

Sea of Faith

Exploring Values, Spirituality and Meaning

www.sof.org.nz

Newsletter 118, May 2015

WELLINGTON ABRAHAMIC COUNCIL OF JEWS, CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS

Fostering understanding, friendship and trust.

The Wellington Abrahamic Council of Jews, Christians and Muslims, formerly the Wellington Council of Christians and Jews, brings together Abrahamic religious communities in a common effort to overcome the evils of prejudice, intolerance and discrimination between people of different religions and ethnicities. It is affiliated to the International Council of Christians and Jews found at <http://www.iccj.org/>

Christian Co-chair Rev Jenny Chalmers said, "There has never been a more important time to join together. Islamophobia and antisemitism are on the rise, against a backdrop of global tensions that are attributed to religious differences. Mutual understanding is the key to effective communication and progress in our relationships. It's not always easy, but we're all committed to this sacred work."

Current members are:

- **Jewish:** Dave Moskovitz (Co-chair), Martin Halliday, Yitzchak Mizrahi
- **Christian:** Jenny Chalmers (Co-chair), Aprem Pithyou, Catherine Jones, Harold Hill, Nick Borthwick, Ron Bennett
- **Muslim:** Sultan Eusoff (Co-chair), Kerem Celiskan, Tahir Nawaz

Extracts from its Constitution:

2.1 The aim of the Council is to foster understanding, friendship and trust between the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

2.2 The aim of the Council will be achieved by:

- (a) Enabling Jews, Christians and Muslims in the wider community to understand their common heritage and appreciate one another's distinctive beliefs and practices.
- (b) Promoting a more just and tolerant society and combating all forms of discrimination.
- (c) Working collectively for wider interfaith dialogue, and on projects supporting the Council's aim.
- (d) Discussing and where appropriate speaking out on issues of mutual concern.

2.3 The Council may undertake any other action which will assist in better achieving the aim.

A pdf copy of the full Constitution can be found at <http://abrahamic.nz/files/2015/04/Wellington-Abrahamic-Council-Constitution.pdf>

THE PROPHET IN COMMON

Jewish Co-chair, Dave Moskovitz said that the Council had welcomed Muslims at all meetings since 2007, and it was now time to make the relationship more formal. "The three Abrahamic religions share a great deal of common history, theology, ethics, and practice. We have important and significant differences too. Making peace begins with each of us, and is our collective responsibility. It's too important to leave to world leaders."

The Council's aim is to foster understanding, friendship and trust between the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The name 'Abrahamic' comes from our common prophet Abraham, who, according to our traditions proclaimed monotheism some 3800 years ago.



Sultan Eusoff is the CEO of the Federation of Islamic Associations NZ and became the Muslim Co-chair on 14 April. Eusoff said, “We are happy and excited to cement our already strong relationships with our Jewish and Christian brothers and sisters. We have learned a lot about each other, and there is plenty more to learn and share.”

THE (RE)LAUNCH CEREMONY

Extracts from an address by Prof. Paul Morris of Victoria University of Wellington at the launching ceremony in Parliament Buildings on April 14, 2015. The full address can be found at <http://abrahamic.nz>

The Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ), was founded in 1942 by Chief Rabbi Hertz and Archbishop Temple during the Nazi persecution of European Jewry. The CCJ was the product of a profound crisis. Seeing Cardinal Dew in the audience here tonight, it is interesting to note that the Catholics pulled out in 1954 on a theological issue, returning only after the Vatican II Council. Christian-Jewish dialogue started haltingly and defensively with participants finding it difficult to frankly address the history and legacy of Christian anti-semitism and anti-Judaism, and the recent horrors. Issues of openness, proselytization, prejudice, textual interpretation, and kashrut [dietary practices] have kept life tense ever since.

Years of effort, startling bravery, honesty and regular personal contact have led in thirty-eight countries around the world, including New Zealand, to groups of people, Christians and Jews, now generationally, who have come to know each other and each other's families. They have learned to trust one another and have come to understand each other's religious lives, values and concerns. The last sixty years have shown that it is possible, if never easy, to further the project of overcoming the past and to learn to live reasonably peacefully together. It is important to record that this has been an ongoing struggle and at times these relationships have been fragile, and have sometimes broken down, but the groups have survived, grown stronger, and continue in their efforts to make the world a safer, and I would say, holier place.

The realities of migration and post 9/11 geopolitics demand that we too acknowledge that we – Jews, Christians and Muslims – face a crisis. A crisis of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment, a resurgence of anti-semitism, and an upsurge of religious violence, and that

it's time for us to be courageous and honest with each other and try together to make the world a better place. But is the invention of this new notion “Abrahamic religions” anything more than a perfectly legitimate idea, that of, the inclusion of Muslims into the mainstream Judeo-Christian fold in Europe and America?

