



Sea of Faith
Sea of Faith Network in Australia
BULLETIN

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2016



photograph by Greg Spearritt

Eucalypt flowers, Forest Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*).

The SOFIA website and archive of articles: www.sof-in-australia.org

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E X P L O R E
religion faith meaning

EDITORIAL

Late again! Partly it's from five weeks visiting family in England, but no less important has been the steady arrival of contributions that I wanted to get to you as soon as I could.

First is a feature from Glenn McBride who directs his passion and expert knowledge towards understanding what makes societies stable (or not) —timely in an era of failed and failing states. The second is Jeremy Fraser's account of liberation theology, timely also when the humanitarian reflex is under stress.

You'll find a range of book reviews and reports. Each shines with the personality of the writer, and has something to say about 'Religion, Faith and Meaning'.

I want to highlight two announcements. One is the SoFiA bus tour (p17) to Carnarvon Gorge in August 2016. At the time of writing there were a couple of places left. If you have booked to go, or would like to, you will need to act promptly. The second is *Between the Writer and the Reader* Number 4 (p14) on 27

February 2016. This also will require prompt attention.

The postlude is Greg Spearritt's typically lively thoughts on being an atheist.

The epilogue is another reflection on the future of SoFiA. Like its predecessors, this is gentle yet direct and from the heart. We are finding out where we currently stand; this is vital and perhaps there is more work to do in this phase, but I look forward to your thoughts on where we might go next.

My collection of articles is now empty. In previous years The Gold Coast provided copy for March/April. If there are writers there I should be delighted to hear from you. And of course I'd be delighted to hear from anyone who is bursting with something to say. I'll need copy by the last week in March if I'm not going to be quite so late next time.

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SoFiA *Bulletin* is produced every two months
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Some people have already paid their 2016 subscription. Thank you. Your prompt payment is appreciated.

Any Questions?

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Cordelia
Membership Secretary

Feature
via Sunshine Coast

Societies and Their Stability

by Glen McBride

We all joined Sea of Faith because there was much we didn't know or understand. We continued our search within this community, coming together regularly to share the stories of our studies. Our searches have taken us in many quite different directions, but generally around the fringes of religions.

Some still search hopefully within the ancient writings of their religions. Thousands have spent lifetimes in such study, and diminishing returns have become exhausted. There are many words written on religions, and, these are the major — perhaps only — source of knowledge we have about them. Others look at the many religions that fill the minds of humans everywhere, and seek to understand how religions serve humankind. Yet others seek to understand why religions are such powerful forces within people's lives.

There are many paths to the understanding that members of our community seek. Each member brings the understandings they have gained, and shares them with us all. It is in this spirit that I bring the stories I have discovered; I will share a biological view of our humanity.

I have been an agnostic since George Bernard Shaw (GBS) convinced me that many things were unknowable; I was then a very young Christian bookworm, just arrived in the UK back in 1944; I plundered the wonderful bookshops that I had never discovered in Australia. GBS convinced me to become agnostic. After the war, I decided to read the Bible, all of it. I needed to feel sure that agnosticism was a realistic response. I remained agnostic. In a very long life since, I became a biologist, a geneticist and student of animal behaviour, now called an ethologist. Slowly it filled me with the excitement of evolution, realizing of course that though biology could show me more about human life, it could never deal with unknowables, like gods.

Knowing about animal and human behaviour in a psychology department taught me about the societies in which we all live; genetics

and the study of selection enriched my understanding of evolution.

Societies probably evolved early in animal development. Societies are the context of most animal and human life; they became the repository for all knowledge accumulated in any species, and the source of all morality throughout the animal world. Indeed, how could animals live together in the thousand situations and arrangements they encounter without rules; moral rules? Societies always live on, they are the immortal part of animal life; on the other hand individuals within them are temporary— mortal. In our species, it is our societies that will continue, ever accumulating all that is human, such as our attempts: to manage and change our societies; to improve moralities; to educate children; to create fairness and harmony; and to develop our humanity.

Through society, we and all animals are educated in societal living, we all learn to participate in the life of our own species; they, and we, may quarrel with neighbours, but we do so within the security of our own societies. We all learn to live in an expected world of everything around us; but we all focus our attention especially on others like ourselves, our conspecifics, our societies.

We either invented or discovered gods. When we first found ways to tell stories we discovered we could talk and ask questions. Since we were very recently speechless animals and without questions, the questions about the experiential stories we were telling soon gave ways to other questions. There had to be a cause for all those things we now discovered we didn't understand: the sun and rain, the storms and winds, the unexplained deaths and illnesses.

Then there were those dead relatives who appeared in our dreams, doing what we still did. Our ancestors found answers and found roles for powers beyond their own. Their answers were the first steps towards our religions. But our newly conscious and speaking ancestors really

had to face the millions of questions. We didn't invent gods, they did; there was no option. They really needed spirits or gods powerful enough to organize a world that was brand new to their understanding.

When they needed help, something common enough, it was inevitable that someone asked whether such power figures could provide that help. Asking for help in the hunts and forage would often be rewarded; they were competent hunters and foragers. Their little groups had rules of behaviour; they knew what was right or wrong, it was embedded in their society, it was ancient. I suspect that we attributed to figures of power the qualities that our societies had taught us to value. We took the moralities of our society and attributed them to our newly invented 'gods'. Clearly gods must oppose everything objectionable in individuals; those things not conforming to society's expectations.

Most of us don't think much about the topic 'society'. Yet most animals live in small communities within their societies as we do. Animal societies take hundreds of forms; each society presumably evolving because individuals with the particular evolved social behaviour could best thrive in each of these societies. They also allowed the distribution of the resources of each habitat, though not always fairly. Societies are built by natural selection into the minds of individuals, for it is individuals who create, maintain and change societies.

To maintain any sort of stability, whether in a society or your own body temperature, a cybernetic system is needed; this 'general system' model was first described by von Bertalanffy in 1950¹.

Your body 'knows' the temperature it expects and always monitors it. It is able to detect any change and has mechanisms to restore it —negative feedback. The great distortion a marathon runner creates can be controlled by the negative feedback mechanisms.

If the mechanisms fail, the distortion may be increased, it might even become positive feedback, in which case the individual is in serious trouble.

What are these mechanisms in society, for you know that you live in a stable society? Indeed, natural selection could not produce anything that could not maintain itself throughout all the problems of living. Natural selection can only produce cybernetic systems, that is ones that are stable and self maintaining. Systems without these properties would fail, whether as individuals or societies. Let's look at the mechanisms maintaining societal stability.

The famous philosopher of science, Daniel Dennett² once described 'the unconscious driving experience' in which we have all walked or driven somewhere and could not remember anything of the trip. The driving required skills and the trip may have been through a busy city or pleasant country scenes; you noticed and remembered nothing. You were aware, not conscious. You were aware — in monitoring mode — checking that everything your senses delivered to your mind was as expected; it must have been, for you would have remembered anything unexpected. Your senses deliver a stream of images, mostly visual. Each of these is then compared with the images you have of these ordinary scenes in memory.

