

Sea of Faith

Exploring Values, Spirituality and Meaning

www.sof.org.nz

Newsletter 110, February 2014

DON CUPITT AT EIGHTY

BIRTHDAY IS MAY 24

He is Easing into Retirement

Its 30 years Since Landmark TV series

Don Cupitt is a Life Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Without Don there would be no Sea of Faith. Without Mathew Arnold there might have been, but it would be called something different. The name of our Network comes from a phrase in Matthew Arnold's poem "Dover Beach":



**The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore,
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.**

The phrase was used in 1984 as the title of a BBC television documentary series and book by Don Cupitt.

The book and the television series trace pivotal changes in western science, philosophy and religion over the past 350 years, which together call for a radical re-thinking of our faith traditions.

Within two years of the broadcast of the TV series in the UK, a group of people came together to form a loose network of discussion groups which teased out the implications of faith – especially Christian faith – retreating with a “melancholy, long, withdrawing roar”. The subtext left room for a return of the tide.

In a Letter to the Editor of the SoF (UK) publication, at Christmas 2013, Don wrote: “Please allow me to use your columns to let it be known that I plan to retire with effect from October 2013. Thereafter I’ll still be seen occasionally, but I’ll seldom be heard. I have various degenerative conditions of age. And it is clearly time to fade from view”. His written legacy is listed on the next page, the TV series is available from many sources on DVD, and he is held in high regard by many people inside and outside of the Sea of Faith Network.

Happy Birthday, Don!

A SECULAR CHRISTIAN

Don Cupitt gave this talk to the London SOF Conference in September 2013.

I am a secular Christian, a person committed to the critical way of thinking and a person therefore for whom there is only one world, and it is *this* world; only one life, and it is *this* life. Our language developed in order to serve the purposes of our life in this, the everyday world; and we cannot usefully pretend to be able to jump clear of the life-world and talk sense about a supposed eternal or supernatural World above. Since the rise of the novel to be our most popular literary form, we seem to have taken secular humanism for granted. Jane Austen's characters are all of them Anglicans; but the world they inhabit has already become completely secular.

[...] The moral teaching of the original Jesus, critically reconstructed, was entirely concerned with human relationships and human self-expression, or, as we'd now call it, 'self-outing'. He seems to be surprisingly secular, a point hard to explain until we remember that in the Last World there is 'no Temple', as the Revelation of John says, no religious system, and no centralised or 'focussed' divinity. In the Kingdom, God is dispersed into a universal 'brightness', a luminous intelligibility in which there is no darkness and everything is plain to view. It's a purely human world in which everyone is equal, and every heart is open. There is no Beyond and therefore no ulteriority and no deception or duplicity, because we can try to deceive people only if we can envisage a future in which we may profit from our deception. We are not immortal souls, with a very long-term future: we are nothing but our own living of our own brief lives. We shouldn't be hoarders, because we cannot do it successfully. Instead we should pour ourselves out into life unreservedly. As the popular saying has it: 'Use it or lose it'. Don't hide, come out like the sun. Pour yourself out. Burn! Don't make comparisons, don't claim your rights. Just put on a good show. Burn!

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+ Also available in Chinese translation.

This list and the copy in the left column is from the SoF UK publication, "Sofia 110", Christmas 2013

ALL ABOUT US

SEA OF FAITH

EXPLORING VALUES, SPIRITUALITY AND MEANING

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

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.

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.

The TV series 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 the Sea of Faith Network 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 six **Life Members**: Sir Lloyd Geering ONZ, Don Cupitt (UK), Noel Cheer, Ian Harris, Alan Goss and Fred Marshall.

The Chairperson is Laurie Chisholm

117 Collins Rd, RD4 Christchurch 7674,
(03) 325-2142, 021-201-0302 laurie.chisholm@ihug.co.nz

The Secretary is Jock Crawford

P.O. Box 12-2046 Chartwell Square, Hamilton 3248,
jockcrawford@actrix.co.nz

The Treasurer and Membership Secretary is Peter Cowley, 1/30A Dunns St, Silverstream, Upper Hutt 5019

The Newsletter Editor is Noel Cheer, the Copy Editor is Shirley Dixon and Distribution is by Yvonne Curtis.

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.

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

To offer a comment on material appearing in the Newsletter or to submit copy for publication, contact the Editor, 26 Clipper Street, Titahi Bay, Porirua 5022, (04) 236-7533 0274-483-805 noel@cheer.org.nz

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Another Benefit of Membership

Your Steering Committee has decided to extend the availability of the Newsletter by allowing those who currently receive a paper copy to also receive the email version (if they wish to), at no extra charge.

To make this happen, send an email to Peter Cowley: pcowley@paradise.net.nz

The Centenary of The Great War

THE YEAR BEFORE THE STORM

An Introduction to ...