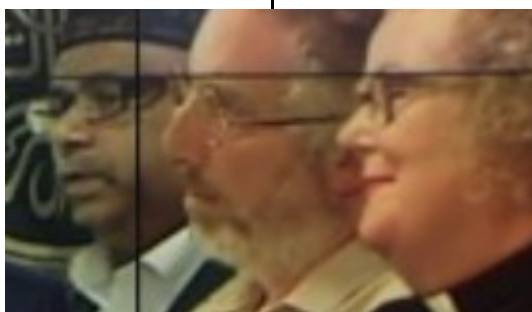
What is the study of the Abrahamic Religions? Put simply it is the three religious traditions studied together, not in isolation from each other. And comparatively, that is, not in terms of which is better or worse but exploring the many similarities and equally the significant differences. The study of Christianity, Islam and Judaism (to put them in order of population) in this way reveals constantly overlapping histories, often missed when limiting research to a single tradition, or even to two of them. Scholarly informed research on the three traditions is as yet thin on the ground and in many cases has been avoided by religious scholars on theological grounds. Besides some comparative philosophical work on the Muslim, Jewish and Christian re-workings of Greek philosophy and a number of local studies there is a dearth of comparative research on the three religions.

Once we free ourselves, however, of the idea that each tradition is somehow a completely separate monolithic entity travelling solo through human history, and begin to explore the three great Mediterranean religions on the same page, we discover that these three traditions have an unbroken record of the creative exchange of ideas, rituals, practices, institutions, myths, ethical

insights, philosophical doctrines, and of course, goods and services. That is, looking at Islam, Christianity and Judaism together, anchored in specific local historical and cultural contexts. When we examine the Abrahamic religions historically, structurally and phenomenologically we learn that all three traditions have radically developed, critically adapted, and dynamically changed, together.

The truth is that there is no history of Judaism without sustained reference to Islam and Christianity; just as there is no story of Christianity without extensive consideration of Judaism and Islam; or, that there is a history of Islam that does not require the study of its continual engagements with Christianity and Judaism. This is an academic viewpoint but one that I consider to be entirely consistent to the theologies of the Abrahamic religions.

To sum up: Islam, Judaism and Christianity developed in interaction with one another.



TV screen shot of Sultan Eusoff, Dave Moskovitz, Rev. Jenny Chalmers

ALL ABOUT US

SEA OF FAITH: EXPLORING VALUES, SPIRITUALITY AND MEANING

We are an association of people who have a common interest in exploring religious thought and expression from a non-dogmatic and human-oriented standpoint.

Our formal name is The Sea of Faith Network (NZ) Inc.

We follow similar organisations in the UK and Australia in taking our name from the 1984 BBC TV series and book by the British religious academic, Don Cupitt.

“Sea of Faith” both traces the decline of traditional Christian influence in the West in the past 250 years and invites the viewer to consider what might replace it. In New Zealand, Sea of Faith provides a forum for the continued exploration.

The Sea of Faith Network itself has no creed. We draw our members from people of all faiths and also from those with no attachment to religious institutions.

Our national **Steering Committee** publishes a Newsletter six times each year, maintains a website at www.sof.org.nz, assists in setting up Local Groups, and organises an annual Conference.

We have five **Life Members**: Sir Lloyd Geering ONZ, Don Cupitt (UK), Noel Cheer, Ian Harris and Fred Marshall. (The late Alan Goss was, for a time, a Life Member).

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Deadline dates for submitted Newsletter copy for 2015 are: 21/06/15, 21/08/15, 21/10/15, 21/12/15.

Members may borrow books, CDs, and DVDs from the Resource Centre which is managed by Suzi Thirlwall phone (07) 578-2775 email susanthirlwall@yahoo.co.nz Refer to the catalogue on the website.

Membership of the national organisation costs \$20 per household per year (\$30 if outside NZ). Both charges drop to \$15 if the Newsletter is emailed and not on paper.

To join, send remittance and details to The Membership Secretary (listed above) or Internet bank to 38 9000 0807809 00 and tell pcowley@paradise.net.nz your mailing details.

Bonus: If you already receive the paper version then you can receive the email version in addition, *at no charge*. Send an email requesting that to pcowley@paradise.net.nz

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Responding to an increasingly uncertain future MR MICAWBER OR CASSANDRA?

It's your choice!

Our Conference in October will consider “responding to an increasingly uncertain future”. It will investigate the issues from the points of view of two contrasted fictional characters who represent the breadth of options open to us



**KEEP POSTED AT:
WWW.SOF.ORG.NZ**

BITS AND PIECES

WITTENBERG 2.0: REFRESHING MARTIN LUTHER'S THESES



The title of the document, which on Easter Sunday 2015 I held to the door of Wittenburg Schlosskirche (Castle Church), on the outside of the protective netting, reads "Sea of Faith: Up-To-Date Theses".



Some, your editor included, suggest that the Theses nailed to that door 498 years ago (yes, another centenary looms) are out of date ... and that some work is needed on them. **Letters to The Editor are invited.**

Most of what follows comes from Wikipedia:

In this context, a 'thesis' is an idea publically offered so that a debate about it can be held.

As part of a fund-raising campaign commissioned by Pope Leo X to finance the renovation of St Peter's Basilica in Rome in the early 16th century, Johann Tetzel, a Dominican priest, began the selling of indulgences in the German lands. When the buyers of these indulgences came to confession, they presented their indulgences for which they paid, claiming they no longer had to repent of their sins, since the document promised to forgive all their sins. A full explanation can be found at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07783a.htm>

In 1517, Luther was outraged that they had paid money for what was theirs by right as a free gift from

God. He argued that the sale of indulgences was a gross violation of the original intention of confession and penance, and that Christians were being falsely told that they could find absolution through the purchase of indulgences. Luther insisted that since forgiveness was God's alone to grant, those who claimed that indulgences absolved buyers from all punishments and granted them salvation were in error.