If there is no difference, the comparison brings the memorized scene image up to date and discards information on the comparison; it has no further relevance and would be clutter, so it is best if it is not remembered. Bringing images up to date is important; only up-to-date images would be relevant for future visits to these surroundings.

If the comparison yields a difference, the result is very different. The mind immediately generates what is called an Orienting Response (OR), a moment of high attention, high learning, some cognition to understand this difference

¹ von Bertalanffy, L. 1950. An outline of general system theory. *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 1, 134-165. doi.org/10.1093/bjps/1.2.134

² Dennett, D. C. 1991. *Consciousness explained*. Little, Brown, Boston.

and, finally, make a decision as to how to respond.

The OR was first described by Pavlov³ in 1927. Thousands of studies of the OR have been made by scientists, mainly psychologists, using people and laboratory animals. On the other hand I know of no studies by ethologists who see ORs daily in the natural contexts in which they evolved. With an OR, you will remember! But the OR involves the cognitive challenge that you and every animal faces.

The famous anthropologist Gregory Bateson challenged me with this question, 'is it a difference that makes a difference?' For you and presumably every animal in an OR, the answer to this question is urgent. You may need more information from your senses, you look around urgently. From your memory you seek images of similar events or experiences; all this information must then be integrated to find an understanding and reach that decision. You and me, we know this requires both consciousness and cognition. For one who has watched animals as a career, the question is also, 'can animals require less?' Indeed, I have elsewhere argued⁴ that our own consciousness and cognition evolved from the processes within the Orienting Response, for natural selection usually starts from existing traits when we are looking to produce something new, and our extended consciousness and cognitive capacities were quite new to animal life. How does 'unconscious driving', what I call being aware, and the OR relate to our question on societal stability?

I suggest that the combination of awareness, Dennett's unconscious driving experience, and the OR was natural selection's really magnificent development. It meant that every animal could live its life in the present, fully aware, monitoring its social and physical environment finding all expected, yet

remembering nothing, avoiding cluttering memories with the endless expected nothingness of everyday living. Yet the OR was always immediately available, offering the ability to detect and instantly respond to any change, any possible danger.

Animals could live strategically in an expected environment, aware but living only in the present, able to monitor everything sensed, endlessly checking for change. Change, or recognition of anything is only possible by a comparison of two images, one from the senses and one from memory. The animal or person does not need a memory filled with the minutiae of everyday life; the unconscious driving experience is one of natural selection's blessings.

Being aware rather than conscious, living only in the present, is a talent we brought from our animal ancestors. It is the endless checking that all is familiar, that society is stable, expected. Only with this endless conformation of expected stability can change be detected. Animals have had this awareness/OR system for many millions of years. Our transition to people added the new talent of improving the consciousness and cognition of the OR, not just for minutes, but for hours, accessing all memories, indeed, bringing them under mind control. *It is this mind we brought from animals.*

As a student of animal behaviour, I believe that animals too have evolved ways of extending the 'conscious' period of the OR, but without the need for our ability to access memories not relevant to their immediate situation. Two such situations are in hunting and exploration. You have watched on television a lion hunting, creeping forward, inch by inch, motionless at the tiniest disturbance in the potential prey, finally deciding on the moment to charge, to attack. Every moment needed high attention, some consciousness, access to every relevant memory leading finally to that decision built on experience.

Attention in exploration is also extended in time. In novel surroundings, the animal must be highly alert to images from experiences of danger; but it is now comparing sensory input

³ Pavlov, I.P. 1927. *Conditioned reflexes*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

⁴ McBride, G. 2012. Ethology, evolution, mind and consciousness. *J. Conscious. Explor. Res.* 3, 830–840.

with categories rather than exact images from memory; it must learn everything relevant to new decisions to be made. We often know those decisions, for eventually the animal will have 'chosen' places for drinking, for body care, for resting and perhaps sleeping and regular paths between these familiar places. It has built new mental maps of a now familiar environment. *I define environment as that portion of surroundings in which animals can detect change, in other words their maps of their world.* This mapping will include only parts relevant to the animal, places to be monitored, all and every day in the aware state. These memorized image maps of all physical and societal surroundings provide the endless flow of remembered images being compared with the images the senses are taking in, moment by moment.

Environment is the expected world we all inhabit. For animals monitoring also may contain the territorial boundaries of its group. It includes the dominance ranks of the others in its group, and how close to approach those of 'higher' rank. Mothers and offspring must monitor endlessly their spacing from each other and where there are moving and potential dangers for youngsters. All are monitoring for dangers, ready to respond with an alarm call immediately any potential danger is detected.

This raises the question of the search images carried by animals and people, a part of the monitoring that is ever a part of the aware state. The best example of a search image is familiar to us all. We know a dog can be used to track a fugitive or someone lost, holding the image in its mind, continuously comparing it with every new imaged sensed, allowing the decision to continue following the trail. A dog can also be trained to detect the presence of drugs in airports. Training provides the search images it uses daily.

Search images are part of the animal minds we have inherited. We know that our hominin ancestors moved around all and every day, hunting or foraging. Each carried many search images necessary to their activity. The hunters sought tracks, droppings and the rubbings of

prey animals. Their female gatherers knew the images of hundreds of edible plants or small animals and the sort of evidence of their presence. Effective search images kept our ancestors well fed for millions of years. When they created stone tools, suitable stones and rocks for making tools entered the search images of these foragers. Every likely stone was picked up and examined before the decision to discard or keep it.

I suspect that this inherited search image talent has been built into modern shop design. We wander through supermarkets or department stores, aware and monitoring with our search images to do our shopping, always alerting to anything that provides an OR, and a decision to discard or purchase.

To me, so much of our human minds was designed in animals. I have never worried about gods or god stories for the last seventy years. Yet I knew all these religion stories of our origin and I have learned much about an alternative set of stories, evolution. My stories still provide no information of gods and their hundred forms of magic, of creating us in their image, monitoring our guilts or virtues, keeping log books of our suitability for entrance to heaven. But they do provide real evidence that we were created by natural selection, always shaping and reshaping our minds and bodies. My stories completely turn the stories of our creation by magic into beautiful myths.

The stories arose in the minds of people who really had no information on which to create any realistic stories of their origins. Their knowledge of their world was built on their need to thrive, and to survive. Gods were made by hunter-gatherers who were dependent on what they could find if they were to thrive every day. They were subject to every force of climate or weather, of every unexpected raid by greedy neighbours. Gods provided stories to account for everything they then had no way of understanding. Certainly believing in mostly friendly gods gave them the security they expected in every part of their physical and societal worlds. They could thank their gods for

every survival through the forces of nature or enemies, but the credit was always their own. Every improvement they and the communities they built, was seized by natural selection; it produced us. But they shaped the religions they produced into ways of thinking and living that became part of daily life, a cultural life within a warm and embracing community. It became part

of the success of our species. We no longer need religion to maintain our societies, but it remains a powerful emotional need for most people, not easily rejected nor discarded. Time, information and education will eventually make religion unnecessary for perhaps most people; but never for all people.