1913: The Year Before The Storm

By Florian Illies

Translated by Shaun Whiteside and Jamie Lee Searle,

Published in the UK by The Clerkenwell Press 2012

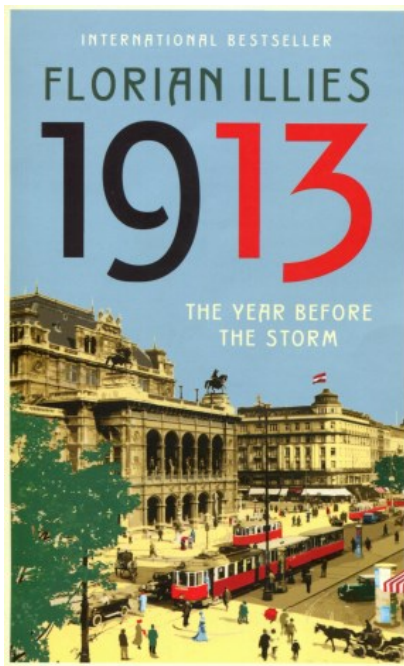
In Newsletter 109 we met significant people of 50 years ago in the article “1963 was a Monumental Year”. This month we wind back a further fifty years and visit a world, chiefly Europe, on the brink of The Great War and read about innovations in just that year 1913, the effects of which are mostly still with us.

This book is described in these terms:

“In a witty yet moving narrative that progresses month by month through the year, and is interspersed with numerous photos and documentary artifacts (such as Kafka’s love letters), Florian Illies ignores the conventions of the stodgy tome so common in ‘one year’

histories.

Forefronting cultural matters as much as politics, he delivers a charming and riveting tale of a world full of hope and unlimited possibility, peopled with amazing characters and radical politics, bristling with new art and new technology ... even as ominous storm clouds began to gather.”



Oops:

“The Great War in Europe, that eternal threat, will never come. The bankers won’t come up with the money needed for such a war, and industry won’t support it, so the statesmen simply won’t be able to do it. There will be no Great War.”

*stated by David Starr Jordan,
President of Stanford University, in 1913.*

A sampling of subjects discussed:

Books:

- Spengler, *The Decline of The West*
- Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*
- D.H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers*.
- Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*
- Marcel Proust, started his novel cycle *In Search of Lost Time*

Music, Theatre and Movies:

- Louis Armstrong aged 12 was jailed for unruly behaviour and was introduced to the trumpet.
- Charlie Chaplin signed his first film contract.
- Premier of Stravinsky's *'Rite of Spring'*

Art:

- Marcel Duchamp made the first 'readymade' art work: a bicycle wheel on top of a stool.
- The *Mona Lisa*, missing since 1911, was returned.
- Picasso started 'synthetic cubism'.

Science and Archaeology:

- Tower of Babel was re-discovered.
- Macchu Picchu was re-discovered.
- Bust of Nefertiti was found.
- Ozone layer was identified.

Medicine:

- Freud and Jung became estranged.
- Jung recorded his dreams in his 'Red Book'.
- Schweitzer and wife left for Lamherene in Africa.

Industry:

- Ford Motor Company set up its first car assembly line.

Religion and Philosophy:

- Wittgenstein provided a new basis for the philosophy of logic.
- Rudolf Steiner laid the foundation stone for 'Centre of Anthroposophy'
- Husserl introduced Phenomenology of Philosophy.

Political and Military:

- The first two German Zeppelins crashed, one month apart.
- Josef Djughashvili adopted the name Joseph Stalin.
- US Federal Reserve was set up.
- Hitler painted postcards in squalid accommodation in Vienna.

Oddities:

- An unemployed teacher shot up a classroom in Bremen. Five children died.
- Return to England of Scott's ship *Terra Nova* after the fatal failure of South Pole expedition.
- Highest on-land temperature recorded in Death Valley USA, 56.7 degrees Celsius

Noel Cheer

ANOTHER BOOK ABOUT JESUS!

REALLY?

WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE SAID ABOUT JESUS THAT HASN'T BEEN SAID BEFORE?

Bill Cooke of Auckland reviews:

Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth

Reza Aslan

Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2013

Well, it depends a lot on who wrote it. If it's another book about Jesus as the founder of Christianity, the paradigm-shifting Incarnation of God who was resurrected after a death endured in the service of us all, then, no, there really isn't much more that can be said. That story just doesn't wash any more. But if the book brings together three decades of Jesus scholarship that has become known as the Third Quest for the Historical Jesus, then new things – important new things – can be said. And this is what Reza Aslan has done with his book *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*.