Luther, a priest, felt compelled to expose the fraud that being sold to the people in the form of a scholarly debate at the University of Wittenberg. The Theses, at <http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/history/95theses.htm> outlined the items to be discussed and issued the challenge to any and all comers. The Theses also deal with practices within the Catholic Church regarding baptism and absolution.

YVONNE'S GIFT OF BOOKS

Yvonne Chisholm has been thinning out her book collection and has gifted those listed below to the SoF Resource Centre. We accept them with thanks. Details of how to borrow such books, and where you might make similar donations, are on page 3.

- B231 Bowker, John ed: *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*
- B232 Metzger and Coogan eds: *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*
- B233 Noss, David and John: *A History of the World's Religions*, Ninth Edn.
- B234 Miles, Jack: *God, A Biography*
- B235 Grayling, A.C: *The Good Book, a Secular Bible*
- B236 Strevens, Diane: *Mackillop Women, The Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart Aotearoa 1883-2006*
- B237 Hawker, Paul: *Soul survivor*
- B238 Bruce, Bryan: *Jesus, The Cold Case*

TURNING YOUR REMAINS INTO COMPOST?

That's the idea which aims to introduce a new burial option in urban areas. The idea is to bury the body, in between layers of woodchips and sawdust and let it decompose into 'rich humus' that can seed new life, says Katrina Spade, a designer and project founder. The approach, says Spade, could help ease soil degradation and reduce the carbon footprint of existing options.

"Our bodies have potential in them even after we've died," said Spade, who hopes to build a prototype in the Seattle area. Read more about it at <http://www.urbandeathproject.org/>

A WAY OF WORLDMAKING

Don Cupitt:

Creative Faith, Religion as a Way of Worldmaking
Polebridge Press, 2015.

Reviewed by Lloyd Geering.

This is Cupitt's 50th book, one in which he gives us, I suspect, his final reflections about life. I found myself likening him to a modern day Ecclesiastes for, as the ancient sage found it best simply to accept life with all its frustrations, and find happiness by making the best of it, so Cupitt concludes that, since the old triumphant religion is dead his "remaining faith is purely philosophical, with a dash of loyalty to Jesus and to the ancient humanitarian strand in the Christian tradition".

The book sets out from the thesis that "very early Christianity split between two different pathways: one path stayed with the teaching of Jesus and the primacy of ethics, and the other path started with the return of Jesus and therefore with supernatural belief".

Following the Westar scholars, Cupitt sets aside as quite unhistorical the traditional account of Christian origins – the triumphant resurrection of Jesus on Easter Day, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and its subsequent proclamation by the apostles "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth".

Cupitt goes back to the twenty years following the death of Jesus, a period about which we now know all too little but which he sketches in the long footnote at the very end of the book. It is briefly this: the followers of Jesus were shattered and scattered by his unexpected crucifixion and only slowly began to gather in groups, recall his teaching and ponder it.

As shown by the most genuine surviving sayings of Jesus – the parables and one-liners – he was a moral teacher who had a vision of what the world would be like if only we cared for one another and learned to love our enemies. Jesus made no claims about himself and did not even talk much about God. Rather, like Martin

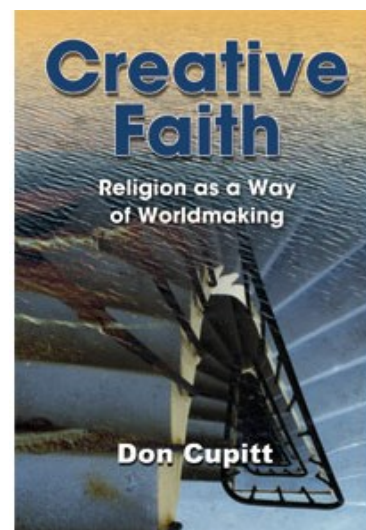
Luther King, Jesus had a dream of what the world be like if we followed his simple, yet demanding, teaching and he called his dream 'the Kingdom of God'.

But this early 'Kingdom form of 'Christianity' became transmuted from about 50 AD onwards, (and largely under the influence of Paul) and then evolved into what we have long known as the Christian orthodoxy, as set out in the Creeds.

Cupitt calls us to "explore what Christianity might look like today if it had stuck to the teaching of Jesus and the primacy of ethics". To do this we must be creative in the way Cupitt himself sets out to be in the rest of *Creative Faith*.

What he gives us is neither a new doctrinal system to replace the outmoded one or even any kind of developing logical argument. Rather the book is Cupitt's own stream of consciousness as he ponders the problem. In doing so he provides us with a variety of interesting insights and observations about life and religion. Indeed, as the title of his last chapter asserts, the pursuit of theology has now become the activity of philosophizing about life.

I detected hints of sadness and resignation in this book. His acceptance of his own mortality lies just beneath the surface. His very last word to us could be easily missed for it appears on the last page and at the end of the very last footnote, where he simply adds "Goodbye".



To which we respond, "If this is your goodbye, Don, your readers wish to thank you warmly for the inspiring lead that you have given us over these many years".