Feature

Liberation Theology

by Jeremy Fraser

Liberation Theology means many things to many people: Marxist ideology for some; a practical way to live Christ's teachings for others. Liberation Theology is however a theology that is difficult to define adequately. This article seeks to at least go part of the way in explaining the nature of this elusive theology by illustrating its core concepts, its criticisms and the Christology central to it. This article will end with a discussion of its relevance to contemporary Australia.

Liberation theology (also known as Latin American Theology) came out of a South American Catholic tradition whose origins in turn can be traced to the 1968 Bishops conference in Medellin, Columbia. Like its Korean equivalent, Minjung Theology, Liberation Theology seeks to respond to and remedy the oppression and poverty that permutates society, by affirming the struggles of the poor and the oppressed who seek freedom from their social and economic troubles.

A concise definition of Liberation Theology is difficult because there is little consensus on exactly what it is. However, it appears to be an overarching term comprising several theologies and systems that include Feminist and Womanist Theology, Christology, and African or Black Theology. Common elements among its widely differing parts are:

- i. Priority must be given to the welfare of the poor and marginalised in the community,
- ii. Liberation is important to our spiritual needs, and essential to salvation,

- iii. Texts such as the Exodus are not literal truth, but indicative of individual change coming through social transformation,

- iv. A political reading of the Gospels emphasising Christ's fight with injustice is at its core,

- v. Right practice (Theopraxis) is a priority, in that right belief (Orthodoxy) can only come from Orthopraxis (right action), and finally

- vi. Organisations that coerce, manipulate and force others into something are no less violent than those that use physical violence, and are equally wrong.

The Theology of Liberation is an inherently practical one, as "it must attend to the concrete setting, the particular historical situation in which the biblical message is read and heard" (Migliore, p200). It requires us to examine not only our own attitudes and beliefs but the economics, politics and society we live in, asking:

How should we 'think God' ... How should we be proclaiming Jesus Christ in a poor Christian milieu possessed of an acute awareness of Injustice and banded together for the abolition of such-and-such particular oppressive practice? (Boff & Boff p59).

To understand, Christ's teachings and those of Liberation Theology we must understand Christology, as "Knowledge of Christ is inseparably linked to following Christ" (Migaloire, p 203), reminding us that Christ was a social, political and religious activist who denounced the injustices of the society he lived in. He worked in solidarity with the poor, the marginalised and the dispossessed, or those who come "from below" challenging society to change the way they see

and act in order to seek the kingdom of God here on earth.

Both Christ and Liberation Theology call us to experience life as the poor and marginalised do, living in empathy with those who are unjustly treated, calling for freedom and Justice for those who have never experienced it. Sobrino argues that,

The only way to get to know Jesus is to follow him in one's own life; to try to identify one's self with his or her own historical concerns; and to try to fashion his kingdom in our own midst. In other words, only through Christian praxis it is possible for us to draw close to Jesus. (Migalore, p203)

Liberation Theology seeks to provide practical action through Christ's message and example, calling us to act on the causes of poverty, such as globalisation and the imposition of first world culture and economics on the third world, which has resulted in dependence on the west. One solution is 'Base Communities', comprised predominantly of laity who work within their own communities to improve their situation through education, advocacy and political activism.

Christ's resurrection draws attention to life after death, as a transformative experience, "What is specific about Jesus' resurrection is ... not what God does with a dead body but what God does with a victim ... God is the God who liberates victims" (Migalore, P203). There is however a difference between a suffering that is imposed and one that is freely chosen. It is through this imposition that we transform Christ's sacrifice from a protest against injustice and suffering and as a sign of God's solidarity with the oppressed, into a method of keeping the poor in their place, and teaching that suffering is not only natural and shouldn't be changed, but is something that should be emulated by the lower orders, thus limiting the desire of both theology and ecclesiology to advocate for the marginalised.

Liberation Theology's detractors say that through romantic (socialist) notions and an over emphasis on the marginalised and poor it creates a utopian distortion of the universality of

salvation by denying the potential of all Christians.

A blind acceptance of this theology risks us creating God and Christ's message in our own image, allowing us to come to social and political conclusions that reflect our own beliefs or those of vested interests opposed to the status quo, rather than the needs of those we seek to serve.

In 1984 Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (Emeritus Pope Benedict XVIII) made statements as head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith which sent mixed message on Liberation Theology. He stated that "Liberation Theology is a phenomenon with an extraordinary number of layers. There is a whole spectrum⁵" He went on to say that it was "on the other hand, a theology which stresses the responsibility which Christians necessarily bear for the poor and oppressed"⁶. More favourable statements were realised two years after this in 1986.

Modern western cultures such as ours promote individualism, the acquisition of wealth and the pursuit of hedonism as a positive, but it is a distortion of the Bible's message. Christ didn't only challenge the sins of individuals, but those of society and its constructs (i.e. corporations, churches, governments etc that put their own needs before those of the community). Liberation Theology reminds us hold to account those with wealth and power, and call on them to use what they have for the good of all, rather than the few.

While Australia is very different from the South America of the 1960s, we have our own issues and problems that are quite separate and distinctly Australian. If we scratch the surface of any affluent nation such as ours we will find that the poor and needy are always among us requiring our help. The ethos of Liberation Theology can be applied to contemporary Australia, suitably be tweaked to our own conditions.

An increased politicisation and arguably emotive emphasise on crime, asylum seekers and

⁵ <http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/ratzinger/liberationtheol.htm>

⁶ *ibid*

the unemployed by the political right of the Australian Labor Party and the Liberal National Party, require our attention and also action, both as Christians and as citizens of a nation that prided itself on being the land of 'the fair go'. We are reminded of Christ's solidarity with the poor and his mission for justice, which require us to be involved in society and politics. We should question the status quo and statements made by our political and corporate leaders, and we should be involved in our community, doing something practical to help the less fortunate among us.

While we are called to question, examine and challenge injustice and the actions of governments and corporate Australia, we should be careful not to hold a mirror to society only to find our own reflection, through a simplistic and over-enthusiastic zeal to do good.

It is arguable that Christ sought to bring about the Kingdom of God by reforming Judaism of his own time, and did not aim to change the political and civil landscape of 21st Century Australia. However, the struggle we face today is one of justice in the hope of reconstructing the Kingdom of God and peace for all through

bringing about the ethos of Christ's teachings on social justice and morality.

While Liberation Theology has been associated with the Latin American context within which it was created, it can be applied outside South America and the Catholic context. It can work for any group that seeks a more equitable society and hopes to correct its imbalances and inequity. While Christ sought to be a religious reformer, we are called to look into all elements of society, both religious and secular. We are called to seek out and challenge injustice in all elements of society, and to provide a practical solutions in the here and now.

Liberation Theology seeks Justice. It aims to inform religious and secular practice at a local level by examining Christ's mission and teaching. It fuses practical action and Christology to improve the lot of those who come from below. It is a Theology that has been criticised by some as being an overly romantic, and being a Marxist theology that over emphasises the poor at the expense of other elements of society. Yet Liberation Theology still resonates around the world, and provides practical solutions to the world's problems.

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Management

SoFiA now has a NEW BANK ACCOUNT (with Westpac).