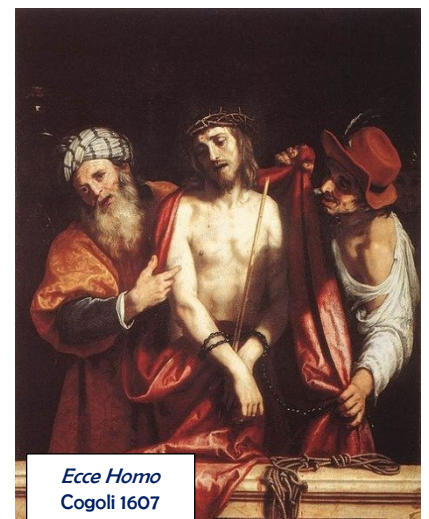
Even before reading the first word of the book, something interesting has happened. The overwhelming majority of Jesus books have been written by Christian theologians of some stripe or other. This book is different. Aslan was born in Iran to a family of, as he calls them, 'lukewarm Muslims and exuberant atheists' (p xviii). Having fled the ayatollahs and now living in America, Aslan converted to high-octane evangelical Christianity as a teenager. But his zeal for Christ withered and died in the bright glare of Jesus scholarship, into which he immersed himself. He has since returned to Islam. But *Zealot* deserves to be read as a work of scholarship, twenty years of scholarship in this case. The author's own faith is just part of the back-story. In a way that is remarkable, Aslan, a Muslim, has returned Jesus – Rabbi Yeshua – to his Jewish context that is authentic and real.

The Third Quest for the Historical Jesus provides the backdrop for Aslan's work. This is the most radical of the three quests. It was the first major drive to understand Jesus that was not dominated by Christian theologians, anxious to keep the core Christian message alive. The Third Quest is the first to ask openly, who actually was Jesus? And to answer this question fully, the Gospels have to be recognized not so much as historical documents but as post-facto theological

treatises. The Jesus that emerges from work of this type comes as a surprise to many. Jesus was a Jew, one who had no intention of creating a new religion, let alone a new religion which would be permeated with a deeply-ingrained anti-Semitism.

What Aslan does is put together this new understanding into a coherent whole. He begins by setting out a picture of Jewish Palestine in the first century of the common era and what that would mean for someone like Jesus. He also clears up a couple of dead-ends some Third Quest scholarship has gone down. For instance, contrary to the Jesus Seminar, Aslan insists that preaching the imminent End Times was central to Jesus' message. In a way no other book has done, we get an intensely Jewish take on the time and on the issues Jesus would have been motivated by. Having laid this important foundation, Aslan then goes through the life and death of this awkward Galilean provincial. Then, on the basis of the Jewish world Aslan has immersed the reader in so deeply, the story of how Jesus' exclusivist, nationalist message was transformed and up-ended within a couple of generations is rolled out. And the deeply foreign nature of what Paul was saying becomes starkly clear.

Predictably, reactions to *Zealot* have been mixed. *Christianity Today* ran a hostile review from a theologian called Craig Evans, who works out of some seminary in Nova Scotia. Evans tried to belittle Aslan's scholarship, sniffily declaring the *Zealot's* core thesis has been discredited and is not taken seriously by scholars. Evans seems to have missed the Third Quest for the Historical Jesus, which has been underway now for three or more decades, involving mainstream scholars like Geza Vermes and E P Sanders. And of course, the Jesus Seminar.



Aslan's book is really a summary of all this Third Quest scholarship. What Evans really meant is not that Aslan's scholarship has been discredited; more that Aslan's scholarship is discomfoting to him. Anticipating that sort of criticism, Aslan has taken care to include several pages of notes and references for each chapter.

More frenetic, though similarly motivated, has been the response from American evangelicals, who have been exercised more by Aslan's Muslim faith than by what he's said. The Fox News interview with Aslan returned time and again to Aslan being Muslim. The interviewer was incensed that a Muslim could write about Christianity, suggesting that to do so implied lack of respect. The irony of this line of attack, given that Fox News is forever disrespectfully sneering at liberals, Obama, Democrats and others, was lost on the interviewer.

Much more congenial to Fox News viewers and to evangelicals generally, would be *Killing Jesus: A History*, by Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard. And yes, that is Bill O'Reilly, the American television personality. O'Reilly's Jesus is a kick-ass country boy who really dislikes liberals (played here by the Sadducees), intellectuals (Pharisees), and taxes (Romans, aka big government). As one English reviewer called it, this is the Tea Party's Son of God. The book is testimony to the American Religious Right's inability to learn lessons from history; in this case that lives of Jesus only really end up reflecting the tastes and opinions of the authors

Unlike O'Reilly and Dugard, Aslan takes history seriously and has made a genuine attempt to fashion his account in the light of the facts as we have them. So, as with most things, your reaction to *Zealot* is going to depend on the views about Jesus you come to the book with. If your view of Jesus is orthodox and faith-based, you'd probably be better off with O'Reilly and Dugard.