Lloyd Geering

**'Authority' is dead, 'revelation' is dead ...
now it's over to Creative Faith: the
morals of Jesus in the only world we
have, or ever will have.
Don Cupitt**

BUT WILL IT EVER PUT TO SEA?

Richard Randerson

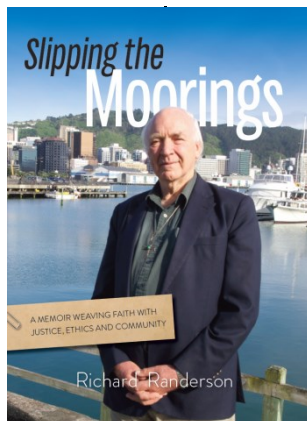
Slipping The Moorings: A Memoir Weaving Faith with Justice, Ethics and Community
Matai House, 2015

Bishop Richard Randerson, CNZM, was Dean of Holy Trinity Cathedral, Auckland from 2000 to 2007. He was also Vicar-General from 1999, and Assistant Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Auckland in the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia from 2002. In 2000 he was appointed by the NZ Government to the four-person Royal Commission on Genetic Modification, engaging in extensive consultation with the NZ public, both at open meetings as well as with Maori on marae. In 2004 he was awarded the CNZM for "services to the community". He has played a prominent role in the media, speaking and writing on issues such as poverty and justice, race relations, peace and inter-faith dialogue, and social ethics, often challenging institutional and conventional views of faith and society. In 2011 he served as Deputy Chair on New Zealand's Advisory Committee on Assisted Reproductive Technology.

Sixteen years before Richard Randerson became vicar at the Anglican church of St. Peter's in Wellington, I was married in that church to Robyn, my much-loved first wife. Like the informal religious environments in which I now move – Sea of Faith, Ephesus and The St. Andrew's Trust for the Study of Religion and Society, St. Peter's was, and still is, an outreach environment. Some readers may still remember the Catacombs on-site coffee bar – its décor even more gloomy than the originals – as a haven for the urban lonely. St Peter's was, and is, an example of concentrating less on the institution that it represents and more on helping people in their needs. In the case of St Peter's, the needs were often homelessness, impoverishment and poverty. A current version of the contrast can be seen in the change of styles between the recent Popes Benedict and Francis.

This book is the memoir of his career, with special emphasis on religion interacting with society.

"What a gorgeous Sea of Faith metaphor", I thought when I read the title, *Slipping The Moorings*. After all, many people sign up with SoF because, in one sense or



another, they feel that they need to decouple from something that is holding them back and to get on with a faith better attuned to the concerns of *this* century. But the author, now retired Bishop Richard Randerson, was recommending that the good ship Eklay Zia (yes, a word-play!) untie from the wharf at which it has been majestically moored for so long – and actually *do* something. This extended metaphor (capped with a coda from the Book of Revelation) sets out his disappointments about the Anglican Church

in this country – and, by extension, every country in which it operates. You can read the analysis of the Eklay Zia in the appendix to this book.

Our own Sea of Faith offers an unsystematic, non-dogmatic collection of ideas and stimuli via local groups and Newsletters and Annual Conferences. Unlike a church, there is no dogma, just a heap of things for the reader to rummage through in an attempt to build a personal faith profile. Unlike a church, SoF offers a home (the late Ralph Pannett once called it "a safe place to talk about unsafe things"), to those caught in the bewilderment of a once-confident and authoritative church – at least the mainstream and majority denominations – sliding into an insipid denial of the secular world's assessment of them as 'irrelevant'.

Elsewhere this polarity can be seen in Don Cupitt's division into 'Church' and 'Kingdom' or into the even more challenging 'Jesus' or 'Christ' neatly put in Cupitt's "we need to smuggle Jesus back into Christianity". See, also, the quote at the bottom of page 5 of this Newsletter.

Outreach churches are 'Kingdom' oriented but Richard sees too much 'Church' in his Anglican church. More than once he writes "What disappoints me about today's church is its absence in the public square", even though there are good works going on, as it were, in the surrounding undergrowth.

Each of us is entitled to ask, in respect of the modern-day church, "What actually matters?" The responses are diverse, on a spectrum from almost total disengagement with a world hostile to traditional religious values to a characterisation of The Salvation Army as "Christianity with its sleeves rolled up." May there be more of it!

That, as I see it, is what retired Bishop Richard Randerson is saying in this book.

Noel Cheer

Be There! Meet the Author! Buy The Book! Help to Slip The Moorings!

Slipping the Moorings will be launched at St Peter's Willis St, Wellington, 6pm on Tuesday 19 May
and at Auckland Cathedral, 3pm on Sunday 24 May.

THE DISCOVERY OF WONDER

Julie Leibrich

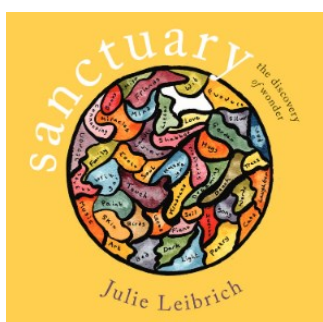
***Sanctuary: The Discovery of Wonder*
Otago University Press, 2015**

The Self-Improvement section of most book shops has lots of books that look like this – but this one is at the better end of the scale. Sharing her deepest fears and deepest insights, the author concedes that everyone has their own version of ‘sanctuary’ – personal, context-dependent, capable of being referred to in words, art, music, and much more. Sometimes it’s something we discover, sometimes we make it – but it is important. Julie Leibrich has gained much support at the Southern Star Abbey at Kopua in the Hawkes Bay – a place of sanctuary and spiritual re-charging.

