been signed by the heads of some of Australia’s cosmetics companies, to Health Minister Peter Dutton. We are urging the government to implement a test and sales ban as soon as possible. A cruelty-free Australia is a win-win for everyone – happy customers, happy regulators and happy bunnies. It has been argued that most companies don’t test on animals in Australia anyway so why ban it? But that’s just an excuse for doing nothing. The truth is we simply don’t know how much cosmetics animal testing happens in Australian labs, but we do know that for as long as it remains legal the higher the chance it will continue, or even increase, in the future. For as long as companies can test on animals abroad and sell their animal-tested cosmetics in Australian shops to unsuspecting consumers, this whole sorry practice will continue around the world. At LUSH we’re standing shoulder to shoulder with the *Be Cruelty-Free* campaign, which is spearheading efforts all over the world and here in Australia. We’re giving the End Cruel Cosmetics Bill our backing and urge politicians on all sides to do the same. It’s time to consign cosmetics animal testing to the history books. (Mark Constantine, *SMH*, August 17, 2014)

### No one’s fault but your own if you don’t have a bestie, boys



Maintaining friendships is difficult, but hanging out with friends makes most people happy, which – in turn – feeds into the success of a long-term relationship. A man is complaining he has no friends because his wife has squeezed them out of his life. Apparently Christopher Middleton sank from having a “merry crew” of mates to sitting alone with a beer watching recorded sport on TV.

In his column “Mates? Most married men waved our best friends goodbye years ago” this weekend, he cited a report by charity organisation Relate that about 4.7 million Britons report not having a best friend. In Middleton’s case, he claims to come to this unhappy circumstance because his wife has removed their names from the “family address book” and replaced them with friends more to her own

taste, usually couples or single women. Supposedly, this is why not only him, but many men, don't have besties. Really? If you find yourself identifying with this man, there are probably a few other reasons people may not want to spend time with you.

**1. You blame your wife for things that aren't her fault.** True, it is way easier than taking responsibility. But it also seems like a simplistic way to avoid your own shortcomings. For example ...

**2. ... You complain too much.** There is nothing not good about sitting on the couch with a beer watching TV.

**3. You don't stick up for your friends.** If your wife is so domineering/jealous/manipulative – or any of the other negative inferences there are to be had in an article that accuses women of being the main reason you're a sad loser with no friends – then you really should have fought harder for your buddies. It seems they're all you've got.

**4. You assume the secret to women's friendships is time spent together criticising their husbands.** Even on the rare occasions your wife manages to put down her pencil and eraser and step away from the "family address book", she will probably have lots to talk about with her friends besides you. Perhaps since she is married to a man who sits around at home complaining about doing nothing, she may spend some time lamenting her husband who sits around at home doing nothing. She and her mates will probably also talk about federal politics, their jobs, their children, Sydney house prices and *Game of Thrones*, because, well, it's 2014.

**5. You use a "family address book".**

Maintaining friendships is difficult, regardless of gender, especially once you're in a long-term relationship, working and possibly trying to wrangle a couple of children. For me, having friendships that are my own help me feel like I'm living my life instead of drowning in the mundane bits of it. Keeping them going takes time and effort, for example, a chain of 28 emails in the weeks leading up to a dinner out, and a flurry of text messages on the night. That doesn't even include the juggling of child-rearing responsibilities between me and my husband. Indeed, the precision planning that's required to ensure one grown-up can leave the house at 7pm may be enough to lure many into a funk of lonely couch-sitting but, in the end, hanging out with friends makes most people happy, which – in turn – feeds into the success of a long-term relationship. If you have time to moan about your lack of mates, you probably have time to track down their emails and invite a couple of them out for a meal. (Aparna Khopkar, *SMH*, August 18, 2014)

### **Hip to be hairy: Beards make a comeback for the hipster look**

**NICK Horrigan is a self-described hipster and loves all things fashion, but the 25-year-old is missing that hippest of accessories – the full bush beard.** "It's just sort of patchy and light, some parts are thicker than others and it's not like a George Clooney," he said. So the underground miner based in Ipswich, Qld, flew to Sydney this week to undergo a facial hair transplant.

"I'm not into the Ned Kelly look, I liked the groomed style and it's a masculine thing, you know, the best genes survival of the fittest, it just looks good," Mr Horrigan said. "My dad had a good thick beard and I'm pretty particular and into fashion and maybe I pick on myself a bit." From the hipster capital of Brooklyn New York, the beard transplant has arrived in Australia. While women are opting for the Brazilian at one end of town, style-driven men like Nick are undergoing facial hair transplants in pursuit of more hirsute manscaping – from Bradley Cooper style designer stubble to the full bush Jared Leto. James Naden from the Crown Clinic said he had taken 10 inquiries in the last two months and has performed three facial hair transplants in the same time frame. "Why? I blame Bradley Cooper," says Mr Naden. "He's the actor that came out (in *Hangover*) with the stubble and became popular and it's very much a fashion thing at the moment."

Facial hair transplants work much the same way as a traditional hair transplant said Mr Naden. A 'plug' of hair is taken from a donor site, usually at unobtrusive nape of the neck, and using a technique called follicular unit extraction, they are dissected into single follicles and transplanted one by one into the stubble trouble parts of the face at a cost of \$8000 to \$10,000. "It heals in 10-12 days and the hair grows in three to four months but it can take up to a year for the final result," Mr Naden said. One of the clinic's current clients is a gentleman who had his facial hair lasered off completely when bare meant beautiful only to grieve basking in the shade of his long-lost five-o'clock shadow. "He wants it back," says Mr Naden. But fashion is a fickle thing. This week researcher from the University of NSW discovered that beards are only attractive when a rarity. As soon as it's the norm the opposite applies, which is good news for the current clean shaven man. "Clean-shaven faces were least attractive when clean-shaven faces were commonest and more attractive when rare," Dr Barnaby Dixson wrote in the *Royal Society Journal*. Rehan Alikhan from the Martinik Hair Restoration Clinic based in Sydney and Perth said his clinic was performing facial hair transplants for cultural reasons more so than fashion. "We just had an Asian student who brought in a picture of his favourite actor (with a thick beard) and we have a lot of Indian clients, sheikhs who equate a thick beard with virility and we have Middle Eastern clients who feel compromised with gaps in their beard," Mr Alikhan said. The clinic has also treated a man in his 30's who permanently lasered his beard and wanted it back. "He lasered it off in his 20's and now he wants it back," he said. (*Jane Hansen*, *The Sunday Telegraph*, April 27, 2014)

### **Executive Living: Turning points**

GROWING old takes so much time and effort. The years of scrambling for things you thought might make you happy and probably didn't. The decades of struggling to pay the mortgage. Not to mention the countless nights wasted fretting about lost promotions and dead-end jobs. Now all that is over and it is not the gloomy spectre of pensionable age that should beckon you. It is the vision of freedom. This is an era to be savoured, a time to escape the stereotypes of the past. Where is it written down that all men over the age of 55 must don gold jewellery and frantically search out a chirpy young partner, one who may think Led Zeppelin was an actual person? What edict states that all men must strive never to show emotion and to mimic the behaviour of silverback chimpanzees? Testosterone can be such a cruel master. As Aristotle said, letting go of that is like being unchained from a maniac. Show me the law that states all women over the age of 50 must metamorphose into cougars intent on snaring younger men. Or the sub-clause that dictates all women must mourn the passing of a time when they couldn't enter any public place without men ogling them, no matter how subdued their clothes or appearance? Invisibility has so much to offer. I'm no Pollyanna, but every period in life has possibilities and promise, and this time of later middle age has more on its side than most people think — that is, if you're lucky enough to be healthy, have enough money to feed and house yourself, and live in a country not torn apart by war. The average life span in the Western world increased by more than 30 years in the 20th century, mainly due to advances in public health. By comparison, the average life span was 30 in medieval Britain. In Australia, 25 per cent of the population is older than 54 and they can expect to live until they are almost 80. That's long enough to change yourself and your life, even if you begin at the age of 60. Of course, muscle tone is not what it was, and there is an inevitable thickening of girth. You see wrinkles in the oddest places, such as toes and ears. You don't like driving at night and can't see properly without spectacles. But these are minor disadvantages compared with the constraints of wage slavery, the expense of raising children and the almost universal young-adult affliction of status anxiety.

Do I earn enough money? Is my house big enough? Am I successful enough? The questions go on and on in an endless stream. If they are ever answered, they are automatically replaced with other, equally spurious ones. Am I handsome enough? Popular enough? Pretty enough? But it is possible, at a certain age, to stop this personal interrogation and instead start living the life we might once only have dreamed of, before responsibility took over so much of our existence. We can, if we make an effort, break out from our self-imposed protective custody, not by trying to recapture youth, but by relishing the time we have left. We can do anything we like. Consider that last phrase for a minute. When was the last time you were able to say that with any degree of accuracy? Now we can downsize or even sell our houses and become grey nomads. We can take to the road and never look back. We can return to university or change careers. We can end unhappy marriages and begin new relationships.

Consider the evidence. The divorce rate in the over-60s has risen by more than half in the past two decades. The Australian Council for Educational Research reports that the number of mature-age students is growing at the same rate as students younger than 25. Walk into any airport and see the number of grey-haired men and women shouldering backpacks and consulting well-worn copies of Lonely Planet guides. These people are embracing life, not cardigans and slippers. People older than 60 read more books than any other age group. They're interested and many want to give back. Consider the growing number of retired executives who have chosen to mentor troubled adolescents instead of travelling the world in seven-star luxury. "I was CEO of a hedge fund that increased profits year-on-year," a retired English executive told me recently. "I was used to feeling satisfied. But it was nothing like the reward of persuading a bright but troubled boy to stay on at school, and then see him get into a leading university." Not everything about growing older falls into the happily-ever-after category. Inevitably, there is sadness, illness and disappointment. But there might be time to try and get it right for once; for an absentee parent to mend a fractured relationship with an adult child, for a person to let go of old grievances. The 16th-century French philosopher Michel de Montaigne had the right idea about growing old. He thought that things mattered more as people got older. He wrote that as men and women aged, they had the opportunity to recognise that they were fallible. And if people understood that growing old didn't make them wise, then that was a kind of wisdom all of its own. (*Suellen Dainty, The Australian, April 14, 2014*)

### 10 strange customs of the British Royal Family

It's safe to say that when the Prince and Princess of Cambridge touched down in Sydney this afternoon, they did so as the most normal – or least odd – royals the world's ever seen. You could almost imagine sharing a schooner with them at the pub.

But as much as they're rebranding the stuffy image of Britain's blue bloods, William and Kate belong to a family that's still weighed down by tradition and protocols. Here's ten strange customs the Royal Family still abides by...

But as much as they're rebranding the stuffy image of Britain's blue bloods, William and Kate belong to a family that's still weighed down by tradition and protocols. Here's ten strange customs the Royal Family still abides by...

#### Heirs travel separately

For security reasons, and to ensure the succession to the throne is not cast into disarray, heirs usually travel separately. Imagine the constitutional crisis if all the Queen's children were killed in a plane crash. But for this current Royal tour of Australia, William and Kate broke with tradition and took nine-month-old son George on their flight.

#### Relations of Dracula

Speaking of heirs, genealogists say that baby George is distantly related to Vlad The Impaler, the 15<sup>th</sup> century prince who inspired Bram Stoker's infamous vampire Dracula. Going back even further, the kid's bloodline can be traced to an Islamic sultan believed to have descended from the Prophet Mohammed.



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[Vlad the Impala, inspiration for Bram Stoker's Dracula, and possible Royal]

**Surnames? For commoners!** Titled members of the British Royal family are not required to have surnames, but can, if they chose, use the name of their Royal house instead.

#### Posh wake-up call

How do you get the Queen out of bed in the morning? By getting a piper to play beneath her window for 15 minutes every day at 9am when she's staying at Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle or Balmoral.

#### Obey the rules

Once Her Majesty has been dragged out of bed, it's important to remember certain protocols. First, no touching. As Aussie PM Paul Keating found out in 1992, placing your peasant hands on the Queen is frowned upon. Also, no touching the pets, either! Only Elizabeth is allowed to stroke her beloved Corgis.

#### They can't be killed

Technically, Britain's Sovereign never dies. While individual kings and queens perish, they are immediately succeeded, so there is never a point when there isn't a monarch. This is why it's customary for the phrase "The Kind Is Dead, Long Live The King" (or Queen where appropriate) to be spoken following a death.

#### News delivery

In the event of a Royal birth or death, the news is announced on an easel that's attached to the railings of Buckingham Palace.

### House of watches

Buckingham Palace is home to one of the world's largest collections of working clocks – 350 in all (including watches). There's so many that the Queen employs two full-time horological conservators to maintain and wind them up every week.

### Birds can be soldiers

The Tower of London, an official palace and fortress of the Royals, is famous for its collection of ravens. A decree by King Charles II means that at least six of the birds must be kept at the Tower at all times. And they're considered so important, they are officially enlisted as soldiers.

### Weird personal habits

The kooky private customs of the various members of the Royal Family are so varied, they could be made into a book. Actually, they have. *Not In Front Of The Corgies!*, a tome written by one of the Queen's former servants, described how the Queen has straw placed in her toilet so no one will hear her pee, that Prince Charles has never undressed himself, and servants are allowed to swim in the Buckingham Palace pool as long as there are no Royals in it at the time... (Worldofknowledge.com.au, April 16, 2014)



[The Royal Family, waving to the Great Unwashed]

Prince Harry's trip to Australia cost taxpayers \$150,000



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Prince Harry's visit to Australia cost taxpayers \$150,000. Photo: Janie Barrett

Taxpayers were charged \$150,000 for Prince Harry's two-night visit to Australia last October, Senate documents reveal.

Entertaining the Prince cost significantly more than the Coalition spent recently on other official visitors. Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Burma's National League for Democracy, spent almost 15 years under house arrest before her release in 2010. The bill for her five nights last November and December was just under \$40,000. Her tour included speeches at universities and the Sydney Opera House, and a meeting with Prime Minister Tony Abbott at Parliament House in Canberra.

About \$12,000 was spent on New Zealand Prime Minister John Key's one-day visit last October. Indonesia's Vice President Boediono visited for six nights last November, during heightened tensions between the Australia and Indonesia over spying claims and the Coalition's boat turn-back policy. His trip cost taxpayers about \$151,000 or a nightly cost of \$25,000. The nightly cost of Prince Harry's trip was \$75,000. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) would not provide a breakdown of the money spent on Prince Harry, but said the "broad categories of costs for these visits could include transport (air/ground/water), accommodation, hospitality and other visit related costs." PM&C also covers the cost of gifts to official guests, according to an official questioned by opposition Senate spokeswoman Penny Wong in estimates hearings this week. While visiting Australia, Prince Harry attended the International Fleet Review celebrating 100 years of the Royal Australian Navy, met with SAS troops in Perth and met with Prime Minister Tony Abbott and his family at Kirribilli House. Prince Harry appears to have enjoyed the hospitality. An AAP journalist covering the royal trip reported: "Before his departure from Sydney, Prince Harry told reporters Australia already felt like a second home and he was very sad to be leaving." "I just can't get the time off work these days," Prince Harry said. "The next time I come back you will be struggling to get rid of me I am sure." (Fergus Hunter, Jonathan Swan, *The Sun-Herald*, June 1, 2014)

### Royal visit cost Australia \$474,582

THE Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's tour of Australia and the advance visit for the trip cost Australia's taxpayers just under \$474,582, according to recent figures. WILLIAM, Kate and Prince George toured Australia for 10 days in April, visiting some of the nation's most famous sites from the Sydney Opera House to Uluru, formerly known as Ayers Rock. The total cost for the trip, and a preliminary visit in January by Kensington Palace staff and personal protection officers, was \$474,582, with

transportation costs the largest portion of the bill at just over STG137,000. The Cambridges based themselves in Sydney and later the capital Canberra during the tour, with their son remaining at the locations while they carried out official engagements. The bill for media liaison at STG46,641 was the next highest cost followed by domestic travel, for things such as meals and accommodation, at STG40,233 while hospitality and event related costs came to STG32,501. During royal visits to countries where the Queen is head of state, it is normal practice for the host nation to pay for the cost of the trip.

The figures were released by Australia's Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to The Australian newspaper after a Freedom of Information request, but do not include the cost of security or GST.

When the Queen visited Australia in October 2011, the cost of her trip reportedly came to almost STG1.5 million, but the bill included the charter of a plane for long-haul flights. (AAP, [dailytelegraph.com.au](http://dailytelegraph.com.au), Oct. 09, 2014)

### **Queen Victoria's dirty little secret revealed in Roland Perry's new book:**

#### **"The Queen her Lover and the most Notorious Spy in History"**

IT has been a British royal secret for 180 years: Queen Victoria had an affair at just 15 years old with a Scottish nobleman, the 13th Lord Elphinstone, who was 12 years her senior. He was Captain of the Royal Horse Guards and a close confidant of Victoria's predecessor, King William the 4th. The young princess and the dashing lord had a passionate relationship, which later matured into a strong friendship at her royal court. When Victoria's mother, the Duchess of Kent, discovered the affair early in 1836, she had Elphinstone "exiled" to become Governor of Madras. The Duchess had run the household at Kensington Palace like a prison to keep her daughter from outside "influence". But young Victoria's love of horses saw her riding daily in the forests and fields around the Palace. Her first choice of a riding companion was the gallant Captain of the Horse Guards. With Victoria's lover out of the way, the Duchess, her consort John Conroy, Victoria's uncle, Leopold King of the Belgians, Baron Stockmar and others conspired to have Victoria marry a royal. They settled on Prince Albert, an impoverished German from an insignificant principality. The 309 files in the huge Elphinstone Archive in London's British Library has abundant references to the affair including scores of comments from prominent establishment figures and those in royal courts in the UK and Europe. Typical was a letter from Charlotte Canning (a lady-in-waiting to Victoria) who wrote to a friend in 1837 that "all the people in the town of Spa, Belgium, ask us every day if the stories about the Queen and Lord Elphinstone are true, and if he is to come back to England to marry her". Newspapers of 1837 and 1838 carried innumerable remarks about the affair. When Victoria was ill and secluded at Ramsgate for several months in late 1835, royal poet Robert Browning noted that "(Princess) Victoria was lame and unable to stand upright, yet bent on marrying nobody but Lord Elphinstone".



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Undated painting of Queen Victoria who was the longest reigning Queen of England. Source: News Corp Australia

Matters came to a head late in 1837, when Victoria, then queen but not yet crowned, wanted Elphinstone back from India to be with her during her coronation in mid-1838. Without consulting her prime minister, Victoria "recalled" Elphinstone from Madras. As one report indicated ambiguously, this was so he could "perform for the royal household". She clashed with the prime minister who reversed her directive and kept Elphinstone in Madras, and also blocked any job in London. The incident was a test of her powers in a growing democracy, in which ministers of the crown were holding more sway at the expense of the monarch than ever before in history. Victoria failed and after five years of prevarication, married Albert in 1840. The arranged marriage lasted 21 years (until Albert's death) and produced nine children. After Elphinstone returned to London from India in 1846, she made him her lord-in-waiting, the closest male to her in the royal court next to her husband. When the Scottish Lord died in 1860, Victoria had photographs and paintings of him refurbished for hanging in the royal collection. Some remain to this day.

A more than life-sized monument of him was created by Victoria's favourite sculptor, Matthew Noble. It lies in the elegant St Peter's Church, at Limpsfield in Surrey near the Kent border, where Elphinstone is buried. In 1945, art historian Anthony Blunt was commissioned by King George VI, the current Queen's father, to steal or collect from a German castle all the thousands of letters from Victoria to her daughter Vicky. They contained intimate details of Victoria's relationship with Elphinstone. Blunt returned with the letters, which were placed in Windsor Castle. But he happened to be a double agent spying for the KGB. Blunt microfilmed the key correspondence and passed it on to his masters in Moscow. He was rewarded with a knighthood in 1956 and given a position at Buckingham Palace as Keeper Of The Queen's Pictures. Despite the knowledge from 1963 that he was a Russian spy, Blunt kept his job. He had virtual "blackmail" insurance that if he were discovered as a double agent he could not be fired because of the secrets he knew. Blunt was "outed" as a spy in public by the media in 1979. The only "punishment" for his treachery was that he was forced to give back his knighthood. (Roland Perry, *The Daily Telegraph*, November 01, 2014) *Professor Roland Perry's The Queen, Her Lover And The Most Notorious Spy In History is published by Allen & Unwin, \$32.99. He is Writer-In-Residence at Monash University. This is his 28th book.*

## **Science and the Environment**

### **Ice sheets melting faster, claims leaked report**

The melting of Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets is accelerating and may trigger a faster sea level rise than predicted, leaked details of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report reveal. Greenland's ice added six times more to sea levels in the decade through 2011 than in the previous 10 years, says a draft 2200-page study by the UN agency obtained by Bloomberg. The Antarctic melt produced a five-fold increase, prompting the UN to raise its forecast for how much the two ice sheets will add to Earth's oceans by 2100. The leak comes just weeks before the panel gathers on September 23 in Stockholm, where the Fifth Assessment Report is scheduled to be released four days later. National delegates are expected to wade through about 1800 comments to achieve consensus on the important Summary for Policymakers during the event. The report's assessment of ice melt from Greenland and Antarctica will be closely watched. The previous IPCC report, released in 2007, drew criticism from some scientists for underplaying the potential contribution from the two regions. "Greenland is losing mass and the rate of loss from Greenland has increased," said Ian Allison, a Hobart-based honorary research professor and lead author of the IPCC report's chapter on the cryosphere. "Antarctica is also losing mass but the signal is not so strong whether it's accelerating." Professor Allison declined to comment specifically on the IPCC report but said important international reports since the previous report in 2007 had improved our knowledge significantly about the two regions.

"We're a lot surer of what happened," he said, noting that satellite information is now largely reconciled compared with earlier studies. Sea levels are now forecast to rise by as much as 80 centimetres by the end of the century and continue to rise after that. The leaked report says Greenland's contribution to rising sea levels "very likely" rose - indicating a probability of more than 90 per cent - to an average of 0.59 millimetres a year from 2002 to 2011, up from 0.09 millimetres a year in the previous decade. Greenland could add a total of four centimetres to 21 centimetres to ocean levels by the period 2081 through 2100, across a range of carbon-emission scenarios assessed in the study, compared with the years 1986 through 2005. That's up from a 2007 forecast of one centimetre to 12 centimetres. Results due to Antarctic ice range from lowering sea levels by six centimetres to a 14 centimetre increase. The 2007 report forecast a reduction of two centimetres to 14 centimetres, due to higher snowfall than surface melting. Global sea levels have been rising at the rate of more than three millimetres a year. Greenland and Antarctica contain enough ice to raise sea levels by almost 66 metres, a process that would take thousands of years, Bloomberg reported. The IPCC leaks come as Australia is likely to register a poor snow season. Temperatures often favoured rain rather than snow, with the early arrival of warm spring weather likely to continue a trend towards shorter snow seasons. "The world is defrosting," Professor Neville Nicholls, a climate expert at Monash University, said in a recent interview. "We are losing snowfields, we're losing glaciers and we're starting to get melting of the big ice blocks on Greenland, even on Antarctica over the last decade or so ... It's just more and more evidence that the whole world is warming." (Peter Hannam, *SMH/Bloomberg*, September 7, 2013)

### **One-Fifth of China's Farmland Is Polluted, State Study Finds**

BEIJING — The Chinese government released a report on Thursday that said nearly one-fifth of its arable land was polluted, a finding certain to raise questions about the toxic results of China's rapid industrialization, its lack of regulations over commercial interests and the consequences for the national food chain. The report, issued by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Land Resources, said 16.1 percent of the country's soil was polluted, including 19.4 percent of farmland. The report was based on a study done from April 2005 to last December on more than 2.4 million square miles of land across mainland China, according to Xinhua, the state news agency. The report said that "the main pollution source is human industrial and agricultural activities," according to Xinhua. More specifically, factory waste products, irrigation of land by polluted water, the improper use of fertilizers and pesticides, and livestock breeding have all resulted in tainted farmland, the report said. The study found that 82.8 percent of the polluted land was contaminated by inorganic material. The most common pollutants were cadmium, nickel and arsenic, and the levels of these materials in the soil had risen sharply since land studies in 1986 and 1990. The level of cadmium had risen by 50 percent in the southwest and in coastal areas and by 10 percent to 40 percent in other regions, Xinhua reported. The soil in southern China is more polluted than in the north.

The report confirms spreading fears among many officials and ordinary Chinese that the country's soil has been in severe decline. Its numbers also indicate a more serious problem than statistics did in a book published in early 2013 by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, "Soil Pollution and Physical Health," which said one-sixth of China's arable land, or nearly 50 million acres, was polluted. Officials have become increasingly vocal about the problem in the past year. In December, a vice minister of land and resources, Wang Shiyuan, said at a news conference that eight million acres of land across China, equal to the size of Maryland, were so polluted that farming should not be allowed on it. Hunan Province, in central China, has some of the worst soil pollution because it is one of China's top producers of nonferrous metals. But it is also a large rice-growing area, producing 16 percent of the country's rice in 2012, according to one market research company. Officials in Guangdong Province last year found that some rice had excessive levels of cadmium. Most of that rice was from Hunan. It is unclear how the findings released Thursday related to a national soil survey that was done from 2007 to around the end of 2009. Those findings have never been released, with officials calling them a "state secret." Some environmental advocates said the survey ended in 2010 and have sought its results. (Edward Wong, *New York Times*, April 18, 2014)

### **Cities' Air Problems Only Get Worse With Climate Change**

SAN FRANCISCO — The threats from climate change are many: extreme weather, shrinking snowpack, altered ecosystems and rising and more acidic seas, to name a few. Another lesser-known issue may hit especially close to home for city dwellers. In the world's already smoggy metropolises, pollution is likely to grow worse, a phenomenon scientists have taken to calling the climate penalty. Ozone is a key culprit. This lung-damaging compound, often formed from chemical reactions involving sunlight and automobile exhaust and other pollution, plagues major cities around the globe. As the climate heats up, it is projected that more ozone will form in polluted areas on sweltering days. "You have a hot summer, you're going to get a lot of ozone," said Daniel Jacob, a professor of atmospheric chemistry and environmental engineering at Harvard. The explanation lies in chemistry. Ozone, formed by a sunlight-aided reaction of volatile organic compounds with nitrogen oxides, is created more quickly at higher temperatures, as was evident during the European heat wave of 2003. Climate change will also make the air more stagnant in some areas like the East Coast of the United States, Dr. Jacob said, because with the Arctic getting warmer more quickly than the tropics, air circulation between those two regions will slow. In a warmer world, plants may also produce more emissions that are precursors to ozone.

In a 2009 paper in the journal *Atmospheric Environment*, Dr. Jacob and another researcher found that "climate change alone will increase summertime surface ozone in polluted regions by 1-10 parts per billion over the coming decades, with the largest effects in urban areas and during pollution episodes." (The United States standard for ozone is 75 parts per billion, though many experts say it should be lower to protect health.) But the projections for ozone are not uniformly bad. Scientists predict that the climate penalty will

mainly affect already polluted cities, where ozone is formed locally. But because a warmer climate means more airborne water vapor, which can dismantle ozone through a series of chemical reactions, the background level of ozone — that not created by man — at the earth's surface is expected to fall. This means that sparsely populated areas, which produce less pollution, may escape the climate penalty. In Europe, for example, southern areas are expected to see climate change lead to higher ozone (assuming emissions stay the same), whereas the thinly populated Nordic region could feel no impact or even see improvements, according to Joakim Langner, an associate professor at the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute. Southern Europe not only produces more ozone-forming emissions, but it is also projected to become drier and sunnier, Dr. Langner said — conditions conducive to ozone formation.

In China, a similar regional split is expected to emerge. Eastern China, home to megacities like Shanghai and Beijing, is likely to see an increase in ozone problems, whereas western China can expect lower levels, scientists project. The ozone in western China is largely produced elsewhere, allowing water vapor in the atmosphere an opportunity to dismantle the ozone through a series of chemical reactions. The phenomenon of an increase in climate-linked ozone is likely to hold true for other big, polluted Asian cities, like those in Japan or India, said Amos Tai, an assistant professor in the Earth System Science Program at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Scientists are most certain of the trajectory of ozone, but other health-damaging air pollutants may also be affected by climate change. Attention is turning to soot and other fine particles, which can lodge in the lungs and cause long-term harm. In areas prone to drought, the climate may also worsen soot-spewing wildfires, as is the case this year in the western United States.

In China, where fine particles are already a huge problem for big cities, a change in winter monsoon patterns could bring less clean air from eastern Siberia, and “that would favor more pollution over eastern China,” said Yuxuan Wang, an assistant professor of atmospheric chemistry at Texas A&M University, Galveston. A changing monsoon could also affect South Asia's pollution distribution, she said. However, the future of monsoon patterns is uncertain under existing climate models, Dr. Wang said. Another key question, researchers say, is what the effects will be from dust swept off major deserts and transported around the world. Even on ozone further study is needed, said Ruth Doherty, a reader in atmospheric sciences at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. “Ozone is still a key area of research in the context of climate change impacts because it is strongly coupled to meteorological conditions and hence climate,” she said. Carlos Ordonez, who works on regional air quality modeling for the Met Office in Britain, points out that most records for ozone and other air pollutants are relatively short, compared with temperature data, so longer-term information is needed.

But with the threat of a climate penalty looming, of course, added impetus is on the world's nations to reduce their emissions of air pollutants from factories and motor vehicles. (Kate Galbraith, New York Times, August 20, 2014)

### **After ‘Cadmium Rice,’ now ‘Lead’ and ‘Arsenic Rice’**

Soil in China's leading rice-producing region shows high levels of heavy metal contamination, in a study that suggests that the proximity of mining and industry to agricultural areas is posing serious threats to the country's food chain.

In “Cadmium Rice: Heavy metal pollution of China's rice crops,” researchers for Greenpeace East Asia sampled farmland and uncultivated soil, water and rice grown near a smelter of non-ferrous metals in Hunan Province, China's top rice producer.

In some locations of the study, the researchers found soil containing cadmium levels more than 200 times the national health standard, adding to a growing body of evidence that parts of the country's soil are heavily degraded after decades of fast industrialization and high economic growth. All but one of the rice samples exceeded the maximum level of cadmium in rice for human consumption in China.

“Cadmium rice” is a well-known term in China since a 2013 Guangdong Province government report that 44 percent of rice samples had excessive levels of cadmium attracted attention. But the Greenpeace study extended the concept by listing “arsenic rice,” “mercury rice” and “lead rice.” Of those four toxic substances, only mercury levels appeared relatively safe.

With “a fast pace of urbanization, China is struggling to save enough land for farming and keep a high rate of grain self-sufficiency. But apart from quantity, whether it can maintain soil health remains a question,” Tang Damin, a communications officer at Greenpeace, wrote in an email. The study tried to pinpoint the source of the cadmium — according to another recent government study, 7 percent of soil in China is polluted with the metal. Greenpeace noted that many provinces where metals mining and smelting was widespread were also major grain-producing provinces. It supplied two maps that showed colored-in provinces representing metal-smelting areas and grain-production areas that mapped closely to each other. “The main sources of cadmium pollution are emissions from smelting plants,” said Chen Nengchang, a soil expert at the Guangdong Institute of Eco-environment and Soil Sciences, chiming with the study's findings. According to the study: “For five metals (arsenic, cadmium, lead, manganese and zinc), strong correlations of concentrations in uncultivated soils indicate a common source, suggesting that emissions from the complex may be a major contributor to elevated concentrations of these five metals in uncultivated soils in this area.” In rice, “the cadmium levels were most notable, with all but one of the samples exceeding the maximum allowable level of cadmium in rice for human consumption in China (0.2 mg/kg), with the highest level exceeding the limit by 22 times,” it said. In a telephone interview, Mr. Chen said: “Cadmium intake through food is a chronic intoxication process by small doses. It's a very slow accumulation, but its excretion and drainage is even slower. Its half life is about 17 to 38 years, that's to say it would take that long to reduce by half. Basically once inside, it will stay there — if not all your life, at least the better half of it.” “About a third of the cadmium absorbed by the human body will concentrate in the kidneys, another a quarter in the liver. Its damage to human health is formidable. Generally speaking, one can't take in more than two grams of cadmium in a lifetime,” he said. Rice is China's favorite food, but it is also unusually vulnerable to pollution as it easily absorbs metals from the soil, Deborah Blum reported last week in The Times' Well blog. It is “one of the most widely consumed foods in the world,” and “also one of nature's great scavengers of metallic compounds,” Ms. Blum reported. Rice contamination with cadmium and arsenic was also an issue in the United States, she noted. However the levels found in the study, in Texas, were “not high enough to provoke alarm.” (Didi Kirsten Tatlow, International Herald Tribune, April 25, 2014)

## **Economics**

### **Equality at risk in the West, says Rupert Murdoch**

IN a confronting message to the world's leading ministers and central bankers, Rupert Murdoch has warned their policies have caused a "massive shift" in societies to benefit the super-rich with a legacy of social polarisation.

In the News Corp executive chairman's speech to the G20 meeting this month — now available for the first time — he told global decision-makers the consequence of their policies had been "greater inequality" in Western society.

Speaking at the dinner in the Library of Congress building in Washington, Mr Murdoch said "the ladder of generational progress" was now at risk in the developed world and that a moment of "great global reckoning" had arrived. He said that, since the 2008 global financial crisis, leaders had made the mistake of responding to the domestic "political outcry" instead of devising long-term structural reforms to restore economic confidence, investment and innovation. The upshot was the sacrifice of a generation of young people.

"It is at moments of great reckoning that great leaders are fashioned," he told guests including US Federal Reserve chairwoman Janet Yellen, European Central Bank president Mario Draghi and senior economic ministers from the top 20 nations, including Joe Hockey who organised the invitation to Mr Murdoch. It was the first time an outsider had addressed the G20 meeting.

Mr Murdoch said "the verdict was still out" on the great quantitative easing experiment — under which central banks put more money into economies by buying securities — "but we already know that one result has been greater inequality". "In America, the most highly paid 1 per cent now pay 46 per cent of all income tax," Mr Murdoch said. "In Britain, the top 1 per cent pay 28 per cent of all income tax. That is a massive shift from what our society looked like 30 years ago. We should all be concerned about this polarisation which was never the intent of policy but is certainly a consequence. "Quantitative easing has increased the price of assets, such as stocks and real estate, and that has helped first and foremost those who already have assets. Meanwhile, the lack of any real wage increase for middle-income workers means growing societal divisions and resentment. "This is one of the core lessons of my professional life — I have seen many politicians who have the best of intentions but who deliver the worst of outcomes." With the global economy still struggling after the 2008-09 crisis, Mr Murdoch told economic decision-makers their prescriptions fell far short of the optimum economic and social results.

The significance of his nine-page speech is his argument about the limits to both monetary and fiscal policy and the imperative for a new approach based upon the need "for government to get out of the way". Mr Murdoch called for: labour market reform; lower and more competitive corporate taxes; a crackdown on multinationals — naming Google — for not paying taxes where they make their profits; a rethink on excessive bank regulation, warning "you would have to be mad to join the board of a bank these days"; and recognition that high taxes and over-regulation were damaging economic growth and the public interest. The October 9 dinner was hosted by Mr Hockey since Australia is the G20 host nation this year. Reports after the event said the speech was broadly appreciated by those in attendance. In the current global context, Mr Murdoch's message is highly provocative. It conflicts with the domestic policies of many nations, not least Australia where the populist denial about the need for structural reform is intense. Mr Murdoch said he was still an optimist — if the right choices were taken. He was confident because the world was shifting "from an industrial society to an information society". The information revolution sweeping all societies would create new opportunities for entrepreneurs and private-sector growth.

The policy priorities he advocated were education and immigration reform, infrastructure investment and cheap energy. Mr Murdoch said cheap gas in the US had decreased manufacturing costs and lifted US manufacturing exports by 6 per cent. But his message to global leaders was that the results weren't good enough — economic growth was weak, unemployment was too high and family incomes were inadequate. He said growth in the eurozone was "basically static". While the US was held up as a "bright spot" the reality was different. Real US median income was lower than 15 years ago and its 63 per cent employment participation was at the lowest level in 35 years. "This has an enormous impact on quality of life for American families," he said. "Today many Americans who have jobs aren't satisfied with them. They would like to work longer hours or find higher-wage jobs with growth potential, but there just aren't enough opportunities."

Mr Murdoch said much of the burden of failed policy was falling on young people.

The lack of opportunity for the next generation was "especially troubling" along with the "inevitable social and political upheavals to come". This was because the unemployment rate for people under 25 years in the US was 13 per cent and in the eurozone was 23 per cent. It was twice as high in Spain and Greece and parts of France and Italy. The chief of News Corporation, ultimate owner of *The Australian*, told European and US leaders in the intimate setting of the dinner that many of their policies were a "tremendous disincentive to innovation and risk-taking". He confronted them saying high taxes and overregulation "goes to extremes in many European countries and several US states". He said an "easier" problem to tackle was that posed by Google in Australia. "Google harvests nearly \$1 billion annually in Australia — by pirating the copyrights of local taxpayers," Mr Murdoch said. "While I am sure they are not the only offenders, as the chairman of a company that is continuously financially wounded by that piracy, I feel quite justified in calling them out by name." On company tax, he quoted former president Bill Clinton saying the current system, notably in the US, was "crazy". Action had to be taken to make corporate tax rates more competitive. (*Paul Kelly, The Australian, October 28, 2014*)

### **How Coles squeezed suppliers for 'perfect profit day'**

AMONG Coles top supermarket executives it was known as "profit day" or if they were feeling particularly animated, "perfect profit day". It was a special time of year, which seemed to happen a lot, when the general managers of Coles' key supermarket categories, such as deli, bakery or frozen, would contact suppliers and demand money from them. And from the internal emails detailed in court documents this morning by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, "perfect profit day" pushed as much pressure on Coles staff as it did their food and grocery suppliers. One particularly active Coles executive even tried to top his "perfect profit day" target, pushing staff to squeeze \$1 million from suppliers when the actual target was only \$750,000 for the day. Take one example revealed in the Federal Court documents prepared by the ACCC. In August and September 2011, Philip Armstrong, the manager of the snacks and beverages category, also known as "Impulse", sent an email to his executives setting out his expectations they would be "challenging lines for profit" with Coles' suppliers every week. These were profit targets Mr Armstrong expected his team to meet for the week, period and financial year end.

When the money couldn't be squeezed from suppliers a "profit gap" emerged, and then the pressure would be upped.

"Our profit position still well behind budget we now need to be chasing all suppliers for any profit gaps we have to sales," read an email in October from the category manager for frozen to his staff. By November Mr Armstrong made clear the profit gap had to be closed. "I want to get out of the Friday morning 'panic' please," he wrote in an email, "our profit budget is a given ... Ring suppliers today if you are short on profit." But Mr Armstrong didn't want a big deal made about it, best to keep it quiet, he advised. The ACCC alleges that in one email in December 2011 he relevantly stated: "Just a reminder today is perfect profit day, it is meant to be kept low

key (we seem to have perfect profit day every day in Impulse!)”.’ Mr Armstrong also passed news of success in extracting money, and after seeking a payment from a supplier for a purported “profit gap” on a report Coles had generated, told other Coles executives the review of the specific Coles report resulted in a “pot of gold”. He encouraged others to use the report to obtain more payments for further purported “profit gaps” from suppliers. Mirroring his email was Anna Croft, the boss of the home-care category, who sent a message to other executives listing “actions” for “perfect profit day” which are now the subject of the ACCC’s case.

The grocery and frozen categories would also need to chip in to help Coles’ profit target as another Coles executive detailed in an email plans to extract \$1 million for “profit day”. “We have been sent a target of what money we need to secure as a team for the day,” wrote Philip Ready, the head of frozen, “as this number is \$750,000 which is just over \$100,000 per category ... lets aim to secure \$1 million for our profit day.” His email also included handy tips and suggestions for demanding money from suppliers, the ACCC alleges, in “areas that have delivered income”. Later Mr Armstrong would send an email at 6.48am where he indicated that the target for the Impulse category for profit day was \$2 million. The matter is listed for a directions hearing in Melbourne on Friday 24, October 2014 before Justice Gordon. (Eli Greenblat, *The Australian*, October 16, 2014)

### **Abbott and Hockey: Why poor people don't matter**

It doesn’t seem yet to have dawned on Tony Abbott that he was elected because he wasn’t Julia Gillard or Kevin Rudd, not because voters thought it was time we made a lurch to the Right. The man who imagines he has a “mandate” to mistreat the children of boat people, ensure free speech for bigots, give top appointments to big business mates and reintroduce knights and dames, represented himself as a harmless populist before the election. The other thing he doesn’t seem to have realised is that just as he has us moving to reduce our commitment to action against climate change and to make the budget much less fair, the rest of the advanced economies are moving the opposite way. President Obama is taking steps to overcome Congress’s refusal to act on global warming, the Chinese get more concerned about it as each month passes and the International Monetary Fund is chastising us for our apostasy. And while we use our budget to widen the gap between rich and poor, people in other countries are realising the need to narrow it.

Wayne Swan, former Labor treasurer, noted in a speech on Monday that “centre-right political leaders across the globe are acknowledging the obvious truth that capitalism is facing an existential challenge . . . only last week ratings agency Standard and Poor’s emphasised yet again that high inequality is a drag on growth”. In Australia, however, an increasing “vocal minority has decided to oppose any reform, no matter how necessary and no matter how obvious in its benefits to the whole nation, if they perceive it is in their short-term interests to do so. “This is a recipe for unnecessary political division and widening social inequality, and unfortunately permanent reform failure,” he says. Australians had done much better than the Americans at matching strong economic growth with social equity but, according to Swan, “we’re witnessing the Americanisation of the Right in this country. Obsessed with defending the advantages of the wealthiest in our society”. In his various efforts to defend rather than correct his first budget’s unfairness, Joe Hockey seems to be doing just that. Meanwhile, the messages coming from international authorities are very different. In a recent paper on policy challenges for the next 50 years, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development warned the growing importance of skill-biased technological progress and the rising demand for skills, will continue to widen the gap between high and low wages.

Unless this was corrected by greater redistribution of income, other OECD countries would end up facing almost the same level of inequality as seen in the US today. “Rising inequalities may backlash on growth, notably if they reduce economic opportunities available to low-income talented individuals,” it warns. Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, noted in a speech that the 85 richest people in the world control as much wealth as the poorest half of the global population - 3.5 billion people.

“With facts like these, it is no wonder that rising inequality has risen to the top of the agenda - not only among groups normally focused on social justice, but also increasingly among politicians, central bankers and business leaders,” she said.

“Many would argue, however, that we should ultimately care about equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome.” As it happens, Hockey has defended his budget’s unfairness with just that argument. “The problem is that opportunities are not equal. Money will always buy better-quality education and health care, for example. But due to current levels of inequality, too many people in too many countries have only the most basic access to these services, if at all. The evidence also shows that social mobility is more stunted in less equal societies.” Disparity also brings division, she said. “The principles of solidarity and reciprocity that bind societies together are more likely to erode in excessively unequal societies. History also teaches us that democracy begins to fray at the edges once political battles separate the haves against the have-nots.” Pope Francis put this in stark terms when he called increasing inequality “the root of social evil”.

