

NATIONAL UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP

NEWSLETTER



Issue 409

September 2013



SPECIAL FEATURE – PAGE 10

A GRUMPY OLD WOMAN AND AUSTRALIA

*In the flow of religious thought and practice,
Unitarians represent openness and inquiry in the spiritual quest*

Reg. Charity No. 1040294

Secretary's Notes

Ken Smith

Anniversaries are important. I dare not overlook my wedding anniversary in a few days' time and need to make sure it is celebrated in the appropriate way. Many Unitarians have already been celebrating an important anniversary in our collective history - the repeal in 1813 of the acts which had hitherto made the holding of Unitarian views illegal. Our 'founding fathers' in the eighteenth century are usually described as Presbyterians, as to openly deny the Doctrine of the Trinity was to contravene the Blasphemy Act of 1698.

The legislation of 1813 did not remove all the obstacles for Unitarians; it was not until 1844 that a further act upheld the right of Unitarians to use many of the buildings in which they worshipped free of legal challenge. Our religious freedom was not easily won and there are still occasional instances of Unitarians being ostracised from the events and activities of local church councils.

Our President Bill Darlison recently urged that we need to constantly examine our concept of religious freedom – do we uphold the right to belief of those whose convictions are uncongenial to us and are there limits to religious tolerance? These can be uncomfortable questions; perhaps you have views that you might like to share on this topic ?

Anniversaries can underline how much life has changed over time. Our Unitarian forbears might struggle to recognise our modern movement as being in a line of descent from theirs just as looking back to one's wedding pictures can underline the passing of the years. Did I really wear those awful flared trousers and jackets with those wide lapels?

I hope the summer sun continues to shine for you.

Elizabeth Barlow writes, in response to Peter Zone's article in the July issue of the Newsletter, that the Motion about signage outside Essex Hall was only withdrawn because the Executive had already agreed to put something up.

President's Page

Rev. Bob Pounder

Dear Friends,

One of my weekly visits is a local care home for elderly people. There I go to see my good friend, and former NUF President, Dorothy Archer. I also get to observe at close hand the predominantly female workforce who ensure the total care of all the residents. These women, there are some men as well, work extremely hard in their long hours of duty giving round the clock care to their mostly disabled clients. These women often have young families to look after, other caring responsibilities waiting for them when they arrive home. They are paid the minimum wage, their lives are far from easy but they just get on with it

A very large proportion of the home's inhabitants are suffering from dementia. Help with washing, feeding and assistance with very personal and private needs is often required. Freshly ironed laundry is taken to each person's room and hung in the wardrobe or neatly stowed in drawers. There is a knock on the door as I sit with Dorothy enjoying our weekly chat, the door opens and a cup of tea and biscuits are cheerfully brought in. The staff are constantly on the go, with an eye on the time, preparing for meal times and rushing from one room to the next answering the summons of each resident who needs help with one personal requirement or another.

It's when I visit the care home that I am brought face to face with the fact that women in the caring professions and as mothers and carers are carrying a massive burden and disproportionate responsibility to the world. I have also noted the recent controversy concerning the representation of women on bank notes. It seems so obvious that any good person of prominence regardless of sex should be considered as worthy candidates for this honour. Of course women should be represented on bank notes. The Queen is pictured there but we are told that is only because of an accident of birth. Then again; neither Elizabeth Fry nor Jane Austen was born into poverty! Nevertheless, both deserve recognition.

In *The Guardian*, Zoe Williams wrote: "We couldn't live in a society that was only prepared to celebrate the achievements of men." Very true but spare a thought for that vast army of women (and men) whose work is underpaid, undervalued, taken for granted, and unrecognised but which without the rest of us could not live.

From Our Minister

Rev. Tony McNeile

I felt that the Guides were turning in our Unitarian direction when they proposed to change their promise so that it excludes any reference to God and country.

The proposal has upset many people. So instead of vowing to “love my God” as they do now, the half a million British Brownies and Girl Guides will soon promise instead “to be true to myself and develop my beliefs”.

One critic said removing God was evacuating the promise of its meaning and the proposed new promise was just ‘vacuous nonsense’.

The Guide laws still say a Guide is honest, reliable, trustworthy, helpful, a good friend, polite, considerate, uses her time wisely and learns from her experiences. She respects all living things and takes care of the world around her.