This book is engaging and moving – full of spiritual insight, wisdom and warmth. It is the result of a decade of exploration and contemplation of the concept of sanctuary by the author, a poet and writer, former research psychologist and Mental Health Commissioner who lives at Raumati, near Wellington. I suspect that this professional background stops the book becoming twee. ***Sanctuary is written in a way that happily combines reason and imagination, poetry and critical thinking, knowledge and originality, producing a highly readable and rewarding book.***

Its not a ‘tell’ book – its more like an explorable scrap-book. Systematic enough to be coherent, but not too much so. It’s a book for dipping in to.

Sanctuary cuts across genres: at once a spiritual memoir; a collection of personal journal entries and brief discourses; and a window into the views of influential writers, thinkers and poets, and of the author’s friends and acquaintances. The author’s life journey has led her to discover through ‘wondering, wandering and wonderment’ the elements of the world and self



Examples of Sanctuary

*homeland
our home
nature
remote places
sacred places
love
friends and
family
strangers
ancestors
imagination
wandering
sleep
dreams
creativity
remembering
forgetting
reading
writing
music
art
numbers
body
being
breath
singing
dance
walking
rest
touch
making love
death
the moon
seasons
darkness
light
New Year
timelessness*

that are most sacred.

Leibrich has published a wealth of short stories and poems in journals and anthologies. She has also published widely on mental health and criminology.

Born in the UK in 1947, she earned an M.A. Hons. degree in English Language and Literature at Edinburgh University. In 1972, she moved first to Bermuda, then on to the far north of Canada. She settled in New Zealand in 1974. In 1976, Leibrich completed a B.A. Hons in Psychology, and in 1982 a Ph.D. at Victoria University of Wellington. In 1993 she returned to Victoria University to study Creative Writing. She was awarded Creative New Zealand's Todd Writers Bursary in 1995.

Her work has appeared in over thirty anthologies and has been recorded for the New Zealand Sound Archive.

In addition to her writing, Leibrich has worked as a Research Psychologist at Wellington Hospital, and as a Social Scientist in the Departments of Justice and Health. From 1996 to 2000 she was the New Zealand Mental Health Commissioner. She has given many lectures, in New Zealand and overseas, on mental health and on spiritual growth and has published widely in the areas of mental health and justice.

***“Purging a drawer is hard enough; the idea of purging my life of what I no longer need or use takes my breath away. Yet, pruning encourages growth. The awful truth is that if I can’t get rid of things I no longer need or use, then I am possessed by possessions.”
(p.131)***

Put it on your bedside table and dip into it at random.

The above was compiled by Noel Cheer from several review sources and his own “dipping”.



SPIRITUALITY WITHOUT RELIGION?

A review by Laurie Chisholm

There is evidently a change under way in the *Zeitgeist* (the spirit of the age). While recent years have seen numerous best-selling books by the ‘New Atheists’ that frontally attack religion, we are now seeing books with a different tone and direction.

There is Alain de Botton’s *Religion for Atheists*, Andre Comte-Sponville’s *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*, and now a new book by Sam Harris:

***Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion*
Sam Harris
New York 2014.**

Instead of attacking religion, these books are looking to find a constructive alternative, extracting something of value that underlies religion. Seven people are queued up to borrow the library copy of Sam Harris’s book that I am using – just one little sign that people are tiring of anti-religious polemic.

Harris’s aim in this book is to get talk of spirituality “off the ground” – to establish its truth and validity, without disabling his “bullshit detector” i.e. without making claims that do not stand up to scientific scrutiny and without degenerating into vague psychobabble. In this way, he hopes to fill the gap left after all religious views that do not stand up to rational and scientific scrutiny have been excluded.

“Spirituality remains the great hole in secularism, humanism, rationalism, atheism, and all the other defensive postures that reasonable men and women strike in the presence of unreasonable faith.” (p.202).

Spirituality is what you begin to be aware of when you realise ...

“..there is something degraded and degrading about many of our habits of attention as we shop, gossip, argue and ruminate our way to the grave.”