“It is therefore not surprising that IMF research - which looked at 173 countries over the past 50 years - found that more unequal countries tend to have lower and less durable economic growth,” Legarde also said. Get that? Until now, the conventional wisdom among economists has been that efforts to reduce inequality come at the expense of economic growth. Now a pillar of economic orthodoxy, the IMF, has found it works the other way round: rising inequality - as is occurring in Australia, the US and almost all advanced economies - seems to lead to slower growth. Lagarde said other IMF research had found that, in general, budgetary policies had a good record of reducing social disparities. Social security benefits and income taxes “have been able to reduce inequality by about a third, on average, among the advanced economies”. What can we do? “Some potentially beneficial options can include making income tax systems more progressive without being excessive; making greater use of property taxes; expanding access to education and health; and relying more on active labour market programs and in-work social benefits.” Perhaps in his efforts to get a modified version of his budget passed by the Senate, Hockey could bring in the IMF as consultants. (Ross Gittins, *SMH*, August 20, 2014)

### **BIS chief fears fresh Lehman from worldwide debt surge**

Jaime Caruana says investors are ignoring prospect of higher interest rates in the hunt for returns

The world economy is just as vulnerable to a financial crisis as it was in 2007, with the added danger that debt ratios are now far higher and emerging markets have been drawn into the fire as well, the Bank for International Settlements has warned. Jaime Caruana, head of the Swiss-based financial watchdog, said investors were ignoring the risk of monetary tightening in their voracious hunt for yield. “Markets seem to be considering only a very narrow spectrum of potential outcomes. They have become convinced that monetary conditions will remain easy for a very long time, and may be taking more assurance than central banks wish to give,” he told *The Telegraph*. Mr Caruana said the international system is in many ways more fragile than it was in the build-up to the Lehman crisis. Debt ratios in the developed economies have risen by 20 percentage points to 275pc of GDP since then. Credit spreads have fallen to wafer-thin levels. Companies are borrowing heavily to buy back their own shares. The BIS said 40pc of syndicated loans are to sub-investment grade borrowers, a higher ratio than in 2007, with ever fewer protection covenants for creditors.

The disturbing twist in this cycle is that China, Brazil, Turkey and other emerging economies have succumbed to private credit booms of their own, partly as a spill-over from quantitative easing in the West. Their debt ratios have risen 20 percentage points as well, to 175pc. Average borrowing rates for five-years is 1pc in real terms. This is extremely low, and could reverse suddenly. "We are watching this closely. If we were concerned by excessive leverage in 2007, we cannot be more relaxed today," he said. "It may be the case that the debt is better distributed because some highly-indebted countries have deleveraged, like the private sector in the US or Spain, and banks are better capitalized. But there is also now more sensitivity to interest rate movements." The BIS warned it is annual report two weeks ago that equity markets had become "euphoric". Volatility has dropped to an historic low. European equities have risen 15pc in a year despite near zero growth and a 3pc fall in expected earnings. The cyclically-adjusted price earnings ratio of the S&P 500 index in the US reached 25 in May, six points above its half-century average. The Tobin's Q measure is far more stretched than in 2007. "Overall, it is hard to avoid the sense of a puzzling disconnect between the markets' buoyancy and underlying economic developments globally," it said. Mr Caruana declined to be drawn on when the bubble will burst. "As Keynes said, markets can stay irrational longer than you can stay solvent," he said. The BIS says prolonged monetary stimulus in the US, Europe, and Japan has led to a leakage of liquidity, contaminating the rest of the world. The rising powers of Asia are no longer able to act as a firebreak – as they did after the Lehman crash – and may themselves now be a source of risk.

Emerging markets have racked up \$2 trillion in foreign currency debt since 2008. They are a much larger animal than they were during the East Asia crisis of the late 1990s, so any crisis would do more damage. "The ramifications would be particularly serious if China, home to an outsize financial boom, were to falter," it said.

BIS officials doubt privately the whether China can avoid a 'hard landing', fearing that the extreme credit growth over the last five years must lead to a financial reckoning. They also doubt whether the aftermath will in the end be easier to deal with in a state-controlled banking system where the Communist Party controls the credit levers. The annual report suggested that China's \$4 trillion of reserves are a Maginot Line defence. It noted US was also a large external creditor in the 1920s, as was Japan in the 1980s, before each went into deep crisis. "Time and again, in both advanced and emerging market economies, seemingly strong bank balance sheets have turned out to mask unsuspected vulnerabilities that surface only after the financial boom has given way to bust," it said.

The BIS is the doyen of world's financial institutions, created in Basel in 1930 to clean up the mess left by German reparations payments under the Versailles Treaty. It has since evolved into the bank of central banks, and lately the bastion of monetary orthodoxy. It issued a crescendo of warnings in the build-up to the Lehman crisis, implicitly rebuking the US Federal Reserve and others for holding interest rates too low, which in their view robs economic growth from the future. The BIS was vindicated, though not everybody agrees that it was right for the right reasons. Monetarists argue that the Great Recession was due to over-tightening into the downturn. This caused M3 broad money growth to collapse months before the banking crisis. The BIS backed QE as an emergency measure in early 2009 to avert a deflationary spiral but has long since called for a return to sound money, and even rate rises. "The predominant risk is that central banks will find themselves behind the curve, exiting too late or too slowly," it said. This has earned BIS a reputation for Austrian School ideology, accused of encouraging crude liquidation. The bank denies this, tracing the bank's doctrines to the pre-Keynesian Swedish economist Knut Wicksell. Wicksell posited a "natural rate of interest". Holding rates too low creates a host of problems. While his model looks like the modern "Taylor Rule" used by the Fed and other central banks, it is different in crucial respects.

Confident in its cause, the BIS more or less indicts the central bank establishment of malpractice. "Policy does not lean against the booms but eases aggressively and persistently during busts. This induces a downward bias in interest rates and an upward bias in debt levels, which in turn makes it hard to raise rates without damaging the economy – a debt trap." "Systemic financial crises do not become less frequent or intense, private and public debts continue to grow, the economy fails to climb onto a stronger sustainable path, and monetary and fiscal policies run out of ammunition. Over time, policies lose their effectiveness and may end up fostering the very conditions they seek to prevent," it said. Basel's lonely call for discipline pits it against the Fed, the Bank of Japan, the Bank of England, and even Frankfurt these days. It prompted an unusually piquant riposte from London earlier this month. "Has monetary policy aided and abetted risk-taking? I hope so. That's why we did it," said the Bank of England's chief economist Andy Haldane.

"It is good to have the debate," said Mr Caruana gamely. Yet he refuses to back down. "There is something strange about fighting debt by incentivizing more debt." He is now skirmishing on a fresh front, questioning the Fed's new enthusiasm for macro-prudential curbs as a first line of defence. "On their own there is little evidence that they can constrain financial imbalances. We don't think macro-pro can serve as a substitute," he said. Mr Caruana said the US recovery is not a vindication of monetary stimulus, but evidence that the best answer to "balance sheet recessions" is to clear away the dead wood and unlock resources for new technologies. "The Americans were quite aggressive in forcing recognition of losses and there was a very rapid recapitalisation of the banks. This is why it was successful. The role of quantitative easing is an open question." Mr Caruana dismisses the global deflation scare as alarmist, even though Sweden's Riksbank has just abandoned his camp and slashed rates to near zero to avert a Japanese-style trap. Deflation is very unlikely to happen in the West, he insists. Gently falling prices are typically benign in any case. "We should not exaggerate the role of deflation in history," he said.

The Great Depression is the exception, not the rule. Welfare systems and unemployment insurance now make such an outcome almost impossible. "In the 1930s the stabilizers were very different," he said. Critics are unlikely to accept this assurance since Spain, Greece, Portugal, Ireland, and Latvia have all gone through depressions over the last six years, and Italy, France and Holland are all close to debt-deflation. The concern is what would now happen to parts of Europe if there were a fresh downturn or an external shock. Debt ratios are higher than they were in the 19th Century. The "denominator effect" of deflation is therefore more destructive today. The International Monetary Fund has hinted that it might be best for the world to chip away its debt mountain with a few years of inflation, as the US did in late 1940s and early 1950s, armed with financial repression. Asked whether he would support this form of loss recognition for creditors, Mr Caruana came close to choking. "It must be clearly resisted," he said. (Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, *The Daily Telegraph* (UK), July 13, 2014)

### **Wealth of seven richest Australians exceeds that of 1.73 million households**

Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows the bottom 20 per cent of households own roughly \$54 billion in wealth. The most recent BRW Rich List shows the seven richest people in the country own more than \$56 billion in accumulated wealth.

#### Growing gap between rich and poor

**\$56.2b**

Wealth of Australia's seven richest people.

**\$54b**

Approximate wealth of the poorest 20% of households.

1. Gina Rinehart: **\$22b**
2. Frank Lowy: **\$6.87b**
3. James Packer: **\$6b**
4. Anthony Pratt and family: **\$5.95b**
5. Ivan Glasenberg: **\$5.61b**
6. Harry Triguboff: **\$4.95b**
7. Hui Wing Mau: **\$4.82b**

Source: BRW, ABS

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The rich Australians.

They are Gina Rinehart (estimated wealth of \$22 billion), Frank Lowy (\$6.9 billion), James Packer (\$6 billion), Anthony Pratt & Family (\$5.6 billion), Ivan Glasenberg (\$5.6 billion), Harry Triguboff (\$4.95 billion) and Wing Mau Hui (\$4.82 billion).

The Australia Institute's paper, *Income and Wealth Inequality in Australia* shows how policy decisions in Australia - such as the reduction in the top marginal income tax rate over time - have contributed to an increase in wealth of Australia's richest individuals, and widened the disparity between wealth and incomes in Australia. It says the gap between the richest and the poorest households will grow if government payments to low-income families are reduced further in this budget.

The paper shows in the past eight years the cost of tax cuts introduced by Labor and Liberal governments have been about \$170 billion, with the top 10 per cent of earners receiving more benefits from those tax cuts than the bottom 80 per cent of taxpayers. A recent survey by the Australia Institute found that most Australians are unaware of the extent of inequality, with the majority of people believing the "average income" in this country is similar to their own personal income. People who earn between \$20,000 and \$40,000 a year believe the average Australian earns the same. The same goes for Australians who earn between \$100,000 and \$150,000 a year.

The decision by Treasurer Joe Hockey to index the age pension against the CPI, rather than male total average weekly earnings, will lead to age pensioners' incomes falling further behind community standards, it shows.

It comes as Nobel-prize laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz warns about the consequences of a global rise in inequality.

Professor Stiglitz will talk in Sydney Town Hall on Tuesday night about the "Price of Inequality". He warned last week that political decisions were to blame for the enormous growth in wealth and income at the top of the income distribution in the United States, and for the falling living standards in the middle and lower bands. Dr Richard Denniss, the Australia Institute's executive director, says the Abbott government's decision in this budget to make welfare payments grow at a slower rate than wages will "inevitably" lead to a bigger gap between rich and poor. He says a recent survey found more than 80 per cent of Australians want the level of social services in Australia to remain as they are or to be increased, "even if increases mean additional taxation." Clive Palmer, told the National Press Club on Monday that he would not support the Abbott government's \$7 GP co-payment because it would reduce the real incomes of pensioners and the poor. "I didn't get elected to Parliament to take someone's chocolate or coffee off them, as simple as that mate, and it won't be happening." (Gareth Hutchens, *SMH*, July 8, 2014)

#### More to public's dislike of the budget than simple selfishness

Tony Abbott has turned out to be a chameleon. Before the election, he took the guise of a populist, opposed to all things nasty and in favour of all things nice. Since the election, he's revealed himself to be a hard-line ideologue, intent on reshaping government to suit the interests of big business and high-income earners. Before the election, he was the consummate vote-seeking politician. Since the election, he has transformed into an inflexible "conviction politician" who doesn't seem much worried about whom he offends. Dr Mike Keating, former top econocrat, says the budget is always the clearest guide to a government's priorities and values. That's certainly true this time.

This budget scores high marks for its efforts to get the budget back on track. As almost every economist will tell you, there is no "budget emergency". But there would be problems if we allowed the budget to stay in deficit for another 10 years, which was a prospect had Abbott failed to take tough measures (all of which were in marked contrast to his sweetness and light before the election and many of which were in direct contradiction to his promises). The budget's great strength is its approach of announcing savings while delaying their major effect until 2017-18, by which time it's hoped the economy will be strong enough to cope with the reduced spending. That, plus Treasurer Joe Hockey's efforts to increase spending on infrastructure in the interim. But the budget goes further than is needed to fix the budget. It's our first genuine attempt to achieve (as opposed to talk about) "smaller government". So as to minimise the need for future tax increases, it puts government spending on a diet. It does so partly by increasing user charges (for GP visits and tests, pharmaceuticals and university tuition), but mainly by changing the indexation of pensions and government grants to the states for public schools and hospitals, from indexes linked to the growth in wages to the main index linked to consumer prices. That's a saving of at least another 1 per cent a year, cumulating every year forever (or at least until it's reversed as politically and economically untenable).

By restricting his savings to cuts in government spending and studiously avoiding all the lurks hidden in the tax system, Abbott ensured the burden of his savings is carried overwhelmingly by low and middle-income earners, leaving high-income earners largely unscathed, save for a small temporary tax levy. He also ignored almost all the government spending constituting welfare for businesses. You would have to be terribly trusting to believe all this happened by accident rather than design. The public's wholehearted disapproval of the budget makes it likely a lot of its measures won't make it through the Senate. Abbott's opponents will have a field day acting as our saviours. No doubt much of this disapproval arises from simple, short-sighted self-interest. After all, Abbott spent the past four years fostering our selfish incomprehension. People got it into their heads that their cost of living was rising rapidly, causing their standard of living to slip. It wasn't true, but Abbott reinforced rather than corrected the misperception. (To be fair, the Labor government was no better.)

But I'd like to believe there's more to our disapproval of the budget than simple selfishness. John Howard says the public will accept a tough budget provided people are satisfied it's reasonably fair and in the nation's interests. Trouble is, this budget is neither fair nor in the nation's interest - unless you share the Business Council's certainty that the world would be a much better place if only big business was allowed to do whatever it pleased and executives paid minimal tax. What surprises me is how Abbott could change from being such a supremely pragmatic, vote-obsessed polie in opposition to being so willing to alienate so many interest groups while in government. I never imagined I'd see the day when any government decided to take on perhaps the most powerful voting bloc of them

all, Grey Power. The fury of the old will be even greater when they fully comprehend how the planned change in pension indexation will lower their relative incomes. If it survives, it will be a hot issue at the next election.

Nor did I ever expect to see any government declare war on virtually the whole of the younger generation. The plan to deny education leavers the dole for six months involves high social costs with little budgetary or economic merit, but is the reappearance of one of Abbott's personal bonnet-bees. The plan to let universities charge what they please for their courses and impose a real interest rate on students' HECS debt will saddle our brightest and best with big debts, lingering for many years. I've heard of worse injustices, but it seems a strange way to endear yourself to those who represent the future Liberal heartland. Abbott is no doubt counting on there being a long time for voters to forgive and forget before the next election in 2016. But despite its goal of avoiding future tax rises, the budget's incorporation of a further two years of bracket creep means it will push up the tax rates faced by a lot of low to middle-income earners, something they won't easily forget. If I were Abbott, I wouldn't be counting on too much voter gratitude for fixing the budget. (Ross Gittins, *SMH*, June 10, 2014). Ross Gittins is economics editor.

## National

### Trains, planes and pain: it takes only seven minutes longer to travel from the Sydney CBD to Melbourne than it does to Ruse

SYDNEY'S peak hour commute has slowed to such a crawl it takes only seven minutes longer to travel from the CBD to Melbourne than to suburbs in the southwest of the city. The Daily Telegraph last Wednesday put Sydney's afternoon traffic to the test and discovered a person can travel 800km further in virtually the same amount of time than a commuter cursed to navigate our clogged streets. While one reporter negotiated a frustrating bumper-to-bumper trek to Ruse from the centre of Sydney, another was able to travel from Central Station to the airport, check in, enjoy a coffee in the waiting lounge and make it well into the descent over Tullamarine in the same amount of time. It was a race of plane, train and automobile as the reporters took on two routes travelled by thousands each day. The battle began shortly before 5pm with one reporter boarding a train at Central while the second drove out of a CBD parking lot. The jet-setting reporter caught the train, checked into his flight and was taxiing down the runway at the same time the second journalist was crawling past Sydney Airport on Southern Cross Drive after 50 minutes of fighting traffic out of the city. More than an hour after the journey began, our land-based reporter had reached the gridlock-inducing M5 tunnel and things really started to slow down. High above the daily grind, her colleague was airborne at nearly 1000km/h. As Reporter One passed over the Snowy Mountains, Reporter Two inched closer to the outskirts of Campbelltown. The pilot in the Virgin plane began a calm descent, but Reporter Two looked the goods. She pulled into the local shops at Ruse on Junction Road in first place. But just seven minutes later she received a text message from Reporter One as he swooped in over the runway. The time was approaching 7pm and one reporter was in another state, with Sydney's traffic lights and congested two-lane highways a distant memory. And if the driver had left the office after 5pm she would have still be sitting in traffic at 7.30pm. It's why when I had to work in the CBD, I always leave after 7pm and get home 40 minutes later. (Taylor Auerbach and Sarah Crawford, *The Daily Telegraph*, October 27, 2014)

#### Comments

**Cec:** And if the driver had left the office after 5pm she would have still be sitting in traffic at 7.30pm. It's why when I had to work in the CBD, I always leave after 7pm and get home 40 minutes later.

**Anonymous:** Probably much the same if you were to do the same from Melbourne! Commute from Melbourne's Western or South-Eastern suburbs on the freeways and into the city during the morning. VERSUS. catching a flight from Melbourne Airport (Tullamarine) to Sydney Airport :D I mean getting out to the Airport on the Tulla Freeway in the morning peak is a joke anyway!

**Riddley:** Decades of traffic data across the United States shows that adding new road capacity doesn't actually improve congestion. The latest example of this is the widening of Los Angeles' I-405 freeway, which was completed in May after five years of construction and a cost of over \$1 billion. "The data shows that traffic is moving slightly slower now on 405 than before the widening," The main reason is simple — adding road capacity spurs people to drive more miles, either by taking more trips by car or taking longer trips than they otherwise would have. It is the "fundamental rule" of road congestion: adding road capacity just increases the total number of miles traveled by all vehicles. This is because, for the most part, drivers aren't charged for using roads. So it's not surprising that a valuable resource, given away for free, leads people to use more of it. Economists see this phenomenon in a lot of places, and call it induced demand. If you really want to cut down on traffic, there's only one option: charge people to use roads when they're crowded, a policy known as congestion pricing. Or better, build efficient alternatives like public transport for longer trips and bike infrastructure for shorter and local trips.

**Saif:** Sydney can't be a major city and have low car traffic at the same time. Look at other metropolises in the world: London, NYC, Tokyo. Everyone there use trains/subway to commute. At least Sydneysiders can still commute via car, if they want...

**Peter:** And Abbott will only help out, if States sells their assets paid for by the taxpayer over many years, with building roads ZILCH on public transport.

**Riddley:** The photos of the roads tell the whole story. HUGE, ENORMOUS amounts of wasted space around each single commuter sitting in their individual car. Imagine that picture photoshopped to show only the people. You would laugh at the amount of space between each one. One train can take 800 cars off the road. If you want to fix the commute to Ruse, put a train line alongside the road, and subsidise it with road tolls.

**Craig @Riddley:** There is already a train line that runs parallel from the cbd to Campbelltown. The problem is that when people try to get to the station in their car, the car parks are full. Would also be good if more freight was moved by trains and the tolls for trucks doubled to encourage this situation.

### ABC spends up to hurt online media rivals

THE ABC is spending tens of thousands of dollars to damage its commercial media rivals by buying Google rankings that lure internet users to stories on its own news website. Spending on "search engine marketing" ensures the ABC's stories rank ahead of those written by other news organisations when users type in search terms such as "politics news".

On Tuesday this week, the ABC outbid its commercial rivals to buy the term "Gough Whitlam" to ensure stories on its website ranked ahead of those by outlets such as News Corp (publisher of *The Australian*), Fairfax Media and the television networks. It spent an estimated \$10,000. Higher-ranked stories typically attract significantly more readers. The ABC's use of search engine marketing has

drawn criticism from outlets including the Seven Network and Sky News, with Labor calling for an investigation and other media companies privately saying the public broadcaster should not be paying to buy internet traffic. While companies such as News Corp and Fairfax need to attract readers to help deliver advertising and subscription revenue, the taxpayer-funded ABC does not need either. Although the ABC Charter stipulates the corporation must “provide digital media services”, it says the ABC must “take account of the broadcasting services provided by the commercial and community sectors of the Australian broadcasting system”. *The Australian* can reveal that the ABC outspent all but one other news service on search engine marketing in August, helping it to rank as the nation’s fourth most popular news website.

The public broadcaster is also driving up the “cost per click” acquisition rate for publishers such as Fairfax, News Corp, Yahoo and Nine by buying search terms on Google. Media outlets typically pay Google a few dollars for each user who clicks through to a story from a sponsored link. Responding to a series of detailed questions from *The Australian*, ABC spokesman Nick Leys said only: “The ABC advertises its programming on a range of platforms, including online. The aim of such advertising is to increase audience awareness of ABC services.” Earlier this month, ABC director of news Kate Torney boasted that the corporation provided “one of the nation’s most popular online and mobile news services”. “News and current affairs content dominates the ABC’s online traffic and reaches an average of 2.6 million Australians a month,” she wrote on the ABC’s The Drum commentary website. “Since the new mobile version of the site launched in July last year, the audience has increased by more than 40 per cent.” Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who is demanding the ABC cut costs, declined to comment yesterday. But opposition communications spokesman Jason Clare called for an investigation into the matter after he was provided with the ABC’s response to questions about why it was competing with commercial media outlets. “Minister Turnbull should investigate this,” Mr Clare said. The spending to drive traffic to ABC online comes as managing director Mark Scott warns many of its top programs, including *Lateline*, are under review because of budget cuts.

Sky News Australia chief executive Angelos Frangopoulos, who recently hired veteran journalist Jim Middleton following his redundancy from the ABC, said yesterday it was “very disappointing that great ABC journalists are losing their jobs while others at the national broadcaster are wasting money with one aim: to damage other Australian media outlets”. “The ABC has an abundance of opportunities on radio, TV and online to promote its services, which it can all use for free,” Mr Frangopoulos said.

Seven Network director of news Rob Raschke said the ABC’s strategy was odd given the public broadcaster had no commercial reason to attract online audiences. “It’s spending money to actively compete with commercial organisations who have a commercial imperative to attract audiences,” he said. Former ABC chairman Maurice Newman described the practice as “unfair competition” that could diminish media diversity. “It does raise the whole question of the ABC’s competitive position in the media space and I would have thought taxpayers’ dollars weren’t really meant to drive away viewership and readership from the private sector,” he said.

“At a time when media organisations are seeking to get their revenue on the web, to the extent that a public broadcaster is paying to have traffic directed to it, away from the private sector, that would seem to be to be not competitive neutrality. I thought competitive neutrality was one of the planks of our form of government.” Media proprietor Eric Beecher has questioned the ABC’s increasing dominance online, writing on Crikey this week that the ABC charter was a “fuzzy motherhood manifesto”, failing to provide detail about key directions or priorities. The ABC also declined to comment on its support of Google, which, despite reported revenue of \$1.8 billion, paid only \$7.1 million to the tax office for the 2013-14 financial year. (*Sharri Markson, The Australian, October 24, 2014*)

### **Busting decades of myths on Gough Whitlam**

GOUGH Whitlam was a political giant who had an enormous impact on Australia. It is right to speak respectfully of the recently dead. In retirement, Whitlam was a model of wit and propriety and I was one of many journalists who benefited from his capacious memories. I supported Whitlam against his defamers over East Timor and for a time we collaborated on this issue a good deal. But sentimentality, and the overwhelming power of the Labor myth-making machine, should not blind us to the central fact of Whitlam: he was the worst prime minister in our history. This is true in economic policy, foreign policy and processes of government. After three years in office, he lost the 1975 election by the greatest electoral landslide in Australian political history. He had another go as opposition leader in 1977 and was rejected by a similar margin. His foreign policy record was appalling, although it is here that the myth-makers have worked hardest because his economic record was even worse. Whitlam acted with conspicuous cruelty towards the Vietnamese who had worked with Australian forces and Australian diplomats during the war between South Vietnam and North Vietnam.

His foreign minister, Don Willessee, wanted him to bring some of these people to Australia at the fall of Saigon in April 1975. Whitlam told him: “I’m not having these f..king Vietnamese Balts coming into the country with their religious and political prejudices against us.” The quote is in Clyde Cameron’s memoir. Whitlam never denied the quote. Once, when I recounted the quote with one word mistaken, Whitlam rang me to correct the mistaken word and confirm the quote generally. Later, when Vietnamese were fleeing the communists whose victory Whitlam had championed, he remarked: “Vietnamese sob stories don’t wring my withers.” More important than what Whitlam said was what he did. Australian transport planes left Saigon with rows of empty seats while those who had helped us there were left to their fate in the vast gulag of re-education camps the communists set up after their victory. Or they were left to a worse fate.

Whitlam’s myth-makers are so impervious to the facts that they often claim his visit to China as opposition leader was a breakthrough in opening China to the west. In fact for most of the preceding years numerous Western nations in Europe had full diplomatic relations with mainland China. It was as near as anything could possibly be to inevitable that Australia would eventually extend formal diplomatic recognition to Beijing. Once the Americans made their move, their Asian allies followed, although the US took some years after de facto recognition to achieve formal recognition. This is because the Americans were tough negotiators and were not going to sell out Taiwan. They would not recognise Beijing in a way that gave it licence to conquer Taiwan, which is de facto independent but which Beijing considers a renegade province. Harvard scholar Ross Terrill argues that Whitlam badly botched the negotiations with Beijing because he was desperate to afford recognition straight away. As a result he agreed to conditions that were punitive of Australian interests in Taiwan and effectively sold out the interests of Taiwanese people altogether. Most of Whitlam’s foreign policy decisions were wrong in principle and turned out badly in practice. Entirely gratuitously, he extended formal diplomatic recognition of Soviet sovereignty over the Baltic states. This was a blow to Australians of Baltic origin who yearned for human rights and self-determination in their countries of origin. And, as so often happened, history proved Whitlam wrong. The Baltic states are all independent of Russia today. The two most disgraceful episodes of Whitlam’s leadership concerned the Middle East. Most people remember the loans affair, but an even greater disgrace concerned Whitlam’s efforts to raise election funds for the ALP in 1975 from the Iraqi government. With Stalinist efficiency, Labor myth-makers have almost entirely elided this episode from history. So let’s recount the facts. Whitlam authorised Bill Hartley, a far-left figure of the Victorian ALP who received subsidies from Arab dictators, to seek

election funding of up to \$2 million from the Iraqi government or the governing Iraqi Baath Socialist Party. Their agreed envoy, whom Whitlam met and authorised, was one Henry Fischer. In Iraq, Fischer met Saddam Hussein, then vice-president of Iraq. He later intimated he could get half a million dollars from the ALP. Whitlam thought this was fine but wanted to keep it secret. When news of it came out, in 1976, Whitlam was already in opposition. He was condemned, as leader, by the ALP national executive. John Wheeldon, who had been Whitlam's social security minister and who later became associate editor of *The Australian*, resigned from Labor's front bench in disgust and said he would never again serve with Whitlam.

Kim Beazley Sr, who had been Whitlam's education minister, had already resigned over the issue. "It would be inevitable for the Australian Jewish community to regard any such (Iraqi) money as blood money that might be paid for, ultimately, in Israeli blood," Beazley said. That might have been an overdramatic judgment, but on any measure for an Australian political leader to seek secret electoral funds from one of the most brutal and bloodthirsty tyrannical regimes the 20th century ever saw was a monstrous moral failing. Imagine the endless outcry there would be if Malcolm Fraser had sought electoral funding for the Liberal Party from apartheid South Africa, or even from the Americans. For the record, Fraser says the Liberals never sought foreign funding from anybody. The more well-remembered loans affair involved Jim Cairns, then treasurer, and Rex Connor, then minerals and energy minister, seeking a \$4 billion loan from Middle East sources for infrastructure in Australia, although there was a later plot to use this money to fund government if the Senate blocked supply.

Connor used the shady Tirath Khemlani to try to raise the money. The problem was that after Connor's official authority was formally withdrawn, he kept using Khemlani, apparently with Whitlam's tacit approval. Whitlam's view was if the money came through he would take it, however Connor got it. Both Connor and Cairns were sacked from the ministry in a government of utter chaos. Whitlam's economic record was ruinous. He produced massively increased unemployment, the highest level in Australia since the great Depression. Inflation got above 20 per cent at one stage. This was partly influenced by the international oil shocks but the outcome in Australia was much worse than in comparable countries. In 1974-75, government spending increased by 40 per cent, plainly a state of madness. Tax increased by 30 per cent. It wasn't just that Whitlam was uninterested in economics, his economic policies were catastrophic and took many years to recover from. Whitlam could not control his ministers, some of whom had pro-communist allegiances (read Mark Aarons's book, *The Family File*) and made wildly ill-disciplined statements against the US alliance, which made his government look incoherent and amateurish. Whitlam did not support the invasion of East Timor, the only thing he is accused of by the Left but is innocent of. Many of his social reforms had calamitous consequences or could not be afforded. Abolishing university fees made no discernible difference to the socio-economic profile of Australian undergraduates and was later reversed by the Hawke government. All this economic disaster ruined Australia's international reputation. The tenor of commentary in British newspapers at the time was that while messing up the British economy was fairly easy, messing up the Australian economy took real determination. The fact that modern Labor idolises Whitlam rather than Bob Hawke is one of the key causes of its policy malaise. Whitlam had grand ambitions. His government, though, on almost every measure, was an unmitigated disaster. (Greg Sheridan, *The Australian*, Oct 22, 2014)

## Reform failure splits Young Labor

**LABOR'S failure to embrace structural reform has deepened divisions in the party's youth movement, sparking a farcical split at a national conference on the weekend where Left and Right factions held rival meetings.** What was supposed to have been a convivial annual meet-and-greet turned sour when the organisation's 50 Left faction members voted on a walkout to protest about lack of party reform. The Left's co-convenor, Adam Clarke, accused some members from the Right of being too accepting of the party's - "archaic power structures" and said the walkout was designed to make the conference more relevant to its participants. Held on the Australian National University's campus, the conference saw Right and Left join for a reform workshop and a keynote speech by Labor's leader of the lower house Tony Burke, but otherwise remain entirely separate. "Members of the Young Left have said enough is enough," Mr Clarke said. "The party is in desperate need of radical reform. We want to make sure we're competitive; we need to see the youth of the party take the actions necessary to move democratisation. "Currently Young Labor does not stand for that."

Outgoing president Kerrie Kahlon, a proud member of the Right who says she favours party reform, said those of her peers who did not believe in reform were "ridiculous" and voiced concern about the senior party's influence on Young Labor. Ms Kahlon said this was a particularly difficult time for members, with internal rivalries making Labor membership "not a positive experience". "If we can't come together and have an annual conference, that really concerns me," she said. "We have a culture that is modelled off the senior party's division (but) we should be idealistic and not have those issues seep into Young Labor. "We spend too much time fighting each other and not enough time fighting the opposition." Echoing recent calls by senior Labor figures for faction and union bosses to surrender power to its members, Mr Clarke and Ms Kahlon said the majority of Young Labor wanted to see a one-member-one-vote system. They said membership throughout the Labor Party would "churn and burn" until rank-and-file members had a greater say in internal decisions. "The reality is we should be having a lot more people joining than we do," Mr Clarke said. "We have a lot of people join but they stick around for a while and then leave. No one's saying the Labor Party is going to die but, without reform, we will be the natural party of opposition." On the back of a disastrous result in the West Australian Senate election re-run — where Labor secured just 21.8 per cent of the vote — ALP president Jenny McAllister last week pushed for an end to union bosses and faction leaders choosing upper house candidates. Party elder John Faulkner also proposed rule changes in NSW to prevent corrupt behaviour and "strengthen the future of our party and our capacity to govern". Young Labor's incoming president, Edward McDougall, said he would focus on taking the party to the people and campaigning on issues that matter to youth. "People want to see that we've changed and we're now working to improve society, rather than always fighting among ourselves," he said. A spokesman for Acting Opposition Leader Tanya Plibersek did not answer questions about the divisions, but said: "If we want to change the government, we must change too. The young members of the Labor Party are committed to holding the Abbott government to account." (Rosie Lewis, *The Australian*, April 14, 2014)

## The ins and outs of Labor's internal intifada

IN February of 1974, Bob Hawke confided in his US embassy contact, codenamed Labbatt, that he was prepared to resign the presidency of the ALP in protest unless he could secure a formal show of support for Israel. He was concerned the pro-Arab group in the party, aligned with the socialist Left, was exercising too much influence. A declassified cable was sent from the US consulate in Melbourne to the US State Department in Washington. The cable raised concerns Hawke had about Labor's support for Israel a few months after the 1973 Arab Israeli War, which began when Arab states led by Egypt and Syria made a surprise attack on Israel. The cable revealed Hawke had told Labbatt he would quit the presidency if the leftist influences were not dealt with. He turned to the Friends

of Israel group in the ALP to get active and to moderate the socialist forces in the party — a grouping of which Bob Carr has been a long-time member.

Now, 40 years later, the issue of support for Israel is again tearing at the heart and soul of the ALP.

While Bill Shorten and Tony Abbott are united on the response to MH17 and Russia, a divide between Labor and the Coalition on other key foreign policy issues has been quietly growing ever wider and potentially more serious. Last week, in a move that went largely unreported, the government listed Hamas as a terrorist organisation under the UN charter. It was a significant and highly symbolic move. While the military wing of Hamas is listed under the criminal code in Australia, the political wing is not. This has given Hamas a legitimacy that many don't believe it deserves. Foreign Minister Julie Bishop agreed to adopt UN Council Resolution 1373 from 2001 that lists Hamas as a terrorist organisation, but stopped short of proscribing it under our criminal code — just yet.

The effect of this was to reassure Israel that Australia supports its right to defend itself against rocket attacks from Gaza — which - Israel has blamed for the current offensive into Gaza that has cost more than 1000 lives already. It was also a signal to the US it was still a partner on Israel, following US anger at a UN vote to launch an inquiry into the Gaza conflict.

Support for Israel has long been a bipartisan position from Labor and the Liberals. But not anymore, it seems.

While the Coalition was out listing Israel's enemies as terrorists, the NSW Labor state conference was at the weekend heading in the other direction. The NSW branch of the Labor Party adopted a resolution critical of Israeli settlements and further reinforced support for a Palestinian state. Carr and others have been at pains to point out the resolution, effectively chastising Israel for the disturbing loss of life among Gaza's civilians, was not a change in policy. But that's not how Muslims in Western Sydney read it. On Monday at the Lakemba mosque, to mark the end of Ramadan, the president of the Lebanese Muslim Association Samier Dandan delivered a speech attacking the Abbott government for its support of Israel and praising the Labor Party for its apparent about-face two days earlier.

The politics of marginal Western Sydney seats appears to be the driver of the change in Labor's policy on Israel; namely, that the NSW Labor Right is concerned about the Muslim vote in Sydney. But the ramifications of this will run much deeper. It may be a world away but no one should be under any illusion that the issue of Israel and the Palestinians is a political powder keg here, both internally in the Labor Party in particular, and for our strategic alliances. Julia Gillard almost lost her job after being rolled on her plan for a no vote at the UN last year on a resolution of a Palestinian state. Again it was Carr who had whipped up the caucus and forced a shift in Labor policy on Israel. Carr has again enraged several Victorian Labor MPs who are strong supporters of Israel — as has Labor leader Bill Shorten, historically. But even Shorten's language over the conflict has shifted and his Victorian backers have noticed.

The issue of Israel and the Palestinians is a weather vane of Labor's broader political direction. When Hawke and Keating undertook the purging of the Labor Left in the late 70s in a bid to fashion a centrist position that could win government, Israel became a touchstone issue. Hawke threatened to quit his presidency over it. In the end they got their way, and it stayed that way until last year. What some in the right wing of the ALP now fear is the shift in policy on Israel marks a broader shift back to the left for the party as a whole. The Israel issue raises two issues for Labor internally. If it is prepared to engage politics over principle on Israel, can it be trusted to stick with the government on the national security and counterterrorism legislation it has so far shown a degree of bipartisanship on? What happens when parts of Western Sydney's Muslim community start to raise concerns about this as well? (*Simon Benson*, *The Daily Telegraph*, Aug 1, 2014)

### **Boys will be boys, but the ABC really should grow up and become accountable**

IN the lead-up to Christmas I shared a few drinks with one of the Chaser boys who tried to explain the rationale behind their dog-humping joke which had aired on the ABC three months earlier. It was all about tempting fate, apparently. The Chaser boys thought it would be amusing to pretend they were responding to a critic of the ABC with such an outrageous slur that it would clearly blow back on them. Except there seemed to be no punch line, or humour. The program simply did exactly as he suggested, without irony.

It slurred a critic, provoking a damaging response against the ABC. How ironic.

Whether you want to see it as the Chaser boys unwittingly making a joke at their own expense or getting caught by an irony - rebound, the fact is their conceit has highlighted exactly the point critics like me have been making for years. The ABC has become an expensive and unaccountable public broadcasting behemoth where individual units run as staff collectives and the managing director seems not to be in charge. The thriving green-Left bias is a worry but is not the most pressing problem. Rather it is the lack of responsiveness and accountability to its audiences and bankrollers — the taxpaying public. During the public debate that developed after I launched legal action over the dog skit there were two noteworthy responses from ABC staff. First, it was revealing that only two on-air staff went public with criticism of the Chaser boys' skit or support for me. The rest were either united in a groupthink belief that the skit was acceptable, or they believe ABC critics invite such a depiction, or they are cowed into holding the company line. And I don't know which would be worst. Second, and perhaps more illuminating, the private messages I received from senior on-air and managerial staffers were extremely critical of the Chaser boys and supportive of me, encouraging strength to my arm. The way these ABC loyalists expressed it, they were sick of the Chaser team being a protected species and taking no responsibility for the damage they inflicted on the broader ABC brand. The Chaser boys are not all directly on the ABC payroll but supply programs to the public broadcaster under contract. Presumably they dub themselves "boys" because they were fresh-faced graduates when the ABC started paying them to relay their undergraduate skits to a mainstream audience. Yet as the Chaser boys have grown into middle age, successive waves of university pranksters have trod the boards in campus revues across the country without progressing to television.

That gig remains in the hands of these permanent rabble-rousers. Self-styled as the cliched provocateurs who tilt at the establishment, the Chaser boys are actually privileged private school boys (with one exception) who started clowning around at the prestigious Sydney University. Sit the bar exam, join the family firm or get taxpayers to televise our university revues? They dared to ask the question and we get to pay the bills. Which would be OK, I suppose, if they produced cutting-edge comedy and satire. And, to be fair, they probably did early on. But where, for instance, the *Late Show* team matured into producing insightful satirical television drama, adult chat shows and even feature films, the Chaser boys are suspended in a kind of teenage diapause. And it must be hard to be edgy when you are a middle-aged, middle-class, publicly funded, comedic slave to the zeitgeist. But no doubt it is good fun trying. Someone at Ultimo must like the boys, however, because they have fronted up for unlikely gigs, from hosting serious current affairs and talkback programs to providing shows about shopping. They even supplied a special television series in 2012 that was a sort of pop culture guide to the US presidential election.

It is an irritating question to ask on behalf of taxpayers — why have they been given this armchair ride and what value do we receive? What are the accountability processes? Who vets the reportedly million-dollar-plus contracts? How long will these boys be boys at taxpayers' expense? And does anyone at the ABC hold them to account? It seems they found a good thing and have stuck to it.

Yet plenty at the ABC are worried. While the boys struggle to rediscover the edge of their undergraduate years — by mocking cancer patients, impersonating Osama bin Laden or showing me up a dog — their status as satirists depends on the public broadcaster. And, in turn, they influence the standing of the ABC, especially as they filter across into other more serious programs, such as *Q&A* and *Radio National Breakfast*, or as they try to demonstrate their evolution by switching from mocking politicians to analysing political events.

The Chaser boys attacked me because of my status as an ABC critic; slander this bloke, their skit effectively said, because he - eschews our green-Left values. This was a classic example of the staff-run collective indulging itself at taxpayers' expense.

Damaging someone's reputation, undermining the ABC's status or exposing it to a law suit? Pffff. We are cutting-edge performers and the ABC has a large legal department. How such tosh could get to air is one thing but how the ABC management and Mark Scott could dig in, refuse to apologise and defend it is difficult to comprehend. No wonder senior ABC staff hate being tarnished by the indulgences of this frat house (for there is not a woman among them) team. The Chaser boys and Scott could not have provided a better demonstration of the lack of common sense and accountability at the ABC. They could not have offered a more obvious invitation for substantial funding cuts and management reform. Down boys, down; you've made your point. (*Chris Kenny, The Australian, June 07, 2014*)

### **Union boss Tony Sheldon rejects call to cut party power**

LABOR elder John Faulkner's call to cut union influence in the ALP has been dismissed by Transport Workers Union national secretary Tony Sheldon, who has signalled that he wants to enhance the role of unions in candidate selection.

After Senator Faulkner called for the power of unions and factional warlords in the party to be diminished, Mr Sheldon, an ALP vice-president and member of the national executive, said unions continued to have a legitimate representative voice in the ALP. He believed their role should be enhanced with a say in rank-and-file ballots to preselect party candidates. Mr Sheldon's comments came as a senior Labor source said Senator Faulkner's reform ideas were unlikely to win the backing of the party's national conference in Melbourne next year. On Tuesday, Senator Faulkner, a 25-year parliamentary veteran who co-wrote the party's review of its 2010 election campaign, said that last year's federal leadership ballot, which gave a 50 per cent vote to the rank and file, was only a first step of many to give increased participation to voting members at the expense of factional and union leaders. Senator Faulkner said the party had to re-evaluate the role of factions, called for reform of electoral funding and for the party to modernise its structure. Bill Shorten said he appreciated Senator Faulkner's contribution. "Back in April, people might recall that I said that we need to be a membership-based party, not a faction-based party," the Opposition Leader said. "We need to have the best-possible candidates from the broadest walks of life. "We need to make sure that we have a party which is as modern, as open, as the society which we seek to present ourselves to, to vote for us at the next election." He said progress had been made with nearly 10,000 extra people joining the Labor Party since April.

Western Sydney Labor MP Ed Husic said he opposed watering down the role of unions in the party further and that the balance was right. "I actually think there is value in having some balance between the say that members have broadly, as well as what unions say, given the historical connection we have had with unions within the party," Mr Husic said. Frontbencher Richard Marles told Sky News: "I think that the influence of unions in terms of the decision-making of the federal parliamentary Labor Party is vastly overstated." He said Senator Faulkner made a reasonable point about opening up the party and having more people participate in it. But that was exactly what the leadership ballot had entailed. Mr Sheldon said he strongly disagreed with Senator Faulkner's view that it was "better to make the party smaller to make it bigger, by not having the representation of unions". Mr Sheldon, while welcoming Senator Faulkner's addition to the reform debate, said he was concerned his proposals would lead to an "American, one-size-fits-all" system open to corruption with huge amounts of money spent to preselect individual candidates. Factionalism would continue with power concentrated in fewer hands if union representation were further cut from 50 per cent to 20 per cent as Senator Faulkner wanted, Ms Sheldon said.