A/c Name: Sea of Faith in Australia Inc

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Review

Digitalia

This is the Editor's review of what is happening on the SoFiA website, the SoFiAblog, sofiatalk and Facebook. See the SoFiA website www.sof-in-australia.org for instructions and links on how to access sofiatalk and the SoFiA Facebook page.

SoFiA website www.sof-in-australia.org My eye landed on a telling quote from a David Marr in the Guardian Australia 5 February 2016, reported In *Religion News*. Marr started his article on the child sex abuse Royal Commission with: "The Cardinal won't be coming. It's his heart."

SoFiA blog at: www.sof-in-australia.org/blog.php (also accessible from the website) Starting from a news item on "Do Christians and Muslims worship the same god", Greg Spearritt posted an article of his from 2008, which was an interesting read. But I still couldn't make sense of the initial question.

Facebook Sea of Faith in Australia A whimsical posting from Jim Norman looked at the incongruity of Tony Abbott - "...a practising...Roman Catholic.." and perhaps a traditional one, calling for an Islamic reformation.

sofiatalk No new postings this time.

In The Gaps

Prejudice, a dirty word, and faith, a clean one, have something in common: they both begin where reason ends.

Jack Finch in Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman*, pp 270-1.

supplied by John Carr

Some reflections on Don Cupitt's *The Revelation of Being*

Judith Bore explains how Don Cupitt's book has spoken to her

If reading for understanding 'life' in its biggest dimensions is one of your pleasures or self-renewing activities then this piece of 'religious writing' could be like receiving a carefully wrapped gift. As you read and open it up, it reveals itself to be a sparkling jewel.

This book is one of two that Don wrote in consequence of a very vivid religious experience in 1997. The first was *The Revelation of Being*. In *The Revelation of Being* he tries to spread out or map the experience: what precipitated it and its product.

So the revelation was not the reception of some ready-made charter as with Moses on Mount Sinai, or a blinding flash with a voice speaking from the sky. It was more like a sudden grasp or understanding of 'The All'. But it was far from being 'just intellectual'.

It came as the writer raised his head and contemplated the view from his study window; not a magnificent landscape, just a small park with people, bicycles and dogs passing through, and traffic noise in the background. And the sun, glinting on leaves and grass, human heads and other smooth surfaces.

He had been re-reading Heidegger and was meditating on three major 'themes': Being, Man (the whole humanly created world of culture, history and science) and Language. This was the ground from which this thrilling insight or vision came; a moment of intense joy and self-emptying.

So we already have two words whose specific meanings have to be grasped through the meaning given to them in this text. To help with this, the book ends with a list of words. Among them is a new coinage, *entostacy* a word in opposition to ecstasy. This is to highlight that the experience drew him, not out of himself and the world, but into the world of which he is a part. The meditation starts within the

ontology/existentialism of Heidegger, moves through to the philosophy of language and ends in a contemplative state that allows a new truth to emerge.

This 'contemplative state'; what is it? Is it the state which meditation aims to achieve? The religious contemplative might describe it as a 'waiting on'; the deliberate but relaxed focusing of the attention. It is the attitude of the scientist who observes the physical phenomena of the world. It is the attitude of the musician and the artist when they are free of concern about their own performance and so can allow inner creativity to operate with abandonment.

In religion this is called humility, or the art of not knowing. For the poet John Keats it was "negative capability". One psychoanalyst called it "being free of both desire and memory". Michael Leunig talks of "mature innocence", an inner state achieved only when "one has 'cut the cord'", the cord being the tie "to parents, received wisdom" and the superego fashioned in part by them. This is a detachment from one's own already established accepted truths or definitions or knowledge, or at least a distancing from these to allow the possibility of new truth, a new understanding to emerge. For the moment, critique is withheld.

This might seem an easy thing to do, but it is something that is often fiercely resisted. It is the stance taken by parents who are keen to hear what their child has to say, who mostly try to tolerate and 'hear' the child's developing speech and mind. Attentive parents and teachers are often delighted when they hear these first creative thoughts.

In our author's case, a state of sheer bliss and joy coincident with watching the play of light on the objects in his view resulted. But let's be careful. This is joy arising from intense

neurological activity and spreading throughout the body.

Don stresses the point though that this is not an *ecstatic* experience. As noted above ecstatic experience takes one 'out' of one's self, one is beside one's self. The self is hidden in some external object, such as a lover, God or Jesus or an ideology or system or cause. Rather this was an 'entostatic' experience because it brought him back to 'ordinariness', to himself, to the world around him. This return was religious because it brought with it a great love for 'Life', which bound him back to life, his shared life and the oneness of all things. We might say, "Here is Don the religious naturalist."

So why did Don write this book? Simply so the reader can have something of the writer's experience as he follows the 'map'. One reviewer describes it as a spiritual classic.

Each of the three words - Being, Man and Language – receives a chapter's worth of description and elucidation, and then subsequent chapters look at each word in relation to the other two. Further chapters describe some of the qualities this threesome shares: contingency, temporality, co-extensiveness, 'outsidelessness.'

A final chapter meditates on the idea that in these three we have a 'Secular Trinity': a symbol of our human life world with three contributing but 'undisentangleable' aspects, an understanding of which can only be grasped by sustained attention and our own creative imagination.

In his book on William Hazlitt, Maurice Whelan teases out from Hazlitt's writing the latter's careful analysis of mental processes. In the chapter on 'Creative' Imagination', he highlights Hazlitt's description of the mind moving out from itself. This 'moving out' is the mind's essential nature. This is how minds

develop or are created and how they live and nourish themselves. So there is a real sense in which 'mind' is essentially a 'social phenomenon', the development of our 'own minds' being so dependent on the 'milieu' we move in. Of course minds are limited by maturational factors and genetic endowment as well as experience. They are closed in self-protection, and damaged by insult. To have an open mind that is free to explore, one needs a courageous spirit but also milieu that is understanding and empathic.

Somebody said to me recently Don Cupitt was a courageous man but we know from the hints he has given us he has paid a price, and more than one. That 'somebody', Peter Kennedy in Brisbane, has also been a courageous man in developing a community that seeks to be empathic.

Once again Maurice Whelan, a practicing psychoanalyst from Sydney is to be the speaker and participant at a Saturday day seminar at Indigiscapes in Capalaba, and the homilist at the St Mary's in Exile community Mass the same weekend. You may wonder what a psychoanalyst is doing giving a homily in a Mass! The milieu in which both religious thinkers and psychoanalysts move is small but bigger than you may think. Maurice Whelan is also a poet and his 'religious thinking' comes from his appreciation of poetry and literature. In this of course he is a close companion of Don Cupitt, though his tack through the 'sea of faith' is gentler and more elusive at first sight. Rather than being grounded in philosophy it grows from the study of human interactions.

Details of the day seminar are given on page 14. [Ed]

Announcement

Between the Writer & the Reader Number 4
To Infinity and Beyond

a day of words and music with

Maurice Whelan

Saturday 27th February 2016, 8:30am to 3:30pm

The IndigiScapes Centre, 17 Runnymede Rd, Capalaba

Cost: \$120 (\$55 concession) which includes lunch and morning tea.