It is not an issue for the Scouts as they have versions of the promise that members of other faiths can say.

It is a long time since I was a Scout but the feelings of loyalty were on a par with what I had felt in the Army. It was about being formally accepted and then feeling that we belonged to a special group. It raised our opinion of ourselves. We believed that ours was the best Scout Group and we enjoyed the rivalry with all the other groups. It was the same in the Army. There was a hierarchy of loyalties - your Regiment first and foremost and within that the company and groups within it.

The organisation sets the standards and all the little parts of it are signed up to them and proud to belong. All the positives were unwritten. The colours meant something; the uniform and badges meant something; loyalty to one another meant something; performing well meant something.

I am sure the Guides will continue to thrive in what the critic called a Promise made up of content free language, because they still have the spirit of their laws to live by.

Unitarians do not even have a promise. There are no laws of membership. But see them together and you get a sense of the spirit of those unwritten meanings in their lives.

Worship Piece

'Knock and the door will be opened', says the scripture. There is a famous painting of the Good Shepherd standing by that door with his lantern - a beacon for searching souls. Is it a doorway in - or a doorway out? Who knows?

That door is something to think upon, to meditate about. It becomes a mandala in the mind that challenges the inner spirit, first to review a life situation and secondly to take action.

If life is not as it should be, which way should the door turn? Sometimes we ourselves hold the door closed, not letting in what should be in. Old anger, old prejudices, old hurts are the memories used to keep that door shut.

And sometimes we dare not open it ourselves nor go through to something new - a new life, a new way of being ourselves, a journey to forgive, a journey to accept.

And sometimes it is this side of the door which is paradise after all but the eyes were being dazzled by a light they could not see and a dream that was just a dream.

Knock and the door will be opened to a better life by you.

Prayer

Let me pray for someone else. Someone who is known to me. Think of them, send them blessings, empathise with the challenges and struggles of their lives, celebrate their successes. Pray that what they wish for may bring them the rewards they expect. Bring them into the circle of people I pray for.

Let me pray for that person I do not know, that no one seems to know, who suffers the trials of life alone and is often swamped by them. Give them a place in the circle of people I pray for.

Let me pray for myself, that I can focus on the needs of others without thinking how it affects my life, may I try not to manage their lives as if they were my own.

May the circle of people I pray for always be full and my prayer put love and energy into it. And may I be grateful for the source of my own well being.

Storybook Soldiers

Rev. Tony McNeile

Personal Video Messages Home and Video Bedtime Stories. Storybook Soldiers provides a link between parents who are deployed in Afghanistan and their children. Soldiers are recorded reading a bedtime story for their children. Afterwards, music and sound effects are added by trained volunteer editors. The story CD is sent to the child who can listen to it, not just at bedtime but on car journeys and at other times of the day. Storybook Soldiers was set up at the beginning of 2007 by Kirsty Alderson and Rosemary Meeke, who work in the Army Education Centre in Tidworth.

The scheme is now available across the Army and has been copied by the Royal Navy and the RAF.

Storybook Soldiers is in partnership with "Storybook Dads", a registered charity formed in 2002 and based at Dartmoor Prison. Since being set up, Storybook Dads has won a huge number of awards, including "Charity of the Year 2007".

UKUTV Update

Joan Wilkinson

The camera team continue to be busy. You can find added material on the UKUTV website at: www.ukunitarian.tv .

The 'Why I became a Unitarian' short clips are proving popular with viewers and hopefully will be one more way of promoting the movement. James Barry filmed his reason for being a Unitarian outdoors and it was so good that it was included on the front page of the NUF website: www.nufonline.org.uk as our August devotional piece. Other congregations have followed this example on their individual websites. The NUF have now archived the video on the website but it can also be accessed at: <http://vimeo.com/71190915>. Could members consider writing 500 words maximum for the Newsletter but answering two questions: 'Why did you become a Unitarian?' and 'Why have you remained a Unitarian?'. I would like to publish these in the Newsletter and perhaps use some of the words for publicity, with your permission.

The Cactus Flower

Louise Rogers

I am not much of a gardener but I have always liked houseplants. It's a seventies thing. I remember growing baby spider plants and cutting bits of busy lizzies to grow some more. I have even been known to read books about houseplants.