Reducing the ALP to a collection of individuals would end up "shrinking the party to a smaller and smaller crowd" and new factions would spring up around individuals. Mr Sheldon said he supported different preselection styles, such as one trialled in NSW — but with a difference. "I'd say add unions to rank-and-file ballots," he said. (*Sid Maher, The Australian, Oct. 09, 2014*)

### **Jacqui Lambie backs Clive Palmer with warning of Chinese 'invasion'**



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"They shoot their own people." Clive Palmer lets fly at the Chinese government.

THE Palmer United Party has intensified its attacks on China, with its Tasmanian senator Jacqui Lambie warning of the danger of an invasion of Australia, as she backed Clive Palmer's criticism of "Chinese mongrels". Senator Lambie called for defence spending to be doubled to prevent Australians being enslaved by a "totalitarian foreign power" with a history of military aggression. Hitting back following criticism of Mr Palmer's initial remarks, Senator Lambie accused the two major parties of failing to defend the country against the rising threat. "If anybody thinks that we should have a national security and defence policy, which ignores the threat of a Chinese Communist invasion — you're delusional and got rocks in your head," she wrote in an email to the media. "The Communist Chinese military capacity and level of threat to the western world democracies is at an unprecedented and historical high.

"They come at a time when Australian military spending and capacity is at historic lows. "Today China is controlled by an aggressive, anti-democratic, totalitarian government. We need to double the size and capacity of our military right now. "Both Labor and the Liberals/Nationals have failed to build an Australian military that is able to defend us — and stop our grandchildren from becoming slaves to an aggressive, anti-democratic, totalitarian foreign power." Senator Lambie described as a "timely warning" Mr Palmer's tirade on ABC television last night in which he called the Chinese government "mongrels" and "bastards" who "want to take over this country"

and who “shoot their own people”. The PUP’s China-born senator Zhenya Wang also backed his party leader, saying Mr Palmer’s remarks had been taken out of context and triggered by “provocative” questions on the Q&A show. “From personal experience I have found Clive to be consistently respectful and supportive throughout our relationship in both the private sector and now in the political arena,” Senator Wang said in a statement. “There has never been the slightest suggestion on his part of a prejudicial view of members of the Chinese community.”

Senior government ministers warned Mr Palmer’s tirade would damage Australian trade and foreign relations, while West Australian Premier Colin Barnett said he would apologise for the mining magnate’s “highly offensive” remarks.

Julie Bishop said she planned to tell the Chinese embassy Australia’s parliament did not share Mr Palmer’s “abusive” views.

Joe Hockey warned the PUP leader to avoid letting his personal disputes with Chinese partners “bring down the rest of Australia” when employers were trying to lift exports to the rising Asian economy. Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce linked Mr Palmer’s outburst to the negotiations over the budget with the Palmer United Party, saying the remarks gave voters an insight into the dealings with the politician. Labor called the remarks “unhelpful” and “unacceptable” while Shanghai Chamber of Commerce president Peter Arkell went further, labelling them “bizarre” and “dangerous”. Mr Palmer lashed out at the Chinese government and Chinese companies during the ABC Q & A program last night when asked by host Tony Jones about allegations he used a \$12 million payment from Chinese state-owned company Citic Pacific, meant to support a port operation, to pay for some of his election campaign. “We’ve had three judgments in the Federal Court and the Supreme Court of Western Australia and an arbitration against these Chinese mongrels,” he said of the business dispute.

“I’m saying that because they’re Communist, they shoot their own people, they haven’t got a justice system and they want to take over this country. And we’re not going to let them.” Mr Palmer said the Chinese government wanted to bring workers into Australia to “destroy” the wages system and extract iron ore without paying for it. “I don’t mind standing up against the Chinese bastards and stop them from doing it,” he told the program. Mr Palmer sought to limit the damage this morning by saying his remarks were not aimed at the Chinese people. “My #qanda comments not intended to refer to Chinese people but to Chinese company which is taking Australian resources & not paying,” he tweeted. However, his televised remarks also seemed aimed at the Chinese government, with an apparent reference to the Tiananmen Square killings in 1989 when he mentioned the “Communists” who “shoot their own people”. Mr Hockey said Mr Palmer’s comments would damage Australia’s relationship with China. “I think it is hugely damaging for Mr Palmer to make those sort of comments because ultimately he is a big beneficiary of a Chinese investment partner, someone that has paid to help him develop his resources,” the Treasurer said. “Now he is in a very obvious legal dispute with his Chinese partners. “But I’d say to Mr Palmer: ‘please don’t bring down Australia as a result of your biases’.” Mr Joyce said the remarks were not helpful to Australia’s relationship with China. “He wanted to make a lot of money out of dealing with China,” Mr Joyce said of Mr Palmer. “You can’t blame the Chinese for being tough business people — that’s what business is about. “But the emotive and colourful language is not the way you do business.”

Bill Shorten warned that Mr Palmer’s remarks could offend Australians as well as damaging the bilateral relationship.

“I think a lot of Chinese-Australians would understandably feel hurt by these comments,” the Labor leader said. “We’ve come a long way as a proud multicultural nation and these comments are unacceptable.” Mr Barnett, a staunch advocate of Chinese investment, also said Mr Palmer’s comments could be “extremely damaging” to the mining industry and to Canberra-Beijing relations. He said would write to the Chinese Embassy in Canberra to apologise. “Mr Palmer is displaying the worst of Australia. He is damaging the international standing of Australia in Chinese eyes, both in investment and government circles. “He is behaving improperly. He is an embarrassment.”

Former federal MP Pauline Hanson also criticised Mr Palmer for the remarks. “I never said what Clive Palmer said, and Tony Abbott thought I was his biggest headache,” Ms Hanson told the Seven Network’s Sunrise program. “I’ve always said clean up your own backyard before criticising other people.” Chinese investor Citic Pacific is taking legal action against Mr Palmer and his companies over payments including \$12 million intended for port services. Asked at the National Press Club last month whether that money was used to fund his election campaign, Mr Palmer said: “That’s just not true.” But The Australian revealed last month that court documents showed some of the money was paid to a company called Media Circus Network, a media agency involved in Mr Palmer’s federal election campaign. Queensland Supreme Court records show that two Citic companies, Korean Steel and Sino Iron, have started proceedings with Clive Frederick Palmer named as the sole respondent. Mr Palmer has denied any wrongdoing. Jones asked Mr Palmer if he could promise that “not a cent of that \$12 million” went missing under his watch, but Mr Palmer refused.

“I can tell you that those allegations are not true ... we will be taking immediate action in the Supreme Court,” Mr Palmer responded. He is to face court next week. The federal government is negotiating a trade agreement with China in the hope of striking a deal in November when Chinese president Xi Jinping visits Australia for the G20 summit, building on Tony Abbott’s visit to Beijing in April. China is Australia’s largest trading partner, according to official figures showing the trade in goods and services was worth more than \$150 billion in 2013. (*David Crowe, The Australian, August 19, 2014*)

## International

### Opium wars left us fighting on two fronts, says Jack Straw

BRITAIN was wrong to lead international efforts to fight Afghanistan’s huge opium trade, Jack Straw has admitted. Mr Straw, who was Labour foreign secretary between 2001 and 2006, said he regretted the move, one of Britain’s starkest failures of the 13-year war, with poppy production in the country at record high levels this year. “I do regret that. It was very much a diversion,” Mr Straw said as British forces handed over control of their last base in the country, Camp Bastion in southern Helmand. Then prime minister Tony Blair made the need to stop Afghanistan from producing the heroin that ends up on British streets one of his key reasons for taking his country to war against the Taliban in 2001. Mr Straw acknowledged, with hindsight, that it was not possible to fight insurgents and the opium trade upon which so many livelihoods in southern Afghanistan rely. The country produces more than 90 per cent of the world’s opium poppy, harvesting 211,650ha last year. “You have got to make a choice about which front you fight on,” Mr Straw said.

Britain chose to be the lead nation for counter-narcotics in Afghanistan after the 2001 invasion, spending hundreds of millions of pounds on the well-meaning but doomed quest to persuade farmers in the south of the country to harvest crops other than poppy. The crop remains one of the most lucrative forms of income in the impoverished nation. The narcotics mission was a big factor in British forces being sent in 2006 to Helmand province, which rapidly became the most dangerous part of the country as the ill-prepared troops, thinking they were on a reconstruction mission, triggered a bloody insurgency. Mr Straw said he remained adamant that the Labour

government was right to join the US to topple Mullah Omar's Taliban regime after the September 11 attacks. "We had no option but to take military action in the autumn of 2001. It was a war of necessity," he said. "Although as with any other military action things didn't work out quite as planned or as intended and we have been caught up in the fog of war, but Afghanistan is a better place on many metrics, including the education of women." He also said Britain was justified in leading the fight against Taliban insurgents in Helmand, a mission that has been widely criticised for being badly conceived and resourced. "It could have been better planned," Mr Straw added. "There should have been ... a further vote in the House of Commons." John Hutton, Labour defence secretary between 2008 and 2009, said Britain's intervention in Afghanistan had been a success in combating the risk posed by al-Qa'ida of carrying out another 9/11-style attack from a safe haven within the country and also in building up a credible Afghan army and police force as part of the wider NATO-led mission. "We paid a high price ... but I think this was a legitimate use of UK force and combined with the political and economic strategy will hopefully give some reasonable grounds for optimism over the future," he added. Rory Stewart, a Conservative MP and chairman of the Commons defence select committee, was less upbeat about Britain's mission in a country that he knows better than most. He was critical of how the government deployed the woefully prepared task force into Helmand, knowing very little about the area. "Why did it go wrong? Why are we so bad at setting objectives? Why are we so bad at understanding the cultures of other countries? What is it that leads to these humiliations?" he asked, speaking more broadly about British defence and foreign policy. "The answer is that we don't invest properly in understanding the culture and politics of these countries." (*Deborah Haynes*, *The Times*, October 28, 2014)

### **Moral clarity about Islamic State needs zero tolerance of terrorism**

IN Ottawa on Wednesday, a lone gunman rampaged in and around Canada's parliament, killing a Canadian soldier before being killed. Authorities said he was a convert to Islam, radicalised to commit his act of terrorism. That day in Jerusalem, a newborn girl was run down and killed in her pram when a vehicle intentionally rammed a crowded tram stop. The Palestinian driver, killed while fleeing, had an extensive arrest record for nationalistic violence and familial connections to Hamas. He was glorified on Hamas-affiliated websites as a martyr and a Hamas spokesman said his attack was only "natural". In Australia, we looked in horror at a photo of an Australian child in Syria holding a severed head aloft like a hunting trophy, basking in his father's pride.

This week, a baby-faced jihadist joined Islamic State, the militia responsible in Syria and Iraq for mass executions and beheadings of aid workers and journalists, filmed to shock the civilised world. The AK-47-toting teen taunted Tony Abbott in a video that might have been grimly funny if people weren't losing their lives daily to such bloodthirsty zealots. All these disparate incidents are linked by Islamist terror, but when the violence is perpetrated against Israel, there is a widespread tendency in the media to rationalise it, suggesting Israeli policies invited or caused the attacks. This rationalisation is unfair and harmful to Israelis in general and Jews in particular, but lessons learned by Islamist terrorists from this immoral exemption extend far beyond Israel. Mainstream Islamic groups have rightly distanced themselves from those who they say have misappropriated an Islamic identity while distorting the tenets of the religion, and it is true that extremism, even violent extremism, is not unique to Islam. However, the actions of Hamas and Islamic State are products of the same broad totalitarian ideological movement — Islamism — which draws on elements of Islam and recruits from Muslims around the world. Popular support for militant Islamists often translates into substantive recruitment for Islamist terror groups, targeting civilians to sensationalise their cause.

Recent polls show that Islamic State is more popular overall — not just among Muslims — in some Western states than in most Middle Eastern ones. A poll by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy found just 3 per cent of Egyptians expressed a positive opinion about it, as did 5 per cent of Saudis. In Lebanon, it was less than 1 per cent. Yet in a poll in August by ICM Research, 7 per cent of British respondents had a favourable view of the group, as did 16 per cent of French polled — rising to 27 per cent in the 18-24 demographic. These numbers suggest large percentages of Western Muslims — and some non-Muslims as well — are attracted to the group's violent totalitarian message despite, or because of, all its barbarism, beheadings, terrorism, mass executions, ethnic cleansing and selling women into slavery. The message is chilling — Islamic State appears to have a tremendous ability to appeal to disaffected Muslims living in free societies in the West, more so than to populations within the Middle East, who perhaps have homes and families at stake, are more grounded in reality and less likely to be swept away by the hyped-up promise of a revolution.

This almost certainly also applies to some degree in Australia, as evidenced by the numerous Australians who have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join up, and the positive view of this behaviour expressed by some of their peers. The allure of groups such as Islamic State should be understood as similar to that which drew people to past murderous totalitarian movements and their atrocities — Nazism, fascism, communism, Maoism. All claimed their violence and genocide were a justified self-defence against race, class or external enemies. It begins with rationalisations that extreme violence is justifiable under the right circumstances, that terrorists are humans and their behaviour is understandable and motivated by injustice. Once that red line has been crossed, the distance from justification to embracing the violence, and then glorifying it, is short. There is a way back. We can begin by unblurring the lines, by defining terrorism consistently and ending the corrosive tendency to justifications for it and excuses. Only through a zero-tolerance approach can Western society restore to this growing quagmire the moral clarity it desperately needs. (*Ahron Shapio*, *The Australian*, October 24, 2014) Ahron Shapio is a policy analyst at the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council.

### **Islamists Are Not Our Friends**

WASHINGTON — A new fault line has emerged in Middle Eastern politics, one that will have profound implications for America's foreign policy in the region. This rift is not defined by those who support or oppose the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or by conflict between Sunnis and Shiites and the proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. It is characterized by a fundamental division between Islamists and non-Islamists. On one side are the Islamists — both Sunni and Shiite. ISIS and the Muslim Brotherhood represent the Sunni end of the spectrum, while the Islamic Republic of Iran and its militias, including Hezbollah (in Lebanon and Syria) and Asaib Ahl al-Haq (in Iraq), constitute the other. Many of these Islamists are at war with one another, but they are also engaged in a bitter struggle with non-Islamists to define the fundamental identity of the region and its states. What the Islamists all have in common is that they subordinate national identities to an Islamic identity. To be sure, not all are as extreme as ISIS, which seeks to obliterate sovereign nations under the aegis of a caliphate. But the Muslim Brotherhood is committed to the Umma, the larger Muslim community. One reason behind the popular revolt against its rule in Egypt was that the Brotherhood violated a basic principle of national identity: It was Islamist before it was Egyptian.

Now, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi sees his country engaged in an existential conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood. He is backed financially by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. Mr. Sisi also collaborates closely with Algeria, and has support from Morocco and Jordan. During the recent conflict in the Gaza Strip, there were demonstrations against Israel in Europe — but not in the

Arab states. Unlike Turkey and Qatar, which support the Muslim Brotherhood, the other Sunni states in the region wanted to weaken Hamas, the Brotherhood's Palestinian wing. Those states were alienated when Washington turned to Qatar and Turkey as possible mediators of a cease-fire in the recent conflict. The Arab Awakening of 2011 did not usher in an era of democracy, nor could it. The institutions of civil society were too weak; the political culture of winner-take-all too strong; sectarian differences too powerful; and a belief in pluralism too inchoate. Instead, the awakening produced political vacuums and a struggle over identity. President Obama is right to note the old order's disappearance in the region and the time it's taking for a new one to emerge. The administration is struggling to define an effective strategy — but the Islamist vs. non-Islamist divide creates an opening. The non-Islamists include the traditional monarchies, authoritarian governments in Egypt and Algeria, and secular reformers who may be small in number but have not disappeared. They do not include Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria; he is completely dependent on Iran and Hezbollah and cannot make decisions without them. Today, the non-Islamists want to know that the United States supports them. For America, that means not partnering with Iran against ISIS, though both countries may avoid interfering with each other's operations against the insurgents in Iraq. It means actively competing with Iran in the rest of the region, independently of whether an acceptable nuclear deal can be reached with Tehran. It means recognizing that Egypt is an essential part of the anti-Islamist coalition, and that American military aid should not be withheld because of differences over Egypt's domestic behavior. America should also coordinate with Egypt and the U.A.E. when they bomb Islamist targets in Libya, or elsewhere. Coordination will make their military operations more effective, as well as provide America with greater ability to influence their actions. (And Washington would want to be able to head off military acts that it sees as ill-advised.)

The Obama administration worries about the consequences of excluding all Islamists. It worries, too, about appearing to give a blank check to authoritarian regimes, when it believes there need to be limits and that these regimes are likely to prove unstable over time. But as Egypt and the U.A.E. showed with the airstrikes on Islamists in Libya, some of America's traditional partners are ready to act without us, convinced that the administration does not see all Islamists as a threat — and that America sees its interests as different from theirs. That is a problem. These non-Islamists are America's natural partners in the region. They favor stability, the free flow of oil and gas, and they oppose terrorism. The forces that threaten us also threaten them. The Obama administration needs to follow three principles in these partnerships.

First, focus on security and stability. Nothing, including tolerant, pluralist societies, is possible without it. Second, do not reach out to Islamists; their creed is not compatible with pluralism or democracy. In Tunisia, the Ennahda party surrendered power only when it realized its policies had produced such a backlash that the party's very survival was threatened. Islamists, even apparent moderates like those of Ennahda, must be left with no choice but coexistence. Turkey is a special case because it is a NATO ally. There is much we can do with Turkey when it comes to fighting ISIS, but the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, should understand that his support for the Muslim Brotherhood limits what we will do with him and necessarily isolates Turkey from its neighbors. Third, America's support for non-Islamist partners does not require surrendering our voice or supporting every domestic policy. We should press them on pluralism, minority rights and the rule of law. The new fault line in the Middle East is a real opportunity for America. Yes, the United States will face challenges and have to manage tensions between our values and our interests. No strategy is free of risk, but joining with our natural partners offers the best way forward. (Dennis B. Rossept, *International New York Times*, Sept. 11, 2014) *Dennis B. Ross*, a counselor and fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, was the United States chief negotiator for the Arab-Israeli conflict from 1993 to 2001 and a special assistant to the president for the Middle East and South Asia from 2009 to 2011.

### **'Terror is a Global Epidemic'**

Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman made a connection Thursday morning between the attacks that occurred in Jerusalem and Ottawa - both state capitals - on Wednesday. The comments were posted on his official Facebook page. "The terror attacks that took place yesterday, at almost the same time in both ends of the world, show that terrorism is a global epidemic that must be fought against with force and without compromises," Lieberman wrote. Lieberman stressed that "terrorism is not due to construction in Jerusalem, Ottawa, New York, Madrid, London or Mombasa - but is a result of radical Islam's struggle [to take over] the Western world."

"We stand by our friends in Canada, who have demonstrated, in the last few days by joining the war against Islamic State (ISIS) and previously, in their strong support of Israel, that they do not give in to terrorism. We also will continue to stand firm and fight terrorism and terrorists." In his remarks, Lieberman referred to the terrorist attack in Jerusalem Wednesday evening, where a driver ran over a number of civilians at the Givat Hatachmoshet (Ammunition Hill) Light Rail stop. Chaya Zisel Braun, a 3-month-old baby, was killed, and 8 others were injured. The gun assault in Ottawa, Canada began when an uniformed soldier guarding the the National War Memorial was shot 4 times and injured by a gunman with a rifle. Medics took him by ambulance to Civic Hospital, nearby, where he later died from his injuries. The shooter, identified as Muslim convert Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, then apparently moved inside Centre Block, the main building of the Canadian parliamentary complex, where he was killed in an exchange of fire. (Hezki Ezra, Cynthia Blank, [israelnationalnews.com](http://israelnationalnews.com), October 23, 2014)

### **Zoabi Encourages Uprising Against Israel - on Hamas Website**

MK publishes article encouraging all Arab countries to attack Judea-Samaria, uses 'Israel' in quotation marks.



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Hanin Zoabi, Flash 90

MK Hanin Zoabi (Balad) took her campaign against Israel to a whole new level this week, Israel Hayom reports Friday - after she published an article on Hamas's official website encouraging an Islamist uprising against the Jewish state. Zoabi encouraged all Arab countries to help stoke a "popular uprising" against Israel, halt security coordination with the Palestinian Authority (PA) police in Judea and Samaria, and lay siege to the region. Zoabi - who is a member of the Israeli Knesset - also put the word "Israel" in quotation marks

for the entire article. The inflammatory piece also attacks Operation Protective Edge against Hamas, which seeks to protect her home country against the thousands of rockets already fired by the terror group on Israeli citizens. "There is no purpose to the military operation in Gaza," Zoabi writes. "Israel will in no way eliminate Hamas - neither the motivations behind the resistance nor the motivation to end the Occupation." "Israel will in no way accomplish anything by brute military force, killing, and devastation," she added. "[Israel's] brutal aggression has no political policy other than fixing the current situation by continuing a series of crimes and violations against our people - stop that, and we will stop the rocket fire." "In order for 'Israel' to declare an end to the possibility of guarding its Occupation and deepening it, we must end the enemy's Trinity - the siege, the security cooperation, and the border [ . . . ] we must besiege 'Israel' instead of negotiating with it," she concluded. **Last straw?** Hanin Zoabi has been linked to Hamas before, and is infamous for provocative speeches, including one in which she said that Israel has "no right to a normal life" and a later address claiming that "the Israeli occupation" was behind the murder of Israelis in Bulgaria. Recently, she declared that Israel should "thank her" for allowing Jews to live in the Jewish State.

The anti-Israel MK was thrust back into the spotlight last month, after making a series of remarks defending Hamas's horrific abduction and murder of Israeli yeshiva high school students Gilad Sha'ar (16), Naftali Frenkel (16), and Eyal Yifrah (19), *hy"d*. In the remarks, Zoabi refused to call their murderers "terrorists" and insisted that the abduction was a "legitimate" way to "fight the occupation." The latest salvo of verbal fire on Israelis resulted in both a personal and political backlash; Zoabi's family disowned her, passersby confronted her on the street and in restaurants, and the Knesset began several forms of legal proceedings for her ouster, in a bill dubbed "Zoabi's Law." Before the last elections, the Central Elections Committee banned Zoabi, under a clause requiring candidates and parties not to work against Israel's character as a Jewish, democratic state. However, the Supreme Court later overturned the decision and allowed Zoabi to run - a decision Deputy Defense Minister Danny Danon lamented in June. "I was able to reject [Zoabi's] candidacy for the Knesset in the [Central] Elections Committee, but the Supreme Court overturned the decision," Danon said. "This is a fiasco which the Knesset has to stop." (Uzi Baruch and Tova Dvorin, *israelnationalnews.com*, July 18, 2014)

### **Iran Conducted Nuclear Experiments at Parchin**

Intelligence Minister Yuval Steinitz (Likud) said on Wednesday that Iran had conducted experiments with nuclear weapons at the Parchin military base, where the West believes suspicious nuclear activities have taken place based on satellite evidence.

According to a statement from Steinitz, quoted by the Reuters news agency, Iran used the Parchin military base as the site for secret tests of technology that could be used only for detonating a nuclear weapon. (*israelnationalnews.com*, Sept. 24, 2014)

### **Iranian Opposition Reveals Nuke Weapon Research at Secret Site**

As Iran continues negotiations with world powers on its nuclear program ahead of a November 24 deadline, members of an Iranian opposition movement revealed Wednesday that the Islamic regime is continuing its nuclear weapon research at a secret location.

According to the Iranian resistance movement in exile Mujahedin-e Khalk, also known as MEK, Tehran is developing nuclear weapons after having relocated its research facilities to avoid detection, reports the Associated Press.

MEK cited unidentified Iranian government sources in saying that "in recent months" Iran's Organization of Defensive Information and Research (SPND) moved the most sensitive weapons research programs to a new Tehran location.

The opposition group named Mohsem Fakhrizadeh as being a Revolutionary Guard brigadier general who heads SPND.

When the US announced sanctions on SPND in August, the US named the group as being "primarily responsible for research in the field of nuclear weapons." The revelation surfaces after reports on Monday said an explosion at the Parchin nuclear plant killed at least two, including an unnamed "nuclear expert." When it finally released an official comment, Iran admitted there was an "incident" at the plant and two people were "missing," but refused to call the incident an explosion. The statement also claimed there was no nuclear work being done at the site. However, the opposition Sahamnews outlet claimed the blast was so powerful it shattered windows some 15 kilometers away from the site. Iran has refused to allow International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors to access Parchin since 2005, and both opposition figures and others have accused the regime of using the site to house an illegal nuclear weapons program. Last month, Israel's Intelligence Minister Yuval Steinitz said he had "reliable information" that Parchin was being used for secret tests of technology that could be used only for detonating a nuclear weapon. That assessment was backed by Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who in his recent tour of America told Fox News that Iran is "making bombs. That's what they're trying to do. That's what they're whole program is about, making bombs."

Regarding Iran's nuclear aspirations, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei back in January publicly revealed that the negotiations with the US about Iran's nuclear program are merely a tactic to stall international pressure and gain time to continue nuclear development. (Ari Yashar, *israelnationalnews.com*, Oct. 8, 2014)

### **PA Official Admits: Israel Follows International Law, We Don't.**

Palestinian envoy to UN Human Rights Council says Hamas rockets are 'crimes against humanity', while Israeli strikes are legal.

The Palestinian Authority's envoy to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has said the PA has no hope of pressing charges against Israel in international courts - because Palestinian terrorist groups are far worse violators of international law themselves. Since peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority fell apart after the PA applied for membership in international agencies, many Palestinian factions and advocates have pushed for the PA to sign the Rome Statute and press charges against Israel in the International Criminal Court at the Hague (ICC). But contrasting Israel's conduct during Operation Protective Edge to stop rocket fire from Gaza - in which Israeli forces always warn civilians before launching airstrikes - to the actions of Hamas and other armed groups, Ibrahim Khreisheh said any such move would surely backfire. Noting concerns that Israel could launch legal offensives of its own against the PA should it sign up to the ICC, the presenter asked whether such a move would be realistic. The response was unequivocal. "The missiles that are now being launched against Israel - each and every missile constitutes a crime against humanity, whether it hits or misses, because it is directed at civilian targets," said Khreisheh. He went on to claim that Israel, too, was guilty of such crimes during the conflict, and also mentioned contested claims about the legality of Israeli building in Judea and Samaria. But he maintained that human rights abuses by Palestinian terrorist groups were far worse - particularly when it came to harming civilians.

In order to launch an appeal to the ICC, Khreisheh said, all "Palestinian factions" would need to commit, in writing, to refrain from targeting Israeli civilians - something which none of them are likely to do. In stark contrast, he noted how "many of our people in Gaza appeared on TV and said that the Israeli army warned them to evacuate their homes before the bombardment." "In such a case, if someone is killed, the (international) law considers it a mistake rather than an intentional killing, because (the Israelis) followed the legal

procedures," he explained. "As for the missiles launched from our side - we never warn anyone about where these missiles are about to fall or about operations we carry out." Khreishah did not mention other serious breaches of international human rights law by Hamas and other terrorist groups, including the widespread use of human shields. (Ari Soffer, *israelnationalnews.com*, July 13, 2014)

### **Gaza: Blame The Left For This War**

I was watching the BBC. On came a former Israeli ambassador to explain Israel's military action in Gaza, the place Hamas turned into Terrorist Central. This ambassador who used to be so good came weak and unprepared. So I won't mention his name. He failed. He made no case for Israel. He made the case for the BBC. As he sat there mostly dazed for half an hour, I found myself hollering, "Why don't you simply tell how it all began? That is the crux of it all." That is the crux of the war taking place this very moment. For in the beginning Gaza was not Hamas. In the beginning Gaza was Israel...and it was rich. In Gaza's Gush Katif some 200 farms in 17 Biblically religious communities produced cutting edge organic agriculture serving nearly a third of Israel. Some 9,000 Israeli inhabitants employing about 4,000 Arabs served even Europe's grocery needs. Everybody prospered from export revenues that totaled some \$200 million annually. One day – kaput. One day Israel's hawk woke up a dove. The lion woke up to find himself a mouse. Kafka already wrote how this can happen, and it happened to Ariel Sharon, Israel's prime minister along 2004-2005. The mystery persists – how the man whose strong hand in favor of expanded settlements suddenly went limp. Sharon came to power a friend of Israel's Middle and Israel's Right, accounting for the vast majority of the Jewish State. He was scorned by the Left, which took him to be far too hawkish. For a time, this was true. Then after a time, something happened, something snapped. Sharon became obsessed.

He became obsessed with the task of diminishing Israel one step at a time. He became obsessed with Gaza's Gush Katif. He wanted it gone from Jewish hands. At first he tried some gentle persuasion to bring Israel around to his side. The Left now embraced him and quickly fell in. Yes, Jewish Gaza must go. The Left had turned him around. The Left could always be counted to be more merciful than God. They kept urging Sharon to act. There was no time to waste. Peace was at hand. Sharon made the pitch, but the rest of Israel was not buying. So he found his inner bulldog and went rogue. He turned Israel into a one-man tyranny. His new friends on the Left could come and go as they pleased, say as they pleased, but no such luck for the rest of the people. Sharon clamped down on all whispers of dissent. Anyone who disagreed with his Gaza Withdrawal Plan was considered a traitor and harassed accordingly. He replaced his Cabinet as often as it would take to find agreeable votes. Public protests were met with force. The news media – newspapers, radio, television – were warned to play along – or else. Most did. Some did so out of fear. But most, being mostly Left Wing, agreed that vacating Gaza was a wonderful idea. Peace was surely at hand. Then it happened. One day the trucks arrived. The Jews of Gaza were ordered to pack up and leave, leave behind their homes, their schools, their synagogues, their businesses, their graves, but to take with them their shirts on their backs. So virtually overnight, a night of August 2005, Gaza was cleansed of Jews by a Jewish government.

Merciful American Jewish philanthropists saw that these people needed help. No, not the homeless Israelis. Yes, millions of Jewish dollars went to the Arabs to build. Surely they would build justice, freedom, peace, stability and democracy. Arabs under the rule of the Palestinian Authority immediately moved in and immediately rioted, shot rifles in the air, and tore everything down – beautiful homes left behind, schools, libraries, industrial buildings, all were smashed and even the greenhouses were torched. They built smoldering hatred and resentment. Some two years later Hamas gained control of Gaza. Hamas quickly established itself in the import business. They imported rocket pads, rocket launchers and a million rockets, which they began firing at Israel. Non-stop. They built tunnels to import more weapons, which they used against Israel, and when Israel fired back, Hamas used children as human shields. What grievance could they have? Gaza was theirs? Don't ask me. Ask the Left. They started this war. (Jack Engelhard, *israelnationalnews.com*, July 10, 2014)

### **Trapped in Gaza: How Hamas punishes reporters for the truth**

HAMAS is not just targeting Israeli civilians, threatening Gazans and using them as human shields.

It has another terror tactic: intimidating foreign journalists. Journalists who have taken pictures of Hamas operatives preparing to shoot rockets from civilian structures and/or fighting in civilian clothing have been threatened by Hamas operatives and had their equipment confiscated. Reporter Peter Stefanovic, of the Nine Network's news, stationed in Gaza, received a surge of abuse and threats when he tweeted that he had seen rockets fired into Israel from near his hotel, in a civilian area. Pro-Hamas tweeters said Stefanovic was "passing and fabricating information to Israel ... from GAZA". Another account wrote: "You are a cretin. Are you working for the IDF" and "in WWII spies got shot". John Reed, a reporter for Britain's *Financial Times*, tweeted about seeing "two rockets fired toward Israel from near al-Shifa hospital (the largest in Gaza), even as more bombing victims were brought in". He was also subject to threats and abuse. *The Wall Street Journal's* reporter Nick Casey fell foul of Hamas by reporting that Shifa hospital was Hamas's control centre. On July 21, Casey posted a photo on Twitter of a chief Hamas spokesman being interviewed from a room in Shifa hospital in front of a makeshift backdrop of a photo of a destroyed house. Casey tweeted the image with the caption: "You have to wonder (with) the shelling how patients at Shifa hospital feel as Hamas uses it as a safe place to see media." Almost immediately, Casey received a flood of online threats. Two days later, the tweet was deleted — yet pro-Palestinian Twitter accounts continued to attack Casey, including him on lists of "journos in Gaza (who) lie/fabricate info for Israel" and "must be sued for crimes". French-Palestinian journalist Radjaa Abu Dagga wrote that he was forcibly blocked from leaving Gaza and detained and interrogated by members of Hamas's al-Qassam Brigade at a room in Shifa hospital next to the emergency room. His account of his treatment, in the French newspaper *Liberation*, also has since been taken down from the paper's website at Dagga's request. His story highlights that reporters can be effectively trapped in Gaza, as Hamas makes it difficult to enter and leave areas under its control and that, while there, they are hostages to Hamas's goodwill.

Italian reporter Gabriele Barbati tweeted on Tuesday: "Out of #Gaza far from #Hamas retaliation: misfired rocket killed children today in Shati. Witness: militants rushed and cleared debris." He was referring to a strike on Monday at al-Shati refugee camp which, together with a near-simultaneous hit on Shifa hospital, killed 10 people, including a number of children.

Israel vehemently denied responsibility and said it had proof via photos and radar that misfired Islamic Jihad rockets had caused the deaths. In his tweet, Barbati backed up the Israeli version (the fast clean-up suggests a cover-up) — and implied that he would not have been free to say this had he been in Gaza. Media coverage of the Gaza war also has been distorted by the use of biased statistics. Widely cited casualty figures for Palestinians, especially claims regarding the percentage of civilians, come from the Gaza Ministry of Health, which is under Hamas control. Some stories cite "UN figures", but these simply repeat the ministry figures. The Al Jazeera casualty list includes at least 33 to 42 duplicate names (according to different counts). Some of the names appeared with slight differences in spelling (yet the age and/or location confirm that it is the same person), some listed different locations (yet the name and age are the same). Among the duplicate names are children, listed as fatalities multiple times. According to the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism

Information Centre, out of 775 fatalities analysed (as of July 23), 229 were militants or terrorists, 267 were civilians, and 279 could not yet be classified.

The Meir Amit centre examines each reported casualty's background on Palestinian websites and looks for details about their funerals to determine their occupation and to confirm or rule out any affiliation with terror groups, giving much greater accuracy about whether the person was a civilian. This is in contrast to reports about civilian casualties not only from the Gaza Health Ministry but also from human rights organisations (such as B'Tselem, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights and al-Mezan), which often rely on biased Palestinian sources or plain naivety. PCHR recently reported that: "At approximately 11.55 (Friday), an Israeli drone fired a missile at a number of Palestinian civilians in al-Zanna area in Bani Suhaila village. As a result, 2 civilians were killed: Mohammed Khalil al-Buraim, 25; and Mohammed Suleiman Hussein Sammour, 45". In fact, Mohammed Khalil Samour al-Buraim is being celebrated as a mujahed by the Abdel-Qader al-Husseini Brigades. He was apparently a rocket-launcher. Reporting from Al Jazeera should also be treated with extreme caution. Al Jazeera is funded by the Qatari government, which financially and politically backs Hamas and hosts its leader, Khaled Meshal, in its capital, Doha. This partisan role is widely reported in the Middle East, yet the ABC and SBS continue to rebroadcast Al Jazeera extensively when less partisan material is available. Reporting from Gaza is dangerous and difficult. But our media should acknowledge the extent to which intimidation and lack of verifiable, or independent, information limit the completeness of the picture that Australians are getting of the conflict. (*Gabrielle Debinski, Avi-Guy and Tzvi Fleischer, The Australian, July 31, 2014*)

### **All we are saying, is give war a chance**

THE real message coming from the Gaza conflict is give war a chance. That's right. All peace-loving people should be demonstrating in the streets and singing, "All we are saying, is give war a chance".

If, as the Left says, the Palestinians want peace, then let Israel smash the terrorist group Hamas, which runs Gaza and uses Palestinian children as human shields. Get the terrorists out of the hospitals, get their rockets out of the schools (a third stockpile was found in a UN school earlier this week), get them out of their rat-run tunnels and away from the civilian population. On the other hand, if the Left wants the terrorists to smash Israel, and that is the clear message from the Greens and Labor MPs who attend rallies where the flags of Hezbollah, Hamas and the jihadists fly, there will be no holding back terrorism around the world. Strip away the Al Jazeera propaganda that the ABC broadcasts and Fairfax media supports in its commentaries by erratic penny-a-line scribblers like Mike Carlton, and there is no other way to view the conflict. There is no moral equivalency argument to be had. Loss of civilian life is of course abhorrent. But in this conflict there is only one side which is going to great lengths in its attempt to avoid killing civilians. No, not Hamas, which enjoys the support of the anti-Israeli rallies staged by so-called peace groups and some deluded Christian churches here and elsewhere in the West, but Israel.

It is the Israelis who broadcast warnings, who shower potential targets with leaflets urging civilians to flee urgently, who even fire a so-called "warning knock" to alert householders to an impending attack. It is Hamas which violates international laws of war by hiding its weapons and its fighters in hospitals, schools and homes and uses tunnels to infiltrate assassins into civilian areas to kidnap, torture and murder non-combatants. Nor is there any argument about proportionality. Hamas needs the Palestinian mortality rate to soar because it hopes to sway international opinion against Israel, it encourages civilians to remain in areas targeted by the Israelis and not seek shelter. Israel has invested in an effective anti-missile defence system called Iron Dome, which has successfully protected its citizens from being killed. This war, argues Israeli author Yossi Klein Halevi, whose book *Like Dreamers* explores the different lives and politics of seven Israeli paratroopers who fought together in the 1967 Six-Day War, needs a definitive end.

The only way for peace in Gaza is for Israel to win a clear victory, not another no-win, no-lose settlement that gives succour to terrorism. Halevi, who is visiting Australia, is adamant the last thing the Israelis want is to occupy Gaza, but says they would like to send Hamas and its sponsors packing — an outcome that should be desired by every peace-loving person. Terrorism is the enemy, not the Palestinians. Defeating terrorism in Gaza would be a severe setback to the Islamist extremists who are at war with each other in Syria, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa and elsewhere. According to the idiotic logic of ABC Q & A guests, Hamas's terrorist acts against Israel are justified because Israel has laid siege to Gaza. Halevi says the chronology defies that claim. He says Israel didn't impose a siege on Gaza after its withdrawal from the region in 2005. Israel imposed the siege only after rockets started raining indiscriminately on its population after Hamas violently expelled the Palestinian Authority from Gaza in 2007. To lift the siege now would permit rogue states like Iran and North Korea to send an unlimited supply of rockets to the terrorists. Writing in the *Washington Post* last Thursday, Michael Oren, a former Israeli ambassador to the US, said there is a cycle of violence, a pattern which emerged during previous rounds of fighting between Israelis and terrorist strongholds. In Lebanon in 2006 and in Gaza in 2008 and again in 2012.

He said: "Allowed to fight for several weeks, at most, Israel was eventually condemned and hamstrung by ceasefires. The terrorists, by contrast, could emerge from hideouts and begin to replenish and enhance their stockpiles. That is precisely the pattern established in the second Lebanon War and repeated in Operations Cast Lead and Pillar of Defense in Gaza. Hezbollah and Hamas sustained losses but, rescued and immunised by international diplomacy, they remained in power and became more powerful still. Israel, on the other hand, was forced to defend its right to defend itself. Jihadist organisations no different from the Islamic State and al-Qaeda gained regional legitimacy, while Israel lost it in the world." It would be easy to say Australia hasn't got a dog in this fight and we should just sing kumbaya and think happy thoughts, but that would be to ignore the spots of cancer which are already active in our society. The cesspits which spawned notorious Sydney jihadists Khaled Sharrouf and Mohamed Elomar — who have posted boasts of beheading "infidels" and horrific pictures of themselves with severed heads — who warn of launching their jihad within Australia.

Marking the end of Ramadan this week, Labor MP Tony Burke, whose electorate of Watson has a large Muslim population, said: "There is a limit to what we can do as a nation, but we can speak the truth and we must speak the truth about Palestine."

Yet, when one community leader Vic Alhadeff did speak the truth about Hamas — and the authenticity of his claims about the terrorists have not been disputed — the NSW government buckled to Muslim community pressure and accepted his resignation as chairman of the Community Relations Board in an act of supreme moral cowardice. Those who objected to Alhadeff's factual remarks have given support to Hamas, whether they like it or not. They have given succour to an organisation in a league with the murderous Islamic State, Boko Haram, al-Qaeda and every other pathologically homicidal terrorist group in the world. If Premier Mike Baird cannot distinguish between those who want to kill all the Jews in the world and convert all the Christians to Islam at the point of a sword and the only liberal democracy in the Middle East, he should check his Christian credentials. Hamas's stated goal is eradicating Israel, which is the West's sole bulwark against terror in the region. Australia and every civilised nation has a vital interest in this struggle, just as we had interests in the struggles against totalitarianism in WWI, WWII and the Cold War. To think otherwise is to begin the slide into the abyss of moral corruption inhabited by supporters of international terrorism. (*Piers Akerman, The Daily Telegraph, Aug 01, 2014*)

## ISIS Crucifies One of Its Own in Syria

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) on Friday executed and crucified one of its own men for corruption in Syria, a watchdog and jihadist sites said, according to AFP. Photographs posted on websites showed the body and bloodied head of a bearded man with a placard reading: "Guilty: Abu Adnan al-Anadali. Sentence: execution and three days of crucifixion. Motive: extorting money at checkpoints by accusing drivers of apostasy." The text is signed by "The prince of believers," thought to refer to ISIS chief Abu Baqr al-Baghdadi. Before being crucified, the man was killed by three bullets to the head at Bab in the north of Aleppo province, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights told AFP. ISIS, the most radical jihadist group fighting in Syria, has been accused of countless atrocities since joining the civil war. These include torturing and murdering prisoners, among them children and teenagers, and forcing Druze men to convert to Islam or die. Earlier this month, ISIS killed a 102-year-old man along with his whole family. In one case, members of the group beheaded a person they said was a member of an Iraqi Shiite militia fighting for Assad, only to discover they had accidentally beheaded a fighter belonging to an allied rebel group. In March, the group live-tweeted the amputation of a hand of a man charged with theft in the northern province of Aleppo. Over the past few weeks, ISIS has expanded its operations in Iraq, taking over several cities in the country and causing alarm over a possible regional war. (Elad Benari, israelnationalnews.com, June 28, 2014)

## Iran Rejects West's 'Excessive Demands'

Talks between Iran and West once again end with no breakthrough, as Iranian Foreign Minister says there are "major disputes". Iran informed the six major powers on Friday it would not accept their "excessive demands" after the latest talks on a permanent nuclear deal ended with no breakthrough, Reuters reports. Iran and the United States, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany are striving to turn an interim deal signed in November into a comprehensive settlement by July 20. Under the interim deal, Iran committed to limit its uranium enrichment to five percent and is **gradually winning access** to \$4.2 billion of its oil revenues frozen abroad and some other sanctions relief. It looks like it will not be easy, as Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Friday urged the six nations to "abandon excessive demands which will not be accepted by Iran." "Still we have not overcome disputes about major issues," Zarif told reporters as five days of negotiations in Vienna wound up, according to Reuters. "There has been progress, but major disputes remain," he added. Zarif made clear there was no agreement yet between Iran and the six on a draft text of an agreement. A senior Chinese official said the two sides had put together a "textual framework", though gave no details.