For catering purposes advance booking is required

“In one of his most famous passages Shakespeare wrote about ‘the lunatic, the lover, and the poet’ and how each made use of their imagination. The lunatic saw evil everywhere; the lover saw confirmation of love everywhere. The poet’s pen gave form to ‘things unknown’ and in doing so glanced from ‘heaven to earth’ and ‘earth to heaven’

People have glanced from earth to heaven for thousands of years. Some see atoms and molecules, others see paradise and gods. Whatever people see has a bearing on how they live their lives. As Shakespeare wisely warned ‘the lunatic, the lover, and the poet are of imagination all compact’. We can slip and glide between being the three.

This talk explores not only how beliefs affect lives, but also how beliefs affect minds. How is a mind shaped by its notion of God, religion, eternity, infinity?

In this talk I will present the thoughts of a few of the numerous people who have glanced in a similar way. I will refer to the thoughts of, among others, Freud, Oskar Pfister, Romain Rolland, Hans Loewald and Karen Armstrong.

Many people who look towards infinity employ a 'rough magic' in their investigations. This talk suggests that poetry with its more subtle magic will help us travel further and when (with Shakespeare) we confront the ‘forms of things unknown, the poet's pen turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name’.”

Maurice Whelan

Registration Form: Bookings to Judith Bore or Pia Hirsch – contact details below.

I wish to attend **Between the Writer and the Reader 4** on Saturday 27th February 2016

Name.....

Address.....

Email.....

I enclose a cheque for

Catering preferences

For further information contact:

Pia Hirsch
3/33 Helen St
Newstead 4006
0422 974 274
piahirsch@icloud.com

Judith Bore
8 Whitehall Ave
Birkdale 4159
3207 5428
judibore@bigpond.net.au

Report

Explore the Jesus Journey
Presentations by John Bodycomb and Lorraine Parkinson
to the
Redcliffe Living the Questions Group
3 October 2015

reported by John Carr

The Living the Questions Group, which includes a number of SoFiA members, has been meeting at Redcliffe for some years. This recent full-day meeting featured presentations by progressive Uniting Church ministers from Melbourne, John Bodycomb and Lorraine Parkinson. John has published a number of books, including *No Fixed Address: Faith as Journey* (2010). Lorraine's books include *The World According to Jesus* (2011); and *Made on Earth: How Gospel Writers Made the Christ* is currently in press.

In the first of John's two sessions, *Twilight of the Gods*, he explored some of the extinct or near-extinct images of God – such as 'the benign old man in the sky' and 'the tinkering conjuror' – and the kinds of roles that a more metaphoric God (an Ultimate Mind') might play, such as 'imagine the possibility of a universe'. In his later session, *Your Eureka Moment*, John explored some expressions of 'New Spirituality'. He acknowledges that he is a panentheist and a follower of Jesus the mystic and Jesus the fighter for social justice. He has been influenced by a wide range of people, including Saint Laurence, Karl Rahner and Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, who practises Dadirri, a form of

Aboriginal meditation focussed on deep listening. (See, for example, <http://www.abc.net.au/site-archive/rural/telegraph/content/2010/s3081764.htm?source=rss> .)

Lorraine's sessions explored key issues in Biblical and church history. In the first presentation, *How did Jesus of Nazareth become Jesus the Christ?*, she systematically traced the events and concepts dealt with in the New Testament and histories from the Epistles to the depictions of 'Imperial Jesus' in 5th century Rome. In her second presentation, *Contradiction and Confusion in the Church*, she contrasted the two Gospels: the Gospel of Jesus and the Gospel of Christ. These are, she asserts, incompatible. The Gospel of Christ led to a theology of fear, leading to the first martyrdom of Christians *by Christians* in the 4th Century, post-Constantine, and to the widespread anti-Semitism culminating in the Holocaust.

The day's program provided an excellent overview of mainstream Progressive Christianity.

For information on the Redcliffe Living the Questions Group, contact Ian and Lesley Brown on browniw5@optusnet.com.au .

Report

Interview With a Gay Imam
on the ABC RN Program *The Religion Report*
Wednesday 3 December 2015.

reported by Robin Ford

This interview on the ABC RN Religion Report was a fascinating insight into progressive Islam. The subject of the interview, Daayiee Abdullah, has

grand plans that you can find on the website for *The Mecca Institute*.

<http://www.mecca-institute.org/> .

Announcement

SoFiA Victoria

LECTURES - Thursdays, 7.30pm. Gold coin donation appreciated.
Lectures are followed by questions, discussion and refreshments.
All viewpoints are welcome.

VENUE: Carlton Library Meeting Room, 667 Rathdowne Street (corner Newry Street), North Carlton. Melways Map: 2B J2.

SoFiA Victoria email - sofmelb@yahoo.com.au

18 February 2016

Carl Turney

Love: Saint Valentine and his Day.

17 March 2016

Ron Suter ([New Life Books & Archaeology](#))

China's First God.

21 April 2016

Jonathan Rutherford (Co-Author, [Beloved Father, Beloved Son](#))

"Early Christianity: From Heavenly Saviour Cult to Roman State Religion."

19 May 2016

Andrew Rooke ([Theosophical Society](#), Pasadena)

"Hermetic Philosophy: A Journey into the Macro and Micro Cosmos."

In The Gaps

Our 2015 conference *Religion in Education* still echoes. Hear the end-of-year speech on education given by Sarah Haynes, Captain of Ravenswood School:

http://www.news.com.au/video/id-s1MDNkeTpZ85t3kJMWSKN9nz1DQq_F7Z/Ravenswood-Captain-Sarah-Haynes-delivers-amazing-graduation-speech

Amongst other things, she said:

"I don't know how to run a school but it seems to me that today's schools are being run more and more like businesses where everything becomes financially motivated, where more value is placed on those who provide good publicity or financial benefits,"

The 18-year-old from Roseville also said that once she became school captain, senior staff would censor her speeches to keep them in line with the school's distinguished image.

supplied by John Carr

Announcement

SoFiA Bus Trip August 2016

from Greg Spearritt

Thank you to those who have responded indicating interest in the 2016 SoFiA Bus Trip to the Central Queensland Sandstone Belt.

As indicated in the past two newsletters, numbers are limited for this trip. We've been able to accommodate all who've expressed interest thus far; at the time of writing there are just two places left. Please contact sof@a1.com.au before

the end of February if you would like to join the expedition.

The adventure is outlined below. If you have signed up already you should have received further instructions by email. These include things you need to do immediately, such as paying deposits and choosing guided tours at Carnarvon Gorge.

Brief Details

The Bus

We are booking a 20-seater coach with air-con and reclinable seats.

The Itinerary in Brief (dates are firm, but the itinerary may change)

Sun 14 Aug - Arrive Toowoomba after lunch; possibly tour a local Indigenous stone arrangement/ceremony site. Overnight at Toowoomba Motor Village (or other arrangements).

Mon 15 Aug - Head for Taroom, stopping at Miles and Wandoan; check out wildflowers at Gurulmundi. Overnight at Taroom.