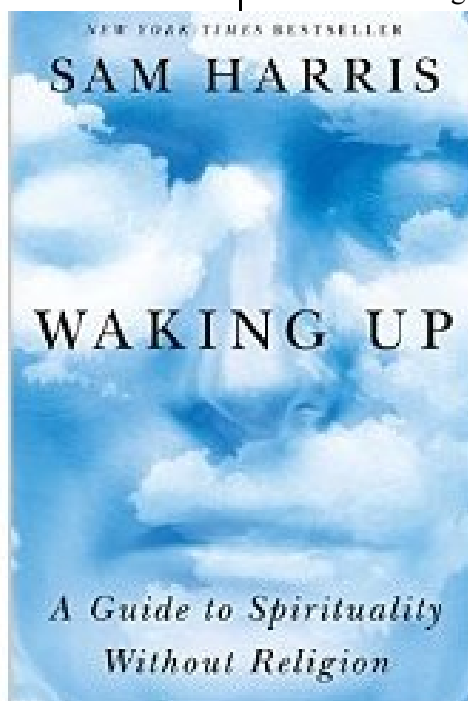
In Harris’s understanding, spirituality is basically about the practice of meditation, particularly mindfulness meditation, leading to the recognition that the self is an illusion. Consciousness is an irreducible given of experience, but there is only a moment-by-moment, ever-changing awareness, not some continuing entity that is the subject of that awareness. He knows that we Western people will find this a strange, unbelievable notion, so he takes a broad approach, carefully softening us up before coming to speak of mediation itself. First he explores the mystery of consciousness and then the notion of the self. Modern brain science is generally subversive of the idea that we

have a soul; there is no “command module” in the brain that is in charge of the other parts of the brain, no homunculus inside our head. In particular, he argues, for example, that surgery done to cut the corpus callosum joining the two hemispheres of the brain results in the subject having two centres of consciousness, undermining the notion that there is a single “I” somewhere behind our eyes.

Practising meditation and discerning the illusory nature of the self is, as Harris freely acknowledges, classical Buddhist teaching. A good case can be made that far from articulating a spirituality without religion, Harris

is serving up core principles of Buddhist religion. Those who are aware of Sam Harris’s anti-religious polemic will be surprised to learn that he has spent a considerable amount of time in meditation retreats and travelling to be with various gurus. He even draws us into the debate between rival Buddhist schools on whether Enlightenment is something that you must work hard to achieve or whether it can be instantly realised in a flash of insight. However, for him Buddhism is quite different from other religions. At its core is a teaching about experience, free of all supernaturalism and dogma. There is nothing you have to believe; instead you are invited to try out the teaching and test its truth in your own experience.

The book is a guide to the extent that he provides a few guided meditations and tips on how to realise that your “I” is an illusion. These are supported by personal



stories and analogies that illustrate the points he is trying to make. What I valued most was the way he described ordinary human experience in such a way as to point to the need for enlightenment. He tries to explain what spirituality is about from the bottom up, from experience, not from the top down, by beginning with concepts or teachings.

There are, I assume, those who are deeply anti-religious and who will be inclined to derisively dismiss his foray into spirituality in a similar way to Harris's own debunking of God and religion. In the book he gives one such example, as if to anticipate such a reaction. Douglas Harding's book *On Having No Head* articulates a similar perspective to Harris's own. Douglas Hofstadter and Daniel Dennett were dismissive of it. Harris suspects that they just didn't understand what he was talking about, defends Hofstadter, and concludes (p.145):

"This illustrates a very common phenomenon in scientific and secular circles: We have a contemplative like Harding, who to the eye of anyone familiar with the experience of self-transcendence, has described it in a manner approaching perfect clarity; we also have a scholar like Hofstadter, a celebrated contributor to our modern understanding of the mind, who dismisses him as a child."

Myth, ritual and symbol play no role in the book. And surely there are other lines of thinking that also deserve consideration. The Abrahamic religions, or at least some aspects of them, stress the unique and irreplaceable importance of the individual person and conceive of the divine as personal. Psychotherapy is about strengthening someone's identity as a person, an individual in their own right, and not merely the crystallisation of social expectations. For Jungians, it is about setting aside our persona and discovering your Self, integrating the conscious and the unconscious. These ideas are almost a direct contradiction of what Harris is saying, yet they deserve our attention.

Sam Harris has argued for a spirituality that is really only a single strand. It is no small achievement to clearly articulate even one strand in our overly rationalistic and scientific age, but we need many strands, woven together, to build a contemporary spirituality.

Laurie Chisholm

REPLACING ANDREW BRADSTOCK

Otago's Centre for Theology & Public Issues is the first research centre in New Zealand to examine political, social and economic issues from a theological perspective. It is based in the Department of Theology and Religion and was founded in January 2009 by Professor Andrew Bradstock who returned to the United Kingdom for family reasons late in 2013. His replacement, David Tombs (from Belfast) is the University's new Howard Paterson Professor of Theology and Public Issues.

Professor Tombs says theology needs to have public debate. "Theology can help to re-frame familiar issues in creative new ways, and open up new opportunities for social transformation."

THE GREAT LOVER

This is an excerpt from the poem The Great Lover by Rupert Brooke. A fuller version was read at Ralph Pannett's funeral by his daughters, Ruth and Iona. Rupert Brooke died on April 23, 1915 on his way to Gallipoli. Try reading it out loud and feel the magic in it.

Noel Cheer

These I have loved ..

White plates and cups, clean-gleaming,
 Ringed with blue lines; and feathery, faery dust;
 Wet roofs, beneath the lamp-light; the strong
 crust
 Of friendly bread; and many-tasting food;
 Rainbows; and the blue bitter smoke of wood;
 And radiant raindrops couching in cool flowers;
 And flowers themselves, that sway through
 sunny hours,
 Dreaming of moths that drink them under the
 moon;
 Then, the cool kindliness of sheets, that soon
 Smooth away trouble; and the rough male kiss
 Of blankets; grainy wood; live hair that is
 Shining and free; blue-massing clouds; the keen
 Unpassioned beauty of a great machine;
 The benison of hot water; furs to touch;
 The good smell of old clothes; and other such—
 The comfortable smell of friendly fingers,
 Hair's fragrance, and the musty reek that lingers
 About dead leaves and last year's ferns....