"The fact that (we came up) with this text is progress ... in procedural terms," China's Wang Qun told reporters. Diplomats from the six powers told Reuters earlier in the week that one of the most difficult issues in the talks was the number of centrifuges Tehran will be allowed to keep to enrich uranium under any deal. Western officials say that the six powers want this number to be in the low thousands to prevent any Iranian dash to a nuclear bomb-making capability. Iran insists on tens of thousands of centrifuges to make fuel for what it says is a planned network of civilian nuclear power stations. A spokesman for European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, who coordinates the talks, would only say that the two sides had begun drafting the text of a deal during their fifth round of negotiations this year. "We have worked extremely hard all week to develop elements we can bring together when we meet for the next round in Vienna, beginning on July 2," Michael Mann said in a statement. "We presented each other with a number of ideas on a range of issues, and we have begun the drafting process." Zarif indicated this week that the sides have started drafting a comprehensive agreement but added "there are still many differences" over the text. The powers are seeking a settlement that would limit Iran's nuclear program. Throughout the talks, Iran has declared that it will never give up on what it sees as its right to uranium enrichment. (Elad Benari, israelnationalnews.com, June 20, 2014)

## Ukraine conflict: Vladimir Putin rattles nuclear sabre

**Moscow:** Russian President Vladimir Putin raised the spectre of nuclear war with the West on Friday as he defied international condemnation over his decision to send thousands of Russian troops and heavy armour into eastern Ukraine. Accused by Europe and NATO of launching a full-scale invasion, he boasted to a group of Russian youngsters that "It's best not to mess with us". In language not heard since the height of the Cold War, he told his audience: "Thank God, I think no one is thinking of unleashing a large-scale conflict with Russia. I want to remind you that Russia is one of the leading nuclear powers." Mr Putin's comments, made during a visit to a pro-Kremlin youth camp on the banks of a lake outside Moscow, will alarm Western governments. Even during the Cold War, few Kremlin leaders resorted to the direct mentions of Russia's nuclear arsenal. Mr Putin made his remarks as European leaders were preparing to hold an emergency summit to discuss further sanctions. NATO believes there are more than 1000 regular Russian troops in eastern Ukraine.

The soldiers are believed to be the backbone of a counter-offensive in which pro-Kremlin rebels in eastern Ukraine have seized back swathes of territory from Ukrainian government forces in the past few days, dramatically turning the tide in the four-month conflict. A battle is now looming in the port city of Mariupol, where Ukrainian forces are braced for a full-scale assault by rebels backed by Kremlin's forces. The escalation in the conflict is the most serious since the pro-Russian uprising began, and has dashed Western hopes that sanctions had forced the Kremlin to abandon its support for the rebels. "If it looks like a war, sounds like a war and kills like a war, it is a war," Poland's Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said. "The situation is now out of control," his German counterpart, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, added. (Tom Parfitt and Colin Freeman, *SMH*, August 30, 2014)

## Ukrainian FM: 'We Want Israeli Drones'

After deal for Israeli military hardware reported canned last month over Russian pressure, visiting Ukrainian diplomat makes another call. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin on Thursday gave an interview to Israel's Knesset Channel, in which he said his nation is interested in expanding military ties with the Jewish state. "We spoke about the importing of drones from Israel," said Klimkin after meeting Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and other officials. "That's really important in the supervision framework of the ceasefire (with pro-Russian separatists), but we are speaking with many countries about that and countries in the European Union in particular." Klimkin continued "today we are holding a special cooperation with France and Italy. Therefore the topic of drones is not so controversial as it was two or three months ago when everything started."

Ukraine has been gripped by violence since its Russian-backed President Viktor Yanukovich was ousted last winter in a popular movement from the streets pushing for closer ties with the EU. That tension spiraled further after a de facto Russian military invasion of Crimea, and votes in several territories to separate from Ukraine and side with Russia. The call for Israeli drones by Klimkin comes after reports last month that a proposed sale of Israeli weapons - including drones - to Ukraine had been blocked over fear of antagonizing Russia. A Ukrainian delegation had visited Israel to acquire military hardware including drones to use against pro-Russian separatists,

said the report on Channel Two. It said the Defense Ministry had approved the sale only to have the Foreign Ministry veto it for fear of such a move causing Russia to sell more weapons to Iran and Syria. Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists signed a ceasefire on September 5, with tensions frequently threatening to spill over again since then. (Hezki Ezra, Ari Yashar, israelnationalnews.com, Oct. 23, 2014)

### **The challenge to rein in Putin**

ABOUT 40,000 combat-ready Russian soldiers are poised on Ukraine's eastern border and Russian-speaking soldiers have been fomenting divisive uprisings in Kiev's industrial heartland, as they did in Crimea. Amid such a state of play, urgent, effective action is needed by the West to deter Vladimir Putin from his course of extended territorial aggression. None of the measures taken in response to the Crimean invasion has made the latter day tsar in the Kremlin think again. So, when NATO and EU leaders meet this week to confront the gravest crisis in Europe since the end of the Cold War, they must be prepared to go further. Given Europe's reliance on Russian gas supplies, Mr Putin obviously believes he is in a strong position. But he does not hold all the cards. It is imperative the EU and NATO leave him in no doubt that, if he persists with his apparent intention to tear Ukraine apart and make it ungovernable ahead of next month's election, he will face damaging sanctions. As well as being aimed at the wider economy, these should be targeted at him personally, and the coterie of oligarchs who surround him and ship their wealth into Western real estate, commercial interests and financial assets.

Washington has proposed a range of potentially highly effective banking sanctions that would play havoc with their wealth. These should now be approved in readiness for further moves by Mr Putin. Washington's plan to expose the vast personal wealth Mr Putin reportedly holds in Western banks should also be enacted. Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, has paved the way, warning the City of London, Europe's financial hub, to prepare for possible market volatility that would follow sanctions. "We are prepared to bear the economic price because the price of doing nothing is considerably higher," he said. It is to be hoped other European leaders are similarly determined to confront Mr Putin as he attempts to use gas exports to blackmail Europe. The EU relies on Russia for 30 per cent of its gas. But Russia, too, is vulnerable, oil and gas accounting for 80 per cent of its exports and 30 per cent of its GDP. Its petro economy relies overwhelmingly on sales to the EU. Without them, Russia's economy would be in dire straits. Mr Putin also needs to be reminded of his dependence on imports from the EU of heavy industrial equipment that Russia no longer produces. Blocking imports of Western-manufactured goods, in addition to financial sanctions, would hit Mr Putin's economy hard and, potentially, even dent his soaring popularity.

NATO, too, must be prepared to expand its deployment of forces in the Baltics and Poland as a direct counter to the Russian troop moves. It could also provide greater direct military assistance to Ukraine so it is better equipped to confront Moscow's forces. A Russian invasion of Ukraine would be catastrophic. The looming crisis has become a fundamental test of perceptions that the Obama administration and the Western alliance are too weak to rein in Mr Putin. For the West, failing the test would hand the Kremlin a victory with far-reaching strategic consequences. (Editorial, *The Australian*. April 14, 2014)

### **Vladimir Putin celebrates 62nd birthday in Siberia as supporters compare him to Hercules**

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin has marked his 62nd birthday in the Siberian wilderness as supporters compared his takeover of Crimea to one of the *12 Labours of Hercules* and 100,000 marched in his honour in Chechnya. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Mr Putin had taken a day off from his "extremely intense" agenda to celebrate his birthday in the depths of Siberia. "This place is some 300 to 400 kilometres away from the nearest settlement," Mr Peskov told the Komsomolskaya Pravda tabloid on Tuesday, saying the president worked virtually around the clock and needed a breather. "He will rest," he said, declining to say whether Mr Putin would have company in Siberia. The president is riding a wave of popular support following Moscow's annexation of Crimea in March, with ordinary Russians, ex-Soviet leaders and Ukrainian separatists singing his praises on Tuesday. More than 100,000 people, some carrying giant flags, marched in the president's honour in the Chechen capital of Grozny, led by Kremlin-backed regional leader Ramzan Kadyrov who carried a portrait of Mr Putin. Supporters in Moscow staged an exhibition of paintings designed to symbolise Mr Putin's achievements, comparing them to the *12 Labours of Hercules*, the demigod of Greek mythology renowned for his strength. The paintings depict the takeover of Crimea, which is compared to capturing the Cretan Bull, fighting corruption (compared to the cleaning of the Augean Stables) and what supporters portray as the most difficult labour of all — standing up to the United States, which is compared to Cerberus, the multi-headed dog of mythology.

"Since Putin's last birthday Russia under his leadership has made a leap into a political 'terra incognita'," the mass-circulation daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets* trumpeted, saying he would remain "indispensable" for the country.

Alexander Zakharchenko, prime minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic in eastern Ukraine, praised Mr Putin for the protection of the "Russian world" and supporting rebels in the ex-Soviet country. But while this year's festivities had all the slavish adulation that has marked Mr Putin's birthdays over the past decade, not everyone was celebrating. His critics attacked him, while wits asked on Twitter whether Mr Putin could remain in the Siberian woods for good. Opposition magazine *The New Times* marked the day with a new dose of gallows humour, with jokes poking fun at life under Mr Putin. In Ukraine, where contempt for Mr Putin runs high, the 1+1 television channel compiled a collection of profanity-laced Twitter messages and internet memes. "According to statistics, the average life expectancy for Russian men is 62 years," read one tweet. (AFP, October 07, 2014)

### **Russian Diplomat's Speech Depicts the West as Hypocritical**

Russia's foreign minister delivered a strident denunciation of the United States and its allies on Saturday, using his speech at the annual United Nations General Assembly session to depict the West as an arrogant and hypocritical arbiter of "what is good or evil." The speech by Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov, a skilled diplomat who spent a decade as Russia's United Nations ambassador, described the world's acute conflict zones — Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan — in near polar opposite terms from the way the United States and Western European leaders have framed them. He bluntly rejected their depiction of Russia as a scheming violator of the world order, equating such a view to what he called an inherent inability of the West to outgrow the stereotypes of Soviet times. On the contrary, Mr. Lavrov said, the deterioration of Russia's relationship with the NATO alliance, particularly regarding the Ukraine crisis, had "made obvious the inability of the alliance to change the genetic code it embedded during the Cold War era."

Russia did not illegally seize Ukraine's Crimea Peninsula six months ago, as President Obama and many other leaders have said, but rather only wanted to see the people of Crimea decide for themselves whether they would remain part of Ukraine after the political violence that ousted the pro-Russia president, Viktor F. Yanukovich. "The attempts to distort the truth and to hide the facts behind

blanket accusations have been undertaken at all stages of the Ukrainian crisis," Mr. Lavrov said. He reiterated the Kremlin's view that the current Ukraine government, led by Western-friendly politicians, was the result of a coup d'état.

"Shouldn't the General Assembly adopt a declaration on the inadmissibility of interference into domestic affairs of sovereign states and nonrecognition of coup d'états as a method of the change of power?" he asked. "The time has come to totally exclude from the international interaction the attempts of illegitimate pressure of some states on others." Countering the American-led position that Russia has resorted to force to get what it wants in Ukraine and arbitrarily redraw geographic boundaries, Mr. Lavrov said the reverse was true. "Washington has openly declared its right to unilateral use of force anywhere to uphold its own interests," he said. "Military interference has become a norm — even despite the dismal outcome of all power operations that the U.S. has carried out over the recent years." The Western alliance, Mr. Lavrov said, which "portrays itself as a champion of democracy, rule of law and human rights within individual countries, acts from directly opposite positions in the international arena, rejecting the democratic principle of sovereign equality of states enshrined in the U.N. Charter and trying to decide for everyone what is good or evil."

Mr. Lavrov's speech had been eagerly awaited, in part to see whether Russia would react to the newly formed American-led alliance of European and Arab states now conducting airstrikes on the Islamic State, the extremist group ensconced in eastern Syria that has seized parts of Iraq and has been universally condemned as a terrorist organization. The United States did not seek permission for those attacks from the government of Syria, a Russia ally, nor did it seek an authorization from the United Nations Security Council, where Russia, as a permanent member, has veto power. While Russia may be quietly happy that the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, is now the target of American airstrikes, Mr. Lavrov took the opportunity to challenge the Obama administration's decision as arrogant, arbitrary and contrary to the United Nations Charter. "The struggle against terrorists in the territory of Syria should be structured in cooperation with the Syrian government, which clearly stated its readiness to join it," Mr. Lavrov said. (Rick Gladstone, *New York Times*, Sept. 27, 2014)

### **Putin enlists Russian philosophers [and theologians] for backup on world stage**



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"The tiger of quasi-religious nationalism, which Putin has been riding, may now take control." *Photo: Getty Images*

Even cynics like to feel moral. Even hard-eyed men who play power politics need to feel that their efforts are part of a great historic mission. So as he has been throwing his weight around the world, Vladimir Putin has been careful to quote Russian philosophers of the 19th and 20th centuries such as Nikolai Berdyaev, Vladimir Solovyov and Ivan Ilyin.

Putin doesn't only quote these guys; he wants others to read them. As Maria Snegovaya pointed out recently in *The Washington Post*, the Kremlin recently assigned three philosophic books to regional governors: Berdyaev's *The Philosophy of Inequality*, Solovyov's *Justification of the Good* and Ilyin's *Our Tasks*. Putin was personally involved in getting the remains of Ilyin - who died and was buried in Switzerland - reburied in Russian soil. In 2009, Putin went to consecrate the grave himself. The event sent him into a nationalistic fervour. "It's a crime when someone only begins talking about the separation of Russia and Ukraine," he said on that day.

To enter into the world of Putin's favourite philosophers is to enter a world full of melodrama, mysticism and grandiose eschatological visions. "We trust and are confident that the hour will come when Russia will rise from disintegration and humiliation and begin an epoch of new development and greatness," Ilyin wrote. Three great ideas run through this work. The first is Russian exceptionalism: the idea Russia has its own unique spiritual status and purpose. The second is devotion to the Orthodox faith. The third is belief in autocracy. Mashed together, these philosophers point to a Russia that is a quasi-theocratic nationalist autocracy destined to play a culminating role on the world stage. These philosophers often argued the rationalistic, materialistic West was corrupting the organic spiritual purity of Russia. "The West exported this anti-Christian virus to Russia," Ilyin wrote. "Having lost our bond with God and the Christian tradition, mankind has been morally blinded, gripped by materialism, irrationalism and nihilism." You can hear echoes of this moralistic strain in Putin's speeches. Citing Berdyaev, he talks about defending traditional values to ward off moral chaos. He says he is defending the distinction between good and evil, which has been lost in the outside world. Most importantly, these philosophers had epic visions of Russia's role in the world. Solovyov argued that because Russia is located between the Catholic West and the non-Christian East, it has a historic mission to lead the way to human unification. Russia would transcend secularism and atheism and create a unified spiritual kingdom. "The Russian messianic conception," Berdyaev wrote, "always exalted Russia as a country that would help to solve the problems of humanity."

Russia is frequently seen as a besieged fortress. The West is pitched as rotten to the core and weak yet so powerful that it can be blamed for everything that goes wrong. Russia has immeasurable spiritual potential yet is forever plagued by a lack of self-respect, lack of self-assertion and unmet potential. In his 1948 essay, *What Dismemberment of Russia Entails for the World*, Ilyin describes the Russian people as the "core of everything European-Asian and, therefore, of universal equilibrium". Yet the West, he argues, is trying to "divide the united Russian broom into twigs to break these twigs one by one". The West is driven by "a plan of hatred and lust for power". All of this adds up to a highly charged and assertive messianic ideology. If Putin took it all literally, he'd be a Russian ayatollah. Up until now, he hasn't taken it literally. His regime has used this nationalism to mobilise public opinion and to explain itself to itself. But it has tamped down every time this nationalistic ideology threatened to upend the status quo. The danger is that Russia is now involved in a dispute in Ukraine that touches and activates the very core of this touchy messianism. The tiger of quasi-religious nationalism, which Putin has been riding, may now take control. That would make it very hard for Putin to stop in this conflict where rational calculus would tell him to stop.

Up until now, we have not been in a conflict of civilisations with Russia. But with passions aroused and philosophic zealotry at full boil, it may appear that we are. The implication for Western policymakers is that we may not be dealing with a "normal" regime, which can be manipulated by economic and diplomatic carrots and sticks. Threatening exclusion from the Group of 8 or the freezing of assets may become irrelevant because the Russian regime will have moved up to a different level. Russia may be motivated by a deep, creedal ideology that has been wafting through the culture for centuries and now has an unlikely, cynical and cold-eyed host. (David Brooks, *New York Times*, March 5, 2014)

### **Russian media is blind to the truth**

OLD habits are hard to break. For decades, the state-run Soviet media was Russia's official source of misinformation. Presently, the Russian media is performing the same role. As US commentator Dennis Prager recently noted: "There is increasingly little difference between the Russian media and the Soviet media. Both were/are saturated with lies." In the case of MH17, the lies began almost instantly. One day after the jet was shot out of the sky, killing 298 people including nearly 40 Australian citizens and residents, one Russian television station claimed the disaster had been engineered by the CIA. The lies have continued ever since, featuring abundant conspiracy theories that invariably "prove" the innocence of Russia and its separatist allies in Ukraine.

One of the more spectacular theories is that Ukrainians shot down the Malaysian Airlines jet because they mistook it for the jet used by Russian President Vladimir Putin. As calmer analysts have pointed out, the two jets are barely in any way alike, apart from fuselage stripes. Besides which, as has also been pointed out, at the altitude flown by the Malaysian Airlines jet, aircraft are not readily identifiable by sight. Instead, they are identified by radar and other signals. Yet this conspiracy theory — and many others — has gained wide currency throughout Russia, thanks to repetition by a media that seems frightened of the truth. All of this should be kept in mind over coming days and weeks if an Australian Federal Police-led taskforce joins operations to help secure the MH17 crash site. The ambitious Australian plan, one of several options under consideration by the federal government, is bound to be misrepresented by the Russian press and possibly by other media following Russia's deceitful lead. English-language Russian media has a considerable following in Australia and elsewhere. It is a pity that those closest to events are determined not to provide an accurate picture, but rather to provide cover for their popular but reckless leader. (The Daily Telegraph, Editorial, July 24, 2014)

### **Vladimir Putin ups the ante with reminders Russia is a nuclear power**

New Zealand's Prime Minister, John Key, was enjoying some friendly banter with his Russian counterpart when they stumbled on to a distinctly unfriendly subject: nuclear war. It was a lunch break at an international summit, as Key related to me earlier this year: "So we're having this joke exchange and one point I said to him: 'How long would it take a missile to get out from Moscow to NZ?' " The Russian Prime Minister, Dmitry Medvedev, briefly consulted an aide, apparently without success, before turning back to the NZ leader. Key relates: "He said, 'Don't worry, I'll let you know before it happens'." Key laughs heartily at the retelling. But jokes about nuclear weapons are an uneasy genre of humour. Russia's nuclear arsenal is the ultimate reality of its power. It sits at the back of every conversation and calculation about Russia. And since that exchange, the humour has drained away. Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, has put his country's 5000 nuclear warheads at the forefront. Three times in the past two months, he has raised the spectre of nuclear war as he confronts the West.

Most recently, he did it overnight Thursday Australian time while he was en route to a summit of 50 nations, the annual Asia-Europe Meeting, in Milan. "He's again threatened the West with nuclear weapons," says John Besemeres, a Russia expert at the ANU. It's a dramatic way to make an entrance to a summit. "It trumps an AFL shirt-fronting any day," quipped Andrew O'Neil, a professor of international relations at Griffith University. "It seems like a masturbatory fantasy he can't go without," says Besemeres. These are references that haven't been heard since the era of the Soviet Union, and even then it wasn't this overt. "Nobody jokes with Putin about Russia's atomic arsenal. Even a prime minister of far-away, pacifist NZ: 'Putin is a lot more buttoned-down,'" Key agreed. And yes, Russian missiles do have the range to strike NZ. Or Australia. "There is a low probability that Russian nuclear weapons are aimed at Australia, with one possible exception," says Peter Jennings, formerly head of strategy at the Australian Defence Department and now head of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. "That would be the joint facilities" — the US-Australian satellite tracking bases at Pine Gap and Nurrungar from which US spy satellites over eastern Russia are controlled. "The joint facilities are the only thing that may be relevant to the US ability to launch an attack on Russia." Soviet officials bluntly told Australian defence officials during the Cold War that warheads were aimed at the joint facilities. And today, "they are certainly on the Russian target list," says O'Neil, who is knowledgeable on Russian nuclear policy. On August 14, Putin told members of Russia's Duma that he soon planned to "surprise the West with our new developments in offensive nuclear weapons about which we do not talk yet".

And six weeks ago: "I want to remind you that Russia is one of the leading nuclear powers ... It's best not to mess with us."

Summarises Besemeres: "Putin's Russia is heading towards a police state internally and a rogue state externally. It's a very worrying combination." Putin's aim is to restore Russian national pride after the humiliation of the Soviet Union's collapse, an event he has called "the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century". Through the force of his own will, Putin's project is hardening into the reality of Russia itself, at great cost to the Russian economy and to the stability of the world. "Today, a single man personifies the entire Russian political system," says Moscow-based Fyodor Lukyanov, head of the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy, an adviser to the government. There is no way back for Putin, he says. "For Putin, the question is not simply one of winning or losing a tactical position in a game. At stake is his own political survival and, by extension, Russia's future political landscape. With the stakes that high, why would anyone expect him to make serious concessions, especially knowing that he can never restore relations with the West?"

Australia's immediate concern with Russia's evolving bellicosity is narrower. It is Russian obstructionism over MH17 and the 298 civilians, including 38 Australian residents, who died when it was shot from the sky without warning as Russian-backed rebels fought to dominate the Ukrainian territory below. It was the moment that brought Australia into the middle of the extraordinary reality that a land war is under way in Europe as Russia seeks to dominate its smaller neighbour.

The Labor leader, Bill Shorten, wanted to show Australian disgust by removing Putin from the guest list at the G-20 summit in Brisbane next month. However, Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop points out that "no one country has the authority to rescind an invitation to another member" of the G-20. "What I said was that I would test the attitude of the other countries; I've done that. You certainly wouldn't get consensus for a withdrawal of the invitation to Russia. There are countries in the G-20 that are supportive of Russia." These include China, Brazil and India, Russia's partners in the so-called BRICs grouping of large countries with emerging economies. "Others, including the US and the UK, don't think he should attend," Bishop says, "and if he does, that we should take the opportunity to raise the issue of Ukraine and for him to face directly the concerns of the countries involved in MH17."

Germany, Britain and Indonesia are the other G-20 nations whose citizens died that day above Ukraine.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott made plain his frustration: "I'm going to shirt-front Mr Putin," he said this week. "I am going to be saying to Mr Putin 'Australians were murdered'. There'll be a lot of tough conversations with Russia and I suspect the conversation I have with Mr Putin will be the toughest conversation of all." Yet, as Bishop points out, "we will need Russian co-operation" to finish searching the crash site and to establish responsibility. "We still don't have free and unfettered access to the crash site," she says. There has been recent fighting in the area and "we're advised it's not safe". The remains of 36 of the 38 Australian residents have been identified so far. And, as Harvard's Joe Nye, a former top US official, points out: "It is natural to feel angry at Putin's deceptions, but anger is not a strategy." He was not addressing Abbott's seething frustration specifically but the reaction of the West more broadly, but he might well have been. Bishop met her Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, overnight Thursday, Australian time, at the Milan summit to ask that "Russia use its influence with the rebels to allow safe access to the crash site", in accord with the United Nations Security Council resolution 2166. Does Bishop think Abbott's public promise of a shirt-fronting will make Putin more likely to co-operate, or less? Bishop neither endorses nor repudiates her leader's remark, but tells me: "My focus is on the repatriation of remains and the investigation" into responsibility for the destruction of the aircraft."

Analysts have remarked in recent weeks that Putin seems to be seeking to re-engage with the wider world. With Western sanctions biting Russia's economy and NATO indignation finally roused, Putin was thought to be looking to ease the pressure.

There are signs he is. By choosing to attend the Asia-Europe summit, he signalled diplomatic re-engagement. This leads to the expectation he will attend the G-20 summit in Brisbane. And, by announcing the withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine, he seemed to be conceding to NATO pressure. But is it so? Bishop is sceptical of the supposed Russian withdrawal: "The troops that weren't there were told to withdraw from where they weren't?" she poses archly, referring to Putin's many denials that the troops were there in the first place. "Jacqui Lambie will tell you that's a sign he's a man of peace."

"Putin has announced the withdrawal about three times; but we are told that troops remain." Among the volumes of evidence that Russia has been waging a covert war in eastern Ukraine was a report in London's *Financial Times* in August of a secret memorial service in Moscow. "In an anonymous military classroom," the newspaper reported, "12 portraits in identical tortoiseshell frames stand on a metal bench placed on a dais. In front of each picture is a bunch of six roses, red and pink. "The dead, according to a source who showed the *Financial Times* photographs of last month's quiet memorial – an individual with intimate knowledge of the Kremlin's intelligence community – were operatives of Russian special forces. All 12 died in Ukraine in recent weeks. Officially, they were all on holiday."

Other evidence shows that the elite spetsnaz forces, in unmarked uniforms, have been directing the Russian rebels in Ukraine in their use of Russian-supplied armaments. Yet are these signs that Putin might be seeking to take the hard edges off his confrontation with the West? Should Abbott expect a possible conciliatory gesture from Putin? "He's a tough, hard bastard," says Paul Dibb, an intelligence chief during the Cold War and former head of strategy at the Defence Department. "Putin is complicit. These were Russian-supplied SA11s that fly at Mach 3 speed with a 70-kilogram warhead and, more importantly, they are a relatively sophisticated bit of kit. "They would have had to be trained in how to use it. It takes three people to operate the launcher. Putin will have ordered the assassination of the people who pressed the button. It's classic KGB. No fingerprints." Dibb, an authority on Russian doctrine and a professor emeritus at ANU, says Abbott should not expect any concessions to the truth or to Australia's interests: "He's KGB trained. He's a former KGB colonel. He's not going to blink. He's a man trained in the perfect lie. In masking – maskirovka – in disinformation – dezinformatsiya. I know these bastards from Soviet times."

The economic sanctions are inflicting pain on Russia, but Russia experts say the world should not expect Putin to yield. He is forging economic deals with China. He has his people behind him, with approval ratings consistently at or above 80 per cent. A recent art exhibition devoted to Putin as a modern Hercules showed him fighting bravely the hydra-headed beast of Western sanctions. "Investors have learnt that, for Mr Putin, economic growth is not a priority," says a Russian economist at the Paris university Sciences Po, Sergei Guriev. "If he has to choose between growth and Crimea" the Ukrainian territory he seized, "he will choose Crimea." So what is the best strategy for dealing with Putin's Russia? The man advising against anger, American Joe Nye, doesn't have any real suggestions. And there are clear limits to the pressures that can be applied to Russia. As the head of the state-owned news network Russia Today, Dmitry Kiselev, considered to represent the Kremlin view, tells his audiences, Russia is "the only country in the world capable of turning the US into radioactive dust". The Russians might be kidding about their nukes, but it might be a joke with an expensive punchline. Putin is counting on it. (Peter Hartcher, Sydney Morning Herald, Oct. 18, 2014)

## Putin and the Pope

Reading the papers these days I find that the two world leaders who stir the most passion in me are Pope Francis and Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia. One is everything you'd want in a leader, the other everything you wouldn't want. One holds sway over 1.2 billion Roman Catholics, the other over nine time zones. One keeps surprising us with his capacity for empathy, the other by how much he has become a first-class jerk and thug. But neither can be ignored and both have an outsized influence on the world today.

First, the pope. At a time when so many leaders around the world are looking to promote their political fortunes by exploiting grievances and fault lines, we have a pope asking his flock to do something hard, something outside their comfort zone, pushing them to be more inclusive of gays and divorced people. Yes, Francis was rebuffed by conservative bishops at a recent Vatican synod when he asked them to embrace the notion that "homosexuals have gifts and qualities to offer to the Christian community," adding, "are we capable of welcoming these people, guaranteeing to them a fraternal space in our communities?" But, as an editorial in this paper noted: "The very fact that Francis ordered church leaders to address these challenges seems a landmark in Vatican history." The pope asked that rejected language be published for all to see, while also cautioning against "hostile inflexibility — that is, wanting to close oneself within the written word, and not allowing oneself to be surprised by God." "Hostile inflexibility?" Whose leadership does that describe? Look at Putin's recent behavior: His military was indirectly involved in downing a Malaysian airliner over Ukraine and his K.G.B. has not only been trying to take a bite out of Ukraine but is nibbling on Estonia, Georgia and Moldova, all under the guise of protecting "Russian speakers."

I opposed NATO expansion because I believed that there are few global problems that we can solve without the help of Russia. By expanding NATO at the end of the Cold War, when Russia was weak, we helped to cultivate a politics there that would one day be very receptive to Putin's message that the West is ganging up on Russia. But, that said, the message is a lie. The West has no intention of bringing Ukraine into NATO. And please raise your hand if you think the European Union plans to invade Russia. Yet Putin just exploits these fears for two reasons. First, he has a huge chip on his shoulder — no, excuse me; he has a whole lumberyard there — of resentment that Russia is no longer the global power it once was. But rather than make Russia great again by tapping its creative people —

empowering them with education, the rule of law and consensual politics to realize their full potential — he has opted for the shortcut of tapping his oil and gas wells and seizing power from his people. And instead of creating a Russia that is an example to its neighbors, he relies on the brute force that his oil and gas can still buy him. While he rails against NATO, he is really afraid of European Union expansion — that Ukrainians would rather embrace the E.U. market and democracy rules than their historical ties to Russia because they know that through the E.U. they can realize potentials that would never be possible with Russia. By seizing Crimea and stoking up nationalism, Putin was not protecting Russia from NATO. He was protecting himself from the viruses of E.U. accountability and transparency, which, if they took hold in Ukraine, could spread to Moscow, undermining his kleptocracy.

Normally, I wouldn't care, but when the world is dividing between zones of order and disorder, and the world of order needs to be collaborating to stem and reverse disorder, the fact that Putin is stoking disorder on Russia's borders, and not collaborating to promote order in the Middle East, is a real problem. What's more worrying is that the country he threatens most is Russia. If things go bad there — and its economy is already sagging under Western sanctions — the world of disorder will get a lot bigger. That is why Putin's leadership matters, and so does the pope's. I'm focused on Putin because I think he is making the world a worse place for bad reasons, when he could make a difference in Europe and the Middle East with just an ounce more decency and collaboration. America, too, has plenty to learn from the pope's humility, but say what you will, we're still focused on trying to strengthen the global commons, whether by protecting people from jihadists in Iraq or fighting Ebola in Africa. We could do more. Putin needs to do a lot more. "The best leaders don't set timid and selfish goals that are easy to meet but instead set bold and inclusive goals that are hard to achieve," remarked Timothy Shriver, the chairman of the Special Olympics, who has just written a book on leadership, "Fully Alive: Discovering What Matters Most." "We're all looking for ways to make sense of a world without a center, but we'll only find that in people who lead with authentic humility and reckless generosity." (Thomas L. Friedman, *International Herald Tribune*, Oct. 21, 2014)

## **Wake Up, Europe**

### **Europe is facing a challenge from Russia to its very existence.**

Neither the European leaders nor their citizens are fully aware of this challenge or know how best to deal with it. I attribute this mainly to the fact that the European Union in general and the eurozone in particular lost their way after the financial crisis of 2008. The fiscal rules that currently prevail in Europe have aroused a lot of popular resentment. Anti-Europe parties captured nearly 30 percent of the seats in the latest elections for the European Parliament but they had no realistic alternative to the EU to point to until recently. Now Russia is presenting an alternative that poses a fundamental challenge to the values and principles on which the European Union was originally founded. It is based on the use of force that manifests itself in repression at home and aggression abroad, as opposed to the rule of law. What is shocking is that Vladimir Putin's Russia has proved to be in some ways superior to the European Union—more flexible and constantly springing surprises. That has given it a tactical advantage, at least in the near term. Europe and the United States—each for its own reasons—are determined to avoid any direct military confrontation with Russia. Russia is taking advantage of their reluctance. Violating its treaty obligations, Russia has annexed Crimea and established separatist enclaves in eastern Ukraine. In August, when the recently installed government in Kiev threatened to win the low-level war in eastern Ukraine against separatist forces backed by Russia, President Putin invaded Ukraine with regular armed forces in violation of the Russian law that exempts conscripts from foreign service without their consent. In seventy-two hours these forces destroyed several hundred of Ukraine's armored vehicles, a substantial portion of its fighting force. According to General Wesley Clark, former NATO Supreme Allied Commander for Europe, the Russians used multiple launch rocket systems armed with cluster munitions and thermobaric warheads (an even more inhumane weapon that ought to be outlawed) with devastating effect.\*

The local militia from the Ukrainian city of Dnepropetrovsk suffered the brunt of the losses because they were communicating by cell phones and could thus easily be located and targeted by the Russians. President Putin has, so far, abided by a cease-fire agreement he concluded with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on September 5, but Putin retains the choice to continue the cease-fire as long as he finds it advantageous or to resume a full-scale assault. In September, President Poroshenko visited Washington where he received an enthusiastic welcome from a joint session of Congress. He asked for "both lethal and nonlethal" defensive weapons in his speech. However, President Obama refused his request for Javelin hand-held missiles that could be used against advancing tanks. Poroshenko was given radar, but what use is it without missiles? European countries are equally reluctant to provide military assistance to Ukraine, fearing Russian retaliation. The Washington visit gave President Poroshenko a façade of support with little substance behind it. Equally disturbing has been the determination of official international leaders to withhold new financial commitments to Ukraine until after the October 26 election there (which will take place just after this issue goes to press). This has led to an avoidable pressure on Ukrainian currency reserves and raised the specter of a full-blown financial crisis in the country.

There is now pressure from donors, whether in Europe or the US, to "bail in" the bondholders of Ukrainian sovereign debt, i.e., for bondholders to take losses on their investments as a precondition for further official assistance to Ukraine that would put more taxpayers' money at risk. That would be an egregious error. The Ukrainian government strenuously opposes the proposal because it would put Ukraine into a technical default that would make it practically impossible for the private sector to refinance its debt. Bailing in private creditors would save very little money and it would make Ukraine entirely dependent on the official donors. To complicate matters, Russia is simultaneously dangling carrots and wielding sticks. It is offering—but failing to sign—a deal for gas supplies that would take care of Ukraine's needs for the winter. At the same time Russia is trying to prevent the delivery of gas that Ukraine secured from the European market through Slovakia. Similarly, Russia is negotiating for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to monitor the borders while continuing to attack the Donetsk airport and the port city of Mariupol.

It is easy to foresee what lies ahead. Putin will await the results of the elections on October 26 and then offer Poroshenko the gas and other benefits he has been dangling on condition that he appoint a prime minister acceptable to Putin. That would exclude anybody associated with the victory of the forces that brought down the Viktor Yanukovich government by resisting it for months on the Maidan—Independence Square. I consider it highly unlikely that Poroshenko would accept such an offer. If he did, he would be disowned by the defenders of the Maidan; the resistance forces would then be revived. Putin may then revert to the smaller victory that would still be within his reach: he could open by force a land route from Russia to Crimea and Transnistria before winter. Alternatively, he could simply sit back and await the economic and financial collapse of Ukraine. I suspect that he may be holding out the prospect of a grand bargain in which Russia would help the United States against ISIS—for instance by not supplying to Syria the S300 missiles it has promised, thus in effect preserving US air domination—and Russia would be allowed to have its way in the "near abroad," as many of the nations adjoining Russia are called. What is worse, President Obama may accept such a deal.

That would be a tragic mistake, with far-reaching geopolitical consequences. Without underestimating the threat from ISIS, I would argue that preserving the independence of Ukraine should take precedence; without it, even the alliance against ISIS would fall apart. The collapse of Ukraine would be a tremendous loss for NATO, the European Union, and the United States. A victorious Russia would become much more influential within the EU and pose a potent threat to the Baltic states with their large ethnic Russian populations. Instead of supporting Ukraine, NATO would have to defend itself on its own soil. This would expose both the EU and the US to the danger they have been so eager to avoid: a direct military confrontation with Russia. The European Union would become even more divided and ungovernable. Why should the US and other NATO nations allow this to happen? The argument that has prevailed in both Europe and the United States is that Putin is no Hitler; by giving him everything he can reasonably ask for, he can be prevented from resorting to further use of force. In the meantime, the sanctions against Russia—which include, for example, restrictions on business transactions, finance, and trade—will have their effect and in the long run Russia will have to retreat in order to earn some relief from them.

These are false hopes derived from a false argument with no factual evidence to support it. Putin has repeatedly resorted to force and he is liable to do so again unless he faces strong resistance. Even if it is possible that the hypothesis could turn out to be valid, it is extremely irresponsible not to prepare a Plan B. There are two counterarguments that are less obvious but even more important. First, Western authorities have ignored the importance of what I call the “new Ukraine” that was born in the successful resistance on the Maidan. Many officials with a history of dealing with Ukraine have difficulty adjusting to the revolutionary change that has taken place there. The recently signed Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine was originally negotiated with the Yanukovich government. This detailed road map now needs adjustment to a totally different situation. For instance, the road map calls for the gradual replacement and retraining of the judiciary over five years whereas the public is clamoring for immediate and radical renewal. As the new mayor of Kiev, Vitali Klitschko, put it, “If you put fresh cucumbers into a barrel of pickles, they will soon turn into pickles.” Contrary to some widely circulated accounts, the resistance on the Maidan was led by the cream of civil society: young people, many of whom had studied abroad and refused to join either government or business on their return because they found both of them repugnant. (Nationalists and anti-Semitic extremists made up only a minority of the anti-Yanukovich protesters.) They are the leaders of the new Ukraine and they are adamantly opposed to a return of the “old Ukraine,” with its endemic corruption and ineffective government. The new Ukraine has to contend with Russian aggression, bureaucratic resistance both at home and abroad, and confusion in the general population. Surprisingly, it has the support of many oligarchs, President Poroshenko foremost among them, and the population at large. There are of course profound differences in history, language, and outlook between the eastern and western parts of the country, but Ukraine is more united and more European-minded than ever before. That unity, however, is extremely fragile. The new Ukraine has remained largely unrecognized because it took time before it could make its influence felt. It had practically no security forces at its disposal when it was born. The security forces of the old Ukraine were actively engaged in suppressing the Maidan rebellion and they were disoriented this summer when they had to take orders from a government formed by the supporters of the rebellion. No wonder that the new government was at first unable to put up an effective resistance to the establishment of the separatist enclaves in eastern Ukraine. It is all the more remarkable that President Poroshenko was able, within a few months of his election, to mount an attack that threatened to reclaim those enclaves.

To appreciate the merits of the new Ukraine you need to have had some personal experience with it. I can speak from personal experience although I must also confess to a bias in its favor. I established a foundation in Ukraine in 1990 even before the country became independent. Its board and staff are composed entirely of Ukrainians and it has deep roots in civil society. I visited the country often, especially in the early years, but not between 2004 and early 2014, when I returned to witness the birth of the new Ukraine. I was immediately impressed by the tremendous improvement in maturity and expertise during that time both in my foundation and in civil society at large. Currently, civic and political engagement is probably higher than anywhere else in Europe. People have proven their willingness to sacrifice their lives for their country. These are the hidden strengths of the new Ukraine that have been overlooked by the West.

The other deficiency of the current European attitude toward Ukraine is that it fails to recognize that the Russian attack on Ukraine is indirectly an attack on the European Union and its principles of governance. It ought to be evident that it is inappropriate for a country, or association of countries, at war to pursue a policy of fiscal austerity as the European Union continues to do. All available resources ought to be put to work in the war effort even if that involves running up budget deficits. The fragility of the new Ukraine makes the ambivalence of the West all the more perilous. Not only the survival of the new Ukraine but the future of NATO and the European Union itself is at risk. In the absence of unified resistance it is unrealistic to expect that Putin will stop pushing beyond Ukraine when the division of Europe and its domination by Russia is in sight. Having identified some of the shortcomings of the current approach, I will try to spell out the course that Europe ought to follow. Sanctions against Russia are necessary but they are a necessary evil. They have a depressive effect not only on Russia but also on the European economies, including Germany. This aggravates the recessionary and deflationary forces that are already at work. By contrast, assisting Ukraine in defending itself against Russian aggression would have a stimulative effect not only on Ukraine but also on Europe. That is the principle that ought to guide European assistance to Ukraine.

Germany, as the main advocate of fiscal austerity, needs to understand the internal contradiction involved. Chancellor Angela Merkel has behaved as a true European with regard to the threat posed by Russia. She has been the foremost advocate of sanctions on Russia, and she has been more willing to defy German public opinion and business interests on this than on any other issue. Only after the Malaysian civilian airliner was shot down in July did German public opinion catch up with her. Yet on fiscal austerity she has recently reaffirmed her allegiance to the orthodoxy of the Bundesbank—probably in response to the electoral inroads made by the Alternative for Germany, the anti-euro party. She does not seem to realize how inconsistent that is. She ought to be even more committed to helping Ukraine than to imposing sanctions on Russia. The new Ukraine has the political will both to defend Europe against Russian aggression and to engage in radical structural reforms. To preserve and reinforce that will, Ukraine needs to receive adequate assistance from its supporters. Without it, the results will be disappointing and hope will turn into despair. Disenchantment already started to set in after Ukraine suffered a military defeat and did not receive the weapons it needs to defend itself.

It is high time for the members of the European Union to wake up and behave as countries indirectly at war. They are better off helping Ukraine to defend itself than having to fight for themselves. One way or another, the internal contradiction between being at war and remaining committed to fiscal austerity has to be eliminated. Where there is a will, there is a way.

Let me be specific. In its last progress report, issued in early September, the IMF estimated that in a worst-case scenario Ukraine would need additional support of \$19 billion. Conditions have deteriorated further since then. After the Ukrainian elections the IMF will need to reassess its baseline forecast in consultation with the Ukrainian government. It should provide an immediate cash injection of at

least \$20 billion, with a promise of more when needed. Ukraine's partners should provide additional financing conditional on implementation of the IMF-supported program, at their own risk, in line with standard practice. The spending of borrowed funds is controlled by the agreement between the IMF and the Ukrainian government. Four billion dollars would go to make up the shortfall in Ukrainian payments to date; \$2 billion would be assigned to repairing the coal mines in eastern Ukraine that remain under the control of the central government; and \$2 billion would be earmarked for the purchase of additional gas for the winter. The rest would replenish the currency reserves of the central bank. The new assistance package would include a debt exchange that would transform Ukraine's hard currency Eurobond debt (which totals almost \$18 billion) into long-term, less risky bonds. This would lighten Ukraine's debt burden and bring down its risk premium. By participating in the exchange, bondholders would agree to accept a lower interest rate and wait longer to get their money back. The exchange would be voluntary and market-based so that it could not be mischaracterized as a default. Bondholders would participate willingly because the new long-term bonds would be guaranteed—but only partially—by the US or Europe, much as the US helped Latin America emerge from its debt crisis in the 1980s with so-called Brady bonds (named for US Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady). Such an exchange would have a few important benefits. One is that, over the next two or three critical years, the government could use considerably less of its scarce hard currency reserves to pay off bondholders. The money could be used for other urgent needs. By trimming Ukraine debt payments in the next few years, the exchange would also reduce the chance of a sovereign default, discouraging capital flight and arresting the incipient run on the banks. This would make it easier to persuade owners of Ukraine's banks (many of them foreign) to inject urgently needed new capital into them. The banks desperately need bigger capital cushions if Ukraine is to avoid a full-blown banking crisis, but shareholders know that a debt crisis could cause a banking crisis that wipes out their equity. Finally, Ukraine would keep bondholders engaged rather than watch them cash out at 100 cents on the dollar as existing debt comes due in the next few years. This would make it easier for Ukraine to reenter the international bond markets once the crisis has passed. Under the current conditions it would be more practical and cost-efficient for the US and Europe not to use their own credit directly to guarantee part of Ukraine's debt, but to employ intermediaries such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development or the World Bank and its subsidiaries.