Tues 16 Aug - Head to Injune, hopefully with input on the Indigenous history of the area. Arrive Carnarvon Gorge mid-afternoon.

Wed 17 Aug - Carnarvon Gorge; choice of activities (see below; book with Greg as required)

Thurs 18 Aug - Head for Roma via Injune

Fri 19 Aug - Return to Toowoomba for (a possibly late-ish) lunch

Guided Tours of Carnarvon Gorge

(1) Wilderness Wander Wander and listen to the birds and the bush. Be introduced to aboriginal rock art, weird and wonderful plants and animals, and how the gorge came to be. See the big four highlights: Art Gallery, Wards Canyon, Amphitheatre, Moss Gardens. Approx. 8.00am - 4.30pm (14 km).

Cost: \$50 adults

(2) Written in the Rocks Go back in time 180 million years and climb through layers of history to the lookout of a lifetime.

Approx. 8.00am - 12.00noon (steep climb of Boolimba Bluff).

Cost: \$30 adults

(3) Guide to the Galaxy No city lights means amazing dark skies and thousands of stars. A state of the art observatory and a star-gazing expert should provide a brilliant experience.

Approx. 1 hr. No walking involved.

Cost: \$25 adults.

More Information

Contact Greg Spearritt

sof@a1.com.au

Report

Maajid Nawaz in Melbourne 29 January 2016

by Cordelia Hull

Maajid Nawaz spoke at Deakin Edge, Melbourne on 29 Jan 2016, an event sponsored by *Think Inc* and to which SoFiA was given complimentary tickets. Colin Johnston and I attended, passing first through a scary security check (scary because it was so perfunctory; the speaker himself would later thank us all for taking the *risk* of attending!)

Nawaz was half an hour late, but was welcomed by interviewer Gerard McCulloch, lead writer for *The Weekly with Charlie Pickering*, who asked Nawaz first for a brief bio. Born in Essex 38 years ago to liberal Muslim parents, Nawaz had never fully identified as British. Rather, stirred by the focus on 'identity' reflected in the lyrics of hip-hop rap, and deeply affected by the Bosnian genocide in the 1990s, he became a radical Islamist.

The term 'Islamist' needed unpacking. Not all conservative, or even all fundamentalist, Muslims are Islamists, he said. Any Islamist wants to see Islamic theocracy / Sharia Law established in the world but Nawaz explained there are three types: the political Islamist (those who are content to simply vote it in); the revolutionary Islamist (those wanting to stage a coup to effect it) and thirdly, the terrorist Islamist (those who are prepared to impose it on everyone by force).

In his days as an Islamist, Nawaz saw himself in the second (revolutionary) camp but his activities still earned him four years in an Egyptian prison (2002 -2006), during which time he was adopted by Amnesty as a 'political prisoner', which might surprise some people. He was a radical Islamist for ten years altogether and during that time, he claims there was a shift from Islamism being on the fringe of Islam to it becoming more of the default position, something he is now working to reverse.

He explained how after those ten years as a radical Islamist, he 'grew up' (his words) and decided that theocracy was not such a good idea

after all. With Ed Husain, he co-founded an organisation called *Quilliam* which has as its motto 'Challenging Extremism, Promoting Pluralism, Inspiring Change'.

Nawaz believes there are four steps in becoming a terrorist. First, in the mind of an individual, there is some kind of grievance (real or perceived). Then, based on that grievance, the person undergoes an identity crisis. Thirdly, a recruiter steps in to provide 'solutions' to the grievance then, ultimately, these 'solutions' provide the ideological basis for the Islamist to turn to terrorism.

So, Grievance, Identity Crisis, Recruiter, Ideology. Four steps, but not a logical progression. Everyone has some kind of grievance at some stage in their lives, Nawaz emphasised, but it does not have to lead to terrorism. There are more logical solutions, and that fact can be revealed to the potential terrorist.

Nawaz also claims that even an 'illogical' progression towards terrorism can be interrupted. Legitimate grievances should be addressed, he suggested. I would have liked him to give more details here. I believe the Palestinian situation is a very real grievance for many people, not just for radical Islamists, but I can't see this grievance being addressed by Israeli policy-makers anytime soon. But Nawaz is optimistic. He also believes identity crises in individuals can be turned around, which in turn undermines the recruiter.

Nawaz is hopeful we can move forward to what he termed 'omni-culturalism', a form of multiculturalism that is underpinned by shared parameters such as the rule of law and basic human rights. Again, my scepticism was rising. If one firmly believes that God is in charge, I thought, how can you put the laws and rights of mere *humans* ahead of that? But there were yet more signs of Nawaz' enthusiasm for his cause. He thinks, for example, that the notion of the

Qur'an having a number of interpretations could become widely accepted, the way we accept that Shakespeare's plays have various interpretations.

Towards the end of his talk, Nawaz spoke of the 'Regressive Left'. These are people who condemn all manner of inequities when it involves their own religion or culture, but will not condemn the same thing in another group (eg in Islam) for fear of being labelled Islamophobic or racist. In fact, the Regressive Left are being just

that. They imply that *they* are too good to do those things, but that other group, well...that's up to *them*. So Nawaz's final task was to exhort *everyone*, not just Muslims, to 'call out' terrorism.

He wants *everyone* to stand together against it. There is no *extra* duty on Muslims to do this, he said, just as there is no *extra* duty on gays to call out homophobia or on women to call out sexism. It was up to *all* of us to call out *all* social ills.

Review

Ethics in the Last Days of Humanity
by Don Cupitt, Polebridge Press, 2016

reviewed by John Gunson

Don Cupitt is now in his 80s, and this is his 51st book. A reading of it gives the impression that it may well be his last. It is a slim volume (112 pages); he calls it an essay. Written conversationally rather than academically, it makes easy reading.

The book contains very little that is new in Cupitt's thinking, but rather weaves most of his established themes into an essay on how we might best confront humanity's last days — the impending tragedy that the human species has brought upon itself and upon this world. He cites: resource depletion, desertification, chemical pollution, overpopulation, destruction of the natural environment, failed nation states, predatory militias, desperate refugees, breakdown of social morality, political paralysis, and above all climate change.

In attempting a solution, interestingly, he draws upon some Biblical themes, including the concept of eschatology or the last days (redefined), and the Jesus way (re-discovered). "There is", he says,

no book which, like this one, is interested in the way in which our current debates echo ancient religious anxieties about the 'end of the world', or which asks why most people seem unable to treat the topic with sustained seriousness.

So he examines the key trends in history — religious, cultural, intellectual, philosophical,

ethical — in order to understand and interpret the present and the future.

His solution is humanitarianism (or humanitarian ethics). In the Bible this is associated with eschatology, which projects a future 'blessed age' imposed by God. But as we are now living in the last age of humanity, he believes, and everything 'out there' in which we have sought to ground our ethics — God, religion, tradition, nature, society — is no longer credible, we must ground ethics in ourselves. Christianity is gone. The human Jesus is all we have left. And, he says, for Jesus life was about 'solar living'; it was to be spent (not saved) in a wholehearted commitment to this life and this world now.