ANZAC DAY 2015

The One Hundredth Anniversary

This item provides an alternative outlook for those who have misgivings about the statements made at ANZAC Day commemorations. While acknowledging that some readers, especially those who lost relatives in the wars of the 20th Century, may not agree with some of the sentiments, there are many others who suggest that war is not to be commended on any grounds. If you have strong feelings on either side, why not send a Letter to The Editor (see page 3).

Noel Cheer.

Professor Kevin Clements (kevin.clements@otago.ac.nz) is the Foundation Chair of Peace and Conflict Studies and Director of the New Zealand National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (NCPACS) at the University of Otago, Dunedin, and Secretary General of the International Peace Research Association.

He has written or edited seven books and over 150 chapters/articles on conflict transformation, peacebuilding, preventive diplomacy and development with a specific focus on the Asia Pacific region. He was a Keynote Speaker at the 2010 SoF Conference.

This short poem was written by the Australian poet and philosopher Michael Leunig:

*“My courage failed
My strength did not endure
I broke down frightened and alone.
I did not sacrifice my life,
It was taken from me
As there I lay half mad and trembling.
Please no bugle call, no flag, no volley
I died human.”*

Below is a poem by Kevin Clements which extends that poem.

I was shot in war,
my body broken,
bloodied and dismembered.
I never made it back
and have no grave
to mark the spot.
My family never found me
And I remain in Turkish dust.

A hundred years on,
My body, my blood,
my dreams,
were not given for you
in remembrance of me.
They have been expropriated
for a national communion.

Please don't do this in my name.

I want no muffled walk, dawn parades,
Fawning Prime Ministers, and Governors
General.
I loathe the last posts and know there will be
No reveille.

I don't want young children
Imagining that being killed in action
Is any more glorious than being killed
in a car crash.

I don't want white crosses in school
grounds
Youth ambassadors at Gallipoli
National lies about sacrifice,
freedom and democracy.

Please don't lie in peace about
What I did or did not feel in war.
Please don't use my shortened
Life for your political advantage.
Please let me be what I was;
A man of my time,
A man who knew no better,
A man killed for no purpose,
A man who died hopeful
That others will refuse to do the same.

Please do that in my name.

THE LAST WORD

Laurie Chisholm, Chairperson

When Eugen Drewermann began his first parish as a young priest, people came to him with their problems. Although he thought he was well prepared, being deeply familiar with Dostoyevsky and Kierkegaard, and having studied philosophy and theology, he was at a loss to know how to respond. It was clear to him that merely reiterating Catholic moral teaching would not help. So he began training in psychoanalysis. This led to a crisis of faith, which he worked through in part by researching the Yahwist's primeval history (the stories of the Fall, Cain and Abel, the Tower of Babel and others, found in Genesis 3-11), exploring it from exegetical, psychotherapeutic and philosophical perspectives. The result was a non-moralistic interpretation of 'the Fall' – one that saw evil emerging, not because of disobedience, as tradition taught, but because of anxiety and a loss of fundamental trust.

Most interpreters of 'the Fall' are only interested in the individual psyche, but for Drewermann, the social and political dimension is fundamental. So Drewermann's next books were about two most important, intractable social/political problems: war and the environment. The book on the environment, *Deadly Progress: On the Destruction of Earth and Humans in the Heritage of Christianity*, was published in 1981. The introduction summarises his approach:

"Today, the world is plummeting at a frightening speed towards an abyss. After hundreds of thousands of years of relative balance with the surrounding nature, humans have changed the natural environment in the last two hundred years in such a way that the progress of civilisation threatens to become a nightmare. The trailblazer for this development is the intellectual/spiritual attitude of Europe. Following Christianity and its secularised legacy, it alone has seen humans not as part of creation, but as rulers over nature and correspondingly has ... allowed validity only to rational understanding and the will to rule. Until this Christian-Western attitude gives way to a new awareness, there will be no way out of the one-way street to catastrophe that we are on."

He begins with a summary of population growth, environmental pollution, forest destruction, desertification and species extinction, and then lists basic requirements to counter the problem, including:

- Reduce the world population to two billion.
- Make the energy supply independent of fossil fuels.

- Introduce laws so that the cost of products includes recycling and not just production.
- Protect wild creatures from being run over on roads.
- Increase public transport and the use of rail rather than roads.
- Reduce the area of cities from 400 sq m/person to 20 sq m/person.

These requirements are eminently rational, however unachievable they may be as practical politics. But, says Drewermann, changes in behaviour will not happen without an underlying spiritual and intellectual change, even though he acknowledges that the outlook for such a change is bleak. The problem has an 'external' side, but also an 'internal' one. Underlying our external actions is our attitude to the world and underlying that attitude is our human-image, our picture of what it is to be a human being. This human-image is like the air that we breathe; something we just assume and are mostly not even aware of. Drewermann sets about critiquing this image. He traces its origin back to the influence of Greek and Roman culture but also, and especially, Christianity and the religion of ancient Israel.