The Ukrainian state-owned company Naftogaz is a black hole in the budget and a major source of corruption. Naftogaz currently sells gas to households for \$47 per thousand cubic meters (TCM), for which it pays \$380 per TCM. At present people cannot control the temperature in their apartments. A radical restructuring of Naftogaz's entire system could reduce household consumption at least by half and totally eliminate Ukraine's dependence on Russia for gas. That would involve charging households the market price for gas. The first step would be to install meters in apartments and the second to distribute a cash subsidy to needy households. The will to make these reforms is strong both in the new management and in the incoming government but the task is extremely complicated (how do you define who is needy?) and the expertise is inadequate. The World Bank and its subsidiaries could sponsor a project development team that would bring together international and domestic experts to convert the existing political will into bankable projects. The initial cost would exceed \$10 billion but it could be financed by project bonds issued by the European Investment Bank and it would produce very high returns.

It is also high time for the European Union to take a critical look at itself. There must be something wrong with the EU if Putin's Russia can be so successful even in the short term. The bureaucracy of the EU no longer has a monopoly of power and it has little to be proud of. It should learn to be more united, flexible, and efficient. And Europeans themselves need to take a close look at the new Ukraine. That could help them recapture the original spirit that led to the creation of the European Union. The European Union would save itself by saving Ukraine. (George Soros, *The New York Review of Books*, October 23, 2014 Issue) US Still At Odds With China

For more than a decade, the United States has been watching nervously to see how China would choose to wield its formidable and growing economic, political and military powers. The hope, as Robert Zoellick said in 2005 when he was a deputy secretary of state, was that Beijing would become a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system, working cooperatively to foster economic integration and the peaceful resolution of global tensions. A more assertive China under President Xi Jinping, however, has emerged in the past year, raising doubts about its commitment to peaceful evolution and severely straining its relationship with the United States. High-level talks between Chinese and American officials in Beijing last week were minimally productive, but they left largely unresolved profound differences on major issues that, if not managed carefully, could have damaging consequences. To take one prominent example, the two sides remain far apart on China's aggressive efforts to assert sweeping claims over islands and waters in the South China Sea and East China Sea — claims disputed by Japan, the Philippines and others in the region. Secretary of State John Kerry's plea that China agree to a legally binding code of conduct to govern navigation and prevent unilateral territorial grabs appears to have fallen on deaf ears.

This has become an urgent matter. Ships and fishing boats from China and other claimant countries confront each other regularly and risk stumbling into conflict. Chinese and Japanese jets have also been playing chicken in the skies. Amid concern that China is taking control over islands and waters bit by bit, the Americans are rightly considering new ways, including more surveillance flights and diplomatic proposals, to discourage such action and reduce tensions. Managing maritime claims through a transparent and rules-based process should be in China's interest as much as anyone's. The United States and China also did not close the gap over charges that Chinese hackers are stealing industrial secrets and costing American companies billions of dollars. It is especially shortsighted that China refused to revive an espionage working group shut down in May after the Obama administration charged five Chinese military officers with hacking. For a long time, it seemed as if the wisest diplomatic course was to downplay worries over China's growing strength and focus instead on cooperation. American officials still do that publicly, as Mr. Kerry did on Thursday when he sought to reassure his hosts that the administration's network of alliances in Asia is not part of a "strategy to try to push back against or be in conflict with China." But there are many reasons to question whether China really is committed to peaceful coexistence and to hope that the United States and its allies in the region will act more firmly to protect their interests in freedom of the seas and an open political and economic order. Getting American policy right is essential. Cooperation between the United States and China, the world's two largest economies, is vital to global stability. There is nothing to be gained by pushing China, which has its own concerns about America's role in Asia, into a corner. At the same time, China must be made to understand that nothing good can come of its bullying, which frightens other Asian nations and inevitably draws them closer to the United States.

Both sides spoke soothing words. Mr. Xi acknowledged that a conflict between China and the United States would "definitely be a disaster for the two countries and the world." Mr. Kerry said no side wants to fall into the trap of "zero-sum competition." The challenge, as always, will be translating these fine sentiments into action. (The Editorial Board, *International Herald Tribune*, July 12, 2014)

## **NY Israel Day Concert Will Denounce 'Two-State Delusion'**

### **Dr. Paul Brody, chairman of concert featuring senior politicians speaking, says message will be 'not one inch of Israel.'**

The 21st Annual Israel Day Concert in Central Park will be held next Sunday in New York, delivering a strong message of support for Israel, topping off of the Annual Israel Day Parade earlier in the day. Arutz Sheva managing editor Ari Soffer got a chance to speak with Dr. Paul Brody in New York. Brody, along with his wife Drora, are chairpersons of the concert.

Brody noted that the concert aims to deliver several messages, primary among them that "Jerusalem is ours, meaning it's part of Eretz Yisrael (the land of Israel), it will remain undivided lanetzah, forever." Another message of the concert, which was founded 21 years ago as a response to the Oslo Accords, is to declare the resolution "not to give up one inch" of the land of Israel, including Judea and Samaria. The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement is another topic the concert intends to stand up against. Brody noted that three groups supporting BDS are marching in the Israel Day Parade, a fact that has led several groups to boycott the parade.

Finally, the concert is meant to express firm opposition to the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran.

US Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX), a potential Republican presidential candidate for the 2016 elections and staunch supporter of Israel, is slated to speak at the concert, along with former United Nations (UN) Ambassador John Bolton, Deputy Defense Minister Danny Danon, and other senior figures. (Ari Yashar, *IsraelNationalNews.com*, May 29, 2014)

### **Islamists at Al-Aqsa: Liberate Jerusalem from 'Jews Filth'**

**The Islamist Hizb ut-Tahrir calls upon the army of Pakistan and the Islamic nation to liberate Jerusalem from "Jewish filth".** Hizb ut-Tahrir, an Islamic organization which aims to have all Muslim countries unify as an caliphate ruled by Islamic law, held a mass rally at the Al-Aqsa Mosque last week, in which members of the group called upon the army of Pakistan and the Islamic nation to liberate Jerusalem from "Jewish filth". Excerpts from footage of the rally were posted on the internet and translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI). The same group last year released a video which shows Palestinian Arab children at the Al-Aqsa Mosque calling for the "liberation of Palestine". These two videos are only two examples of the anti-Israel incitement which is prevalent in the Palestinian Authority (PA). Such incitement ranges from the glorification of Nazism and the lionization of Adolf Hitler, to programs on official PA television featuring heavily-stereotyped Jews as villains (and encouraging violence against them), and various TV and radio shows which literally wipe the Jewish state off the map. In April, an imam from the Al-Aqsa Mosque participated in a conference in Milan, where he called on "Arab legions" to attack Jaffa and Haifa. (Elad Benari, *IsraelNationalNews.com*, May 5, 2014)

### **Iran Threatens to Annihilate Israel if U.S. Attacks**

**Senior Iranian commander says that any American attack on Iran will result in "the annihilation of the Israeli regime".**



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Iranian Armed Forces march in Tehran Reuters

A senior Iranian commander threatened on Friday that any American attack on Iran will result in "the annihilation of the Israeli regime". "They know that aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran would mean annihilation of Tel Aviv and spread of war into the United States," the commander, Massoud Jazayeri, was quoted by the Fars news agency as having said. His remarks came after U.S. President Barack Obama said on Wednesday that there is an opportunity to resolve disputes over Iran's nuclear energy program but reiterated that Washington reserves "all options" against Iran, alluding to military action.

Jazayeri described Obama's remarks as "childish dreams which may not come true". "Had the U.S. and its allies the capability to attack Iran they would not hesitate a moment to carry out their barbaric act; and, of course, it is surprising that Obama is not embarrassed to rehash his empty words," he said. The Iranian commander said that the era of global hegemony has ended, adding that the "empire of money and weapons" will soon collapse. Over the years, Iran has threatened Israel and the United States on more than one occasion.

In March, a senior commander in Iran's Revolutionary Guards said that Iran **is keeping its finger on the trigger** and is ready to destroy Israel. The commander, Brigadier General Hossein Salami, said that Iranian military commanders are prepared to attack and destroy "the Zionist regime of Israel" as soon as they receive such an order. Previously, **Salami said** that Iran "could minimize the breathing room of the U.S. and the West until the Zionist regime would no longer have room to breathe." Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has in the past **threatened to "annihilate"** the Israeli cities of Tel Aviv and Haifa. In February, the official site of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards **warned the U.S.** that its warships in the Persian Gulf were in range of their Karrar combat drones, as well as their Kowsar anti-ship missiles, both domestically produced. Several weeks ago, the commander of the Iranian Navy stated that his forces **were trained to destroy U.S. warships**. (Elad Benari, *IsraelNationalNews.com*, May 5, 2014)

### **A Nation of Moldy Doormats?**

The repeated calls for Israeli restraint in responding to rocket attacks emanating from Gaza would be comical, if it wasn't so bizarre. What other nation would accept rocket attacks on its cities, while just retaliating with tit for tat counter-attacks?

The unjust criticism from the Obama administration, from the EU, and from the UN demand a response, but not just in words. We are not a nation of moldy doormats and we have the right not just to respond to such rocket attacks, but to create a strong deterrence to such attacks. That will only happen when we realize that tit for tat retaliation doesn't work. What I propose is very simple - multiples of ten. For every 5 rocket attacks from Gaza, we respond with 50. For every 50, we respond with 500. They will get the message loud and clear. If the attacks continue, increase the multiples until they beg for mercy. That is how wars are won, and we are indeed in a war with a bitter enemy. And how do we respond to unjustified world criticism? Explain and Ignore. No proud nation in its right mind allows

other nations and biased world bodies to force it to undermine its national security. The criticism will only begin to die down when we act like a nation with national pride and responsibility for the security of its citizens. Yes, we should explain and we should explain well, but if the critics persist in their biases, we need to learn to ignore the haters of Israel and to act in our national interest. The other nations will only respect a nation that respects itself. (David Rubin, [israelnationalnews.com](http://israelnationalnews.com), July 8, 2014)

### **President Obama Was Right**

Americans don't have a common ancestry. Therefore, we have to work hard to build national solidarity. We go in for more overt displays of patriotism than in most other countries: politicians wearing flag lapel pins, everybody singing the national anthem before games, saying the Pledge of Allegiance at big meetings, revering sacred creedal statements, like the Gettysburg Address. We need to do this because national solidarity is essential to the health of the country. This feeling of solidarity means that we do pull together and not apart in times of crisis, like after the attacks on 9/11. Despite all our polarization, we do accept the election results, even when the other party wins. People in New York do uncomplainingly send tax dollars to help people in New Mexico. We are able to assimilate waves of immigration. National solidarity is especially important for the national defense. Men and women serve in the armed forces for a variety of reasons, but one of them is the awareness that it is an extraordinary privilege to be an American, that it is a debt that needs to be repaid with service.

Soldiers in combat not only protect their buddies, they show amazing devotion to anyone in the uniform, without asking about state or ethnicity. This is the cohesion that makes armies effective. These commitments, so crucial, are based on deep fraternal sentiments that have to be nurtured with action. They are based on the notion that we are members of one national community. We will not abandon each other; we will protect one another; heroic measures will be taken to leave no one behind. Even if it is just a lifeless body that we are retrieving, it is important to repatriate all Americans. The president and vice president, the only government officials elected directly by the entire nation, have a special responsibility to nurture this national solidarity. So, of course, President Obama had to take all measures necessary to secure the release of Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl. Of course, he had to do all he could do to not forsake an American citizen.

It doesn't matter if Bergdahl had deserted his post or not. It doesn't matter if he is a confused young man who said insulting and shameful things about his country and his Army. The debt we owe to fellow Americans is not based on individual merit. It is based on citizenship, and loyalty to the national community we all share. Soldiers don't risk their lives only for those Americans who deserve it; they do it for the nation as a whole. It is not dispositive either that the deal to release Bergdahl may put others at risk. The five prisoners released from Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, in a swap for Bergdahl seem like terrible men who could do harm. But their release may have been imminent anyway. And the loss of national fraternity that would result if we start abandoning Americans in the field would be a greater and more long lasting harm. Israel once traded 1,027 Palestinian prisoners to get back one of their own. Another time they traded 1,150 prisoners to get back three of their own. They did it because of a deep awareness that national cohesion is essential to national survival. They did it because Israeli parents share a common emotional bond; the imprisonment of one of their children touches them all. In polarized countries, especially, you have to take care of your own. If you don't, the corrosive effects will be cumulative.

It doesn't matter either that the United States government ended up dealing with terrorists. In the first place, the Taliban is not a terrorist organization the way Al Qaeda is. America has always tried to reach a negotiated arrangement with the Taliban, and this agreement may be a piece of that. In the second place, this is the dirty world we live in. Sometimes national leaders are called upon to take the sins of the situation upon themselves for the good of the country, to deal with the hateful and compromise with the loathsome. That's their form of sacrifice and service. So President Obama made the right call. If he is to be faulted, it would be first for turning the release into an Oprah-esque photo-op, a political stunt filled with inaccurate rhetoric and unworthy grandstanding. It would next be for his administration's astonishing tone-deafness about how this swap would be received. Most of all, the Obama administration can be faulted for not at least trying to use the language of communal solidarity to explain this decision. Apparently, we have become such a hyperindividualized culture that it is impossible to even develop an extended argument on how individual cases fit into the larger fabric of the common good. Still, the president's instincts were right. His sense of responsibility for a fellow countryman was correct. It's not about one person; it's about the principle of all-for-one-and-one-for-all, which is the basis of citizenship. (David Brooks, *New York Times*, June 5, 2014)

## **Religion**

### **Hillsong founder Brian Houston defends caution on sex abuse claim against father**

HILLSONG Church founder Brian Houston has defended a decision not to take to police allegations his father sexually abused a boy when he first learned of them in late 1999. Brian Houston was today questioned in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse about when he became aware of the sexual abuse claims against his father, and former senior pastor of the church, William Francis "Frank" Houston. Brian Houston says he was first made aware of the claims by an unidentified man, known as AHA, that his father Frank Houston sexually abused him as a seven-year-old, in October 1999. When asked by commission barrister Simeon Beckett why he did not immediately report the claims to police, Mr Houston said that it was the victim's decision because he was by then a fully grown man, despite Mr Houston's having no "doubt it was criminal conduct". "On that day? All the information I was being given was that the man was 35-36 and if the man wanted to go to the police he can ... I did not have a doubt it was criminal conduct," he said. "If this was about someone under 18 we would have gone to the police then and there. "Rightly or wrongly I believed I would have been pre-empting the victim at that point," Mr Houston told the inquiry. He also pointed out that he knew the victim and his mother, and said the man, AHA, "was extremely brittle, extremely angry that the information had come out".

Mr Houston said he was unaware of any allegations against his father until the matter was raised with him by another senior Hills Christian Life Centre official, George Aghajanian, at a meeting between the pair in October 1999. Mr Houston denied he had been made aware of the claims that had been raised by a pastor of the church after being alerted by AHA's mother. "I never saw any of these documents. Frank was dodging and weaving, and was a desperate man treading water." Mr Houston described how "his stomach dropped" when he was told of the claims, saying he had thought to himself "we're not just talking about homosexuality, we're talking about pedophilia". "You don't forget when you find out that your father is a paedophile. "George said, 'here's one other thing I need to talk about, not about you, about your father'. I thought this is not going to be good, my stomach dropped ... Someone had rung one of the pastors in our church and started to blurt all this stuff about Frank, about Dad. "George told me this complaint of abuse, this child sexual abuse had come in. There may have been more detail," he told the hearing today.

Mr Houston told the commission he “dreaded” confronting his father about the abuse allegation. “I cried, I went home. I was devastated. I was devastated, to be honest with you. Totally devastated,” he said. Frank Houston was subsequently suspended from his work as a pastor on the advice of his own son. Frank Houston died in 2004. Frank Houston founded the Assemblies of God Sydney Christian Life Centre after migrating from New Zealand as a pastor in 1977. His son Brian established the Hills Christian Life Centre in northwest Sydney, and Brian went on to merge the two churches into the hugely successful Hillsong Church in 1999. Mr Houston said he was “completely oblivious” to the allegations against his father when Frank Houston asked him to take over as head of the church in 1998, and was shocked at the “abrupt” nature of the request but “in hindsight I think we know why that is”. “I believe that he knew that things were coming to a head, on the issues we’re talking about at the commission.” Leo Shanahan, *The Australian*, Oct. 09, 2014)

### **Burqa ban bunnit covers up real issue**

THE ban the burqa barmy is barmy. All it’s done is to give hashtag feminists another way to showcase their superior morality and added fuel to the fake Islamophobia narrative. To be honest, I find the burqa confronting. You can’t see the woman’s face. If she leaves the house she walks around inside a portable prison, with a small crocheted grille over her eyes. The niqab is slightly less oppressive, with a slit for the eyes. The clothing is a visual reminder that radical Islam regards women as deficient, weak-minded chattels. But equally confronting is the sight of young women, many of them very fat, wearing bandage-style clothing that leaves absolutely nothing to the imagination, stumbling around drunkenly in the city after hens’ night cruises. Who is to say which woman is worse off? Some people have been saying that they find Tony Abbott in budgie smugglers confronting. I don’t like the bushy beards that professional rugby players have taken to wearing, either, though I wouldn’t call them confronting. We all have our opinions about other people’s appearance, but that doesn’t mean the state should legislate for them. As Tony Abbott has said, it’s not the role of government to tell - people what to wear.

It is not up to politicians to force emancipation on women, not that banning the burqa or the niqab would free women from subjugation. It would just force them indoors and alienate them more from society. Why would you further victimise the powerless? Banning the burqa and other face veils is just a cowardly proxy for standing up to radical Islam.

All that matters is that cultural dress is not an excuse to disguise identity. If a police officer pulls over a woman driver wearing a veil she is obliged to show her face, just as she is when entering a public building such as Parliament House. But to go that extra step, as Parliament’s presiding officers Bronwyn Bishop and Stephen Parry did last week, and demand she sit in the glassed-off section for schoolchildren, was pointlessly provocative. Sensibly, the plan was quickly rejected by Mr Abbott. But then, segregation is something a woman wearing an Islamic face covering is used to. At Lakemba Mosque in Sydney, where I went to Friday prayers last year, dressed in a hijab, I found women were not permitted to walk up the front stairs to the main prayer hall but must sit in the second-floor women’s section. It is a glassed-in room overlooking the men’s hall, similar to the children’s section at parliament house. So, enough of the faux outrage. You’re not going to eradicate militant Islam by eliminating the burqa or the niqab. In any case, they are useful indicators of what’s going on at home. In some houses raided by counter-terror authorities recently, TV footage showed women in the background covered top to toe. Moderate Muslims don’t dress that way. The rise of militant Islam has been accompanied by the covering up of women. Where does it end? Well in Syria, the medieval barbarians of Islamic State reportedly want a thicker burqa – as thick as a carpet – so that it cannot blow in the wind and reveal a glimpse of face. Islamic State offers the ultimate fascist expression of militant Islam, with Koran-sanctioned gang rape and torture chambers for girls as young as nine. Their attempt to cover women with carpet is a sign of their own disordered souls. (Miranda Devine, *The Daily Telegraph*, October, 04, 2014)

### **Paedophile Marist brother dressed students up before abusing them**

**A NOTORIOUS paedophile Marist brother made one boy dress up in women’s clothing and then kiss him, the child sex abuse royal commission has been told today.** The 65-year-old man said he still found it difficult to talk about it even 53 years later. He said that Brother Kostka Chute, then aged about 26, had told him there was going to be a school play at the Marcellin school in Randwick. “I was dressed up like a Mandarin woman,” the man said. “The thing was that there was never going to be a play. It was like the whole thing was invented in order for Brother Kostka to have physical contact with me.”

The royal commission is investigating how Brother Kostka and another paedophile, Brother Gregory Sutton, were moved around schools and allowed to teach despite the order being told that they were abusing boys and in Sutton’s case, also abusing girls. The commission has heard how Brother Kostka, 82, instilled fear and intimidation in his pupils by bringing a number of canes into the classroom. Using a candle, he would meticulously burn the ends of the canes to make them “sloped” at the end. “After he finished working on his canes, he would whoosh them around and smack them against his cassock and of course we were all supposed to be working and not watching,” the 65-year-old man said. Brother Kostka was sexually abusing pupils on a daily basis, putting his hands down their pants at the front of the classroom, the commission has heard. “The events occurred in his office, in his dark room, in his garden shed behind the monastery, in the chapel, in the monastery, at a picnic spot ... wherever and whenever he felt he could do it without being interrupted or caught,” one victim has told the commission. He is now living in a Marist home after serving two years in jail for 19 counts of sexual abuse involving young boys. The hearing in Canberra continues. (*Janet Fife-Yeomans*, *The Daily Telegraph*, June 11, 2014)

### **Pontifical secret allows abuse to go unpunished**

**STAYING SILENT:** There is evidence that popes have used canon law to save the reputation of the Church.

THE Catholic Church for some 1500 years recognised that simply stripping a priest of his status as a priest was not a sufficient punishment for the sexual abuse of children. Canon law from the 12th century decreed that he should be dismissed from the priesthood and handed over to the civil authority for punishment in accordance with the civil law.

A commission set up by Pope Pius X in 1904 drafted a uniform code of canon law by discarding papal and council decrees that were no longer relevant, modifying others and creating new ones. The 1917 Code of Canon Law discarded the decrees requiring priests who sexually assaulted children to be handed over to the civil authorities. Five years later, Pope Pius XI issued his 1922 decree, *Crimen Sollicitationis*, imposing the “secret of the Holy Office”, a “permanent silence” on all information the Church obtained through its canonical investigations of clergy sex abuse of children. There were no exceptions allowing the reporting of these crimes to the civil authorities. In 1962, Pope St. John XXIII reissued *Crimen Sollicitationis*. In 1974, Pope Paul VI, by his decree, *Secreta Continere* renamed “the secret of the Holy Office” “the pontifical secret”, and it continued to apply to the sexual abuse of children under the new 1983 Code of Canon Law. In 2001, Pope St. John Paul II confirmed the pontifical secret under some new procedures, and in 2010, Pope

Benedict XVI expanded its reach by applying it to allegations of priests having sex with intellectually disabled people. In 2010, the Holy See allowed a restricted form of reporting to the civil authorities but only where the civil law required it. In most parts of the world, and in every state of Australia, apart from NSW, there is no such requirement to report in the vast majority of cases. The pontifical secret still applies where there are no such reporting laws. The policy of secrecy may not have been so disastrous for children had canon law's internal disciplinary procedures been adequate to dismiss such priests. But they were not. Canon law required bishops to try and reform such priests before dismissing them. In his 1983 Code of Canon Law, Pope John Paul II imposed a five-year limitation period that effectively meant there would be no canonical trials of sex-abusing priests. It also gave such priests a Catch-22 defence: a priest cannot be dismissed for paedophilia because he is a paedophile. The more children a priest abused, the less likely it was could he be dismissed.

In November 2009, the Murphy Commission in Ireland examined all the above matters, and found that "the structures and rules of the Catholic Church facilitated" the cover-up of sexual abuse in the Archdiocese of Dublin, and severely criticised the secrecy imposed by canon law and its capacity to discipline priests. In March 2010, Pope Benedict wrote a Pastoral Letter to the people of Ireland, and ignored the Commission's criticisms of canon law. Instead he blamed the bishops for the cover-up, and for not applying "the long-established norms of canon law". The submissions made by the Victorian Church to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry and by the Australian Church to the current Royal Commission follow the same script: there is no mention of the pontifical secret or the inadequacies of the canon law to dismiss these priests. There are theological reasons behind this reluctance to face the unpalatable truth. Martin Luther claimed that the only source of divine inspiration was the Bible, a view influenced by the corruption of the Renaissance Popes.

The Catholic Church could explain the "bad popes" under the bad apples in the barrel theory: the Holy Spirit does inspire the Church to lead the world to salvation even through sinful popes like Alexander VI with his string of mistresses and eight children. But now there is hard evidence that six popes since 1922, two of them now saints, maintained and expanded a system of cover-up of child sexual abuse by clergy through canon law, in order to save the Church's reputation. These were not "bad popes" of the Renaissance kind. An unintended consequence of this policy was an increase in damage done to children, a crime that the Church's founder thought was so bad that those responsible should be thrown in the sea with millstones around their necks. (Kieran Tapsell, NewcastleHerald.com.au, June 10, 2014)

### **Pope Francis to Land in Politically Sensitive West Bank**

BETHLEHEM, West Bank — Pope Francis flies to the West Bank on Sunday to start the most delicate part of his stay in the Middle East, with visits to the Palestinian Territories and Israel, where his every word will be scrutinized. Church officials say his three-day tour of the region, which started on Saturday in Jordan, is purely focused on religious issues. However, the dividing lines of the generations-old Middle East conflict will be impossible to ignore. Francis will fly straight by helicopter to Bethlehem, becoming the first pontiff to travel directly to the West Bank rather than enter via Israel — a decision hailed by Palestinian officials as a recognition of their push for full statehood. The Pope is due to celebrate an open-air Mass in Bethlehem's Manger Square, close to where Christians believe Jesus was born.

Underlining the power of symbolism, a mural has been erected there showing Jesus swaddled in a Palestinian keffiyeh, with his father, Joseph, also wearing the black and white headdress, made famous by the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Authorities have likewise plastered images around the city comparing the experience of Palestinians to the suffering of Jesus, and officials have made sure the Pope will see the Israeli separation barrier that divides Bethlehem from Israel as he visits Palestinians at a nearby refugee camp. Israel says the wall is needed to prevent attacks by militants. His trip comes at a time of renewed uncertainty, with the latest in a long line of U.S.-backed peace talks collapsing last month amid mutual recrimination and no clear ideas emerging over how to end decades of bloodshed and deadlock. The Vatican supports the vision of an independent Palestine living in peace alongside Israel, and Francis on Saturday called for a "just solution" to the conflict - the sort of neutral, anodyne language he is expected to adhere to during the stay. Francis also appealed in Jordan for an end to Syria's civil war, and in an unscripted message, called for arms makers to be converted to become "constructors of peace."

CELEBRATION: After barely six hours in Bethlehem, Francis will head to Israel, but to avoid a diplomatic tangle, he has to get back in his helicopter and fly to Tel Aviv for a welcoming reception, rather than drive the short distance to Jerusalem.

Israel calls Jerusalem its eternal and undivided capital, having annexed Arab neighbourhoods seized in the 1967 war, including the Old City, the site of the main religious shrines. The rest of the world has not recognised the annexation and leaders traditionally enter the country via Tel Aviv. From there, he will get back in his helicopter and fly to Jerusalem for what he has said is the purpose of the whole trip - to commemorate the 50th anniversary of a historic meeting of Catholic and Orthodox Christian leaders, who moved to end centuries of bitter divisions between the two churches. The Vatican's yellow and white flags flutter from lampposts across the city, and posters of a smiling Francis have been strung up from numerous buildings, but that might be as much as many locals get to see of him. His decision not to use a bullet-proof car means Israeli security officials are clearing the roads and creating numerous "sterile areas" ahead of his 24-hour stay in the city. "He is a guest here and we would like to assure that he goes back home safe and sound," said Oded Ben-Hur, a former Israeli ambassador to Holy See. (*IsraelNationalNews.com*, Saturday, 24 May 2014)

### **'What would we die for?' Pope Francis asks at mass for Korean martyrs**

POPE Francis beatified 124 early Korean martyrs today at a mass in Seoul and challenged the huge crowd to ask what values would be worth dying for in an increasingly materialistic, globalised world. An estimated 800,000 people, most of them invited church groups from across South Korea, attended the open-air ceremony in hot, humid conditions at Gwanghwamun plaza — the city's main ceremonial thoroughfare. The centrepiece of the pope's five-day visit, the beatification mass was the subject of a massive security operation, with bridges, roads and subway stations closed, and police snipers posted on the roofs of surrounding office buildings, which had their windows sealed. According to the church, about 10,000 Koreans were martyred in the first 100 years after Catholicism was introduced to the peninsula in 1784. "They knew the cost of discipleship ... and were willing to make great sacrifices," Francis said in his sermon after the brief beatification ceremony, which gives the martyrs the title "blessed" and marks their first step towards sainthood.

"They challenge us to think about what, if anything, we ourselves would be willing to die for," the pope said. Continuing the theme that has dominated his visit, the pope said the lessons to be learned from the martyrs were as important as ever in an era marked more by selfishness and greed than sacrifice. "Their example has much to say to us who live in societies where, alongside immense wealth, dire poverty is silently growing; where the cry of the poor is seldom heeded," he said.

Among the vast crowd, only 200,000 who pre-registered were allowed to pass through dozens of metal detectors placed along a 4.5-kilometre security ring around the main plaza. Some arrived hours before dawn, and whiled away the time reading the Bible in small groups. South Korea has a fast-growing Catholic community that punches well above its weight in one of Christianity's most muscular Asian strongholds. As the sun rose, Gwanghwamun boulevard was already crammed with people for a one-kilometre stretch north of City Hall. The papal stage, topped with a giant cross, stood at the top of the boulevard, backed by the giant tiled roof of the Joseon dynasty Gyeongbokgung Palace. In the 18th and 19th centuries, unrepentant Catholics were generally paraded from Gwanghwamun southwest to Seosomun Gate where they were publicly executed. Pope Francis began the day at a martyrs' shrine at Seosomun and then made the journey of the condemned in reverse to Gwanghwamun, riding in an open-topped vehicle and waving to the ecstatic crowds on either side. "It was so moving. The Pope felt like such a caring, kind grandfather-figure," Lee Young-Hee, a 58-year-old housewife, told AFP. "My heart is swelling. The weather was hot but all I could feel was happiness," she said.

Organisers had been concerned about the relatives of victims of April's Sewol ferry disaster, who have been camped out in Gwanghwamun for weeks to push their campaign for a full independent inquiry into the tragedy, which claimed 300 lives — most of them schoolchildren. In the end, 600 family members were invited to attend the mass, effectively incorporating the protest into the event. As he passed by, the pope stopped and stepped down from his vehicle to greet the relatives, including Kim Young-Oh, whose daughter died in the disaster and who has been on a hunger strike for more than one month.

"I am a Buddhist but I think the Pope can help us," said Choi Keum-Bok, a construction worker who lost his son in the disaster. After the mass, the pope toured a hilltop community for the sick and disabled in Kkottongnae, around 80 kilometres south of Seoul. The sprawling facility has been held up as a model of the Church's commitment to the vulnerable and marginalised, although critics say it ghettoises its residents. Set up in the 1970s by a Catholic priest, it has been tainted in recent years by allegations of embezzlement, though nothing has been proved. A staunch opponent of abortion, Pope Francis stopped and prayed in a memorial garden for aborted fetuses, dotted with hundreds of symbolic white crosses. The pope held a brief private audience with a group of Sewol survivors and family relatives yesterday, before holding a mass in the central city of Daejeon. (AFP, August 16, 2014)

### **No Consensus at Vatican Synod**

A closely watched Vatican assembly on the family ended on Saturday without consensus among the bishops in attendance on what to say about gays, and whether to give communion to divorced and remarried Catholics. The bishops' final report watered down the warm and welcoming language about gays and divorced couples that appeared in a preliminary report released on Monday, midway through the two-week assembly. Conservative bishops had expressed alarm that the Roman Catholic Church was sending a mixed message on marriage and homosexuality. Pope Francis addressed the bishops in the final session, issuing a double-barreled warning against "hostile rigidity" by "so-called traditionalists," but also cautioning "progressives" who would "bandage a wound before treating it." The bishops responded with a four-minute standing ovation in the closed-door meeting, Vatican spokesmen said afterward.

The assembly is far from the final word, and has served only to open debate among prelates and in the wider church, as Francis said he had intended. Francis is taking the unusual step of publishing the final report showing the vote tallies on each passage, in the interest of transparency, said the Rev. Thomas Rosica, the English-language spokesman at the Vatican meeting. The entire document received approval from a majority of the bishops, but a vote of two-thirds is required to be considered the consensus of the assembly. The passages on gays and divorce did not receive two-thirds of the vote by the 183 bishops in attendance on Saturday, but were not "completely rejected," Father Rosica said. "It shows that it's a work in progress," he said. "We still have a ways to go." The preliminary version of the report set off a furor, with phrases implying that the church was shifting toward understanding and acceptance of gay couples. Earlier on Saturday, before the final report was issued, Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi of Italy said it would be "welcoming" to gays, but not approving of them.

"Like Christ with the adulteress, his response is to welcome her, but then he tells her not to sin again," Cardinal Ravasi said. The final document drops the language in the preliminary draft that spoke of "welcoming" gays and that they had "gifts and qualities to offer to the Christian community." The final version says that gays must be met with "respect and sensitivity," phrasing also in the church's catechism, but emphatically asserts there is no basis whatsoever for comparing same-sex unions to marriage between a man and a woman. Upon opening the assembly, known as a synod, Francis urged the bishops to hold a genuinely free-wheeling discussion without fear of censure. "Speak clearly," Francis told the 191 bishops gathered. "No one must say, 'This can't be said.'"

He apparently got what he was asking for. The synod, while clarifying points of consensus, nevertheless brought to the surface clear fault lines between the prelates. They discussed how the church should respond when even active Catholics disregard its teachings, seeing the church as out of touch with modern life. Some bishops took the position that the church must double down on doctrine by articulating more clearly the reasons for its teachings on marriage, and its disapproval of birth control, divorce, homosexuality and cohabitation. Doctrine, they say, is unchanging. "We're not giving in to the secular agenda," Cardinal George Pell, an Australian archbishop now serving in the Vatican, told the Catholic News Service on Thursday. "We're not collapsing in a heap." But other bishops said the church should stress inclusiveness, understanding and mercy. Doctrine should be responsive to new developments and information, they said.

Asked at a news conference on Friday whether church teaching can change, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, chairman of the German bishops' conference, said: "Obviously it can change. The history of the church is 2,000 years old." "Doctrine doesn't change, but it is understood in a deeper manner," he added. The preliminary report, written by a committee appointed by Francis, stressed a warm, pastoral approach to the divorced and to cohabiting couples, gay couples and their children. To the surprise of many Catholics, it said some gay relationships provide "precious support in the life of the partners." There was no mention of the teaching, included in the church's catechism, that gay relationships are "intrinsically disordered." Cardinal Wilfrid Napier of Durban, South Africa, was among several bishops who immediately expressed their dismay over the report's contents. He said the passages that were picked up by the news media reflected what only a few bishops had said in the synod. "The message has gone out, and it's not a true message," he said. Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke, an American who has emerged as the synod's standard-bearer for orthodoxy, called on Francis to clarify that the church was not changing its doctrine, saying such a statement was overdue.

Francis soon added Cardinal Napier to the committee to draft the final synod report. Ten committees of bishops suggested extensive changes. But Cardinal Burke said in an interview with BuzzFeed that the pope "had done a lot of harm" by not clarifying his position. He confirmed that Francis planned to remove him as head of the church's highest judicial authority, the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura. The process reminded some church observers of the debates that took place during the Second Vatican Council, the landmark series of meetings in the early 1960s that changed the church's worship practices, the role of lay people and relations with other

faiths. The Rev. John W. O'Malley, a historian at Georgetown University and the author of "What Happened at Vatican II," said, "In Vatican II also, the conservatives felt that the church was going to hell in a handbasket with the direction it was taking, and they did everything to stop it."

But he said that in those days, bishops did not go public with denunciations of one another, or make demands of the pope. "We're in different times," he said. (Laure Goodstein and Elisabetta Povoledo, International Herald Tribune, Oct. 18, 2014)

### **Abbas Accuses Israel of 'Judaizing' Jerusalem in Papal Meeting**

**'Religious, not political' visit takes decidedly political turn Sunday, after PA accuses Israel of 'judaization' and Pope calls PA a state.** Pope Francis met with Palestinian Authority (PA) Chairman Mahmoud Abbas in Bethlehem Sunday, in a historic meeting that saw Abbas accuse Israel of "Judaizing" Jerusalem. During the meeting, Abbas insisted that Israel is "systematically acting to change [Jerusalem's] identity and character, and strangling the Palestinians, both Christians and Muslims, with the aim of pushing them out."

Earlier, Pope Francis addressed what he called "the State of Palestine," according to Ma'an, calling Abbas "a man of peace." In his speech, he called for a two-state solution and an end to the Israeli-Palestinian Arab conflict, which he deemed **"unacceptable."** "The time has come for everyone to find the courage... to forge a peace which rests on the acknowledgement by all of the right of two states to exist and to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders," he urged.

The pope also paused for several moments in front of a graffiti on the security wall in Bethlehem, bowing his head in prayer in front of a message proclaiming, "Pope we need to see someone to speak about justice. Bethlehem look like Warsaw ghetto. Free Palestine." Pope Francis invited both Abbas and Israeli President Shimon Peres on Sunday to his home in the Vatican for a "heartfelt prayer" for peace. "I wish to invite you, president Mahmud Abbas, together with President Shimon Peres, to join me in heartfelt prayer to God for the gift of peace," he said at the end of an open-air mass in Manger Square in Bethlehem. "I offer my home in the Vatican as a place for this encounter of prayer," he said. "Building peace is difficult, but living without peace is a constant torment. The men and women of these lands, and of the entire world, all of them, ask us to bring before God their fervent hopes for peace."

Political or apolitical? Although Francis himself has said it will be a **"purely religious trip,"** both Israel and the PA will be looking to use the visit to score a few political points. The Vatican said the main reason for the visit was a meeting in Jerusalem with Bartholomew I, the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, seeking to heal a nearly 1,000-year rift between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. But ahead of the trip, **Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin** defended the Palestinian Arabs' right to a "sovereign and independent" homeland and said he hoped Francis's visit would lead to "courageous decisions" for peace.

Rabbi Sergio Bergman, a member of the Argentinian parliament and close friend of Pope Francis, reported in February that the pope intends to define himself as the **"Che Guevara of the Palestinians"** and support their "struggle and rights" during his visit. It has been noted that the pope has been remarkably **tight-lipped over the violent persecution** of Christians in Bethlehem, instead choosing to condemn alleged Jewish "price tag" vandalism. (*IsraelNationalNews.com*, May 25, 2014)

### **Op-Ed: For Shame, Pope Francis**

**Insidious allusions are as bad as outright anti-Semitism.** Two images will be remembered from Pope Francis' visit to the "Holy Land". One will be of the Pope pictured praying at Israel's security barrier beneath a graffiti that compares Palestinian Arabs with Jews under the Nazis. "Bethlehem looks like the Warsaw Ghetto", graffiti on the wall said.

The other will be the altar from which the Pope delivered his message in Bethlehem, facing a giant baby Jesus wrapped in a keffiyeh, the very symbol of Palestinian anti-Semitic irredentism. Papa Bergoglio delivered a message of hate to the Jews. How is that? The Warsaw Ghetto was created by the Nazis as a means of collecting Jews in preparation for their extermination by Zyklon B. How can a Pope accept that it is compared to an Arab city under the Palestinian Authority's rule?

The "Palestinian concentration camp" claim is a blatant anti-Semitic lie and an insult to the millions who really did suffer and die in the camps, and the Pope should have denounced it. But it was clear in the homily delivered by Pope Francis in Bethlehem that he didn't come to bring peace: "Are we like Mary and Joseph, who welcomed Jesus and cared for him with the love of a father and mother? Or are we like Herod, who wanted to eliminate him?" So according to Pope Francis, the Israeli Jews are like Herod, who killed all the innocent babies because his heart was set on killing Jesus. This is an insidious form of anti-Semitism which subtly accuses the Jewish State of trying to murder the new Jesus, symbolized by the Palestinian Arabs. Pope Francis should have asked the opinion of the nuns at the Rosary Sisters School in the Dachyat El Barid neighborhood north of Jerusalem. They asked to be included on the Israeli side of the fence, in light of requests from the Mother Superior of the Order. Why? They didn't want to live under the Palestinian autocracy.

Why did the Pope meet with Palestinian Arab "refugees" if not to present the 1948 war as the source of an "injustice" committed by Israel when it pushed away the Palestinian Arabs? Pope Francis, the refugee problem was created not by an inexorable eruption of hostilities, but by an Arab war of annihilation against Israel. You should have said that. Why did you ignore the 800,000 Jewish refugees who were driven out of Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East in the years after Israel obtained its independence?

Why did Pope Francis accepted to walk in the Temple Mount, Judaism's most sacred site, with Mufti Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, who declared that "the Hour of Resurrection will not come until you fight the Jews", who promoted terror against Israel and denied the existence of the Jewish Temples? Talk is cheap, Pope Francis. If you were a "friend of the Jewish people", as the Catholic media and some rabbis try to present you, you should have rejected the Judeophobic Palestinian propaganda; you should have refused to be pictured beneath images comparing Israel's actions to Hitler's and the Palestinian Arabs to Jesus; you should have refused to shake hands with the Muftis who want to annihilate the Jewish people. After visiting the concentration camp of Mauthausen on June 25, 1988, Pope John Paul II said that the Jews "enriched the world by their suffering," and their death was like the grain which must fall into the earth in order to bear fruit, in the words of Jesus who brings salvation. One wonders whether being killed is the only role of the Jews in the eyes of the Papacy. Now we have a new Pope who sees Israel as a baby-killer. (Giulio Meotti, *IsraelNationalNews.com*, May 26, 2014)

### **Rabbis: Soldiers May Eat Meat During 'Nine Days'**

Soldiers need their strength, and fighting terrorists to save Jewish lives trumps the custom not to eat meat this week, IDF Rabbis said. Soldiers in Gaza could eat meat during the coming days, the IDF Rabbinate announced Monday.

The decision contravenes a widely-held Jewish custom not to eat meat from the beginning of the Hebrew month of Av – which began Monday – until after the Fast of the Ninth of Av next week, during the period generally known as the "Nine Days."

The ban on eating meat, except for Shabbat meals, is a long-standing one, instituted after the Destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel, as a sign of mourning for the Destruction. Other customs prevalent during this period

include not taking haircuts or shaving, not listening to music, and not attending parties or going to places of entertainment. While soldiers are not exempted from the ban on haircuts or shaving – most don't have a chance to shave at the front anyway, said the Rabbinate – they could eat meat if they felt the need. Meat supplies protein and vitamins that are very difficult to get otherwise, especially under battlefield conditions, the Rabbinate said – and since soldiers need their energy and strength to fight Hamas terrorists, they were permitted to eat meat.