My nephew, who is now 25, liked cacti. I bought him one some years ago but it never got to him. I don't particularly like the spiky varieties of cactus but I can't bear to get rid of plants if they are healthy. So I kept it in various places around the house and latterly on one of my kitchen window sills. I occasionally water it and have a quick word. All of my conversations with plants are quite superficial, 'How are you today?' or 'Are you thirsty' or 'Do you need a bigger pot?' But I do recognise their existence and I am grateful for their presence in my home.

At the weekend I noticed a rather ugly arm which had grown out of my cactus. It was beige with brown hairs on. What was I supposed to do? I supposed that letting it do its thing i.e. be a cactus, would probably be the best thing. So I left it alone and almost forgot about it. This morning, as I entered the kitchen, I noticed a new addition at the end of the ugly arm, the most beautiful, pink flower. It entranced me.

My life has been a little hard of late. I have struggled to find work over the past six months and have struggled to see the beauty in the harshness of life as I have received rejections to job applications and interviews. This miraculous flower and its host enlightened my soul, telling me that something beautiful will come from my current hardships. It made my soul sing. I took some photos and put them onto my Facebook page and it also brought joy to many of my friends. Here it is for you to wonder at.

From a prickly home
The stranger reached out off'ring
Succulent beauty.



September : The Château of Saumur 1416

[written after looking at a facsimile of the Duc de Berry's 'Les Très Riches Heures']

Commanding the landscape from its place on a hill, the chateau lifts into the sky slim turrets, crowned by golden fleur de lys, symbols of privilege and power. Intricate invention of white stone and dove grey slate, a castle sugar-spun by a master patissier's art, with a quiet about it, shimmering in the noon day as if it were enchanted, goblin made in silvered thistle down. Ladies eat honeycakes, their lords make games of war, the empty tiltyard echoes with whispers of taffeta and silk, and the thud of steel cold lance on leather shield.

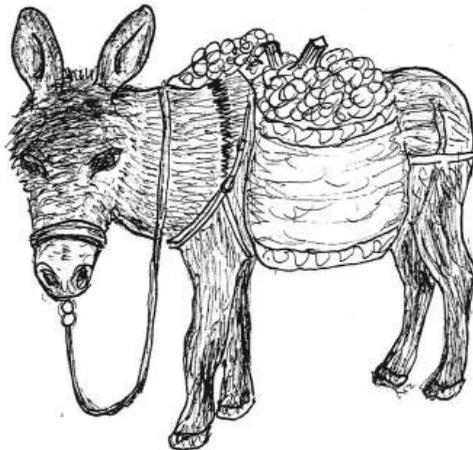
Lords joust, ladies play, but peasants all must work. Servants, baskets on head, climb the gatehouse path; in the field below a woman rests, apron lifted high by her swollen belly; a hungry man, seizing a bunch of ripe fruit, eats and takes his ease as best he can. Bent double over bloom coated purple grapes, grim faced gatherers, muscles aching, joints protesting, toil on, while meek panniered donkeys rest patient beneath their heavy burdens, and gentle eyed oxen draw high stocked carts through the hot afternoon.

Subservient to a lord, whose great château itself mirrors his royal rank and wealth, but accustomed to their lowly appointed place, beast and peasant *mutely* submit, helpless in a divinely ordered world. Their lord's free men now - but poor menials still, they must for ever toil in another man's vineyard, serve at another man's table, dreaming of the day when each will make his own wine and his wife bake her own bread. Dreaming is cheap, but hope is sometimes blind and freedom may not be a gift.

There is an irony in this masterpiece of vellum, lapis and gold, this holy book of devotions made for the brother of a king, who nightly whispers his reverent Kyrie, eleison to an all forgiving God, while free men weep in the cold for their dying children. Poor men may be free but not escape the serfdom of poverty; a rich man's self-content may divorce him from his lord's command 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Who will be a lady then, who can be a lord in the fellowship of that bright celestial dawning, if all shall be ruled by ourlove, each for one another?

Amen. So may it be.

Naomi Linnell



A Grumpy Old Woman and Australia

Pat Caddick

There aren't many advantages to getting old, but being a grumpy old woman is one of them. My two sisters and I, when we meet together like the three witches in Macbeth, delight in hubbling and bubbling, putting the world to rights and saying exactly what we think. With increasing years comes increased life experience, wisdom (it's about time we ruled the world), and the ability to reflect on change: on the grand sweep of history from our youth to now; on the amazing technical advances of the last century – communication, medicine, computers etc.; on changes in attitude to race, religion and sexuality; and on the ability to laugh at how we are now 'the elders' at whom our nieces and nephews laugh for being old fashioned and not with it. Our grump-ing of course doesn't always see change in a positive light and we continue to stir the cauldron gleefully.