This is a fascinating interpretation of and approach to our current and future crisis, and I guess it is what one would expect from an academic philosopher of religion.

But, if, as Cupitt declares, God and religion are long gone, (and philosophy, or at least metaphysics, is now an academic, if not irrelevant, luxury), why look for what he calls a "religious" response?

Further, while Cupitt proposes an ethical (solar) solution, his approach seems to me to be essentially pessimistic. I share his basic pessimism or sadness about the human species and the current state of the world, but I espouse (in my book) what I call "the cliff edge" theory, that the human species will take us to the brink before

reacting, and in the end draw back before it is too late.

Cupitt finished the book before the recent Paris climate change conference. I think he would now be surprised (and I'm sure delighted) by this first major sign of hope, well ahead of his expectations, and those of most of us.

Finally, I have always had an objection to Cupitt's use of the word 'religion/religious' and his discussion of language. With 'religion' I understand what he is trying to do, but this is not the common usage of the word, and only serves to confuse. And only a philosopher could say that we create the world with our language. Again, in his earlier writings his use of Wittgenstein and

Derrida is a useful correction to traditional ways of thinking. But for most of us it is more helpful to say that our language and our use of it creates and limits our world view. A large brain and sophisticated vocabulary are what differentiate us from other animals. These tools enable us to name the world and hence to manipulate, understand and manage it, not 'create' it. So we need to (and indeed we do) constantly create new language appropriate to our new knowledge of the world, and we need always to carefully define the words we choose to use.

But in the end, as always, Don Cupitt's words are worth the read.

In The Gaps

The Dog Ate My Homework

Robin Ford's excuses for late publication of this Bulletin

"Why go to England in Winter?" friends asked.

"For the low winter sun, watery blue skies and bare trees." I replied.



Garden
Hampton Court



Ice-skating rink
Hampton Court

On Being an Atheist

By Greg Spearritt

In some quarters, at least, atheism seems to have a bad name. In the minds of many it conjures the combative and contrarian spirit of Dawkins and Dennett.

The Psalmist famously avers that "the fool says in his heart there is no God", though it seems he was really talking about wickedness rather than disbelief. Arguably, too, the writer was casting aspersions on believers and unbelievers alike, since he goes on to say, "All have turned aside... there is no one who does good, not even one." Not a glass-half-full kind of guy. And not, in the present context, grist for our mill.

Robert Dessaix in *What Days Are For* tells us that,

... atheists define 'God' and declare that this entity doesn't exist... Trying to be an atheist strikes me as a real fool's errand, as foolish as hunting the snark, an endeavour that can end very badly indeed, we might recall, if the snark we're hot on the trail of is a boojum, in which case, like the baker in Lewis Carroll's poem, we might 'softly and suddenly vanish away, and never be met with again.' We have been warned.

I admire much of Dessaix's writing, but for my own case of atheism this is codswallop. He's right, of course, about atheists vanishing, never to be met with again, but that fate awaits us all, atheists or not. I haven't met too many dog-loving believers who really think their beloved Fido will survive death, so why should people? Sorry to break it to you so baldly, but people are animals too. And any genuine dog-loving believer knows dogs have 'souls'.

My beef with Dessaix's careless prose on this subject is that I have never 'tried to be' an atheist, and I don't go around 'declaring' that God doesn't exist. My lack of belief is not my fault at all; it wasn't a choice. The more I learned about religion and religions, the more God faded away like the Cheshire Cat until I came to realise He (She/It) was gone.

I'm of the view that the only philosophically respectable position is agnosticism. Nonetheless, I'm happy to call myself an atheist because it just rings true for me that there's No One There. Other than in a very abstract philosophical sense I'm not agnostic about fairies or goblins either – with A.C. Grayling, I'm an 'afairyist' and an 'agoblinist' as well as 'atheistic'.

Further, I call myself a 'materialist'. Clearly there are 'spiritual' realities – love, generosity, aesthetic appreciation, hatred and so on – but I'd argue these are by-products of our axons and synapses. That is not the same, please note, as saying they're unimportant.

I've seen a number of purported evidences of the supernatural nature of reality, but I have yet to find one compelling. For example, I was involved in a spiritualist reading once where the dead were lining up (apparently) to talk to those gathered. It was as clear a case of 'cold reading' as I could imagine, with the 'psychic' making guesses and dropping the mis-hits like hot potatoes, while assiduously following up on naïve/honest self-revelations that were in any way closer to the mark. Unfortunately there was no-one waiting to talk to me that night. Perhaps those on the other side were pissed off with my sceptical attitude.

To be sure, there are stories of uncanny events for which I have no explanation. If anecdotes were evidence, however, we'd be back in the sixteenth century (or in 21st century Papua New Guinea) putting witches to death. And there are plenty of things we have yet to learn about the world/reality.

If we're talking about the nature of reality, though, or about the reality of 'God' (whatever that word means), my bottom line is the scientific method. It is our best means of preventing us from fooling ourselves. Before you object that God is not graspable by science, please acknowledge that many claims about Him/Her

can in fact be subjected to science. God heals is one such instance. Many claim that Jesus fixes bad backs and mystery diseases. This is the view for example, of those at the 'Jesus Tent of Miracles' which has pitched from time-to-time in Toowoomba's Queen's Park. However, there is no clear evidence from reputable scientific trials, that ailments can be rectified by prayer (though the power of the god Placebo is well recognised in the literature). And to be blunt, all the evidence, to boot, suggests that God hates amputees. When did you last hear of someone or some creature, other than a salamander perhaps, growing a limb through faith in Jesus? (see <http://whywontgodhealamputees.com/> for

more.). Similar arguments apply to messages from the dead, water divining and the power of crystals.

Atheism, then, even when informed by science, need not rule out some of what we have come to know as religious or spiritual attitudes. I love sunsets, human kindness and (some kinds of) art as much as the next man or woman.

I will continue to be open to genuine evidence, and if it requires me to change my mind, that's what I'll do. In fact, I'll do it without conscious choice, since we don't choose what we believe ('belief' here in the sense of 'what rings true' rather than allegiance to something). Who knows? I might even be a 'theist' again one day.

Epilogue

Where To For Sofia?

Recent Bulletins have included reflections on possible futures for the Sea of Faith in Australia. Here are reflections from Bob Dungavell.

I am very grateful to John Gunson for his contribution in the November/December issue of the Bulletin

My own thoughts are similar to those expressed by John as to his future membership and the future of Sofia.

The immediate response to John's article was "Why did I join in the first place?" A copy of the NSW UC Journal came across the border to Coolangatta, and it contained an invitation to hear a lecture by Bishop Spong at Albert Street Uniting Church in Brisbane. Judith Bore's name was given as the one to whom requests for bookings should be made, and Judith said "Would you be interested in coming to a Sofia meeting?" Barbara and I did and we attended Brookfield meetings for some months then we both became foundation members of the Gold Coast Group.