However, those who felt they could manage without meat were certainly not obligated to do so, the Rabbinate added. (Moshe Cohen, israelnationalnews.com, July 28, 2014)

### Hatred of Jews on rise again



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President of the World Jewish Congress, Ronald Lauder, right, participates in a service for the victims of a shooting at the Jewish Museum in Brussels. Source: AP

THE fatal shootings in late May at the Brussels Jewish Museum were shocking. A young Muslim man, who experienced jihadist campaigning in Syria, is accused of opening fire at random victims. He shot and killed four people, two of them Israeli tourists visiting the museum, before escaping, later to be captured. His choice of victims was random in the sense that, individually, he didn't care who they were. But the choice in its most profound respect was not random. He went to the museum to shoot and kill innocent Jewish people. His mind was formed in the heart of jihadist battle and it gave him the motivation to murder Jews. We should pay a lot of attention to this appalling and hateful business. It would be bad enough if it were a truly isolated incident. It is not an isolated incident at all.

Senior Western, Middle East and Asian intelligence agencies have been telling their governments for months now that the Syrian alumni will become a bigger terrorist menace than the Afghan alumni were before them. But it is actually not primarily, or at least not just, through the prism of terrorism that I think we should view these terrible murders.

Instead we should understand them as just another emanation of hateful anti-Semitism, which is making an astonishing comeback around the world and across many points of the political spectrum. Anti-semitism is a prejudice against or hatred of the Jewish people. It takes many forms. It is sad to say that anti-Semitism was a mainstream element of Christian culture over most of the past 2000 years. I don't believe anti-Semitism was ever at the core of Christianity. You don't find anti-Semitism in the New Testament. But a misunderstanding of the culpability for the death of Jesus Christ led to the traditional view among many Christians that the Jews were responsible for killing Christ. Moreover, as a result of this, they were as a people cursed and homeless. This was always a completely wrong view of Christianity, but it would be foolish to pretend that it did not have widespread support among many mainstream Christians for hundreds of years. As a Catholic, and as someone who believes that the contribution of the church throughout human history was overwhelmingly positive, I would say the history of Catholic anti-Semitism is the most awful element of Catholic history. The experience of the Holocaust in World War II, in which Hitler's Nazis murdered six million Jews, changed the traditional Western view of the relationship of Western civic culture to the Jews. Of course, even before the Holocaust, there were always countless pro-Jewish Catholics. JRR Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*, was a conscientious and serious Catholic. Before World War II, his German publishers wrote to him to ask if he was an Aryan. He replied with words to the effect that he was a bit surprised by their inquiry, that Aryans were an Indo-Persian race, but that if their reference was to matters relating to the Jewish people, he could only regret that he did not have a direct connection to that talented and cultured people.

But it was not until Vatican II that the Catholic Church made its attitude to the Jewish people completely clear. The Vatican II Documents stated that: "True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (cf John 19.6); still, what happened in his passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the holy scriptures." The very fact the Vatican Council documents had to make this statement shows how widespread Catholic anti-Semitism had been. But what is perversely disturbing today is the rise again of anti-Semitism. Several currents of this noxious, moral poison are operating simultaneously. There has been astonishingly, a recrudescence of Christian anti-Semitism. Some of this comes from Arab Christian churches who seek to portray Jesus not as Jewish, which he certainly was historically, but as a Palestinian. This theological idiocy and historical travesty has been taken up by a number of progressive Western Protestant churches. This has an echo with the old Christian replacement theology, which held that because the Jews did not accept Christ they had been replaced as the chosen people.

It is indeed a legitimate element of Christian theology that the Old Testament promises are fulfilled by Christ in the establishment of Christianity. But it is not legitimate to deny the Jewish people their peoplehood, or their history. The idea of Zionism is that there should be a Jewish state in the historical lands of Israel. It is not remotely necessary to have any religious faith at all to acknowledge the historic and ongoing Jewish connection with the land of Israel. This certainly does not entitle Israel to all the land of the Biblical passages. But it is a historic claim of association to a land of a kind that we recognise explicitly in our own legislation regarding Aboriginal land rights. It is the kind of association of a people with a land that is the basis for many civic identities around the world. But now, alone among all such claims, Zionism has become a dirty word in all progressive circles. But what is really disturbing is how many other rivers of anti-Semitism are all flowing together. The recent European elections saw substantial votes for a number of explicitly anti-Semitic, right-wing political parties. Perhaps the worst is Jobbik, which won 15 per cent of the Hungarian national vote. It has

politicians who have called for Jews to be registered as a national security threat. Or there is the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party in Greece which won 9.3 per cent of the vote. The French National Front, which won a quarter of the French vote, has rejected its old anti-Semitism, but it has a history of anti-Semitism and it still honours its former leader, Jean Marie Le Pen, who certainly had a strong anti-Semitic record.

The rise of these right wing parties is a sign of the failure of European mainstream politics, but the degree of popular anti-Semitism in all this is quite real. For some years now a mutant variety of anti-Semitism has been evident on the political Left in the West. This takes the form of a hostility to Israel that is so excessive and deranged, so uncoupled from the facts, so full of lies and grievous distortions, so unhinged in its lack of proportionality that it easily flows over into hostility to Jews in general. This often takes an ugly manifestation in the use of Nazi imagery, in a clichéd faux irony which implies that once the Jews were the victims of the Nazis, now they are the Nazis themselves. This propaganda is almost insane. The Middle East today is roiling with a quasi-genocidal Sunni/Shia hatred, and the collapse of order in countries as diverse as Libya and Egypt, although Egypt has recovered some order under the military. None of these hatreds and killings could remotely be attributed by any plausible causality to Israel in any way, and yet Israel is still presented routinely as the centre of the Middle East's problems. Similarly, Israel's imperfections are treated as being of the same moral and human gravity as the enormities in Syria, or the excesses of the Iranian government. Similarly Jews within Western societies who have views on the Middle East are routinely delegitimised as being merely the Zionist lobby, or sometimes more explicitly the Jewish lobby. These ad hominem attacks imply two bizarre things. One is that alone among Western citizens only Jews must not have views on the Middle East. The other is, perhaps unconsciously, to echo the historical conspiracy theories about sinister Jewish cabals. And then of course we have contemporary Arab anti-Semitism which is widespread, nearly orthodox, among many Arab and Muslim societies. The government of Turkey, by Middle East standards a moderate government, recently accused the "Jewish diaspora" of orchestrating demonstrations in Turkey. Jihadist culture is fixated on the Jews, but broad Arab culture is home to much flagrant anti-Semitism. These disturbing currents should be opposed by every civilised human being. (Greg Sheridan, *The Australian*, June 07, 2014)

### **Chief Rabbis Decry Mass Christian Prayers Near Temple Mount**

The Chief Rabbinate of Israel, together with rabbis of the Derech Emuna organization rabbis of Jerusalem's Old City, have launched a campaign against a new mass Christian prayer initiative at the southern wall of the Temple Mount.

For the first time since the liberation of the Old City in the 1967 Six Day War, the Christian groups are reportedly poised to hold a prayer service for the "return of Jesus" on the morning of Hoshana Raba, the last day of the Sukkot holiday, which falls on October 15 this year. The prayer service, which is to be open to all, will be held at the feet of the Hulda Gate on the southern wall of the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism. Derech Emuna rabbis point out that the prayer service is part of a recent troubling trend of expanding control by the Christian Church in the Old City. That expansion has most notably included a secret deal revealed in July in a Knesset Interior Committee, by which Christians received permission to hold fixed Mass prayers in the David's Tomb Compound in a breach of the status quo of the site, and a breach of the law regarding holy sites. "For those responsible for giving the permit for this: prevent the gathering," the Chief Rabbinate demanded in a statement responding to the prayer service.

The Chief Rabbis likewise called on Jews not to join the prayers, saying "to our brothers in the house of Israel, it must be said not to join a prayer meant to prevent the true redemption of Israel." "The goal of the organizers is to get their hands on the (Old) City and the Holy Land, and to disconnect our brothers the house of Israel from the Land of the Living," added the Chief Rabbis in a reference to the Torah. "According to our holy Torah we must distance from this event, and it is forbidden under any circumstance to join them." (Shlomo Pyotrkovsky, Ari Yashar, [israelnationalnews.com](http://israelnationalnews.com), September 22, 2014)

### **PLO Accuses Netanyahu of 'Terrorism'**

PLO claims that Netanyahu is using the kidnapping of "three settlers" as an excuse to cover up his own crimes. The executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) convened for a meeting on Sunday, following which it accused Israel of terrorism and rejected Israel's placing the blame on the Palestinian Authority (PA) for the kidnapping of the three yeshiva students in Gush Etzion. The committee, headed by PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, condemned Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu for what it termed his "racist attack" on the PA and its leader using the kidnapping of "three settlers" as an excuse. The statement said that Netanyahu is returning to a pattern of action characteristic of the "occupation", including "the enforcement of collective punishment, a blockade, invasion of cities, widespread arrests, threats to withhold the Palestinian Authority's funds and more." The executive committee further declared that it rejects the "false" accusations made by Prime Minister Netanyahu, which are intended, it claimed, to cover up his incompetence. The statement further claimed that Netanyahu's behavior is due to his desire to use of the kidnapping of the students for political purposes to cover up "the crimes of the expansion of the settlements," thwarting the peace process, and his opposition to the reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. "This is Netanyahu's method of operation, which seeks to turn away attention from the real cause of the cycle of violence and his support in practice for the terrorist actions perpetrated by the Judaization gangs, such as the price tag gangs, and these activities include murder, taking over of lands, ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley, damaging holy sites, especially the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque," the statement charged.

The PLO leadership stated that the PA does not ignore its duties and responsibilities, but refuses to have the "occupation" cast the responsibility on its shoulders for "crimes" being carried out using the "terrorism of the occupation state." The statement comes after the Fatah movement, which is headed by Abbas, actually celebrated the kidnapping of the three students. Fatah's official Facebook page posted a cartoon comparing the three kidnapped Israeli students to rats. As well, the official Palestinian Authority daily printed a cartoon celebrating the kidnapping of three Israeli youths." (Dalit Halevi and Elad Benari, [israelnationalnews.com](http://israelnationalnews.com), June 16, 2014).

### **Op-Ed: Netanyahu, Why Insult IS? Hamas is Much Worse**

**A comparison between the two organizations reveals that IS, barbarian as it is, is not as bad as Hamas.** Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has pronounced that "Hamas is IS (formerly ISIS) and IS is Hamas." Why is Bibi insulting IS? Compared to Hamas, IS are choir boys. A close look at the two organizations, reveals that:

1. The Palestinian Arabs voted for the terrorist group Hamas as their government.

IS, however, are Islamist mass-murdering terrorists for whom no one has ever voted or granted legal legitimacy to rule.

Hamas members are mass-murdering terrorists for whom, in 2005, approximately 3.5 million Palestinians voted in as their governing body. Who is more evil, terrorists who have the legitimacy of having been voted for by almost 4 million Palestinian people, or a bunch of rag-tag un-legitimized terrorists. Hamas is much worse.

2. In 2007, Hamas massacred hundreds of Fatah loyalists; the world yawned.

When Hamas took over Gaza in 2007, they machine-gunned dozens of Fatah members while they lay face down, and the world gladly accepted the new Hamas rule over Gaza. Now, IS machine-guns hundreds of Shiites and moderate-Sunnis, and the world gets upset. Who's worse? Mass-murderers the world loves, or mass-murderers the world scorns?

3. Obama has granted the seal of approval of the United States of America to a government of which Hamas was an integral and controlling part. Not only did Obama approve of the PA's "Unity" government of which Hamas was an integral part, Obama has run interference for Hamas every step of the Gaza War, whereas, in Iraq, Obama has been blowing IS to bits.

Obama isn't blowing Hamas to bits, and he's been denying the Israelis the necessary weapons to do it themselves.

Hamas is much worse than IS.

4. European anti-Semites are violently demonstrating for Hamas, not IS. Some European Muslim Islamists are being recruited for IS. But, nobody is violently demonstrating for them yet like they are for Hamas. What this means is that Hamas terrorists are looked upon as heroes by millions of Muslims and other virulent anti-Semites in Europe. Again, Hamas is a lot worse than ISIS.

5. The EU, the UN, and the United States fund Hamas. This comparison is a close one. Hamas is funded by the entire world, but IS robs banks, and has tons of money. One the one hand, all Hamas has to do is sit back and collect coupons from all the world's "do-gooder" countries, and organizations. On the other, IS has to kidnap people for ransom, rob banks, and sell occupied oil. I'll call this one a tie.

6. Hamas is embedded in the Palestinian population, and can't be destroyed. The Palestinians love Hamas so much that they have let them embed themselves in the densest civilian populations centers in the world. Therefore, it's almost impossible to militarily defeat Hamas. But, IS is out in the open desert, and exposed to US F-16's with Hellfire missiles. Hamas is thousands of times worse than IS.

7. Hamas is militarily protected by the United Nations. As a corollary to #5 and #6, Hamas and its rockets are housed and protected by the United Nations through its UNRWA schools and other facilities. IS, for now, isn't being protected by the United Nations. But, give IS time and I'm sure the UN will see IS as good prospect to try to annihilate Israel. And, when it does, the UN members will fall over themselves to protect IS. But until the UN protects IS, Hamas is much worse.

8. Hamas kills mostly Jews, with some Fatah thrown in for good measure.

Hamas really tries to massacre only Jews, or anyone who gets in their way; whereas, IS is a non-denominational mass-murderer. Hitler was really much more dangerous than someone who openly bragged about being a full-spectrum mass-murderer because Hitler was actually successful in killing the Jews first. Then, once Hitler got on a roll, he gladly mass-murdered anyone else. But, if Hitler had just murdered everybody like IS, people would have caught on much earlier to his mass-murdering ways. So, again, Hamas is much worse than IS. It would appear that Netanyahu was insulting IS by calling them Hamas. But then, IS might have taken the insult comparing themselves to Hamas as a compliment. Stay tuned. (Mark Langfan, israelnationalnews.com, Aug 28, 2014)

### **Op-Ed: The Pope and the EU Earthquake: Standing vs. Succumbing**

Standing or succumbing to Islamist pressures? The Vatican said the Pope's visit was non-political, but his embrace of Islam is in sharp contrast to the growing strength of Euroskeptics. Many do not think of the Vatican as an independent, sovereign city-state with its own diplomatic envoy, Secretariat of State and embassies around the world. Most think of it as the home of the Pope and the headquarters of the Catholic hierarchy. The Catholic Pope, both spiritual leader and head of a tiny kingdom in the center of Rome, is the only absolute monarch in Europe -- exercising legislative, executive, and judicial power over the state. So when the Vatican spokesperson announced in advance of the Pope's trip to the Holy Land this past month that his visit would be a spiritual journey in response to an invitation from the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Vatican meant that the Pope's visit would not be political. But the Vatican did not anticipate the Pope's unplanned stop at Israel's security barrier -- a wall built by Israel 10 years ago to protect Israeli citizens from Arab-Palestinian suicide bombers -- en route to Jerusalem. Pope Francis stopped at two walls. Before visiting the Western Wall religious site he made an unexpected stop at Israel's security wall. The controversial separation fence between Israel and Bethlehem has aided Israel in saving lives while being labeled the "apartheid fence" by pro-Palestinian voices. One photo circulating in the aftermath of the Pope's visit to the security wall shows him making the sign of the cross to begin prayer. Next to him is giant, red-lettered graffiti, "Free Palestine," next to bold black letters, "Apartheid wall" -- the latter, ironically an accusation against Israel's multicultural democracy. Didn't Pope Francis realize how his association with Palestinian rhetoric would appear in pictures published for his admirers around the world and what it could mean? The Pope's sudden visit to the concrete barrier was atypical of a spiritual pilgrimage where the heart of Christianity awaited him at notable biblical landmarks. For the Pope to pray anywhere in public other than holy sites or sanctuaries would be considered unusual. And for what purpose? We can only guess. Leaving Hamas-held Bethlehem, the Pope paused in silence as he pressed his face and hands against a wall detested by Muslims around the world. He linked his own image to powerful Palestinian rhetoric. Photos around the world show him standing alongside "Bethlehem looks like a Warsaw Ghetto." Such sentiments reverberate across the world to equate Israel with Nazism and Palestinians with Polish Jews. If we didn't think differently of him, we would suspect that the Pope's visit to this wall was a special gift for Palestinian Authority head, Mahmoud Abbas. Another snapshot connects the Pope's image with a forlorn child holding a Palestinian flag. The Pope is silent. The viewer needs to read his mind. He says nothing because his journey is spiritual not political. The images remain and foster speculation. Is the Pope's ambiguity sending a political message for the Vatican after all?

And coupled with the Vatican's planned agenda for the Pope's visit to the Holy Land that entailed a first stop in Amman, Jordan, then Hamas-held Bethlehem and finally Jerusalem (the origin of his invitation), one might get the distinct idea that the Pope's trip represented from the outset the opposite of the Vatican's announcement. Egyptians paid almost no attention to the Catholic Pope's historic visit -- no comments one way or the other -- odd, but not so much, considering the circumstances. Upon the Pope's return to Rome, Egyptians began three days of voting which ended decisively with a new President. A candidate of the people's choice was successfully elected -- a far cry from the previous election consisting of delays and much mystery surrounding the outcome. In and of itself, it spells for the first time a moral victory for Egypt over political Islam and Islamic terrorism. Former military Field Marshal Abdel Fatah Al Sisi has won the people and won the country's election, and any steps he takes now to further the direction he has already taken will be monumental for Egypt.

Meanwhile, at exactly the same time, the European Union elections shifted France's representation to the right (and others as well: Greece, Denmark, UK, and Austria) in response to its controversial immigration problem -- illegal Arab-Muslim populations coming from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. Viewed as an "earthquake," election results demonstrate that Europeans feel threatened by an Arab-Islamic "invasion" and want to secure their own identities, roots and cultures.

The advance of Euroskeptical groups (those opposed to the EU altogether) across Europe is due to a perception that the EU will accommodate and appease Islam, allowing and even promoting porous borders. Italy, however, which has the presidency of the European Parliament this semester and will lead, has created an opposite wave with the 40.8 percent win of Matteo Renzi's Left-wing party (Partito Democratico) and is likely to be widely challenged by the minority Right and the Euroskeptics. The Pope has followed up his trip with the recent visit of Israeli President Shimon Peres and PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas to the Vatican -- praying and advocating for a dialogue of peace. But the hope of Europe rests in political movements that will assure real peace after the much prolonged attempt at appeasement. This may ultimately jeopardize the stability of the EU threatening its dissolution, but all the better if it means regaining individual state sovereignty on matters of regulation, borders, immigration and culture." (Ashraf Ramelah, israelnationalnews.com, June 11, 2014).

### **A Christian Convert, on the Run in Afghanistan**

KABUL, Afghanistan — A former Muslim prays somewhere near Kabul, Afghanistan, in hiding from relatives who want to kill him for forsaking Islam and converting to Christianity. In a dank basement on the outskirts of Kabul, Josef read his worn blue Bible by the light of a propane lantern, as he had done for weeks since he fled from his family in Pakistan.

His few worldly possessions sat nearby in the 10-by-10-foot room of stone and crumbling brown earth. He keeps a wooden cross with a passage from the Sermon on the Mount written on it, a carton of Esse cigarettes, and a thin plastic folder containing records of his conversion to Christianity. The documents are the reason he is hiding for his life. On paper, Afghan law protects freedom of religion, but the reality here and in some other Muslim countries is that renouncing Islam is a capital offense.

Josef's brother-in-law Ibrahim arrived in Kabul recently, leaving behind his family and business in Pakistan, to hunt down the apostate and kill him. Reached by telephone, Ibrahim, who uses only one name, offered a reporter for The New York Times \$20,000 to tell him where Josef was hiding. "If I find him, once we are done with him, I will kill his son as well, because his son is a bastard," Ibrahim said, referring to Josef's 3-year-old child. "He is not from a Muslim father." For Josef, 32, who asked to be identified only by his Christian name to protect his wife and young child, the path to Christianity was only one segment on a much longer journey, a year of wandering that took him through Turkey, Greece, Italy and Germany, seeking refuge from Afghanistan's violence. But at each stop he found misfortune. He was detained in Greece and deported from Germany, and he lived on the streets in Italy before he truly understood that there would be no happy ending in Europe, where his application for asylum has gone nowhere. He voluntarily left Italy for Pakistan to be with his wife and son, but that is no longer an option. Neither is reverting to Islam. "I inherited my faith, but I saw so many things that made me discard my religious beliefs," Josef said. "Even if I get killed, I won't convert back." In official eyes here, there are no Afghan Christians. The few Afghans who practice the faith do so in private for fear of persecution, attending one of a handful of underground churches that are believed to be operating in the country. Expatriates use chapels on embassy grounds, but those are effectively inaccessible to Afghans. Only a few Afghan converts have surfaced in the past decade, and the government has typically dealt with them swiftly and silently: They are asked to recant, and if they refuse, they are expelled, usually to India, where an Afghan church flourishes in New Delhi.

In a country of crippling poverty, ethnic fault lines and decades of war, Islamic piety offers many Afghans a rare thread of national solidarity. To reject Islam is seen as tantamount to treason. "Religious identity is the only thing that Afghans can claim," said Daud Moradian, a professor at the American University in Afghanistan. "They do not have a national identity, they do not have an economic identity, and there is no middle or working class here." That leaves Josef almost nowhere to turn for protection. The police would be no help. Converts report being beaten and sexually abused while in custody. His family in Afghanistan is also a dead end: His uncles are hunting for him now, too. Josef said he lost his faith well before he knew what would replace it. Most of his siblings emigrated to Germany when he was a teenager, but he stayed behind to look after his aging, ailing parents. He drove a taxi at night and studied medicine, earning a degree from Kabul Medical University. He hung on through civil war, repressive Taliban rule and Western invasion, but a senseless shooting he witnessed at close range in 2009 that left an 8-year-old boy dying in his mother's arms finally shattered his resolve to stay.

He borrowed money from his family and worked double shifts until he could pay a smuggler to get him to Europe. He left behind his mother, who died soon afterward, and his pregnant wife, who moved to Pakistan to be with her family. His memories of the journey are flashes of elation and despair: The sights of Istanbul; the fence at the Turkish-Greek border, with his fingers laced in the wire; a field of sunflowers; three sickening days on rough seas in a boat to Italy, and a last-minute swim to shore; a road trip to Germany using the passport of a Pakistani who looked nothing like him; and the desolate Hamburg street where his brothers picked him up.

In Hanover, close to where his siblings lived, Josef found a Protestant church for Farsi speakers, and began attending services, at first just to watch. "When I threw away my Islamic beliefs, I was living in a space of spiritual emptiness," he said. "During that time I was studying different religions — Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity. I was studying Islam as well."

After 15 days in Germany, he turned himself in and applied for asylum, and was held in a refugee camp where the monotony was broken by visits from missionaries. "I think I was impressed by the personality of Jesus himself," he said. "The fact that he came here to take all of our sins, that moved me. I admired his character and personality long before I was baptized."

When he was released to live with his sister in Kassel, he returned to the church in Hanover and converted, a decision his siblings accepted with open-mindedness. The reprieve was short-lived; the German authorities rearrested him and deported him to Italy because he had not sought asylum in the European Union country where he was first processed, as required. Without family or friends in Italy, he sought aid from churches and charities that offered him food but no shelter.

Homeless, broke, depressed and in deteriorating health, Josef gave up and went to live with his wife and her family in northern Pakistan. Knowing the stakes of his secret, he put digital copies of his asylum paperwork and mementos of his conversion and baptism on a flash drive he carried in his pocket, finding some comfort in having them with him. But one day in March, he left the flash drive at home. While he ran errands, one of his wife's brothers borrowed the flash drive to save a file, and discovered what was on it.

When Josef came home that evening, his in-laws grabbed him by the throat and beat him. "We tied his hands and his legs and we wanted to kill him," Ibrahim said. "It was my father who intervened, and said that he wanted to talk to his family first."

The father said they would contact Josef's uncles for guidance, and in the meantime Josef would be locked in a room at the side of the house, bound hand and foot. In the middle of the night, Josef managed to escape, sneaking out of the house without a final goodbye to his wife or son. He caught a night bus to the border with Afghanistan. On the way, he phoned a childhood friend to ask for help, and then called his sister in Germany, weeping into his cellphone. Reached in Germany, his sister, who declined to be named for fear of giving a clue to her brother's pursuers, said she hasn't heard from Josef since then. "I've been worrying about his life and his

whereabouts,” his sister said. “It will be one of the biggest achievements of my life if I can help him get somewhere that he can practice his new religion openly.” To aid a convert is nearly as despised here as to be one, but his friend helped him anyway, hiding him in the basement of an empty house and bringing him food once a week. “When times were good, he was always generous with me,” said his friend, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the danger. “Now he’s at risk, and needs my help, and I have no choice but to give it.”

For Josef, who has recently changed hiding places, the time passes slowly now, with little company other than his Bible. He can hear the muezzin calling Muslims to prayer, a reminder of danger’s proximity and the paradox he lives now. “When I threw away my convictions, it was hard to speak with people about it,” he said, a red ember pulsing on the tip of his cigarette. “It was like an imaginary prison.” He paused, the light from his propane lantern casting a long shadow on the wall. “Now it is the other way around,” he said at last. “My body is in prison, but my soul is free.” (Azam Ahmed, International Herald Tribune, June 21, 2014)

### **Islamic State jihadists planned to execute London civilian**

BRITISH authorities yesterday smashed a suspected plot lead by a jihadist freshly returned from fighting with Islamic State to kidnap and behead a civilian on the streets of London. The terrorist veteran and three other men were arrested in co-ordinated raids in central and west London yesterday after being monitored by MI5 and Scotland Yard’s counter-terrorism special command. One of the men was tasered, but unhurt, during the arrests. Scotland Yard and MI5 said the raids had disrupted the early planning of a “significant plot”.

The men, aged 20 and 21, were feared to be preparing to execute a member of the public on the streets of the capital. One of the men had access to firearms. Britain is already reeling from the news that a Londoner known as “Jihadi John” has beheaded four Westerners, including kidnapped British aid workers Alan Henning and David Haines.

The terror threat level of the country was increased to severe — an attack is highly likely — in August specifically in response to the brutal “and specific threat” Islamic State posed within British borders. Britain joining the US-led airstrikes against Islamic State in Iraq has led to “Jihadi John” in the audio of the video-taped executions singling out London for its increasing involvement. A Scotland Yard spokesman said of the latest raid: “These arrests and searches are part of an ongoing investigation into Islamist-related terrorism”.

The four were arrested “on suspicion of being concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism”.

One of the men, aged 21, had just returned from Syria after fighting with Islamic State, also known as ISIL. Police last night were still searching premises associated with the men. About half of the more than 500 Britons believed to have joined the fight in Syria and Iraq with Islamic State and fellow terrorist outfit Jabhat al-Nusra are believed to have returned to Britain, many escaping scrutiny because of Europe’s open borders. There are increasing concerns they will spread their radicalisation and conduct grisly “demonstrations” of small arms attacks and public beheadings. Last week, a British jihadist appeared in an Islamic State video urging “all the brothers in the UK” to rise up and those who could not get to Syria or Iraq to wage jihad at home. Intelligence agencies are understood to have thwarted six plots from returning jihadists in Britain, France, Italy and Holland. The biggest worry for authorities are freelance actors such as Mehdi Nemmouche, 29, who had fought with Islamic State in Syria before shooting three people dead in a Jewish museum in Brussels six months ago; and Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale, who last year killed off-duty fusilier Lee Rigby on the streets of Woolwich. British Prime Minister David Cameron yesterday demanded former Guantanamo Bay detainee Moazzam Begg come forward with any information he held about Islamic State. Mr Begg, a human rights activist who had terror charges against him dropped last week, claims he offered to help free Henning after the Manchester taxi driver’s family approached him months before his murder last week, but his offer had been ignored by the Foreign Office. The case against Mr Begg dissolved when it emerged secret intelligence information had been withheld from the trial process. “If Moazzam Begg has information to provide about who these people are, he should provide it,” Mr Cameron said. The Prime Minister has warned that Islamic State is the greatest terrorist threat in British history, a threat that would last for decades. (*Jacquelin Magnay, The Australian, Oct. 09, 2014*)

### **Hate blinds twittering fools from the evil truth**

THE undeniable atrocities being committed by Islamic State have leftists all at sea. They have made common cause with Islamism against their real foe, the Judaeo-Christian capitalist west, and it’s all a bit uncomfortable. But when even the United Nations confirms that IS is beheading, raping, enslaving and torturing innocent civilians, they still can’t bring themselves to condemn the evil in front of their eyes. Instead they evade, distract, ignore, and attack with all sorts of false moral equivalencies, from evil Israel to the so-called “Christian” (actually agnostic) Oklahoma bomber Timothy McVeigh. Anything to avoid the awful truth, that the totalitarian ideology of radical Islam is on the march, potentially as dangerous as the communist ideology which killed 100 million people last century. Crikey’s Bernard Keane tells us we should focus on “less glamorous subjects” than terrorism which “kills fewer Australians than even the most exotic causes of death”.

The ABC’s Jonathan Holmes pours scorn on Attorney-General George Brandis’ claim that we face an “existential threat” from the Islamo-fascists, and declares climate change is much scarier. Tell that to the beheaded Christians and Yazidis.

University of Western Sydney academic George Morgan pops up on the opinion pages of The Sydney Morning Herald to tell us Islamophobia is more of a threat than Islamist terrorism. “Although no one in Australia has yet been killed by a Muslim terrorist, we are in the midst of an intense moral panic about Islam”. The moral gymnastics reached its apogee last week. As news from Syria and Iraq became ever more dire, Twitter activists coined the witless hashtag #JSIL. This stands for Jewish State in the Levant, which they claim is the moral equivalent of ISIL, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, now calling itself IS. “#ISIL falsely claims to embody the true Islam, inspiring Islamophobia. #JSIL falsely claims to represent all Jews, inspiring anti-Semitism,” explained the left-wing fringe journalist who started it all, Max Blumenthal, an American Bernard Keane. He and fellow Hamas sympathisers say Israel is a rogue state that recruits foreign fighters and commits atrocities against civilians in Gaza, just like IS. This is an obscene libel not only against Israel, but it trivialises the plight of millions of victims of IS. If anyone faces an existential threat, it’s Israel, surrounded by neighbours which want it obliterated. The apologists won’t admit Hamas used human shields in Gaza deliberately to create civilian casualties for its propaganda war against Israel.

Palestinians in Gaza last month told Jordanian-Palestinian writer Mudar Zahram that when the Israeli army sent warnings to buildings it was targeting, Hamas would not allow people to evacuate. It shot those who disobeyed. In the third week of the war, Palestinians staged two major protests against Hamas, and Hamas fighters shot dead as many as 35. Hamas propaganda images of dead children found fertile ground with blinkered Western leftists. Yet what would they have Israel do? Disarm? Then you would see Jews suffer the same treatment as the Christians, Yazidis and Kurds of Syria and Iraq, and any Muslims who don’t get with the program. The

only reason Israel still exists is because it can defend itself. But the morally confused don't care to grasp this reality. In much the same way, leftists of a previous generation laughed off mounting evidence of Stalin's atrocities. It's a bit more difficult now to ignore the totalitarian threat of militant Islam, with the internet showing you severed heads all the time. It's a bit hard to laugh it off with journalists interviewing refugees like Kurd Mostafa Kader from the besieged Syrian town of Kobane. He told the Observer newspaper this week he found his sister-in-law and her eight-year-old daughter lying in pools of blood. "They had been raped, and their hearts were cut out of their chests and left on top of the bodies," he said. This is pure evil, which can't be explained away or minimised. If you can't recognise it there is something wrong with you. (Miranda Devine, [dailytelegraph.com.au](http://dailytelegraph.com.au), Oct., 08, 2014)

### **Playing the victim won't help the situation**

WHAT makes an 18-year-old living in a big house with a successful career in prospect, turn on two police officers and stab them outside a suburban police station? How did Numan Haider, a young man from a well-educated Afghan family, get radicalised by Islamic extremists, begin wrapping himself in the Islamic State flag, and get to the stage where he would kill — and die — for that cause in a Melbourne carpark? The Australian security Agencies are asking exactly that question. We need to come up with the right answer. Because if all it takes is exposure to extremist Islamist sermons and literature then we have a real problem. The internet is swimming with the stuff. Self-styled jihadis are already coming up with their answers. It is all the fault of Australia, they say. Muslim people are treated so badly they are turning against this country towards its opponents such as Islamic State in northern Iraq and Syria.

The trouble with explanations like this is that the facts get in the way. We know that the family of Numan Haider left Afghanistan to migrate to Australia. Under the Taliban, Afghanistan was a hardline Islamic State — coming to Australia meant getting away from all that. And Australia was good to the family. They have a nice house in a good suburb. The children were given a good education. The taxpayers of Australia were good to Numan Haider with schooling and services. The family lived in security and freedom — more than Islamic State would ever give to a minority group. The standard analysis is that people turn to extremist groups out of hardship, that some kind of discrimination or deprivation forces them into anti-social activity. It is not the recent experience. Nearly all the conspirators in the September 11 attack on the World Trade Centre had received tertiary education in the West. They did not grow up in refugee camps. They were able to travel and easily assimilate into Western society. It is well known that Osama bin Laden came from an extremely wealthy family and enjoyed a privileged upbringing — including lengthy periods of living in the West.

It seems in these cases that affluence contributes more to extremism than poverty. It is possible these privileged young men feel guilty about their money and the ease of their life compared to others in war zones, a guilt that gives extremists plenty to work with. The next step is to promote a sense of victimhood. Islam was a great civilisation that ruled much of the world, excelling in science and art. But it fell behind the West. It lost its foothold in Europe. Its homelands were divided after the World War I. The radicals represent its people as downtrodden and suffering. Only by re-establishing a caliphate, they say, can its honour and prestige be restored. In fact, the fight in Iraq and Syria is between Muslim and Muslim. But the preachers of hate want to blame a whole host of others for the problems — the West for dividing Islam, or the Jews for establishing a homeland of their own. They reach out to disaffected youth with stories of horror and shame that must be avenged — if not in Iraq, then in Brisbane or Endeavour Hills. Any interest this evokes from the police or the security services is just further justification for radicalisation. The interest of law enforcement agencies is not the cause of radicalisation. It is the result. But it too can be turned to propaganda purposes. Blaming authorities is a standard political technique. Left-wing activists always blame the police for violence at demonstrations. The Deakin University student Tahmid Mirza, a jihadi propagandist and supporter of Islamic State, was quoted in the weekend press explaining why he has rejected this country, a country that gave him a home and an education: "Many Muslims have been harassed, betrayed and in fact lied to by the government and the so-called 'security' intelligence," he said.

In other words, he is a victim. The real victims here are not the aid workers or journalists who have been beheaded by Islamic state. The victims here are not the Yazidis of northern Iraq facing genocide and extermination.

The real victims are those who were taken in by Australia, given a home, healthcare, a free education and subsidised university places. Such a terrible country. Why would any Muslim want to live here? The fact that so many do tells you that things are not really as Mr Mirza claims. A lot more Muslims are trying to get into Australia than are trying to leave it. This idea Australia's treatment of Muslims is to blame for terrorism is so fanciful you would wonder how anyone could believe it. But it is standard-issue-opinion with university academics, ABC journalists and Greens senators. They act on the principle that "My enemy's enemy is my friend". Since they don't like open liberal western capitalist society, they feel natural support for those who regard themselves at war with Western civilisation. The brutality of Islamic State does not seem to worry them nearly so much as the imagined "brutality" of the Australian government. Thank heavens real people don't fall for such rubbish. They know our society, for all its faults, is worth protecting. They are not taken in by the claims of the extremists or their odd bedfellows on the Australian political left. The people on the front line in the effort against terrorism are not the problem, they are a crucial part of the solution. (*Peter Costello*, The Daily Telegraph, Oct. 07, 2014) Peter Costello is a former federal treasurer and was a member of Australia's National Security Committee for over a decade.

### **European Rights Court Upholds France's Ban on Full-Face Veils**

LONDON — The European Court of Human Rights on Tuesday upheld a ban imposed by France on the wearing of full-face veils in public, rejecting arguments that the measure violated religious freedoms and bolstering opponents of strict Islamic dress in other parts of Europe. The ban, which went into effect three years ago in France, has always been contentious since it set the authorities on a collision course with Muslims who said the full-face veil was an obligation of their faith. The ban, imposed by the former conservative government of Nicolas Sarkozy, was also depicted by its critics as exploiting anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiments in a country with a Muslim minority estimated at up to six million — Europe's largest. At the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, judges said the ban was a legitimate attempt to preserve the norms of France's diverse society and did not infringe on Europe's Convention on Human Rights. The court was ruling on a case brought by an unidentified Frenchwoman who said the law, first passed in 2010 and implemented in 2011, was discriminatory and violated her freedom of conscience. The 24-year-old woman, a college graduate, had requested anonymity for fear of reprisals if her identity became known. The law, the first of its kind in Europe and followed by similar legislation in Belgium, evoked an array of issues, including France's vaunted secularism and the question of whether women are degraded when they wear the full-face veil.

During years of debate, proponents of the ban said it was needed to preserve French culture and ward off Islamic separatism. Officials also said the veil presented a security risk because it cloaked the identity of the wearer. But opponents called the ban extreme. At the time, the Interior Ministry in Paris estimated that only about 2,000 women in France wore the full-face veil, known as the niqab

and often confused with the head-to-toe covering called the burqa. Hundreds of women have been fined up to 150 euros, or about \$215, for defying the ban, but the police have said it is rarely enforced.

The court said in a statement that the "ban was not expressly based on the religious connotation of the clothing in question but solely on the fact that it concealed the face." The 17 judges said the applicant had not been a victim of discrimination.

In a statement summarizing the ruling on its website, the court said the woman "is a devout Muslim and in her submissions she said that she wore the burqa and niqab in accordance with her religious faith, culture and personal convictions."

"The applicant also emphasized that neither her husband nor any other member of her family put pressure on her to dress in this manner. She added that she wore the niqab in public and in private, but not systematically. She was thus content not to wear the niqab in certain circumstances but wished to be able to wear it when she chose to do so. Lastly, her aim was not to annoy others but to feel at inner peace with herself," the statement said. It continued: "While the Court was aware that the disputed ban mainly affected certain Muslim women, it nevertheless noted that there was no restriction on the freedom to wear in public any item of clothing which did not have the effect of concealing the face and that the ban was not expressly based on the religious connotation of the clothing in question but solely on the fact that it concealed the face." The court also said it was "able to understand the view" that, in the interests of social cohabitation, the wearing of the full-face veil might be perceived as thwarting "open interpersonal relationships, which, by virtue of an established consensus, formed an indispensable element of community life within the society in question." While opponents of the ban complained that it could exacerbate social tensions, the court's statement concluded that the prohibition could "be regarded as proportionate to the aim pursued, namely the preservation of the conditions of 'living together' in French society." (Alan Cowell, International Herald Tribune, July 1, 2014)

## **Judaism: We, the Eternal People**

**Comfort, wisdom and hope from the words of the iconic first Chief Rabbi of Israel.**



**HaRav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook zts"**

Together with Shema

In the parashah of Balak, we find prophetic verses of exquisite beauty and an inspiring story of God's vigilant watch over the Jewish people. But to truly appreciate this Torah portion, consider this remarkable teaching of the Sages.

The Talmud (Berachot 12b) relates that at one time the rabbis contemplated incorporating the parashah of Balak into the daily prayers, alongside the recitation of the Shema. This is truly astounding. What lesson is contained in the words of Balaam - a villainous prophet, steeped in blind hatred for the Jewish people - that could possibly compare to the Torah's most fundamental beliefs, as delineated in the Shema, the centerpiece of Jewish prayer? Fortunately, the Talmud clues us in to what makes this parashah so special. Its unique message may be found in the following verse, comparing the Jewish people to a fearsome lion: "[Israel] crouches; he lies like a lion and a lioness. Who dares rouse him?" (Numbers 24:9) Yes, it is a beautiful metaphor describing the timeless strength and vitality of the Jewish people. But does this verse justify reading the entire portion of Balak twice a day, together with the Shema?

### **The Missing Link**

Clearly, the Sages saw an inner link between Balak and the Shema. In order to understand this connection, we must first analyze the principle themes of the Shema. The Sages taught (Berachot 13a) that the first passage of the Shema expresses God's unity and our acceptance of His rule; and that the theme of the second passage is our acceptance of the mitzvot.

However, these two axioms of Judaism - accepting God's reign and accepting His mitzvot - are missing a common link. What is it that combines them, leading to universal acceptance of God through the performance of mitzvot? The missing link is the Jewish people. The lofty aspirations expressed in the Shema necessitate the existence of a nation who, throughout the generations, observes the mitzvot and introduces the concept of God's unity to the world. This is the mission of the Jewish people. In fact, they were created specifically for this purpose: "This people I created for Me, [so that] they will proclaim My praise" (Isaiah 43:21). Now we can understand why the Sages wanted to add this particular verse to the recital of the Shema. Balaam poetically compared the Jewish people to a sleeping lion that none dare disturb. Everyone fears the formidable powers of this majestic creature, even when it sleeps. The latent power of the Jewish people is such that, even when 'sleeping' - even when they are exiled from their land and many of their unique national institutions (the Temple, Sanhedrin, kohanim, prophets, etc.) are dormant - nonetheless, their eternal nature is legendary.[1 The survival of the Jewish people throughout the generations, despite all odds, and in violation of all laws of history, enables them to persist in their mission of proclaiming God's unity. Their indestructible nature is in itself a sanctification of God's Name.

### **Jewish Nationalism**

If the significance of the parashah of Balak can be reduced to this single verse, then why not just add that verse to the daily prayers? Why add the entire section? The Talmud explains that we may not add the verse by itself, since the Torah should not be broken up arbitrarily. "Any section that Moses did not divide, we may not divide." This explanation is difficult to understand. We find many individual verses incorporated in the liturgy. Why not this one? It appears that detaching this particular verse from the rest of Balaam's prophecy poses a special danger. By itself, the verse could be construed as extolling nationalism for its own sake. The unique strength of the Jewish people is not meant to serve the goals of self-centered nationalism, military conquest, or national aggrandizement. The eternal nature of Israel must be understood within the context of their unique mission: to promulgate God's Name in the world. Therefore we must take care not to separate this verse from the rest of the portion.