So what has this got to do with Australia you might ask. Well, this year we decided to spend some of the said nieces' and nephews' inheritance on an extended trip to Australia, while the Grim Reaper isn't making too many swishes in our direction. This afforded an interesting reflection on changes such as mentioned above, which have taken place since our first trip down under in 1967 on the £10.0 scheme.

When we left England for Tasmania, our parents thought they would never see us again; the world was not the global village that it is now. It took 3 days to fly there in an old plane with propellers, necessitating several stops for re-fuelling, and on arrival we were sprayed with some sort of insect-repellent before being allowed to disembark. In customs, one couple had their copy of the Kamasutra confiscated!

Australian culture was very macho and my being a dentist was a sure conversation stopper. The swinging 60s had not reached God's Own then, so I caused quite a stir in my mini skirt and by going into pubs with John. Women were not supposed to stray from the kitchen or to hold an opinion of their own. In the fond hope of controlling excessive drinking, the pub's had to close at 6.00 pm, but this led to what was known as the 6 o'clock swill, when the bars heaved with men downing as much beer as they could before the dead line. Hugely civilised – not.

We did not have a phone in our flat (no mobiles, no internet) and I had to book a call from a public call box to my mum's neighbour (no phone in our home in Crewe), in order to speak to my sister on her wedding day. We didn't

have a T.V or radio either in the flat, so had to read books or listen to our Beatles records on a gramophone, in our free time.

In our holidays we explored what we thought of as a large part of Australia, but when we looked at a map, it was miniscule. We camped mostly, sleeping in a tiny tent which collapsed on us once in a gale, vastly different from our recent holiday when we were in very up-market camp sites, in tents or cabins which had en-suites! A reminder of the fact that we were in the outback, was that we had to remember to put the lavatory lid down after use so that local creatures such as frogs, couldn't get in. There was one morning however when I found the loo full of ants ...

We had chosen the Kimberley in the north west of Western Australia, as the focal point of this last holiday, and were part of a very friendly group of Aussies on the same tour. No misogyny this time, but everyone on an equal footing. We did afford them some amusement by seeking the sun at every opportunity, while they sought the shade. The Brits are thus readily identifiable!

We had to rise at 5.00 am every morning so that we were on the coach by 7.00 am and on the road. In two weeks we covered over 2,000 miles. This was a small price to pay however for the magnificent scenery that we experienced. We walked through gorges, canyons, and rivers; we saw tremendous waterfalls (Mitchell Plateau), Aboriginal cave drawings and ancient burial sites; we flew over massive rocky out-crops in helicopters and stayed in ranches managing land of a million acres with 10,000 heads of cattle. We also walked close to fresh water crocodiles (not harmful to humans) basking on riverbanks and saw many species of birds quite different from our home varieties.



Our flight to Australia this time was by jet, in business class, sipping champagne en route. We weren't decontaminated on arrival and there was no interest in our reading material, just whether we were carrying explosives! Australia is now a sophisticated cosmopolitan country, in marked contrast with the 'back of beyond' culture we encountered all those years ago and it was interesting to be able to reflect personally on that particular country's historical changes.

So old age has the tremendous advantages of leisure to remember and reflect; to spend our hard earned money as we wish; and to carry on grumping for as long as we can!

Fifty Years of The Golden Treasury

Ken Smith

Do you read the Bible? Often called ‘the world’s most unread bestseller’, the Unitarian edited selection known as *The Golden Treasury of the Bible* by Rev. Dr. Mortimer Rowe was last published by the Lindsey Press in 1963. That it is no longer in print at its golden jubilee¹ is perhaps a comment in itself on the importance that many Unitarians attach to the value of the Christian scriptures. Fifty years ago many more Unitarians were of the Liberal Christian persuasion than appears to be the case now. It was customary in most Unitarian churches for the first reading in a service to be taken from the Old or New Testament, a practice that is no longer to be found in many places.