Our human-image is anthropocentric. It puts humans at the centre of things. The very word 'environment' is anthropocentric, conceiving nature as that which surrounds us humans. Notice that while other cultures (ancient Egypt, India) have gods in animal form, Greek and Roman gods are all human-like; a revealing symptom of anthropocentrism. Realise also that the Hebrew scriptures, full of laws, statutes and commandments, have virtually nothing that gives animals any rights (laws about human property rights to animals don't count). Christianity only strengthened this anthropocentrism; God became human in Christ, so planet earth must be the centre of the world. Even Teilhard de Chardin, who attempts to take evolution seriously, effectively sees the purpose of the whole universe in the emergence of human beings.

Our human-image has uprooted us from nature. The faith of the ancient Hebrews in a "God of the fathers" originated in an alliance of nomadic tribes living in the inhospitable desert. They never had agricultural people's warm relationship to nature, reflected in the worship of nature as the Great Mother. Moreover, the idea of God as creator was not part of early Hebrew faith. Only after settlement in Canaan and generations of contact with the myths of agricultural people did Israel conclude that it must be God who was responsible for the harvest, not

the gods of fertility religions. Israel's concept of God as creator did not derive from any experience of nature as divine but rather from extending the sense of God as super-chief of the tribe to the realm of nature.

You might think that secularisation and modern science would undermine this human-image but the contrary is the case. Although modern biology makes abundantly clear how closely related we are to animals and other living things, its insights are used, not to stabilise and preserve natural ecosystems, but to enhance human dominance over the natural world. While many religions emphasise harmony and the cyclic nature of things, the modern world believes in progress, a secularised version of the Christian hope for salvation. Marxism operates virtually without any notion of nature; regarding humans simply as the product of social conditions. Existentialism focusses on human subjectivity as something that absolutely transcends the natural world.

Our human-image is all about domination, in line with the command in the Priestly account of creation; "be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth." (The word translated 'subdue' is also used for the subjection of conquered peoples in war.) This impetus to dominate works itself out in various ways. Humans dominate nature using science and technology. Western civilisation dominated native peoples wherever it encountered them, effectively eradicating their cultures and social structures. Men dominate women in the patriarchy. Christian doctrine dominates pagan religion. Drewermann argues that there is a psychological or intrapsychic equivalent to social and political domination. Christianity's destruction of myth alienated us from myth's ability to express the nature of our 'collective unconscious.' Just as humans have subdued the earth, so monotheistic religions have subdued pagan myth and humans have subdued the symbols of their collective unconscious, allowing reason and will to dominate.

With these explanations, the book's title makes sense: *Deadly Progress: On the Destruction of Earth and Humans in the Heritage of Christianity*. Drewermann is not directly blaming Christianity for our environmental crisis, but claims that the crisis is an unintended, indirect consequence of Christianity, which desacralized nature, engaged in anti-myth polemic and resulted in a secular ideology of progress. So responding to the crisis isn't only a practical, political matter; it has a religious, spiritual dimension. For Drewermann, rediscovering the importance of dreams and visions with the help of psychoanalysis is needed to change that destructive human-image. Black Elk's great vision shows us how much we moderns have lost. Only after the book did Drewermann become aware of the importance of money,

debt and interest in causing the environmental crisis. Ever-increasing growth is required to repay the compound interest demanded by the borrowing needed to get economic activities started.

Drewermann concludes by holding up a mirror to ourselves by quoting from other cultures, in particular American Indians and their horrified reaction to the deeds of the white man.

"We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, the winding streams with tangled growth, as 'wild'. Only to the white man was nature a 'wilderness' and only to him was it 'infested' with 'wild' animals and 'savage' people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery. Not until the hairy man from the east came and with brutal frenzy heaped injustices upon us and the families that we loved was it 'wild' for us. When the very animals of the forest began fleeing from his approach, then it was that for us the 'Wild West' began."

Laurie Chisholm



The White Man's Burden ... On The Environment

"As yet I know of no species of plant, bird, or animal that was exterminated until the coming of the white man. For some years after the buffalo disappeared there still remained huge herds of antelope, but the hunter's work was no sooner done in the destruction of the buffalo than his attention was attracted toward the deer....The white man considered natural animal life just as he did the natural man life upon this continent, as "pests." Plants which the Indian found beneficial were also "pests." There is no word in the Lakota vocabulary with the English meaning of this word...[the Indian] was...kin to all living things and he gave to all creatures equal rights with himself. Everything of earth was loved and revered....[To the white man] the worth and right to live were his, thus he heartlessly destroyed. Forests were mowed down, the buffalo exterminated, the beaver driven to extinction and his wonderfully constructed dams dynamited, allowing flood waters to wreak further havoc, and the very birds of the air silenced. Great grassy plains that sweetened the air have been upturned; springs, streams, and lakes that lived no longer ago than my boyhood have dried, and a whole people harassed to degradation and death. The white man has come to be the symbol of extinction for all things natural to this continent. Between him and the animal there is no rapport and they have learned to flee from his approach, for they cannot live on the same ground."

Source: *From Land of the Spotted Eagle* by Luther Standing Bear. Copyright © 1933, by Luther Standing Bear. Renewal copyright, 1960, by May Jones.