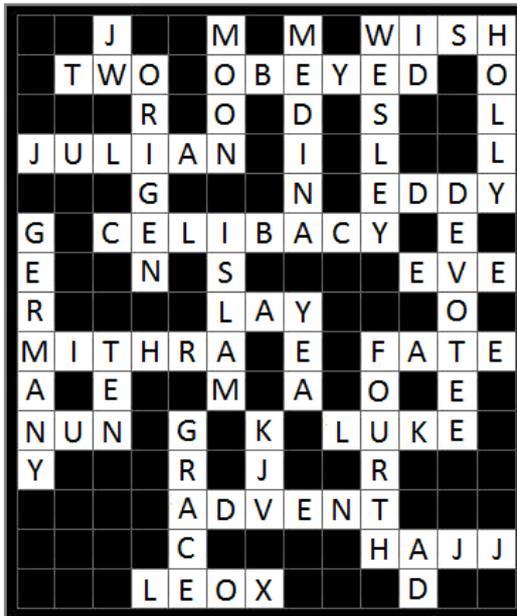
In hindsight, Sofia was a transition vehicle for me. I changed from being a very active

member of a Christian denomination to being an atheist. Actually, I describe myself to my friends as an "apprentice atheist" as I know far less about atheism than I do about Christianity.

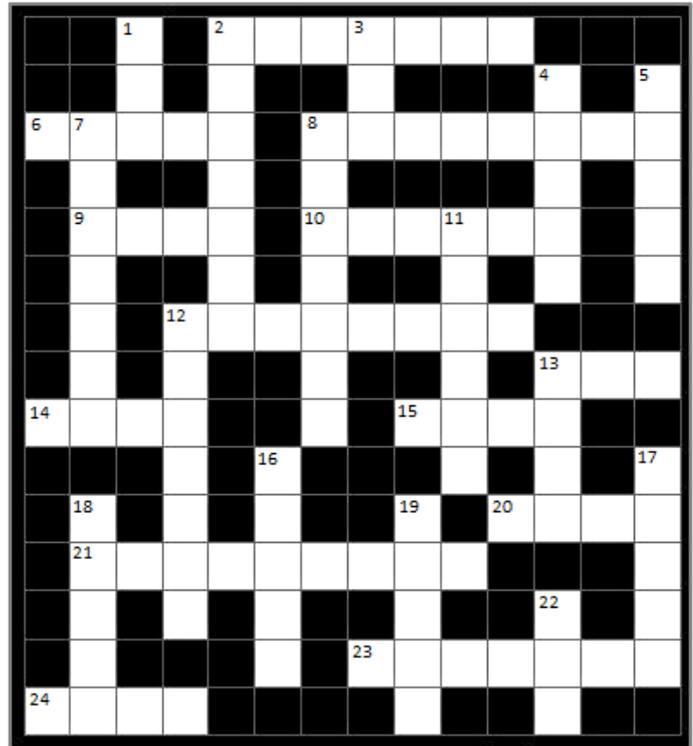
When I decided to cease being a member of my congregation, a fellow member of the Finance Committee, said "Why?". My reply was that I could no longer in honesty recite the Apostle's Creed.

My pronunciation of Sofia has always been "Sufire". I am willing to admit that I have lost some of my 'fire', but I no longer feel I have to continue attending conferences and group meetings to maintain a useful life in the community. Barbara and I will continue our membership for the time being and receive the Journal which has always been interesting and helpful. Sofia friends we have made will, I hope, remain friends regardless of whether we remain members.

SoFiA Crossword #20



SoFiA Crossword #21 Prepared by Greg Spearritt



Across

- 2. Relating to knowledge, especially esoteric mystical knowledge
- 6. Group of traditional church fellowships of Swiss Anabaptist origin which focuses on simple living
- 8. The Greater Vehicle (Buddhism)
- 9. The biblical sixth hour
- 10. Teachings of the Buddha (among many other meanings)
- 12. Predestination
- 13. Liturgical vestment (Christianity)
- 14. Central Catholic act of worship
- 15. One who dispels darkness
- 20. Phoenician deity/false god
- 21. Five-pointed star (Wicca)
- 23. The tower located beside a mosque
- 24. Supplicate

Down

- 1. Chinese energy force
- 2. Destination of the wicked (Hebrew)
- 3. Extant female Anglican religious order founded in 1892 in Brisbane (init.)
- 4. Civilisation known for human sacrifice
- 5. Father
- 7. Religious/ritual diagram or pattern symbolically representing the cosmos
- 8. The Hebrew use of allegory and narrative to fill gaps in sacred text
- 11. Place of worship
- 12. A common abstinence practice
- 13. Spiritual emanation (supposedly) surrounding the body
- 16. Set of objects often manipulated for religious purposes
- 17. Chosen
- 18. Port on the Red Sea used by King Solomon to bring in gold (e.g. 1 Kings 9:28)
- 19. The use of blessings, spells etc. to change event outcomes
- 22. Founder of Dianetics (init.)

Sea of Faith in Australia

promoting the open exploration of issues of religion, faith and meaning

SoFiA publishes a bi-monthly bulletin. It organises conferences, public lectures and regional meetings. Through its website it maintains an archive of articles and a blog. It also runs email discussion groups.

Contact: mail: **PO Box 1309 UPWEY Vic. 3158**, email: **sofnetwork@gmail.com**
 web: **www.sof-in-australia.org**, blog: **www.sof-in-australia.org/blog.php**

Brisbane Acacia Ridge 3rd Sunday, 7.30pm. Contact: Rodney Eivers (07 3273 2049)

Brisbane Brookfield 1st Sunday, 7.30pm. Contact: Helen Mason (07 3870 8565)

Brisbane Bayside 3rd Monday. Contact: Judith Bore (07 3207 5428)

Brisbane CBD 2nd Sunday, 1pm to 2.30pm. Contact: Rachel Matthews (07 3217 9301 or 0408 193 872)

Chinchilla 1st & 3rd Thursday nights. Contact: Glen Beasley (07 4662 7738)

Gold Coast 3rd Sunday, 2pm. Contact: Eva and Keith Duggan (07 5571 5375)

Melbourne 3rd Thursday, 7.30pm at the Carlton Library. Contact: David Miller (03 9467 2063).

Rockhampton 'Explorers' Fortnightly. Contact: Dick and Mary Oxborrow (07 4926 2178).

Sunshine Coast Contact: Marion Kleinberg (07 5479 0905)

Sydney Irregularly somewhere in the CBD. Contact: Lyndell and Robin Ford (02 9427 7078)

Toowoomba Monthly on a Monday night. Contact: Jed Perkins (07 4632 0626)

Sea of Faith in Australia Inc.: Membership Application/Renewal

Name(s).....

Address.....

Email.....Phone number.....

SoFiA supplies names and contact details to state coordinators/local group conveners for advising about network activities. Please tick if you do not want your contact details disclosed

Membership category	Paper Bulletin	Email Bulletin	Amount, \$
Individual	\$35	\$20	
Concession individual	\$25	\$20	
Couple (one copy of the Bulletin)	\$45	\$30	
Donation			
Total to be paid on line, (BSB 032 085 A/c 446904 ref your name) or cheque (payable to SoFiA).			

Signature.....