

## We Would Rather Forget

The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Armenian genocide in Turkey took place just two days before 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of landing of ANZAC forces at Gallipoli, also in Turkey.

At that time, under the cover of other allied landings in the Dardanelles, the Ottoman Empire began systematically rounding up and killing Armenian Christians. It is estimated that 1.5 million were killed near the start of what became the bloodiest century in world history.

Sadly the Turkish government has never admitted that the killing of Armenians at that time was a genocide. Nor has the Australian Government recognised the Armenian genocide even though Australian POWs from Gallipoli were eye-witnesses to the death marches.

But happily, just prior to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries, Turkish and Armenian Christians joined hands in prayer at the Armenian Genocide Memorial.

## The Crime of Genocide

Man's inhumanity to man has been a major feature of human history. In our own history we have what is sometimes referred to as the Tasmanian genocide where early British settlers wiped out the entire Aboriginal population of what was then known as Van Diemen's Land.

The word 'genocide' was coined in 1944 in response to the Nazi attempted annihilation of the entire Jewish race from the face of the earth. The word comes from the Greek 'genos' (race or tribe) and the Latin suffix 'cide' (to kill).

Genocide signifies the destruction of a nation or ethnic or religious group. It implies the existence of a coordinated plan aimed at total extermination to be put into effect against individuals chosen as victims simply because they are members of the target group.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, martyred by the Nazis in World War II for his courageous stand for the Jewish people wrote, "*and in the Incarnation the whole human race recovers the dignity of the image of God. Henceforth, any attack even on the least of men is an attack on Christ, who took the form of man, and in his own Person restored the image of God in all that bears a human form.*"

Killing someone simply because he or she exists is a crime against humanity; it is a crime against the very essence of what it is to be human.



Turkish and Armenian Christians circle the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan, Armenia, on 11 April 2015.

## Genocide is Murder

God explains why genocide is so wrong saying, "*whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man*" (Genesis 9:6).

For to kill a person is to kill one made in God's image. Because all human beings are made in God's image, all people possess the qualities that distinguish them from animals. When we interact with others, we are interacting with beings made by God, being to whom God offers eternal life. God wants us to recognize His image in all people.

Without this belief that every person has inherent dignity and worth there is no check or restraint on what man can do to his fellow man.

## Depersonalisation of Victims

In 1904 a German colonial official ordered the total extermination of the Herero tribe in South-West Africa. In response to their uprisings he referred to the Herero tribe as 'Unmenschen' – non-humans - soldiers called them 'monkeys'.

The burning of Herero women and children to death by German soldiers was a radical rejection of the Biblical teaching that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. Only the public outcry from the German people back home prevented total annihilation.

## Never Again?

Despite saying 'never again' after the Jewish holocaust of World War II, the world is grappling with a less than adequate response to mass religious cleansing and killing of Christians, Yazdis and Shia Muslims in Iraq and Syria at the hands of Islamic State.

And right now a suspected genocide is taking place on our very doorstep. An estimated 150,000 to 500,000 Papuans have been killed in Iryan Jaya by the Indonesian government in their resettlement programs. What is the answer?

## For Such a Time as This

In the book of Esther we read of an official who had convinced the king to kill all the Jews in the Persian Empire on a single day.

Haman was a descendant of Agag, King of the Amalekites, an idolatrous and murderous nomadic tribe who were a long-standing threat to Israel's existence. Haman's attempt to instigate a genocide of the Jewish people was simply a continuation of hundreds of years of hatred. Thankfully the genocide

was averted due to Esther's call to pray and fast and courage to speak out at such a crucial time.

**God Our Father and Creator, Forgive us of our complacency and silence and turning a blind eye to 'inconvenient' genocides. We resist Satan, the enemy of mankind, who Your Word declares is a murderer and liar from the beginning. Help us to actively take up the ministry of reconciliation that You entrusted to us. Help us to be peacemakers in a lost a broken world where hatred of different group for one another is perpetuated generation after generation. Help us to speak up for men, women and children, everyone created in Your image and likeness who are the victims of genocide. Help us to break the chains of hatred that bind so many and replace them with bonds of love even as Turkish and Armenian Christians have broken through. We pray in the Name of Jesus. Amen**

## About 'Image of God' Leaflets

In the Bible we read that God "*created man in His own image*" (Genesis 1:27). Many maintain that all human history revolves around this truth. The Judeo-Christian belief in the unique dignity of human beings is at the very foundation of Western civilisation.

The 2010 Canberra Declaration therefore states:

*"We believe that all human life, being made in the image of God, has intrinsic and equal value from conception to life's natural end."*

'Image of God' leaflets relate the doctrine of man as created in the image of God to various issues we face in Australia today.

The 21 leaflets in SERIES ONE are dedicated to Sophie Scholl who was martyred at the age of 21 in World War II for writing and distributing leaflets.

You can download other 'Image of God' leaflets at the Canberra Declaration website.

**Please:**

**READ & SIGN**

**The Canberra Declaration  
to Protect**

- **Religious Freedom**
- **Marriage and Family and**
- **Human Life**  
in Australia

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

Email: [info@canberradeclaration.org.au](mailto:info@canberradeclaration.org.au)

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SERIES ONE

## Leaflet 8

# Genocide



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# Image of God