But if your view on Jesus can be modified in the light of scholarship, then Aslan's is the book for you. It helps a great deal that *Zealot* is very clearly written.

Bill Cooke lives in Auckland where he is a member of the Sea of Faith. He has a new book coming out soon on the history of public controversies about Jesus in New Zealand. It will be called *Kernel and Husk: the waning of Jesus in Godzone*.

WHY MULTIPLE JESUSES?

From a review by Austin Cline (about.com) of Charlotte Allen's *The Human Christ: The Search for the Historical Jesus* published by Simon & Schuster

Jesus is often identified with whatever religious ideologies are current at the time.

- In the 18th century, Jesus was often identified with deism or anticlericalism.
- Later, in the 19th century, Jesus was identified with nationalism or political liberalism.
- Some tried to describe him as a sort of Hegelian synthesizer of Judaism and Hellenism.
- In the 20th century, Jesus was often identified with Marxism or feminism.
- There were also many idiosyncratic depictions of Jesus.
- For Ernst Renan, he was a romantic universalist.
- For David Friedrich Strauss, he was a heavily mythologized moralist.
- Albert Schweitzer's famous books depicts Jesus as an apocalypse-obsessed madman — one of the few times the portrait of Jesus has been less than favourable.
- Many scholars today portray him as a wandering Cynic.

And, of course, there is a huge industry in describing the "Life of Christ" in films, plays, art and movies....



Steering Committee 2014

Absent
Marjorie Spittle
of Dunedin who
is Chair of the
2014
Arrangements
Committee

“SCIENCE WITHOUT RELIGION IS LAME AND RELIGION WITHOUT SCIENCE IS BLIND”

*A statement by Albert Einstein provides a theme for a book review
by Yvonne Curtis of Wellington*

MATTER & what matters SOME SCIENCE FOR THE RELIGIOUS & SOME RELIGION FOR SCIENTISTS

Lionel Sharman
ISBN 978-1-927242-43-8
Published 2013
Steele Roberts Publishers
Box 9321, Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand
info@steeleroberts.co.nz
www.steeleroberts.co.nz

This book is a little gem. In only 116 pages Lionel Sharman manages to capture the essence of science and religion and finds the cores to both that resonate for me. His poetry is the lustre. An added bonus is a short but wide ranging bibliography grouped under the headings Science, Philosophy and Religion

Sharman acknowledges in his preface that his publication is only one among many very good texts debating and exploring the present perceived conflict between science and religion. Most he has read are by theologians with some knowledge of science who “tend to argue for a space for most of conventional religion to operate.” In contrast, Lionel writes as a scientist “who happens to be lay Christian” and he lays out his views of science and religion and how they have shaped his life and values.

This account is written from an everyday point of view and pulls the strands of science and religion together in a very even-handed way. It is significant that Sharman uses this quote from Albert Einstein at the beginning of the first chapter:

***“Science without religion is lame
and religion without science is blind.”***

The elements of science and religion that he explores bring this quote to life in a compelling and absorbing way.

The book takes you on journeys of science and religion with highlights from each to develop the relationship that Sharman has found between the objective MATTER of existence and what he considers that really matters - our relationship with each other, which, in turn, the subjective God in our heads helps nourish.

But I am leaving the best to the last: the lustre. Each of the twelve chapters finishes with a poem which captures the essence of the chapter. Reading these poems reminded me just how powerful poetry can be in capturing emotion and ideas in few words. The richness of imagery that the poetry can evoke is much harder to capture in prose. Read the poetry aloud to really hear it.

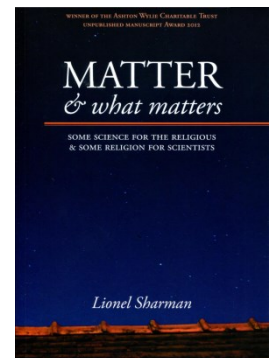
I have found it hard to be objective in this review of this book as it touches me deeply. This book very closely parallels my journeys with science and religion and it is very exciting to find someone with the courage to publicise views that I have silently held for years. I look forward to sharing this treasure with my religious and scientific friends. Thank you Lionel.