### **Appreciating the Message of Balak**

In the end, the Sages did not add the parashah of Balak to the daily prayers. They felt that such a lengthy addition would be too great a burden for the people. Reading this portion would be a burden, since its message is not applicable to every generation. Not every generation is able to appreciate the role that Israel's timeless vitality plays in achieving its spiritual goals. Yet the very fact that the Sages wanted to incorporate it in the prayers indicates that a time will come when this message will be accepted and internalized by the nation

as a whole. (**Sapphire from the Land of Israel**. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, pp. 67-68, sent to Arutz Sheva by Rabbi Chanan Morrison, RavKookTorah.org )

[1] Mark Twain wrote in 1898: "[The Jew] has made a marvelous fight in the world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?" ("Concerning the Jews," Harper's Magazine, March 1898). (HaRav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, israelnationalnews.com, July 04, 2014)

### **Deborah E. Lipstadt on the Rising Anti-Semitism in Europe**

ATLANTA — AN old Jewish joke goes like this: "What's the definition of a Jewish telegram? 'Start worrying. Details to follow.'" I am often asked by fellow Jews about contemporary manifestations of anti-Semitism, particularly in Europe. "Is this just like 1939? Are we on the cusp of another Holocaust?" Until now, my answer has been an unequivocal "no." I have criticized community leaders who, either out of genuine concern or to advance their own purposes, use Holocaust analogies to describe contemporary conditions. These claims are ahistorical. They overstate what is going on now and completely understate the situation in 1939. The differences between then and now are legion. When there is an outbreak of anti-Semitism today, officials condemn it. This is light-years away from the 1930s and 1940s, when governments were not only silent but complicit. Memory also distinguishes the present from previous events. Now, in contrast to the 1930s, we know matters can escalate. Jews today are resolute in their determination: "Never again." And despite all this I wonder if I am too sanguine. Last month, pro-Gaza protesters on Kurfürstendamm, the legendary avenue in Berlin, chanted, "Jews, Jews, cowardly swine." Demonstrators in Dortmund and Frankfurt chanted, "Hamas, Hamas; Jews to the gas!" And a pro-Hamas marcher in Berlin broke away from the crowd and assaulted an older man who was quietly standing on a corner holding an Israeli flag.

On the eve of Bastille Day, a group of Parisian Jews were trapped in a synagogue by pro-Palestinian rioters and had to be rescued by the police. A few weeks ago signs were posted in Rome urging a boycott of 50 Jewish-owned businesses. In central London last week, anti-Israel protesters targeted a Sainsbury's grocery, and the manager reflexively pulled kosher products off the shelves. (The supermarket chain later apologized.) It would be simple to link all this outrage to events in Gaza. But this trend has been evident for a while. In March 2012, four people were killed at a Jewish day school in Toulouse, France. (Last month, a Jewish community center there was firebombed.) In December 2012, Israeli officials warned Jewish men who wanted to visit synagogues in Denmark not to don their skullcaps until they were inside the building. It is increasingly common for Jewish tourists in Western Europe to avoid carrying anything that might distinguish them as such. A shooting at the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May, a month before the latest Gaza conflict began, killed four people. I am unpersuaded by those who try to dismiss what is happening as "just rhetoric." It is language, after all, that's at the heart of the ubiquitous slippage from anger at Israeli military action to hatred of Jews.

Nor am I comforted by the explanation that these actions are being taken by "disgruntled Muslim youth." (By one estimate, 95 percent of anti-Semitic actions in France are committed by youths of Arab or African descent.) Many of these Muslims were born in Europe, and many of those who weren't are the parents of a new generation of Europeans. It's true that this is not the anti-Semitism of the 1930s, which came from the right and was rooted in longstanding Christian views that demonized the Jews. Traditionally, Islam did not treat Jews this way. But in the past century a distinct strain of Muslim anti-Semitism has emerged. Built on a foundation of antipathy toward non-Muslims, it mixes Christian anti-Semitism — imported to the Middle East by European missionaries — and a more leftist, secular form of anti-Semitism. It is evident in political cartoons, editorials, television shows and newspaper articles. (Deborah E. Lipstadt, israelnationalnews.com, Aug. 20, 2014)

### **Christian Clerics to Europe: Recognize 'Palestine'**

Three leading Christian clerics in Israel on Friday called on more European governments to recognize "Palestine" as a state with eastern Jerusalem as its capital. The call from the Arab Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Lutheran prelates came after EU member Sweden last week announced its intention to recognize Palestinian statehood late last Friday during Yom Kippur. The UK is likewise set to vote on recognition on Monday. The three clergymen wrote in their open letter "from Jerusalem, our occupied capital, we send our urgent message to the whole world and particularly to Europe - we are yearning for justice and peace. Recognizing Palestine and defining Israel's borders is a first step towards that goal." Former Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, Michel Sabbah, the Greek Orthodox archbishop of Sebastia, Atallah (Theodosios) Hanna, and Lutheran World Federation president Bishop Munib Younan were signatories on the letter. The current Latin patriarch, Fouad Twal, was not among those signing. "We are tired of calls for resumptions of negotiations while we can't reach our churches due to a foreign power and our people continue to be humiliated by an undesirable occupation," the letter read. It continued "Europe has a moral, legal and political duty to hold Israel accountable and support Palestinian non-violent initiatives to end the Israeli occupation, including the recognition of the State of Palestine on the 1967 border with east Jerusalem as its capital." Despite its complete lack of any historical presence, and the full legality of Israel's presence in Judea and Samaria, the Biblical heartland of Israel, several EU countries have already recognized "Palestine," including Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta, Poland and Romania.

Dr. Jonathan Rynhold, a senior researcher at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, told Arutz Sheva on Tuesday that the move by Sweden and now the UK to recognize "Palestine" shows a prelude to the political war Palestinian Authority (PA) Chairman Mahmoud Abbas vowed late last month to wage on Israel. The "war" includes a request that the UN demand Israel withdraw behind the 1949 Armistice lines by 2016. The criticism on Israel by the Arab Christians is ironic, given the fact that Muslim persecution has nearly emptied Bethlehem of its once-sizable Christian population. Greek Orthodox priest Father Gabriel Nadaf, a leader of the Aramaean Christian minority in Israel, spoke before the UN Human Rights Council last month, saying "Israel is the only place where Christians in the Middle East are safe." Nadaf's support of Israel had led the Greek Orthodox patriarchate in Israel to ban him from entering Nazareth's Basilica of the Annunciation, and repeatedly threatening to dismiss him from his post in Yafia near Nazareth. (Arutz Sheva Staff, israelnationalnews.com, October 10, 2014)

### **The Church of Scientology buys land for \$37 million to build new Australasian headquarters**

THE Church of Scientology has quietly snapped up a large tract of land on Sydney's leafy North Shore where it hopes to build a new base for the religion in the southern hemisphere and usher in a new "golden age". The land in West Chatswood, which cost the church \$37 million, will be the site of a sprawling new facility called the Ideal Advanced Organisation and Continental Base for Australia and the Asiatic region. David Miscavige, the chairman of the International Association of Scientologists (IAS) and former best man of Scientology poster boy Tom Cruise, spoke publicly last month for the first time about the organisation's plans to kickstart a "golden age" in Sydney. At a Freedom Medal ceremony in Sussex on October 17, at which Australia's highest profile Scientologist singer Kate Ceberano was presented with the secretive organisation's highest award, Mr Miscavige revealed the redevelopment plans to an assembly of 7500 members. The vast new facility, that will overlook Lane Cove National Park, will open seven days a week, from 8.30am-9.30pm, as both an administrative and theological operation and a place for public worship. "Here, Scientologists from Tasmania to Tokyo will traverse the upper realms of the Bridge to Total Freedom," the Scientology.org website reported of Mr Miscavige's announcement at Sussex.

Mr Miscavige, the powerful leader of the organisation since 1987 following the death of founder and pulp fiction writer L Ron Hubbard in 1986, had visited Sydney in May to preside over the opening of Scientology's refurbished city centre in Castlereagh Street — referred to by the Church of Scientology Australia's (CSA) as "Ideal Org".

That same month the CSA purchased the National Acoustic Laboratory site at 126 Greville Street, West Chatswood, paying \$33 million for the 3.5 hectare site. It also bought two adjoining properties at 23 and 25 Millwood Avenue for \$2 million each. They had sold less than a decade earlier for \$752,500 and \$801,500. The purchase ended a decade of community debate over the Greville Street site which for 70 years was an Army rifle range before the construction of the National Acoustic Laboratory and Ultrasonics Institute in 1987. In 2003, a syndicate of new owners spearheaded by Greg Shand's Barana Group began 10 years of unsuccessful submissions to Willoughby Council to have the site rezoned Medium Density Residential, initiating a battle with the local community resistant to increased traffic in the area.

Recently Willoughby Council approved CSA's application for R3 rezoning of the site after the new owners agreed to retain an existing main three-four level building with 14,224m<sup>2</sup> floorspace, install acoustic fencing to reduce noise and retain bushland and public access to the site. Council is also looking at constructing a bus layover to reduce traffic. Scientology spokeswoman Virginia Stewart confirmed a DA has been lodged with local council. "We have been seeking a suitable Sydney location to consolidate our ecclesiastical management offices," she said. "The ecclesiastical management liaison headquarters is responsible for coordinating Scientology's religious services as well as a wide range of social betterment and community activities. "We are engaged internationally on building purchase for all our existing churches and full renovations and establishment of ideal facilities for our church buildings to enable our many community programs to be facilitated." Ms Stewart did not have a projected date for the opening of the proposed new centre. In May, the enigmatic Mr Miscavige said of his plans for Sydney: "There's a new sign in the southern night skies and it points to something never seen before — your Ideal Org of Sydney. "You now possess the means — in this, our Golden Age — to uplift this city and this nation with the unqualified freedom of Scientology." A Willoughby City Council spokeswoman said the development application had not yet been approved and was open for public submission. "It's still in an early stage and because of the nature and size of the development it goes to the Joint Regional Planning Panel," she said. "They will get a briefing on the DA in November then probably won't approve it until early next year," the spokeswoman said. "So at the moment our officers are going through and assessing the traffic, bushfire and environmental risks and that gets presented to the JRPP." Chatswood West Progress Association member Ian Tanner, 71, who has lived in Millwood Ave for 36 years, said the development was better than new houses being built. "Well I think it's a lot better than having 56 townhouses beside my house and having five years of construction activity as well so I think it's a better outcome all things considered," he said.

"But they're going to have 460 to 500 people on the site seven days a week so it's going to be a busy little place.

"They're making it user friendly to their staff. They've got two or three bus loads bringing in 180 people each day.

"You have to see how it pans out but in theory it should be all right. They've got quite an extensive car park their already for about 120 cars. They're going to encourage people to use public transport. "I don't know what they stand for, I think they stand for a few problems but I'm not affected by them at this stage." (*Annette Sharp and Ian Walker, The Sunday Telegraph, November 02, 2014*)

### **Pope Francis declares evolution and Big Bang theory are real and God is not 'a magician with a magic wand'**

Francis goes against Benedict XVI's apparent support for 'intelligent design' - but does hail his predecessor's 'great contribution to theology' The theories of evolution and the Big Bang are real and God is not "a magician with a magic wand", Pope Francis has declared. Speaking at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, the Pope made comments which experts said put an end to the "pseudo theories" of creationism and intelligent design that some argue were encouraged by his predecessor, Benedict XVI. Francis explained that both scientific theories were not incompatible with the existence of a creator — arguing instead that they "require it".

"When we read about Creation in Genesis, we run the risk of imagining God was a magician, with a magic wand able to do everything. But that is not so," Francis said. He added: "He created human beings and let them develop according to the internal laws that he gave to each one so they would reach their fulfilment. "The Big Bang, which today we hold to be the origin of the world, does not contradict the intervention of the divine creator but, rather, requires it. "Evolution in nature is not inconsistent with the notion of creation, because evolution requires the creation of beings that evolve." The Catholic Church has long had a reputation for being anti-science — most famously when Galileo faced the inquisition and was forced to retract his "heretic" theory that the Earth revolved around the Sun. But Pope Francis's comments were more in keeping with the progressive work of Pope Pius XII, who opened the door to the idea of evolution and actively welcomed the Big Bang theory. In 1996, John Paul II went further and suggested evolution was "more than a hypothesis" and "effectively proven fact". Yet more recently, Benedict XVI and his close advisors have apparently endorsed the idea that intelligent design underpins evolution — the idea that natural selection on its own is insufficient to explain the complexity of the world. In 2005, his close associate Cardinal Schoenborn wrote an article saying "evolution in the sense of common ancestry might be true, but evolution in the neo-Darwinian sense — an unguided, unplanned process — is not". Pope Francis look on during the unveiling of a bronze bust in honor of Pope Benedict XVI on October 27, 2014 at the Vatican. Giovanni Bignami, a professor and president of Italy's National Institute for Astrophysics, told the Italian news agency Adnkronos: "The pope's statement is significant. We are the direct descendents from the Big Bang that created the universe. Evolution came from creation." Giulio Giorello, professor of the philosophy of science at Milan's University degli Studi, told reporters that he believed Francis was "trying to reduce the emotion of dispute or presumed disputes" with science. Despite the huge gulf in theological stance between his tenure and that of his predecessor, Francis praised Benedict XVI as he unveiled a bronze bust of him at the academy's headquarters in the Vatican Gardens. "No one could ever say

of him that study and science made him and his love for God and his neighbour wither,” Francis said, according to a translation by the Catholic News Service.

“On the contrary, knowledge, wisdom and prayer enlarged his heart and his spirit. Let us thank God for the gift that he gave the church and the world with the existence and the pontificate of Pope Benedict.” (Adam Withnall, *The Independent*, 28 October 2014)

*[Does anyone still doubt that Jesus Christ called a man in this office the “abomination of desolation”? (Mat 24:15. Jesus Christ believed in the Genesis creation, as He explained it to His disciples. Ed.)]*

### **More Britons believe in aliens and ghosts than God**

Today in unnerving statistics, a poll has found more Britons believe in aliens and ghosts than God.

The survey of 1,500 adults and 500 children, carried out online for Ripley’s Believe It or Not! by OnePoll, found more than half of adults believe that there is alien life, while only a quarter believe in God. Of the children polled, 26 per cent believe aliens are disguised as humans while one in 20 thought they knew an alien - and of those, one in 20 suggested their mother as the likely culprit.

In the 2011 census 59.3 per cent of the population described themselves as Christian - but that doesn’t necessarily mean they were believers. A YouGov poll of 1,500 Anglican clergy this week found one in 50 priests believe God to be a human construct, while 16 per cent of priests say they are unclear on what they think about God. (Dina Rickman, *independent.co.uk*, Oct. 7, 2014)

### **Courtroom confrontation sees Afghan cleric jailed for raping girl**

AN Afghan cleric has been jailed for 20 years for raping an 11-year old girl, after she confronted her attacker in court despite fierce family opposition. Activists said yesterday the girl appeared in court after being taken to a women’s shelter when members of her own family threatened to kill her for bringing “dishonour” on them. The sentence, passed by a court in Kabul on Saturday, came just weeks after five men were hanged for the gang-rape of four adult women and was hailed as a victory by activists. Hasina Sarwari, head in Kunduz province of the Women for Afghan Women non-government organisation, said the student at a mosque school was raped in May by Mohammad Aminullah Barez, a mullah who taught the girls religious studies. She tried to hide what had happened to her but doctors discovered the rape when she was admitted to hospital for bleeding. “We are happy for the court’s decision but we wanted him to be executed,” Ms Sarwari said. Her organisation supported the girl in her case and gave her shelter in Kabul. “The family of the girl wanted to kill her out of shame, even the nurses were not ready to treat her when she was bleeding in the hospital,” she said. “They would shout ‘May you die, you brought disgrace to our family!’ and ‘We will kill you and dump your body in the river’.” Shaima Qasemi, the victim’s lawyer, said the girl cried in court and shouted for the mullah to be hanged. “For now she is happy to see that the mullah ... has been sentenced to jail,” she said. Mohammad Rasool, the girl’s uncle, backed her in court. “We welcome the decision,” he said. (AFP, October 28, 2014)

## **Health**

### **Microbes maketh man. People are not just people**

**They are an awful lot of microbes, too. Political revolutionaries turn the world upside down. Scientific ones more often than not turn it inside out. And that, almost literally, is happening to the idea of what, biologically speaking, a human being is.**

The traditional view is that a human body is a collection of 10 trillion cells which are themselves the products of 23,000 genes. If the revolutionaries are correct, these numbers radically underestimate the truth. For in the nooks and crannies of every human being, and especially in his or her guts, dwells the microbiome: 100 trillion bacteria of several hundred species bearing 3m non-human genes. The biological Robespierres believe these should count, too; that humans are not single organisms, but superorganisms made up of lots of smaller organisms working together. It might sound perverse to claim bacterial cells and genes as part of the body, but the revolutionary case is a good one. For the bugs are neither parasites nor passengers. They are, rather, fully paid-up members of a community of which the human “host” is but a single (if dominating) member. This view is increasingly popular: the world’s leading scientific journals, *Nature* and *Science*, have both reviewed it extensively in recent months. It is also important: it will help the science and practice of medicine.

The microbiome does many jobs in exchange for the raw materials and shelter its host provides. One is to feed people more than 10% of their daily calories. These are derived from plant carbohydrates that human enzymes are unable to break down. And not just plant carbohydrates. Mother’s milk contains carbohydrates called glycans which human enzymes cannot digest, but bacterial ones can. This alone shows how closely host and microbiome have co-evolved over the years. But digestion is not the only nutritional service provided. The microbiome also makes vitamins, notably B2, B12 and folic acid. It is, moreover, capable of adjusting its output to its host’s needs and diet. The microbiomes of babies make more folic acid than do those of adults. And microbiomes in vitamin-hungry places like Malawi and rural Venezuela turn out more of these chemicals than do those in the guts of North Americans. The microbiome also maintains the host’s health by keeping hostile interlopers at bay. An alien bug that causes diarrhoea, for instance, is as much an enemy of the microbiome as of the host. Both have an interest in zapping it. And both contribute to the task. Host and microbiome, then, are allies. But there is more to it than that. For the latest research shows their physiologies are linked in ways which make the idea of a human superorganism more than just a rhetorical flourish. These links are most visible when they go wrong. A disrupted microbiome has been associated with a lengthening list of problems: obesity and its opposite, malnutrition; diabetes (both type-1 and type-2); atherosclerosis and heart disease; multiple sclerosis; asthma and eczema; liver disease; numerous diseases of the intestines, including bowel cancer; and autism. The details are often obscure, but in some cases it looks as if bugs are making molecules that help regulate the activities of human cells. If these signals go wrong, disease is the consequence. This matters because it suggests doctors have been looking in the wrong place for explanations of these diseases. It also suggests a whole new avenue for treatment. If an upset microbiome causes illness, settling it down might effect a cure.

Yogurt companies and health-food fanatics have been banging this drum for years. And in the case of at least one malady, irritable-bowel syndrome, they are right. So-called probiotics, a mixture of about half a dozen bacterial species found in yogurt, do act to calm this condition. But there is little evidence that consuming probiotics has the tonic effect on healthy people that certain adverts suggest. A handful of doctors are taking a more fundamental approach to another microbiome-related disease, infection with *Clostridium difficile*. This bacterium, which causes life-threatening distension of the gut in some people who have been treated with antibiotics and thus had their microbiomes disrupted, is a bane of hospitals. It kills 14,000 people a year in America alone. But recent experiments have shown it can be eliminated by introducing, as an enema, the faeces of a healthy individual. “Stool transplants” are a pretty crude approach, to be sure, but the crucial point is that microbes are much easier to manipulate than human cells. For all the talk of superorganisms (and

despite the yuck factor of what is being moved from one body to another), transplanting a microbiome is far easier than transplanting a heart or a kidney.

**Disgusting but useful:** Two other areas look promising. One is more sophisticated deployment of the humble antibiotic, arguably the pharma industry's most effective invention. At the moment antibiotics are used mainly to kill infections. In the future they might have a more subtle use to manipulate the mix of bugs within a human, so that good bugs spread at the expense of bad ones.

The other field that may be changed is genetics. Many of the diseases in which the microbiome is implicated seem to run in families. In some, such as heart disease, that is partly explained by known human genes. In a lot, though, most notably autism, the genetic link is obscure. This may be because geneticists have been looking at the wrong set of genes—the 23,000 rather than the 3m. For those 3m are still inherited. They are largely picked up from your mother during the messy process of birth. Though no clear example is yet known, it is possible that particular disease-inducing strains are being passed down the generations in this way. As with all such upheavals, it is unclear where the microbiome revolution will end up. Doctors and biologists may truly come to think of people as superorganisms. Then again, they may not. What is clear, though, is that turning thinking inside out in this way is yielding new insights into seemingly intractable medical problems, and there is a good chance cures will follow. Vive la revolution! (*The Economist*, Aug, 2012)

### **Why that device on your wrist could be making you fat**

**IT is rare for a workout trend to have such universal appeal that it is enthusiastically adopted by everyone from A-listers to pensioners. Yet fitness-tracking bracelets are being sported on the wrists of the likes of Katy Perry, Gwyneth Paltrow, Britney Spears and my 60-year-old neighbour, who swears that her Fitbit is keeping her in shape. These data-collectors, which keep tally of every step stepped and every calorie burned — whether while exercising or doing the housework — seem almost as popular among adults as loom bands are for children: if it's not a Jawbone UP or a Nike+ FuelBand SE then it's a Misfit Shine device or a Garmin Vivofit. Self-monitoring has become a serious status symbol of healthy intent — everyone wants to become part of the "datarati".**

Market research company Canalys predicts that 17 million of these wearable devices will be sold this year, rising to 23 million by next year. Apple has done its best to sway the unconverted with its infuriatingly catchy "Go, you chicken fat, go", showing off the usefulness of the iPhone 5s as a health tracker with a soundtrack that was used to spur on schoolchildren during PE lessons in 1960s America. And US company Fitbit has collaborated with fashion designer Tory Burch to create a stylish collection, pictured. But all is not well in the wearable activity-monitor world. The chief executive of Misfit, which makes the Shine device, has labelled the market "a dying business". Nike laid off a big part of its FuelBand team early this year, having decided that only apps and software have a future in the company's vision. It may seem odd that one of the world's largest sportswear manufacturers is pulling out of a market in which others are investing billions. But not if you've tested dozens of these things, as I have, and realised the uncomfortable truth: they don't really work — or at least not as well as the manufacturers would have you believe. As much as they have tried to refine the technology of wrist-based gadgets, even those costing several hundred dollars are notoriously prone to inaccuracies. When it comes to step-keeping, limb movement creates disturbance that can mess up energy-expenditure calculations: the bracelet smart-pedometer can be fooled into thinking you are moving your lower body more than you actually are. The result? Elevated calorie expenditure readings. Good for the self-esteem; not so good for the waistline. Celebrity trainer Jon Denoris says he has tested a few of the devices for accuracy. His verdict? "I can tell you first hand that there are wide differences in the quality and results that they give." It has not gone unnoticed by scientists. Earlier this year a team at Iowa State University tested the accuracy of eight popular fitness trackers against lab equipment that accurately measured energy expenditure. They found that some over-estimated calorie burn by 23 per cent. "People buy these activity monitors assuming they work, but some of them are not that accurate or have never been tested before," says Gregory Welk, the professor of kinesiology who led the trial.

Many people find the devices think they have done more exercise than they have and recommend a higher intake of calories as a result. Cue the complaints now flooding the internet that they are leading to weight gain rather than loss. But if growing numbers are getting fitness-tracker fatigue, it's not the end of the road for self-quantification. Insiders say they are set to be overtaken by a new generation of electronic fitness aids, such as the rumoured Apple iWatch. In January, *The New York Times* reported that a group of Apple executives had met directors at the US Food and Drug Administration to discuss future "mobile medical applications". They are believed to be working on integrated health features, including one that aims to predict heart attacks by listening to the sound blood makes as it flows through the arteries. It alerts the wearer if it detects anything dodgy. A patent has been filed by Apple for an intelligent, hi-tech "step-detection" program that factors in location technology and drastically reduces the margin of error when it comes to estimating the calories you've gobbled up. Word has it that the watch can tell when someone slows to a stroll on a run. (*Peta Bee*, *The Times*, August 15, 2014)

### **Too little salt in diet found to increase heart attack, stroke risks**

A LONG debate over the merits of eating less salt escalated yesterday when one of the most comprehensive studies yet suggested cutting back on sodium too much poses health hazards.

Guidelines from US government agencies, the World Health Organisation, the American Heart Association and other groups set daily dietary sodium targets between 1500 and 2300 milligrams or lower, well below the average US daily consumption of about 3400mg. The new study tracked more than 100,000 people from 17 countries over an average of more than three years. It found that those who consumed fewer than 3000mg of sodium a day had a 27 per cent higher risk of death or a serious event such as a heart attack or stroke in that period than those whose intake was estimated at 3000mg-6000mg. Risk of death or other major events increased with intake above 6000mg. The findings, published yesterday in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, are the latest to challenge the benefit of aggressively low sodium targets — especially for generally healthy people. Last year, a report from the Institute of Medicine, which advises the US congress on health issues, didn't find evidence that cutting sodium intake below 2300mg reduced risk of cardiovascular disease. The new report has shortcomings, and as an observational study it found only an association, not a causative effect, between very low sodium and cardiovascular risk. Still, it spurred calls to reconsider the targets. Suzanne Oparil, professor of medicine at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and an expert on high blood pressure, said the study added "a pretty big weight on the side that low salt intake is associated with harm". Without evidence from randomised trials to back them up, the low-sodium targets are "questionable health policy", she said. Dr Oparil is the author of an editorial that accompanied the findings. The American Heart Association, a strong proponent of the low-sodium targets, wasn't persuaded. AHA president Elliott Antman said certain methods in the

study, including how dietary sodium was estimated from urine samples, called into question “our ability to have confidence” in the findings. (Ron Winslow, The Wall Street Journal, August 15, 2014)

## **Ebola fears grow as experts say epidemic could spread to US, Europe and Asia**

**AS the outbreak of the deadly west African Ebola disease worsens, a doctor treating infected patients has revealed many are refusing treatment over its links to witchcraft and sorcery.**

Doctor Benjamin Black, 32, a volunteer with Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in Sierra Leone, told the UK Telegraph that some of those in infected areas were not seeking medical treatment as they thought the disease was the work of sorcerers. “There is a section of population here who simply don’t believe Ebola is real, they think it is witchcraft and so they don’t come to the treatment centres,” he told the UK Telegraph. “Sometimes, even those who turn up at clinics with symptoms of the disease will be resistant to the idea that they have it. They will say ‘yes, people in my family have died already, but this is witchcraft rather than Ebola’.” His alarming comments come after Doctors Without Borders warned that the outbreak is out of control and there are fears it “can only get worse”. The medical charity said the crisis gripping Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone could spread to other continents and warns there is no overarching strategy to handle the world’s worst-ever outbreak of the disease. Amid rising fears that the deadly virus could spread to the US, there are already plans to subject even healthy Americans into forced quarantine in the event of an Ebola pandemic. Western doctors are now on the lookout for symptoms of the disease after the death of US citizen Patrick Sawyer, who travelled through a major transport hub in Nigeria, prompted fears that the disease could spread to the US. Symptoms of the disease, which has anywhere from a 50 to 90 per cent mortality rate, include headache, fever, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, and lack of appetite.

There are now fears that the deadly and highly contagious virus will be passed on through air travel.

Florida congressman Alan Grayson has called on the Obama Government to impose a travel ban in response to the growing Ebola virus outbreak, the Huffington Post reports. “This latest case is particularly troubling because Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos is the third busiest airport in Africa, and it offers direct flights to the United States,” he wrote in a letter addressed to US Secretary of State John Kerry. “I urge you to consider the enhanced danger Ebola now presents to the American public, and therefore request that appropriate travel restrictions be implemented immediately.”

Stephen Monroe, the deputy director of the National Centre for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, also warned of the dangers of air travel. “It’s possible that someone could become infected with the Ebola virus in Africa and then get on a plane to the United States,” he said. Describing the current crisis as “a rapidly changing situation”, Monroe pointed out that “people do travel between West Africa and the US” and health officials needed “to be prepared for the very remote possibility that one of those travellers could get Ebola and return to the US while sick.” The death of Sawyer in the Nigerian capital of Lagos on Friday has prompted fears the disease could be on the brink of spreading to the West. Mr Sawyer had worked for the Liberian government since 2008, returning every six months or so to his family in the Minneapolis suburbs. An American doctor with Samaritan’s Purse, Kent Brantly, has come down with the disease and is in hospital in Liberia fighting for his life as is another American health volunteer, Nancy Writebol.

Two US Peace Corps volunteers in Liberia have been isolated and are under observation after being exposed to a person who later died of the deadly virus. A spokeswoman said the volunteers will return to the US after they are cleared to travel. In Hong Kong, a woman returning from Kenya was quarantined in Queen Elizabeth Hospital but tested negative, despite displaying Ebola-like symptoms. There are similar fears in the UK, where a man was tested for Ebola in Birmingham after arriving back there from Nigeria via Paris. Although the man was given the all-clear, the case has prompted fears that the deadly disease could spread to Britain. Bart Janssens, MSF’s director of operations, warned that governments and global bodies had no “overarching view” or vision of how to tackle the outbreak.

“This epidemic is unprecedented, absolutely out of control and the situation can only get worse, because it is still spreading, above all in Liberia and Sierra Leone, in some very important hotspots,” he said. “If the situation does not improve fairly quickly, there is a real risk of new countries being affected,” he told *La Libre Belgique* newspaper. Despite the growing fears, the scientist who helped discover the Ebola virus said the outbreak in west Africa was unlikely to trigger a major epidemic outside the region, adding he would happily sit next to an infected person on a train. But Professor Peter Piot told AFP that a “really bad” sense of panic and lack of trust in the authorities in west Africa had contributed to the world’s largest-ever outbreak. Belgian scientist Piot, the director of the prestigious London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said even if someone carrying Ebola were to fly to Europe, the United States or another part of Africa, “I don’t think that will give rise to a major epidemic”. “Spreading in the population here, I’m not that worried about it,” he told AFP. “I wouldn’t be worried to sit next to someone with Ebola virus on the Tube as long as they don’t vomit on you or something. This is an infection that requires very close contact. The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), however, isn’t taking any chances and has held talks with global health officials on potential measures to halt the spread of the disease.

ICAO secretary-general Raymond Benjamin said the virus crossing borders for the first time by plane could lead to new flight restrictions aimed at containing outbreaks and they will have to act quickly. (AFP/News Corp Australia, July 31, 2014)

## **HUMAN BODY: 10 things you probably didn’t know about digestion (or were afraid to ask!)**

1. Food doesn’t need gravity to get to your stomach – a process called ‘peristalsis’, which involves the muscles in your esophagus contracting and relaxing in a wave-like manner, pushes your meal down. Thanks to peristalsis, food would theoretically still make it to your stomach if you were hanging upside down.
2. Your gastrointestinal tract, the organ in charge of digesting food, is about 10 metres long and runs from your mouth to your anus.
3. Up to 15% of your daily energy expenditure comes from the calories burned simply digesting food. Protein and alcohol take up the most energy (that doesn’t include the silly things you do drunk).
4. The loudest burp ever recorded is as loud as a chainsaw. In September 2008, British man Paul Hunn produced a belch that measured 107.1 decibels. Dread to think what he’d eaten beforehand...
5. Your gut’s main digestive juice, hydrochloric acid, is powerful enough to dissolve metal, most plastics and hair.
6. The human digestive system contains the same class of enzymes as laundry detergents, which it uses to break down food.
7. Your stomach doesn’t actually do much digesting – that job falls to the small intestine, which accounts for two-thirds of the length of the digestive tract.
8. That same small intestine, once unfolded, would be big enough to cover a tennis court – that’s 250 square metres
9. Flatulence often smells because the digestive system can’t break down the components of certain foods, allowing whole colonies of intestinal bacteria to release gases such as hydrogen sulfide – the baddie that makes farts stink like rotten eggs.

10. Pica is an eating disorder in which sufferers take a fancy to eating things that have no nutritional value, like dirt or paint or hotdogs. Up to 30% of all young children develop it at some point. (worldofknowledge.com.au, June 25, 2014)

### **A Vasectomy May Increase Prostate Cancer Risk**

Men with vasectomies may be at an increased risk for the most lethal form of prostate cancer, researchers have found. But aggressive cancer nonetheless remains rare in these patients. Earlier studies had hinted at a connection between vasectomies and prostate cancer. Many experts have dismissed the idea of a link: Men who have vasectomies may receive more medical attention, they said, and therefore may be more likely to receive a diagnosis. The new study, published this month in *The Journal of Clinical Oncology*, sought to account for that possibility and for other variables. Researchers at Harvard reviewed data on 49,405 men ages 40 to 75, of whom 12,321 had had vasectomies. They found 6,023 cases of prostate cancer among those men from 1986 to 2010. The researchers found no association between a vasectomy and low-grade cancers. But men who had had a vasectomy were about 20 percent more likely to develop lethal prostate cancer, compared with those who had not. The incidence was 19 in 1,000 cases, compared with 16 in 1,000, over the 24-year period.

The reason for the increase is unclear, but some experts have speculated that immunological changes, abnormal cell growth or hormonal imbalances following a vasectomy may also affect prostate cancer risk. Dr. James M. McKiernan, interim chairman of the department of urology at Columbia, said the lack of a clear causal mechanism was a drawback of the new research. "If someone asked for a vasectomy, I would have to tell them that there is this new data in this regard, but it's not enough for me to change the standard of care," he said. "I would not say that you should avoid vasectomy." The lead author, Lorelei A. Mucci, an associate professor of epidemiology at the Harvard School of Public Health, emphasized that a vasectomy does not increase the risk for prostate cancer over all. "We're really seeing the association only for advanced state and lethal cancers," she said. She agreed with Dr. McKiernan that the new data are not a reason to avoid a vasectomy. "Having a vasectomy is a highly personal decision that men should make with their families and discuss with their physicians," she said. "This is one piece of evidence that should be considered." (Nicholas Bakalar, *New York Times*, July 17, 2014)

### **Hot chillies help combat cancer**

A CHEMICAL compound in spicy curries could help reduce the risk of developing bowel cancer. Researchers from University of California's San Diego School of Medicine gave capsaicin, which gives chilli peppers their heat, to mice genetically prone to developing multiple tumours in their gastrointestinal tract. The capsaicin triggered a pain receptor in the cells lining their intestines, setting off a reaction that reduced the risk of growing colorectal tumours. Scientists found the treatment extended the lifespan of the mice by more than 30 per cent. (*Sunday Telegraph*, August 3, 2014)

### **Superfood?**

**I'VE recently become one of those people who read food labels.** And I really wish I hadn't. I have been put on a temporary dairy-free diet for a medical condition. For it to work I have to make sure I avoid even the slightest trace of milk. No big deal, I thought. Black coffee for a while and bingo. "You need to read labels carefully though," my doctor said. "Milk is in everything." Yes, like, er butter, yoghurt and cheese, I thought. Samples. But how wrong I was. Because thanks to the insane way we manufacture food nowadays, I have discovered that if you need to know exactly what is in the innocuous-looking meal you're tucking into, it's almost impossible.

And when you do find out — you'll wish you hadn't looked. I began by avoiding food clearly made with dairy. And then I checked everything else. I was in for a shock. Apart from the obvious items, guess what can also have milk protein in it: cereal, bottled water, cakes, battered food, anything baked, cans of anything, tuna, ham and all deli meats, flavouring, fruit juice, medicine, flour, bread, margarine, meat pies, products marketed as non-dairy (yes really), turkey, chicken, sausages, sports drinks and vegetable stock. Suddenly things were looking a bit more complicated. After hopelessly abandoning all bread in the supermarket, thanks to their get out of jail free fine print "May contain nuts and milk", there was nothing for it. I had to start shopping at the whole food market. Now, the health food crew is not my usual tribe, it has to be said. I wasn't sure I'd be welcome. After all, I don't own any tie-dye hair wraps or hessian shoes. But after a few initial askance looks at me and my Bugaboo, now I'm happily quaffing almond milk lattes with the goat hair sweater-clad patrons, and munching on fair trade vegan chocolate. Which — who knew — is really delicious, if mouth-waveringly pricey. No wonder people who shop there sport homespun jumpers, you wouldn't have any money left to afford anything else. But hey, at least your jacket potato won't kill you. I only have to do this for a short time, but I realised anyone with serious allergies must find it almost impossible to eat packaged food, or dine out, for the haphazard way we manufacture food now. So, forget processed food then, I decided to concentrate on vegetables. You could put money on them not coming anywhere near milk. Well, no. Bagged salads for example, are usually washed in chlorine (mmm, tasty), but some companies also use lactic acid. Of course, I should have guessed. The lactic acid in this case is not usually made from milk, I'm told, but it could be and there's no way to find out. That's not all. Diligently eating your superfoods? Well they better be organic, as many of these are superb when it comes to pesticides. All you hipsters chugging a kale smoothie, don't choke, but that wonder green is one of the worst offenders. Kale, apples, strawberries, grapes, potatoes, cucumber, tomatoes, spinach, peas and celery all make the dirty dozen list.

The average potato had a much higher total weight of pesticides than any other food. And one grape tested had 15 different pesticides on it. Bet you'll never pinch one from the bag again at Coles. It goes on. When you crunch into a crisp or hot chip, I bet you didn't know that it has the highest content of acrylamide than any other food, a substance

used in the manufacturing of plastics and glues and also found in food cooked at super-high temperatures. It is of "major concern" to The World Health Organization and under investigation for possibly causing cancer. Or when you eat a packet cake, you're also ingesting levels of aluminium. According to the recent 24th Australian Total Diet Study by the Food Standards Australia and New Zealand, levels of aluminium in our diet are the same in Australia as other western countries. So that's OK then. Oh, but some 2-5 year olds have worryingly high levels, they found. Oh well, never mind, eh. Not concerning enough? If you eat a sliced loaf of bread, chances are it has L-Cysteine in it which is made from duck feathers and human hair from China. They harvest the latter from hairdresser floors, apparently. I'm serious. To finish off, may I suggest a nice dollop of vanilla, strawberry or raspberry ice-cream containing castoreum flavouring. Well that comes from beaver's anal glands. And best of all, it's labelled under "natural flavouring". Eat up people. Ironically, in researching this, I just discovered it's also found in almond milk. Bugger. Just wait till I tell my goat hair crew. Past generations must

be looking on in horror at all this. Beaver bum ice-cream, hair toast and heavy metal Danish pastries? Suddenly bread and dripping doesn't sound so bad after all. As long as it's dairy-free, of course. (*Kerry Parnell, The Sunday Telegraph, July 13, 2014*)

## **The Truth About Down Syndrome**

LAST week the biologist Richard Dawkins sparked controversy when, in response to a woman's hypothetical question about whether to carry to term a child with Down syndrome, he wrote on Twitter: "Abort it and try again. It would be immoral to bring it into the world if you have the choice." In further statements, Mr. Dawkins suggested that his view was rooted in the moral principle of reducing overall suffering whenever possible — in this case, that of individuals born with Down syndrome and their families. But Mr. Dawkins's argument is flawed. Not because his moral reasoning is wrong, necessarily (that is a question for another day), but because his understanding of the facts is mistaken. Recent research indicates that individuals with Down syndrome can experience more happiness and potential for success than Mr. Dawkins seems to appreciate.

There are, of course, many challenges facing families caring for children with Down syndrome, including a high likelihood that their children will face surgery in infancy and Alzheimer's disease in adulthood. But at the same time, studies have suggested that families of these children show levels of well-being that are often greater than those of families with children with other developmental disabilities, and sometimes equivalent to those of families with nondisabled children. These effects are prevalent enough to have been coined the "Down syndrome advantage."

In 2010, researchers reported that parents of preschoolers with Down syndrome experienced lower levels of stress than parents of preschoolers with autism. In 2007, researchers found that the divorce rate in families with a child with Down syndrome was lower on average than that in families with a child with other congenital abnormalities and in those with a nondisabled child.

In another study, 88 percent of siblings reported feeling that they themselves were better people for having a younger sibling with Down syndrome; and of 284 respondents to a survey of those with Down syndrome over the age of 12, 99 percent stated they were personally happy with their own lives. Researchers (including one of us) have found that children and young adults with Down syndrome have significantly higher "adaptive" skills than their low I.Q. scores might suggest. Adaptive behavior is a measure of how well people are functioning in their environment, such as the quality of their day-to-day living and work skills. A paper published this week in the *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* suggests that the Down syndrome advantage may arise from these relatively strong adaptive skills. Recent work also suggests that the cognitive impairment that is a hallmark of Down syndrome might eventually be managed by medical interventions. In an article published in 2007 in the journal *Nature Neuroscience*, one of us and a colleague reported a regimen of medication that reversed the learning and memory impairments of a mouse model of Down syndrome. Today that medication and a number of others are undergoing clinical trials. Medical interventions promise to improve the quality of life of people with Down syndrome in other ways, too. For example, children and adults with Down syndrome suffer from a high rate of obstructive sleep apnea. (Work conducted in one of our laboratories this year found obstructive sleep apnea in 61 percent of a sample of school-age children with Down syndrome.) But this is a manageable medical issue, and proper intervention (like positive airway pressure) has the potential to improve developmental outcomes over the course of an individual's life span if started early enough.

Another area of research concerns Alzheimer's-related dementia. Virtually all people with Down syndrome show Alzheimer's neuropathology by age 40, though not all develop clinical symptoms of the full-blown disease. Studies are underway to examine the neural underpinnings of Alzheimer's disease at these early ages, in the hope of providing preventive treatments in those with Down syndrome. The data indicate that people with Down syndrome, and the families who care for them, suffer less than might be supposed. And where Down syndrome does pose undoubted challenges, research into treatment options suggests that there are grounds for cautious optimism. In whatever moral calculation Mr. Dawkins and others may wish to make, these facts deserve to be accorded their full weight. (*Jamie Edgin and Fabian Fernandez, NYTimes, Aug 28, 2014*)

## **UN bungles spread ebola**

THE World Health Organisation bungled efforts to halt the spread of ebola in west Africa, an internal report has revealed, as the political brawl over whether Australia sends personnel to Africa escalated.

With the disease having killed more than 4500 people in Africa, a WHO draft report pointed to serious errors in coordinating the initial response. The document found that WHO, an arm of the UN, missed chances to prevent ebola from spreading after it was first diagnosed in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea last spring, blaming factors including incompetent staff and a lack of information. "Nearly everyone involved in the outbreak response failed to see some fairly plain writing on the wall. A perfect storm was brewing, ready to burst open in full force," a WHO spokesperson said. The report was released as Labor leader Bill Shorten was accused of showing "reckless disregard" for the safety of health workers by calling for Australians to fight ebola in Africa without a credible evacuation policy in place. Hitting back at Mr Shorten's warning that the Abbott government was sleep-walking through the crisis, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and Health Minister Peter Dutton have written to Labor calling for a return to bipartisanship. Confirming the National Security Committee of Cabinet has formally considered Australia's domestic and international response to the ebola crisis five times, the letter warns there is no current capacity to evacuate Australians in the region to safety if they contract the virus. "It shows a reckless disregard for the safety of health workers to ignore this advice and call for Australians to be placed in harm's way without credible evacuation arrangements in place," it states. Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Tanya Plibersek seized on reports that the Coalition's \$10 million pledge has yet to reach the UN. However, the government said the money had been provided but that the UN had simply failed to update its website. *Medicins San Frontieres* Australia advocacy manager Jon Edwards said he recognised the government's safety concerns but urged it to make a commitment. "Every day the outbreak is becoming more dangerous and more difficult to control," Mr Edwards said. MSF Australia reportedly has 12 Australians in Liberia and Sierra Leone. (*Maria Cheng and Samantha Maiden, The Sunday Telegraph, October 19, 2014*)

## **HOW EBOLA AFFECTS THE HUMAN BODY**

- The virus is transmitted from wild animals to humans through contact with breaks in skin, eyes, nose, mouth or sexual activity.
- After about ten days a patient shows signs of sore throat, fever, fatigue, muscle pain and headaches.
- After about 13 to 15 days a patient can suffer from rashes, chest pains, coughing, loss of appetite, diarrhoea and eye inflammation.
- After about 15 to 17 days external bleeding occurs from the damage to the vascular system with blood appearing from gums as well as when coughing, vomiting and in stools.