For a concise account of the contents of the book, go to the Steele Roberts web site and read the blurb from the back cover:

<http://www.steeleroberts.co.nz/books/isbn/9781927242438>

Yvonne Curtis, January 2014

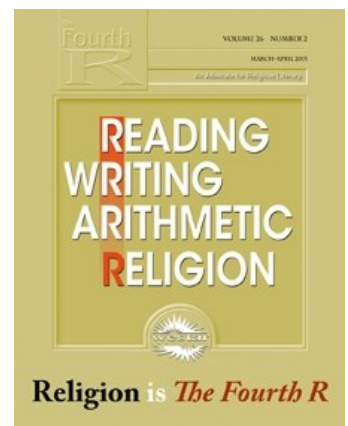
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RELIGIOUS LITERACY

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specializes in it.**

**Founded by (the late)
Robert Funk and
home of the Jesus
Seminar, Westar
publishes a world class
magazine.**



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ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2014

Exploring Inner Space: Psychology, Spirituality and Consciousness

October 3 – 5, 2014 at St. Hilda's Collegiate School, 2 Cobden St., Dunedin 9016

Our intention is that these different approaches will illuminate the theme from different angles.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

We have invited speakers who have interests in neuroscience, in the strengths and limitations of the scientific approach, together with philosophical issues concerning consciousness and mind (such as whether artificial intelligence could duplicate the human mind), and the relationship between psychotherapy and religion.

Bernard Beckett: NZ author of books for young adults. His novel *Genesis* “looks at questions such as the origins of life (hence Genesis), ideas about human consciousness, and the nature of a soul which separates humans from other animals or machines.”

Dirk de Ridder: Belgian brain surgeon and neuroscientist, recently appointed as a professor at Otago Medical School.

Richard Egan: Lecturer in Health Promotion at Otago School of Medicine. His field is in the spirituality surrounding death and dying; including the whole euthanasia question.

Sandra Winton: A psychoanalytic psychotherapist working in private practice in Dunedin, New Zealand. She is also a Dominican Sister. She is interested in the relationship between psychotherapy and religion and how religion may be worked with in psychotherapy.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

Chairperson Laurie Chisholm writes:

[In the speaker line-up] I would want to have a counter-balance to brain science and, I think, the focus on what makes us human could do this. We don't want, for example, to study love exclusively from the perspective of what goes on in chemicals in the brain when we feel love - we also need the perspective of the poet and the novelist - those who put into words the experience of love. We need the topic to integrate or at least bring together the brain science approach and other approaches.

We need to balance these issues and to avoid obstacles:

- opposition to a reductionist approach to being human.
- fear of exposing deep-seated differences within the Sea of Faith - on the nature of the soul/self, on the reality of near-death experiences, on the materialism/idealism divide.
- fear of science that might explain away our most precious experiences and convictions.
- apprehension that brain science could quickly become technical and scientific and beyond the ordinary person's ability to comprehend and digest.
- feeling that brain science is technical and irrelevant to the concerns of SoFers

FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee held its annual face-to-face meeting at St. Andrews on the Terrace in Wellington on 18 January. Although there is an inevitable cost in bringing members of the committee together in one place, experience has shown that this bears fruit in increasing the effectiveness of the teleconference meetings held over the rest of the year.

The following outlines some of what it did at the meeting:

- Spent some time telling our individual stories, to help us get to know one another.
- Received a report from the Dunedin Local Arrangements Committee, convened by Marjorie Spittle, and worked on some issues arising from it. Planning is well advanced.
- Discussed the ending of Peter Cowley's term as Treasurer. We will ask the AGM to permit a further extension.
- Brainstormed ideas for theme and speakers for Conference 2015.
- Initiated an exploration on where we want the Sea of Faith to be in five years' time.
- Explored ways of facilitating the telling of Sea of Faith members' life stories, including how and why they arrived in the Sea of Faith and why they remain in it. The Dunedin and Napier local groups will be holding meetings at which this will happen. Stories could be subsequently published in the newsletter and/or as a modest booklet.
- Decided to offer a \$50 discount on those flying to Conference 2014 from outside Auckland, Wellington, or Christchurch, as a modest attempt to redress the imbalance in air fare costs between flights from a main centre and flights from smaller centres.

Laurie Chisholm, Chairperson

THE SUNDAY ASSEMBLY

CHURCH WITHOUT RELIGION

A note from Life Member Alan Goss of Napier

According to one of its leaders recently interviewed on National Radio ("Nine to Noon" October 20, 2013), one of the fastest growing groups in Australia is a community of godless religious atheists. A membership figure of 3000 members was quoted.

In Melbourne there is a regular Sunday Assembly, the structure of the services is 'very churchy'. The speakers, whose general theme is to address the human condition, insist that their inspiration comes, not from above, but from the world around us. Songs by groups such as *Crowded House* are sung and there is also karaoke, readings from various sources and a gathering afterwards for tea and cake. There is no fixed ritual and no appointed leader although there are necessary guidelines – humans are attracted to ritual and habit and, yes, there is a choir.

Those who attend the Assembly can be as anonymous as they wish and creep into the back row (sound familiar?!)

Services "are not preachy, they are more a combination of ideas." Although nominally godless, some members are willing to hold the God-door open just a wee bit. For others the door is shut tight. The interviewee conceded that the future of these communities is open and they could be just a "flash in the pan". Like everyone else "we are given only one life and our task is to love it as best we can."

The Public Charter

The following is from <http://sundayassembly.com/about/>

The Sunday Assembly is a godless congregation that celebrates life. Our motto: **live better, help often, wonder more**. Our mission: to help everyone find and fulfill their full potential. Our vision: a godless congregation in every town, city and village that wants one.

The Sunday Assembly ...

1. Is 100% celebration of life. We are born from nothing and go to nothing. Let's enjoy it together.
2. Has no doctrine. We have no set texts so we can make use of wisdom from all sources.
3. Has no deity. We don't do supernatural but we also won't tell you you're wrong if you do.

4. Is radically inclusive. Everyone is welcome, regardless of their beliefs – this is a place of love that is open and accepting.
5. Is free to attend, not-for-profit and volunteer run. We ask for donations to cover our costs and support our community work.
6. Has a community mission. Through our Action Heroes (you!), we will be a force for good.
7. Is independent. We do not accept sponsorship or promote outside businesses, organisations or services
8. Is here to stay. With your involvement, The Sunday Assembly will make the world a better place
9. We won't tell you how to live, but will try to help you do it as well as you can
10. And remember point 1... The Sunday Assembly is a celebration of the one life we know we have.

* * * * *

THE PARADOXICAL COMMANDMENTS

[The following sounds as though it might have been said by the sage from Galilee – ed]

1. People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. *Love them anyway.*
2. If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. *Do good anyway.*
3. If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies. *Succeed anyway.*
4. The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. *Do good anyway.*
5. Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. *Be honest and frank anyway.*
6. The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the smallest minds. *Think big anyway.*
7. People favour underdogs but follow only top dogs. *Fight for a few underdogs anyway.*
8. What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. *Build anyway.*
9. People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. *Help people anyway.*
10. Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. *Give the world the best you have anyway.*

From Kent Keith 2001: *The Paradoxical Commandments*,
A Hodder Book

MUSIC IN THE AIR 2013

The biannual journal, edited/published by John Thornley of Palmerston North.

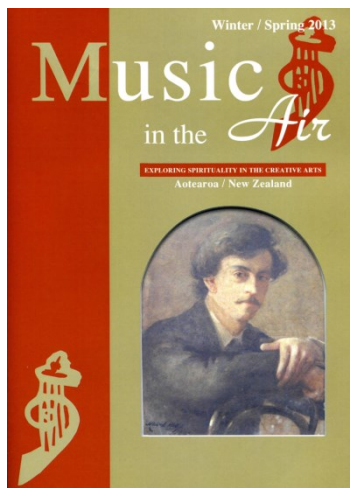
The latest edition explores the creative arts and spirituality and includes two extended articles by writers well known to SOFers.

In Issue 35 (Summer/Autumn), Ian Harris's final talk in a Palmerston North series on *Caring for Creation*, is titled "A World on the Brink – and God?" Professor Lloyd Geering's talk on painter Colin McCahon, titled "Colin McCahon – Prophet in the Wilderness", appears in Issue 36 (Winter/Spring). A total of 20 articles appear in both issues

Details of Contents.

Issue 35: Child Centred Theology / Mary Caygill; Speaking Truth to Power / Mary Caygill; baptismal liturgy for a secular world (3 articles), John Meredith; An Upside Down Story / Ralph Milton; The Lesson – short story by Tony Chapelle; Hope is our Song comes to England / Frances Brewitt-Taylor; Celebrating Colin Gibson's 80th Birthday / Marnie Barrell; A world on the brink – and God? / Ian Harris; Earth sermon – ego-spiritual reflection on Antoine de Saint-Exupery / Colin Anderson; 'This is our world' a reflection for Christmas 2012 / John Thornley; Chris Trotter columnist on 'the Tail' of NZ society; Passing on the Dream / Mary Caygill.

Issue 36: Discovering Alfred Hill / Robin Maconie, Donald Maurice and John Archer; How to read the Bible / Jim Burklo; In her own words / Iris DeMent; Colin McCahon / Lloyd Geering; Northland coastal imagery in the two Colins – Gibson and McCahon / John Thornley; Willow Macky's The Spirit and the Bride / Peggy Haworth and John Thornley.



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4412

YOUR RIGHTS IN DEALING WITH CHRONIC PAIN

[While this was offered in the context of chronic pain, it is likely to be of general applicability: ed]

People with chronic pain are often "people pleasers." They find it hard to express their needs and require that others respect them. And when their needs are not met, tension is increased and their pain seems worse. But they do have the same basic rights as you grant to others.