— After about 21 days a patient can die from EVD. The fatality rate is approximately 70 per cent but this has varied from 25 per cent to 90 per cent in previous outbreaks.

— No proven treatment available for EVD. Surviving the virus depends on a strong early response from the patient's immune system.

#### WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU GET IT OVERSEAS?

— Airport border agencies identify people who have originated their travel from affected countries in West Africa.

— They are referred to Biosecurity Officers and asked questions in relation to Ebola victims in West Africa, attendance at funerals or reports of fevers in the last 24 hours.

— If they answer 'Yes' to any of the questions they will be referred to the human quarantine officer who takes over and assesses if they need to be taken to hospital. (Such a step has not been required as yet.)

— For returning health care workers, the federal department of health is informed a week in advance and the citizen is assessed by quarantine officers at the border.

— The state health authorities are notified of their arrival with each case judged on its merits by the infectious diseases experts in the State and Territory Public Health Units.

— The health worker is removed from having any clinical duties for 21 days.

— Restrictions are assessed on a case-by-case basis but all health care workers are asked to limit their social mixing and avoid plane flights and mass gatherings.

### India's Public Health Crisis

An infected person travels from West Africa to India and seeks treatment at an underfinanced and overwhelmed public hospital. There, substandard treatment unleashes an Ebola pandemic. It's the nightmare scenario set out by Peter Piot, the British microbiologist who first identified the Ebola virus. About 45,000 Indians live in West Africa, and Indian trade with Nigeria, particularly in medical services and pharmaceuticals, has boomed. However, India's most troubling threat is not abroad, but at home: the crippled public health system. The nation spends less than 1 per cent of its gross domestic product on public health care. There are only nine hospital beds per 10,000 in India, compared with 41 per 10,000 in China, and doctors, nurses and lab technicians are critically lacking.

The Indian government has already shown itself incapable of dealing with lethal viral diseases. As many as 80 percent of the 30 million Indians infected with dengue fever every year never seek medical care or are turned away from hospitals whose beds are full. Ebola would quickly overwhelm such strained hospitals. The government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised a universal health insurance plan inspired by the Affordable Care Act in the United States. This would help more people afford care but do little to plug the gaping holes in the system. The government has set up screenings for Ebola at international airports and prepared isolation wards. And, so far, no cases have been found in India. The nation has also contributed \$12.5 million to contain the Ebola virus in West Africa and has pledged to use its expertise in producing low-cost drugs to develop an affordable vaccine.

But with the World Health Organization warning that Ebola infection rates could rise to 10,000 new victims a week by the end of the year in West Africa, and the fumbles dealing with Ebola in Spain and America, improving India's public health system is a national emergency. (Editorial, *International Herald Tribune*, Oct. 17, 2014)

### Ice cream and cheese could help IVF pregnancies

OLDER women who eat more cheese, yoghurt and ice cream are more likely to have a baby, according to a new study.

A study of women undergoing IVF at Massachusetts General Hospital found that over-35s who ate the most portions of dairy produce each day were 21 per cent more likely to have a successful pregnancy than those who ate the least.

Delegates at the American Society for Reproductive Medicine's annual meeting in Hawaii were told the findings could be linked to hormones from the pregnant cows producing the milk. Women eating the most dairy products had at least three portions a day of foods such as milk, cream, cheese, yoghurt and ice cream, while those eating the least had less than 1.34 servings, with one serving of milk measuring 240ml. Jorge Chavarro, of Harvard University, one of the study's authors, said: "Cows are milked mostly while they are pregnant, and the hormones produced in the placenta during pregnancy can cross freely into milk. So there is lots of progesterone." Progesterone is the hormone which helps embryos to "stick" in the womb. The researchers also looked at the possible effect of dairy produce on egg or embryo quality, but only found an association with measurements once the embryo was implanted in the womb.

Dr Chavarro said the researchers had expected dairy to have a negative effect. IVF patients were normally given progesterone after the embryo had been implanted, he said, although in greater doses than in milk. He said, as infertility treatment was expensive, "being able to identify factors that are potentially modifiable is of great interest". However, Dr Chavarro added he would not necessarily recommend that women trying for a baby to eat more dairy as evidence was at an early stage. Earlier trials found women eating low-fat dairy were more likely to be infertile, and men who ate full-fat dairy products had lower quality sperm. Charles Kingsland, of Liverpool Women's Hospital, said a balanced diet would help women to conceive. (*Kat Lay*, *The Times*, October 23, 2014)

### A Natural Fix for A.D.H.D.

ATTENTION deficit hyperactivity disorder is now the most prevalent psychiatric illness of young people in America, affecting 11 percent of them at some point between the ages of 4 and 17. The rates of both diagnosis and treatment have increased so much in the past decade that you may wonder whether something that affects so many people can really be a disease.

And for a good reason. Recent neuroscience research shows that people with A.D.H.D. are actually hard-wired for novelty-seeking — a trait that had, until relatively recently, a distinct evolutionary advantage. Compared with the rest of us, they have sluggish and underfed brain reward circuits, so much of everyday life feels routine and under stimulating. To compensate, they are drawn to new and exciting experiences and get famously impatient and restless with the regimented structure that characterizes our modern world. In short, people with A.D.H.D. may not have a disease, so much as a set of behavioral traits that don't match the expectations of our contemporary culture.

From the standpoint of teachers, parents and the world at large, the problem with people with A.D.H.D. looks like a lack of focus and attention and impulsive behavior. But if you have the "illness," the real problem is that, to your brain, the world that you live in essentially feels not very interesting. One of my patients, a young woman in her early 20s, is prototypical. "I've been on Adderall for years to help me focus," she told me at our first meeting. Before taking Adderall, she found sitting in lectures unendurable and would lose her concentration within minutes. Like many people With A.D.H.D., she hankered for exciting and varied experiences and also

resorted to alcohol to relieve boredom. But when something was new and stimulating, she had laserlike focus. I knew that she loved painting and asked her how long she could maintain her interest in her art. “No problem. I can paint for hours at a stretch.” Rewards like sex, money, drugs and novel situations all cause the release of dopamine in the reward circuit of the brain, a region buried deep beneath the cortex. Aside from generating a sense of pleasure, this dopamine signal tells your brain something like, “Pay attention, this is an important experience that is worth remembering.”

The more novel and unpredictable the experience, the greater the activity in your reward center. But what is stimulating to one person may be dull — or even unbearably exciting — to another. There is great variability in the sensitivity of this reward circuit.

Clinicians have long known this to be the case, and everyday experience bears it out. Think of the adrenaline junkies who bungee jump without breaking a sweat and contrast them with the anxious spectators for whom the act evokes nothing but terror and dread.

Dr. Nora D. Volkow, a scientist who directs the National Institute on Drug Abuse, has studied the dopamine reward pathway in people with A.D.H.D. Using a PET scan, she and her colleagues compared the number of dopamine receptors in this brain region in a group of unmedicated adults with A.D.H.D. with a group of healthy controls. What she found was striking. The adults with A.D.H.D. had significantly fewer D2 and D3 receptors (two specific subtypes of dopamine receptors) in their reward circuits than did healthy controls. Furthermore, the lower the level of dopamine receptors was, the greater the subjects’ symptoms of inattention. Studies in children showed similar changes in dopamine function as well. These findings suggest that people with A.D.H.D. are walking around with reward circuits that are less sensitive at baseline than those of the rest of us. Having a sluggish reward circuit makes normally interesting activities seem dull and would explain, in part, why people with A.D.H.D. find repetitive and routine tasks unrewarding and even painfully boring. Psychostimulants like Adderall and Ritalin help by blocking the transport of dopamine back into neurons, thus increasing its level in the brain.

Another patient of mine, a 28-year-old man, was having a lot of trouble at his desk job in an advertising firm. Having to sit at a desk for long hours and focus his attention on one task was nearly impossible. He would multitask, listening to music and texting, while “working” to prevent activities from becoming routine. Eventually he quit his job and threw himself into a start-up company, which has him on the road in constantly changing environments. He is much happier and — little surprise — has lost his symptoms of A.D.H.D.

My patient “treated” his A.D.H.D. simply by changing the conditions of his work environment from one that was highly routine to one that was varied and unpredictable. All of a sudden, his greatest liabilities — his impatience, short attention span and restlessness — became assets. And this, I think, gets to the heart of what is happening in A.D.H.D.

Consider that humans evolved over millions of years as nomadic hunter-gatherers. It was not until we invented agriculture, about 10,000 years ago, that we settled down and started living more sedentary — and boring — lives. As hunters, we had to adapt to an ever-changing environment where the dangers were as unpredictable as our next meal. In such a context, having a rapidly shifting but intense attention span and a taste for novelty would have proved highly advantageous in locating and securing rewards — like a mate and a nice chunk of mastodon. In short, having the profile of what we now call A.D.H.D. would have made you a Paleolithic success story.

In fact, there is modern evidence to support this hypothesis. There is a tribe in Kenya called the Ariaal, who were traditionally nomadic animal herders. More recently, a subgroup split off and settled in one location, where they practice agriculture. Dan T. A. Eisenberg, an anthropologist at the University of Washington, examined the frequency of a genetic variant of the dopamine type-four receptor called DRD4 7R in the nomadic and settler groups of the Ariaal. This genetic variant makes the dopamine receptor less responsive than normal and is specifically linked with A.D.H.D. Dr. Eisenberg discovered that the nomadic men who had the DRD4 7R variant were better nourished than the nomadic men who lacked it. Strikingly, the reverse was true for the Ariaal who had settled: Those with this genetic variant were significantly more underweight than those without it. So if you are nomadic, having a gene that promotes A.D.H.D.-like behavior is clearly advantageous (you are better nourished), but the same trait is a disadvantage if you live in a settled context. It’s not hard to see why. Nomadic Ariaal, with short attention spans and novelty-seeking tendencies, are probably going to have an easier time making the most of a dynamic environment, including getting more to eat. But this same brief attention span would not be very useful among the settled, who have to focus on activities that call for sustained focus, like going to school, growing crops and selling goods. You may wonder what accounts for the recent explosive increase in the rates of A.D.H.D. diagnosis and its treatment through medication. The lifetime prevalence in children has increased to 11 percent in 2011 from 7.8 percent in 2003 — a whopping 41 percent increase — according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And 6.1 percent of young people were taking some A.D.H.D. medication in 2011, a 28 percent increase since 2007. Most alarmingly, more than 10,000 toddlers at ages 2 and 3 were found to be taking these drugs, far outside any established pediatric guidelines.

Some of the rising prevalence of A.D.H.D. is doubtless driven by the pharmaceutical industry, whose profitable drugs are the mainstay of treatment. Others blame burdensome levels of homework, but the data show otherwise. Studies consistently show that the number of hours of homework for high school students has remained steady for the past 30 years.

I think another social factor that, in part, may be driving the “epidemic” of A.D.H.D. has gone unnoticed: the increasingly stark contrast between the regimented and demanding school environment and the highly stimulating digital world, where young people spend their time outside school. Digital life, with its vivid gaming and exciting social media, is a world of immediate gratification where practically any desire or fantasy can be realized in the blink of an eye. By comparison, school would seem even duller to a novelty-seeking kid living in the early 21st century than in previous decades, and the comparatively boring school environment might accentuate students’ inattentive behavior, making their teachers more likely to see it and driving up the number of diagnoses.

Not all the news is so bad. Curiously, the prevalence of adult A.D.H.D. is only 3 to 5 percent, a fraction of what it is in young people. This suggests that a substantial number of people simply “grow out” of it. How does that happen? Perhaps one explanation is that adults have far more freedom to choose the environment in which they live and the kind of work they do so that it better matches their cognitive style and reward preferences. If you were a restless kid who couldn’t sit still in school, you might choose to be an entrepreneur or carpenter, but you would be unlikely to become an accountant. But what is happening at the level of the brain that may explain this spontaneous “recovery”? To try to answer that question, Aaron T. Mattfeld, a neuroscientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, now at Florida International University in Miami, compared the brain function with resting-state M.R.I.s of three groups of adults: those whose childhood A.D.H.D. persisted into adulthood; those whose had remitted; and a control group who never had a diagnosis of it. Normally, when someone is unfocused and at rest, there is synchrony of activity in brain regions known as the default mode network, which is typically more active during rest than during performance of a task. (In contrast, these brain regions in people with A.D.H.D. appear functionally disconnected from each other.) Dr. Mattfeld found that adults who had had A.D.H.D. as children but no longer had it as adults had a restoration of the normal synchrony pattern, so their brains looked just like those of people who had never had it.

WE don't yet know whether these brain changes preceded or followed the behavioral improvement, so the exact mechanism of adult recovery is unclear. But in another measure of brain synchrony, the adults who had recovered looked more like adults with A.D.H.D. In people without it, when the default mode network is active, another network, called the task-positive network, is inhibited. When the brain is focusing, the task-positive network takes over and quiets the default mode network. This reciprocal relationship is necessary in order to focus. Both groups of adult A.D.H.D. patients, including those who had recovered, displayed simultaneous activation of both networks, as if the two regions were out of step, working at cross-purposes. Thus, adults who lost most of their symptoms did not have entirely normal brain activity. What are the implications of this new research for how we think about and treat kids with A.D.H.D.? Of course, I am not suggesting that we take our kids out of school and head for the savanna. Nor am I saying we that should not use stimulant medications like Adderall and Ritalin, which are safe and effective and very helpful to many kids with A.D.H.D. But perhaps we can leverage the experience of adults who grew out of their symptoms to help these kids. First, we should do everything we can to help young people with A.D.H.D. select situations — whether schools now or professions later on — that are a better fit for their novelty-seeking behavior, just the way adults seem to self-select jobs in which they are more likely to succeed.

In school, these curious, experience-seeking kids would most likely do better in small classes that emphasize hands-on-learning, self-paced computer assignments and tasks that build specific skills. This will not eliminate the need for many kids with A.D.H.D. to take psychostimulants. But let's not rush to medicalize their curiosity, energy and novelty-seeking; in the right environment, these traits are not a disability, and can be a real asset. (Richard A. Friedman, New York Times, Oct. 31, 2014) Richard A. Friedman is a professor of clinical psychiatry and the director of the psychopharmacology clinic at the Weill Cornell Medical College.

## Education

### Internet porn a hazard for primary pupils

**SCHOOLCHILDREN are being exposed to internet pornography at an increasingly early age and exhibiting aberrant sexual behaviour, a leading child protection expert says.** Freda Briggs, who teaches about child protection at the University of South Australia, warned of a growing incidence of children bringing internet pornography into the schoolyard and "trying to do what the grown ups do". Professor Briggs said she had recently been asked to assist in a case involving a five year-old boy who had been asked to perform a sexual act on a group of six-year-old fellow schoolboys. The Adelaide incident was not an isolated case, she said. Professor Briggs, a former Senior Australian of the Year, said teachers were not trained to handle these situations. "This happens so often that the Education Department now has a booklet on handling children who exhibit inappropriate sexual behaviours," she said. "It is happening all too frequently."

Professor Briggs said children beginning school "are the ones invariably targeted". "The department's response is that children are taking porn to school on their mobiles, showing others and trying to do what the grown-ups do. In allowing adults to see whatever they want to see, we have exposed children to really damaging material." "They are getting their sex education from porn, which has nothing to do with relationships." Professor Briggs declined to name the school that sought her advice, but said she provided guidance on how to alert parents and how to train teachers. "Some young children have been overexposed to pornography because although you may be a wonderfully protective parent, you often don't know what your children are seeing on their electronic devices," she said.

Australian Education Union state president David Smith said teachers found it increasingly difficult to control electronic devices among students. "Schools try to deal with it ... but it is clearly true that there are more and more concerns about the misuse of mobile phones and other electronic devices," Mr Smith said. (Michael Owen, *The Australian*, April 14, 2014)

### A Learning Secret: Don't Take Notes with a Laptop

Students who used longhand remembered more and had a deeper understanding of the material

"More is better." From the number of gigs in a cellular data plan to the horsepower in a pickup truck, this mantra is ubiquitous in American culture. When it comes to college students, the belief that more is better may underlie their widely-held view that laptops in the classroom enhance their academic performance. Laptops do in fact allow students to do more, like engage in online activities and demonstrations, collaborate more easily on papers and projects, access information from the internet, and take more notes. Indeed, because students can type significantly faster than they can write, those who use laptops in the classroom tend to take more notes than those who write out their notes by hand. Moreover, when students take notes using laptops they tend to take notes verbatim, writing down every last word uttered by their professor.

Obviously it is advantageous to draft more complete notes that precisely capture the course content and allow for a verbatim review of the material at a later date. Only it isn't. New research by Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer demonstrates that students who write out their notes on paper actually learn more. Across three experiments, Mueller and Oppenheimer had students take notes in a classroom setting and then tested students on their memory for factual detail, their conceptual understanding of the material, and their ability to synthesize and generalize the information. Half of the students were instructed to take notes with a laptop, and the other half were instructed to write the notes out by hand. As in other studies, students who used laptops took more notes. In each study, however, those who wrote out their notes by hand had a stronger conceptual understanding and were more successful in applying and integrating the material than those who used took notes with their laptops. What drives this paradoxical finding? Mueller and Oppenheimer postulate that taking notes by hand requires different types of cognitive processing than taking notes on a laptop, and these different processes have consequences for learning. Writing by hand is slower and more cumbersome than typing, and students cannot possibly write down every word in a lecture. Instead, they listen, digest, and summarize so that they can succinctly capture the essence of the information. Thus, taking notes by hand forces the brain to engage in some heavy "mental lifting," and these efforts foster comprehension and retention. By contrast, when typing students can easily produce a written record of the lecture without processing its meaning, as faster typing speeds allow students to transcribe a lecture word for word without devoting much thought to the content.

To evaluate this theory, Mueller and Oppenheimer assessed the content of notes taken by hand versus laptop. Their studies included hundreds of students from Princeton and UCLA, and the lecture topics ranged from bats, bread, and algorithms to faith, respiration, and economics. Content analysis of the notes consistently showed that students who used laptops had more verbatim transcription of the lecture material than those who wrote notes by hand. Moreover, high verbatim note content was associated with lower retention of the lecture material. It appears that students who use laptops can take notes in a fairly mindless, rote fashion, with little analysis or synthesis by the brain. This kind of shallow transcription fails to promote a meaningful understanding or application of

the information. If the source of the advantage for longhand notes derives from the conceptual processes they evoke, perhaps instructing laptop users to draft summative rather than verbatim notes will boost performance. Mueller and Oppenheimer explored this idea by warning laptop note takers against the tendency to transcribe information without thinking, and explicitly instructed them to think about the information and type notes in their own words. Despite these instructions, students using laptops showed the same level of verbatim content and were no better in synthesizing material than students who received no such warning. It is possible these direct instructions to improve the quality of laptop notes failed because it is so easy to rely on less demanding, mindless processes when typing. It's important to note that most of the studies that have compared note taking by hand versus laptop have used immediate memory tests administered very shortly (typically less than an hour) after the learning session. In real classroom settings, however, students are often assessed days if not weeks after learning new material. Thus, although laptop users may not encode as much during the lecture and thus may be disadvantaged on immediate assessments, it seems reasonable to expect that the additional information they record will give them an advantage when reviewing material after a long delay.

Wrong again. Mueller and Oppenheimer included a study in which participants were asked to take notes by hand or by laptop, and were told they would be tested on the material in a week. When participants were given an opportunity to study with their notes before the final assessment, once again those who took longhand notes outperformed laptop participants. Because longhand notes contain students' own words and handwriting, they may serve as more effective memory cues by recreating the context (e.g., thought processes, emotions, conclusions) as well as content (e.g., individual facts) from the original learning session.

These findings hold important implications for students who use their laptops to access lecture outlines and notes that have been posted by professors before class. Because students can use these posted materials to access lecture content with a mere click, there is no need to organize, synthesize or summarize in their own words. Indeed, students may take very minimal notes or not take notes at all, and may consequently forego the opportunity to engage in the mental work that supports learning. Beyond altering students' cognitive processes and thereby reducing learning, laptops pose other threats in the classroom. In the Mueller and Oppenheimer studies, all laptops were disconnected from the internet, thus eliminating any disruption from email, instant messaging, surfing, or other online distractions. In most typical college settings, however, internet access is available, and evidence suggests that when college students use laptops, they spend 40% of class time using applications unrelated to coursework, are more likely to fall off task, and are less satisfied with their education. In one study with law school students, nearly 90% of laptop users engaged in online activities unrelated to coursework for at least five minutes, and roughly 60% were distracted for half the class. Technology offers innovative tools that are shaping educational experiences for students, often in positive and dynamic ways. The research by Mueller and Oppenheimer serves as a reminder, however, that even when technology allows us to do more in less time, it does not always foster learning. Learning involves more than the receipt and the regurgitation of information. If we want students to synthesize material, draw inferences, see new connections, evaluate evidence, and apply concepts in novel situations, we need to encourage the deep, effortful cognitive processes that underlie these abilities. When it comes to taking notes, students need fewer gigs, more brain power. (Cindi May, *Scientific American*, Jun 3, 2014)

### **Quality of Words, Not Quantity, Is Crucial to Language Skills, Study Finds**

It has been nearly 20 years since a landmark education study found that by age 3, children from low-income families have heard 30 million fewer words than more affluent children, putting them at an educational disadvantage before they even began school. The findings led to increased calls for publicly funded prekindergarten programs and dozens of campaigns urging parents to get chatty with their children. Now, a growing body of research is challenging the notion that merely exposing poor children to more language is enough to overcome the deficits they face. The quality of the communication between children and their parents and caregivers, the researchers say, is of much greater importance than the number of words a child hears. A study presented on Thursday at a White House conference on "bridging the word gap" found that among 2-year-olds from low-income families, quality interactions involving words — the use of shared symbols ("Look, a dog!"); rituals ("Want a bottle after your bath?"); and conversational fluency ("Yes, that is a bus!") — were a far better predictor of language skills at age 3 than any other factor, including the quantity of words a child heard.

"It's not just about shoving words in," said Kathryn Hirsh-Pasek, a professor of psychology at Temple University and lead author of the study. "It's about having these fluid conversations around shared rituals and objects, like pretending to have morning coffee together or using the banana as a phone. That is the stuff from which language is made." In a related finding, published in April, researchers who observed 11- and 14-month-old children in their homes found that the prevalence of one-on-one interactions and frequent use of parentese — the slow, high-pitched voice commonly used for talking to babies — were reliable predictors of language ability at age 2. The total number of words had no correlation with future ability. The idea that quality of communication matters when it comes to teaching children language is hardly new. "Our field has been pretty consistent in recognizing all along that there has to be quality and quantity," said Dr. Hirsh-Pasek. Even the 1995 study that introduced the notion of the 30-million-word gap, conducted by the University of Kansas psychologists Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, found that parental tone, responsiveness and use of symbols affected a child's I.Q. and vocabulary. But this year's studies are the first time researchers have compared the impact of word quantity with quality of communication. The findings, said Dr. Patricia K. Kuhl, a director of the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences at the University of Washington and an author of the April study, suggest that advocates and educators should reconsider rallying cries like "close the word gap," that may oversimplify the challenges facing poor children. "I worry about these messages acting as though what parents ought to focus on is a word count, as though they need a Fitbit for words," she said, referring to the wearable devices that tally steps. The use of the word "gap" may be counterproductive, said Dr. Hirsh-Pasek. "When we talk about gaps, our natural tendency is to talk about filling them," she said. "So we talk about the amount as if we're putting words inside the empty head of a child." "But in the same way that you can't drop the shingles and the siding for a house on the ground, you need to have the foundation there first if language isn't going to just roll off the child's back and become background noise."

For the new study, Dr. Hirsh-Pasek and colleagues selected 60 low-income 3-year-olds with varying degrees of language proficiency from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, a long-term, wide-ranging study of 1,300 children from birth to age 15. Other researchers reviewed video of those children at age 2 in play sessions with their parents. The researchers watching the video were unaware of how the children would later develop. "We were able to ask whether those interactions held any clues accounting for the differences we saw at age 3," said Dr. Hirsh-Pasek, who was an author of the long-term study. "It turned out we were able to account for a whole lot of the variability later on." Dr. Fernald, author of a 2013 study that found a vocabulary gap between affluent and poor children as young as 18 months, is a scientific adviser to Providence Talks, a program in Providence, R.I., that outfits children with devices that record the number of words they hear each day. "People emphasize

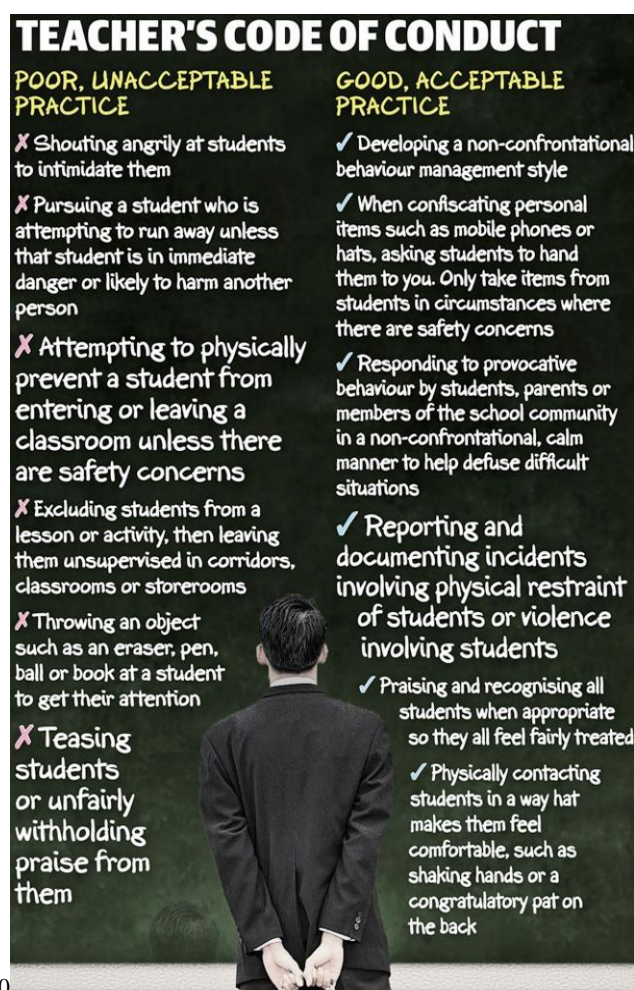
the quantity because that's what you can measure," she said. But she noted that the program also sent counselors into children's homes to more closely evaluate their exposure to language and teach parents how best to communicate with children.

Still, Ann O'Leary, director of Too Small to Fail, a joint effort of the nonprofit Next Generation and the Bill, Hillary & Chelsea Clinton Foundation that focuses on closing the word gap, acknowledged that messages to parents could do more to emphasize quality. "When we're doing these campaigns to close the word gap, they do capture the imagination, they do get people understanding that we do need to do a lot more talking," she said. "But we also need to be more mindful that part of what we need to do is model what that talking looks like." (Douglas Quenqua, International Herald Tribune, Oct. 16, 2014)

### Teachers powerless to confronted violent students

A lengthy list of classroom dos and don'ts prevents teachers from taking students' personal items, including mobile phones, from them except where there are safety concerns. The rules of "good or acceptable practice" in public school classrooms require teachers to ask students to hand over their phone if it is disrupting a lesson. As more than a million students in NSW prepare for the new school year teachers are under orders from education chiefs to develop a "non-confrontational behaviour management style". When faced with provocative behaviour, and even violence, they are directed to respond in a "calm manner to help defuse difficult situations". In extreme situations teachers may seek support from colleagues or supervisors and the school principal can call police.

The strict guidelines are contained in a document produced by the NSW Department of Education and Communities headed Responding to Allegations against Employees in the area of Child Protection. Australia's largest Muslim school, Malek Fahd at Greenacre in Sydney's southwest places similar restrictions on teachers who are also banned from shouting angrily, physically stopping children from leaving a classroom or taking a student's phone from them. As in the state's 2240 government schools, Catholic schools in Sydney do not administer corporal punishment in any form and have a general "hands off kids" rule.



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List of do's and don't for teaching staff Source: Supplied

More than 18,000 long suspensions were handed out in public schools during 2012 - almost 40 per cent of them for physical violence - the latest data released by the department shows. School serious incident reports show principals and teachers are abused, threatened or bashed daily in schools by violent students, angry parents or intruders with a grudge. Some children become so out of control at school they throw furniture, smash windows and assault teachers by biting, kicking and hitting, forcing a number to seek an AVO for protection.

A survey of beginner teachers six years ago found bad behaviour by students was driving many out of the job. A public debate has erupted over the issue of classroom discipline following revelations in *The Sunday Telegraph* that former high school teacher Stephen Krix was sacked after putting a misbehaving student in a headlock. The case of Mr Krix, who lost an appeal in the NSW Industrial Relations Commission against his dismissal, has thrown the spotlight on the vexed issue of whether teachers are adequately equipped to control misbehaving students. In a judgment in the Krix case Commissioner Peter Newall said the teacher was right to direct misbehaving boys to stay in his classroom but added he had not been entitled to "physically restrain" them. A senior departmental officer

with 38 years' experience in classrooms told the commission teachers who spent long enough in the job could expect to be abused and sworn at.

Blue Mountains solicitor Ian Collins, who specialises in litigation involving teachers, said the power balance in classrooms had shifted from teachers to students. He said it often took just one allegation for a teaching career to be over, even if proven false, and many were frightened to discipline students for fear of ramifications. Teachers receive training in handling violent situations in the classroom, including how to repel physical attacks through defensive "block and move" manoeuvres using the arms to parry an attacker's blow and dodge out of harm's way. New teachers have won extra time away from the classroom for professional development and improved mentoring support but the NSW Teachers' Federation says more is needed.

"Chuckling people in (to a classroom) and saying they have a university degree and teaching is second nature is just stupid," federation officer Fionie Stavert said. *(Bruce McDougall Linda Silmalis, The Sunday Telegraph, January 25, 2014)*

### **Singapore education – where teachers earn as much as accountants and all get a job**



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"We trust teachers": Woon Chia Liu, dean of teacher education at Singapore's National Institute of Education. *Photo: Louie Douvis*

Trainee teachers in Singapore are paid while they are studying, as few as 20 per cent of applicants get into the course and starting salaries are equal to an engineer or accountant, ensuring teaching is one of the most respected professions in the country, according to the head of Singapore's teacher training institute. As the teacher oversupply worsens in Australia, the profession is thriving in Singapore, where no teachers are unemployed and the most popular subjects to teach are maths and science, Woon Chia Liu, dean of teacher education at Singapore's National Institute of Education, told a Sydney education conference. Australian universities have been accused of using teaching degrees as cash cows, producing far too many graduates for the available teaching positions. In NSW, there are 44,000 graduates languishing on waiting lists, with 25,374 waiting for a full-time job at a primary school and 18,888 looking for work at a high school. But, in Singapore, widely regarded as having one of the best education systems in the world because of its performance in internationally benchmarked tests of student achievement, the situation is very different and the country has reached its desired number of teachers.

Ms Liu said Singapore was now focused on moving from "quantity to quality". "In Singapore, we trust teachers, we respect and value our teachers and we see them as nation builders," Ms Liu said. "When things don't go well, instead of blaming or bashing teachers, we look at providing resources to support them, providing personal development to increase their capacity and on top of that, as a society, the government makes a very conscious decision that teaching should be a valuable profession." A vocal critic of the oversupply of teachers is NSW Education Minister Adrian Piccoli, who has introduced tougher requirements for students wanting to study teaching at university. From this year, students will have to achieve band five in three Higher School Certificate subjects, including English. In NSW last year, 6966 students graduated as new teachers but only 2200 permanent jobs were available in government schools. Ms Liu said in Singapore teaching attracted the "best and the brightest" and people saw teaching as a calling. "Our beginning teachers are paid the same as a beginning engineer or accountant, so we are able to attract passionate people and they don't lose pay," she said. "It's not just a job, it's a calling, so once we get people in we give them the training they deserve and make sure it is a profession for them." Ms Liu said Singapore had different "tracks", which ensured teachers could pursue their passion, whether it be in classroom or as a principal, without sacrificing pay. "A key fundamental upheld in the Singapore system is that teachers are developed in their areas of strengths and are mentored in the process because not all teachers aspire to be school leaders or subject specialists," Ms Liu said. "Good teachers who see their calling in the classroom must also be allowed to grow in their career and helped to fulfil their potential so that they feel valued and supported in their work. Without such a differentiation, outstanding teachers will all be expected to take on leadership roles in schools or the government. "Some may be happy to do that but others may become disillusioned and leave the profession." (Alexandra Smith, *SMH*, Oct. 24, 2014)

### **Comments:**

**JY IL:** The human relation to language is very complicated. I made a couple attempts to learn a third language when I was younger, and found it really hard. I guess it takes inborn talent to retain three or more languages. Even with a single language, thinking, reading, and speaking seem to have different natural speeds. There are moments when we think faster than we can speak, for instance. **Ivan, Hannel:** This is also true for asking kids questions. The quality of the questions matters as much as the quantity. This is really all based (whether they know it or not) on the work of the Israeli psychologist Dr. Reuven Feuerstein, who spoke about the importance of "mediated learning experiences" (MLEs) over simple "direct learning" from the environment. My own book on questioning (for K12 teachers) attends to this, as well, "A Pedagogy of Questioning." Wish more schools would understand that mere exposure to "content" isn't enough; quality mediation of the content is what creates learning. **Aviva, Connecticut:** Without meaning to imply that "quality" was clearly defined in this article (it wasn't), how do you disconnect quality of speech from the education of a child's parents/caregivers?

You can't. And while it might be possible to teach parents/caregivers how best to verbally engage young children, crash courses in grammar aren't likely to be successful. As for bridging the gap with early childhood education, the truth is that many of those working with young children haven't achieved high levels of education themselves. Maybe one day, when we make child care and education priorities in this country, well-paid, highly educated specialists will teach at daycare centers and pre-schools. Until then, most young American children will continue to lack high-quality verbal stimulation.

**Fritzrxx**, Portland Or: I did not study the article closely, but it gave me no clear sense how to define quality, how to tell quality from most other bad habits in talking with young children, and how easily the average parent would know key differences between what they had been doing and needed adjustments. If a new method's success needs a genius to use it, the method is not worth much. Few of us are close to being geniuses. Finally I suspect such an article could clearly cover the ground in five to seven well-written paragraphs.

**Sivaram Pochiraju**, Hyderabad, India: I don't know from where this idea of poor children hearing 30 million less words in the first three years when compared with the affluent children has been found out by the researchers 30 years back, perhaps only a symbolism. The parents mostly repeat the same words any number of times so that the children pick up words faster. If the parents keep on uttering the new words every time they speak to their children, say right from the womb stage, the children get confused and end up learning nothing. However it's not at all practical and never happened that way. During the primary stage of the childhood, only parents, siblings, relatives and close friends speak to the children. Most of the time, it's mainly by their family members only subject to the number of hours their family members spend and speak with these kids. It simply doesn't matter to the children if they come to hear any foreign language or languages from strangers any number of times whenever their parents take them outside, the children practically pick up nothing except a few words. All said and done, I completely agree with smoke readers about the parental abuse of cellphones and iPads etc instead of taking to their kids and spend some much wanted valuable time with their kids.

**Jenny**, North Carolina: My husband I adopted our daughter from China four years ago. She is now five, and still has a speech delay. We are middle class, and both my husband and I work outside the home. However, I was fortunate enough to stay at home with her for her first two years in this country, and did everything suggested by other commentators to ensure strong language skills. We also arranged for speech therapists (both public and private), and she still sees a speech therapist twice a week (as well as an individualized education plan integrated into her normal kindergarten day). My husband and I were told repeatedly that hearing Chinese the first year of her life did not contribute to her speech delay, and that "some kids are just delayed". The interesting thing is, her speech began rapidly improving when we changed her before/after school care to a facility that focuses on outside play, and physically vigorous activities. I'm wondering, for those that know about these things, do you think it is simply a coincidence, or has she reached a "tipping point" where all the positive things we are doing are paying off, or is there any correlation between exercise and language ability in early childhood?

**Concerned Citizen**: Some children just have speech delays -- even if they are born here, to biological parents and get best possible care. It is likely this is NOT your fault. And no -- it cannot possibly be because she first heard Chinese. Children are hardwired to learn LANGUAGE -- any language -- it doesn't matter which language it is, even sign language. In fact, at your daughter's age, she could easily learn 3 or more languages at the same time. Be patient; she will likely outgrow this by the time she is a teenager.

**WCLestina**, San Francisco, California: It may be that her language ability has been developing all along and now ... she has something to talk about. Children need "outside play and vigorous activities" -- tangible, physical, tactile lives -- to make meaningful correlations with the abstract. Many years ago, a friend's son spoke rarely until he was nearly 4, and he went with his father to some kind of motorcycle race. His excitement and fascination with the machines pulled the plug.

**John S. Green**, Bellingham, Washington: Conversation should be a part of a baby's life from before birth. In utero, a fetus can hear words and music as it begins to develop language and brain. The gap between children begins then, so by 3, 6, 9, 12, 15 and 18 months there are major advantages to the child who is in an environment of verbal and musical enrichment. It is difficult to quantitatively access the differences until later, but the child's language foundation is being built... or not.

**Ed**, Old Field, NY: What happens when you put all these kids together? Will all that Montessori be beaten out of him within one year of public school? I wish all parents were playing on the same team. Winthrop Staples, *a trusted commenter* Newbury Park, CA: Or we could simply stop the flood of 1 million + functionally illiterate immigrants into the nation every year, double the minimum wage so parents could spend more time with their children, stop sending good factories jobs to China, therefore, giving our nation the ability to concentrate our efforts on the many millions of children of native- born poor citizens already here.

**ICC**, ATLANTA: English was not my mother's native language, and although she was university educated, she had a slight accent; so she began reading to me when I was an infant. She always held me in her lap while reading, because she felt that the close physical contact and love were part of the language experience. She used a lot of nursery rhymes. When I had children, she advised me to do the same. Of course, I did. I also played all the little physical games like Pat-a-cake, and I sang songs. Language and literature were central to my life, so this came naturally. I had begun talking early and had taught myself to read by watching the pages, memorizing familiar content, then asking where on the page it said a particular word or phrase. My children did the same. True, both my mother and I were full time at home mothers at this critical time. All of this probably helped, as did all the constant conversation. Language, love, and learning all go together.

**Susie Goodin**, Berkeley, CA: Yes, let's talk and sing and play with our children, and more, let's read aloud with them every day right on through their school years. We know that quality children's literature is as rich in language as many adult sources of vocabulary. So...talk, sing, play and read with the ones you love and they will learn. Great education always involves conversation and interactive engagement, whether it's at home or school. And while technology is wonderful, it will never hold the power of human interactions in learning.

**Liam Murphy**, Stamford ct: When you say that poorer children hear 82,192 fewer words a day in three years than affluent children you cast doubt on the veracity of the rest of the article.

**Ladysmith**, New York: A Sabbath day when people are free to talk, visit and enjoy long periods of communication is a great thing. There were many children of non-English speaking immigrants in New York who rose to great achievement. Perhaps that was a factor.

**Charles**, San Jose, Calif.: My older daughter, age 31, has 4 children under age 9. She's always been chatty, like her mom and dad. Her children speak well, and we laugh still about when the oldest boy, about 6 then, forgot what he was meaning to say, and then turned to his grandma and I and said, "I guess I got distracted." We suppressed our laughter and continued the conversation. Now he reads lots of books too, like his mother and I, an unreformed, retired high school English teacher. My daughter has a marked revulsion to Television, which she restricts for them as much as she does sugary drinks -- and vaccinations too, regrettably.

**Denise**, San Francisco: Not one mention of the fact that verbal people have verbal kids for genetic reasons.

Unless that is factored in, studies like this are worthless.

**EWood**, Atlanta: My kids, now 10 & 9, are very fluent with language and I attribute that to three things:

1.) I am and was a stay-at-home parent and my husband travelled a lot. I had no one else to talk to much of the time, so the kids (and the cats) were my sounding boards. I narrated our walks and the mundane activities throughout the day, just to keep my vocal cords tuned.

2) My husband and I both love language and are avid readers. We have always played word games -- rhyming activities, alliterative challenges -- and have engaged the kids, as well. I started reading Dr Seuss aloud when my oldest was 3 months old for the sounds. (She loved a particular passage in Fox in Sox, which inevitably made her giggle.)

3.) They were born BEFORE the advent of the iPhone/iPad. They had our full attention and we had theirs in the early years. I see so many new parents pushing babies in strollers while they are talking on their phones or have their headphones in, or pushing toddlers on swings while checking their phones -- nothing says to a child "you're not important" as a parent's diverted attention. It will be interesting to see if the current generation of kids growing up surrounded by tablets/smartphones suffers from language deficit --regardless of parents' income level.

**Lance Haley**, Kansas City: I will immodestly say that my great command of the English language came from an intelligent, high school educated lady who grew up on a farm in the Great Depression. For her, the mastery of the English language - along with an interest in literally everything in this universe - was one of her most compelling qualities. She knew more about her world than most college-educated people; those who knew her best said she was the most fascinating woman they had ever known. She was unable to attend college but always emphasized getting a degree by telling me that she "did not care if I became a ditch-digger; she just wanted me to be the most educated ditch-digger in the world." She was always encouraging me to expand my vocabulary even when I was a little boy and it has served me well throughout my life. When I was a young adolescent, she and I would watch William Buckley's Firing Line on PBS on Sunday evenings together starting in the late 1960's. She had her dictionary right there beside us so we could look up all of the obscure words Buckley utilized in his conversations with the intellectuals he had as guests. When people comment me on my writing and verbal skills I attribute it to my mother. I know that when I was a baby she was very instrumental in developing my language abilities. It is not about the number of words. It is simply about engaging the child. Constantly. Children's minds are an empty board just waiting for someone to fill in the blanks.

**leah723**, cambridge, ma: I find it puzzling and disturbing that this article seems to be implying that low-income families have "lower quality" talk, with little to no evidence for that claim. For quite some time, I have been wondering at why many education reporters tend to present the "word gap" findings from Hart & Risley's (small and never replicated) study as established facts. There is a deep body of research that argues just the opposite. Linguist William Labov spent decades observing language in working class Black communities and, in contrast, found that children were "bathed in verbal stimulation from morning to night." I suspect that reporters describe low income families as verbally deprived or deficient not because they have thoroughly investigated the evidence but because it confirms pre-existing bias about poor families. Even if we accept as fact that poor parents, for example, spend less one-on-one time with their children, I would argue that before we assume that the solution is to tell them to spend more time with their children or to talk differently to them, we should consider other approaches. There have been a number of promising (and mostly ignored) studies indicating that supplementing working-poor families' incomes so they didn't have to work two jobs led to better academic outcomes for their children.

**MM**, The South: Observations of families may be informative, but ultimately, public health campaigns need to rely on rigorously collected data. There are several studies documenting the comparative word deficits of low-income families.