We have the right to:

1. Act in a way that promotes dignity and self-respect.
2. Be treated with respect.
3. Make mistakes.
4. Do less than you are humanly capable of doing.
5. Change your mind.
6. Ask for what you want.
7. Take time to slow down and think before you act.
8. Ask for information.
9. Ask for help or assistance.
10. Feel good about yourself.
11. Disagree.
12. Not have to explain everything you do and think.
13. Say "no" and not feel guilty.
14. Ask why.
15. Be listened to and taken seriously when expressing your feelings.

Found at:

<http://www.mdjunction.com/forums/work-and-chronic-illnesses-discussions/general-support/2951463-your-rights-in-dealing-with-chronic-pain>

LIFE ATTITUDES



Authorship unknown

THANK YOU, NELSON MANDELA

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Long Walk to Freedom is an autobiographical work written by the later South African President Nelson Mandela, and published in 1995 by Little Brown & Co.

The book profiles his early life, coming of age, education and 27 years in prison. Under the apartheid government, Mandela was regarded as a terrorist and jailed on the infamous Robben Island for his role as a leader of the then-outlawed ANC. He has since achieved international recognition for his leadership as president in rebuilding the country's once segregated society. The last chapters of the book describe his political ascension, and his belief that the struggle continues against apartheid in South Africa.

Mandela dedicated his book to "my six children, Madiba and Makaziwe (my first daughter) who are now deceased, and to Makgatho, Makaziwe, Zenani and Zindzi, whose support and love I treasure; to my twenty-one grandchildren and three great-grandchildren who give me great pleasure; and to all my comrades, friends and fellow South Africans whom I serve and whose courage, determination and patriotism remain my source of inspiration."

In the second part of the book, Mandela introduces political and social aspects of apartheid in South Africa, and the influences of politicians such as Daniel François Malan who implemented the nadir of African freedoms, as he officially commenced the apartheid policies. Mandela joined the African National Congress in 1950 and describes his organisation of guerrilla tactics and underground organisations to battle against apartheid.

In 1961, Mandela was convicted for inciting people to strike and for leaving the country without a passport. He was sentenced to five years imprisonment. However, Mandela was shortly thereafter sentenced to life imprisonment for sabotage.

Mandela describes his 28-year tenure in prison as marked by the cruelty of Afrikaner guards, backbreaking labour, and sleeping in minuscule cells which were nearly uninhabitable.

Later on in his sentence, Mandela met South African president, Frederik Willem de Klerk, and was released from prison in 1990.

APARTHEID

Apartheid is an Afrikaans word meaning 'the state of being apart', literally 'apart-hood'. It began in colonial times under Dutch rule. Apartheid as an official policy was introduced in South Africa following the general election of 1948.

Legislation classified inhabitants into four racial groups, "black", "white", "coloured", and "Indian". From 1960-1983, 3.5 million non-white South Africans were removed in one of the largest mass removals in modern history. Non-white political representation was abolished in 1970, and starting in that year black people were deprived of their citizenship of South Africa, legally becoming citizens of one of ten tribally based self-governing homelands called bantustans, four of which became nominally independent states.

Apartheid sparked significant internal resistance and violence, and a long arms and trade embargo against South Africa. Since the 1950s, a series of popular uprisings and protests was met with the banning of opposition and imprisoning of anti-apartheid leaders. Apartheid reforms in the 1980s failed to quell the mounting opposition, and in 1990 President Frederik Willem de Klerk began negotiations to end apartheid, culminating in multi-racial democratic elections in 1994, won by the African National Congress under Nelson Mandela.

Although the official abolition of apartheid occurred in 1990 with repeal of the last of the remaining apartheid laws, the end of apartheid is widely regarded as arising from the 1994 democratic general elections.

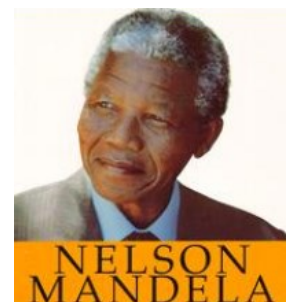
Wikipedia

Nelson Mandela laid to Rest

Nobel Peace Prize winner, Nelson Mandela died, aged 95 on December 5, 2013, and was laid to rest in his childhood rural town of Qunu.

"He was a true servant of the people, his mission in life was to make lives better," said his granddaughter Nandi Mandela.

Jacob Zuma, the current president of South Africa, said **"Whilst the long walk to freedom has ended in the physical sense our own journey continues."**



THE LAST WORD

Why ‘spirituality’? Why did the Sea of Faith include the word ‘spirituality’ in its new tagline “Exploring Values, Spirituality and Meaning”? And what is ‘spirituality’? In what follows, I am attempting to respond to these questions.

Above the entrance to a building at Heidelberg University are inscribed the words “*dem lebendigen Geist*”. Each time I went to Claus Westermann’s lectures, I passed them and puzzled over their meaning. “To the living... what?” The German word *Geist* can mean ghost, or alcoholic spirits, or spirit. Was this a dedication to the memory of some important person, regarded as a ghost? It surely couldn’t be celebrating alcohol? But then, Heidelberg students were renowned for drinking (remember the song “Drink, drink, drink” in the movie “The Student Prince”). “To the living spirit” seemed equally improbable; universities after all are rational and objective – hardly centres of spirituality. Eventually, I realized that “to the living spirit” is indeed what was meant. It is what we today would call a mission statement for the university, or at least its humanities division. It expresses a dedication to the living human spirit. In its academic work, the university both studies and expresses that spirit. *Geist* has different associations in the German language, so it is often translated as spirit or intellect or even mind. Germans classify academic disciplines under two headings: the *Naturwissenschaften* (sciences of nature) and the *Geisteswissenschaften* (sciences of the spirit): history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, even law and theology. *Geist* was the central concept for the philosopher Hegel, who understood history as the evolutionary development of *Geist* in the consciousness of the individual, in the history of religions, and in the continuing improvement of social institutions.

So in Germany the words spirit and spirituality have different associations. In the 16th century, Ignatian spirituality was a set of exercises for monks and nuns, designed to deepen and strengthen their piety. An awareness of what spirituality means in other times and places may help us better understand what spirituality means in our own place and time.

“I’m not religious, but I am interested in spirituality” is a sentiment often heard. Religion means something institutional, a specific defined doctrinal system, while spirituality means a more open approach. Spirituality is wider than religion; as well as Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Goddess spirituality there is green, cosmic, Maori, New Age and humanist spirituality. Even a politically oriented liberation theology and Richard Dawkins’ enthusiasm for the wonder evoked by modern science’s picture of the world and his impassioned attack on religion could be regarded as forms of spirituality.

To focus on spirituality is to turn one’s attention away from doing to being, from the external world to what is going on within. Instead of beginning with ideas and concepts and analysing them rationally, spirituality is concerned more with the person, the individual and his/her life journey, with what works for them.

Of course, like any word, ‘spirituality’ has negative as well as positive connotations. It has a high level of abstraction: the noun ‘spirit’ was turned into an adjective, ‘spiritual,’ and then made into a noun again, ‘spirituality.’ It derives from a superseded dualism: spirit as opposed to body or matter. All manner of intellectually dubious ideas can shelter under its umbrella; from channeling, reincarnation, astrology and UFOs, to the mystical powers of crystals.

Writers on spirituality often point out that there is no agreed definition of the word and indeed it does mean different things to different people. Perhaps it is better to give examples. Here are some that are important to me:

- Surrender to a higher power, “letting go and letting God.” This is a key part of the AA’s 12-step programme for overcoming alcohol addiction.
- An experience of the oneness of all things. The physicist Fritjof Capra’s describes such an experience in his book *Uncommon Wisdom*. On the beach he is aware of the waves on the shore. Then the light all around him – waves of a different sort. His own body, made of atoms, consisting of electrons, protons and neutron, themselves ultimately wave-like vibrational patterns and no different from the atoms around him. His bodily experience and his conceptual understanding of the world merge in an experience of unity.
- Spirituality in literature. David Tacey’s students complained that while the novels they were studying are full of spirituality, academia ignores this dimension, focusing on class, race, and gender.

Spirituality that draws on the Christian tradition is tricky because of our dual heritage of

Christianity and Enlightenment. Take this for example, from Richard Rohr:

I believe that God gives us our soul, our deepest identity, our True Self, our unique blueprint, at our own ‘immaculate conception.’ Our unique little bit of heaven is installed by the Manufacturer within the product, at the beginning!

Is Rohr uncritically accepting traditional ideas of soul or making use of them symbolically? He is perhaps intentionally vague at this point. But why is his language ‘religious’ with no mention of the evolution of the brain? The spirituality we need will be open to our religious traditions, but aware of modern science as well. It will integrate thinking, feeling and believing. It will explore freely and not be subject to external authority, however venerable.

Fritjof Capra: *Uncommon Wisdom: Conversations With Remarkable People*

Richard Rohr: *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*

David Tacey: *The Spirituality Revolution: The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*

Andre Comte-Sponville: *The Book of Atheist Spirituality*



“I’m not religious, but I am interested in spirituality” is a sentiment often heard.

Laurie Chisholm, Chairperson 2013-2014