So it was especially interesting to hear Bill Darlison state at last year’s NUF meeting at Keele University that he had regularly read through the entire Bible. (see Bill’s article *Book Believers* in VP 223 June 2012). However it is not only among Unitarians that the primacy of the Bible has diminished; although Anglican and Roman Catholic churches still have a Lectionary, a calendar which appoints specific from the Old Testament, Epistles and Gospels to be read at its various services, preaching from the Bible in an expository manner has faded away except in churches with a strongly evangelical flavour. It would surprise me if more than a small proportion of worshippers leaving church on a Sunday morning regularly read the Bible in any systematic way.

Many years ago I heard the view expressed that many people had been *inoculated* against the Bible by only ever hearing small extracts read in church services; for just as vaccines carry a small amount of the virus *against* which they offer protection, so without ever really grasping the vast expanse of the Scriptural ‘forest’, many have encountered only ‘twigs’ from a few selected trees and have never taken in the big picture. No one would derive much benefit from seeing the plays of Shakespeare, performed a scene at a time at weekly intervals. So the first requirement for an appreciation of the Bible is to read *plenty* of it – not just a few verses, but at least a complete book! Suggested reading plans are given at the end of this article.²

Just as reading Shakespeare will bring you up against vocabulary and turns of phrase that will puzzle you (and sometimes mislead you), so it is with the Bible – a commentary is almost as essential to the serious bible reader as proper footwear is to the serious walker. There are several one-volume commentaries that will be a good companion to the text.³

The *Golden Treasury of the Bible* is a sympathetically edited text. In the Old Testament Rowe aims to preserve ‘what is best and most enduring in the religious history of Israel’, although he ignores the book of Esther completely and severely prunes Leviticus and Chronicles as well as reordering the sequence of the prophetic books more chronologically. In the New Testament he interleaves sections of the first three Synoptic gospels to achieve what he claims is a more consecutive narrative, with the Gospel of John edited separately. Paul’s letters are given a fresh translation that owes much to other early modernising translators such as Moffatt and Weymouth. The second and third epistles of John are omitted and small insignificant passages are omitted. However it would be possible to use any of the suggested bible reading plans mentioned in conjunction with Rowe’s *Treasury* with only minor adjustments.

Unitarians do not recognize a prescribed canon of Scripture. Regular worshippers are likely to encounter an eclectic selection of readings over the course of the year, ranging from poetry to articles from *The Guardian* (founded, of course, by Unitarians). We are not *Book Believers*, as Bill Darlison indicates, yet that is no reason to ignore the treasury of religious insights to be found in the Bible (or any other sacred text that has stood the test of time – as he stated in his lecture much of the Bible is *among the world’s great works of literature* intellectually stimulating and spiritually rewarding).

Shakespeare’s world was quite different to ours in many respects but no serious student of literature would exclude the Bard from consideration because our contemporary culture is sharply different to his. A proper study of his plays involves more than reading a few selected excerpts; merely reading Shakespeare is to experience only a fraction of his impact – the plays demand performance on a stage.

Such writings need informed exposition – dare I say *preaching* – rather more than mere skimming: Bill Darlison’s exposition of the Gospel of Mark in *The Gospel and the Zodiac* is provocative and controversial but anyone who reads it thoroughly will know a great deal more about the Gospel for having done so, whether or not they accept his particular views of the text.

I note with interest that Essex Unitarian Church in Kensington has in the last year started a monthly Bible reading group. It would be interesting to hear of other churches that offer similar opportunities.

(1) The text may be found on the GA website at:-

<http://www.unitarian.org.uk/docs/publications/index.php?shelf=Theology>

(2) <http://www.navigators.co.uk/bible-reading-plans/>

(3) e.g. William Neile's One Volume Bible Commentary (out of print ,but second hand copies easily obtainable)

A Review of Twelve Steps to Spiritual Health by David Usher

Peter Brown

It has often been said that one thing above all that the Unitarian movement lacked was a good 'lift speech'. This term from North America envisages the 30 seconds or so of chat that one might engage with another person in a lift journey and is often used to summarise beliefs. 'You go to church, what do you believe? We stumble and fail long before the time is up.

'We are a church that is open to all; some of us do not even believe in God'

'We are liberal and tolerant of all beliefs although we have not actually tried them'.

'We do not pray as we do not all believe it does any good'.

I do not offer a lift speech at the end of this review, but I do note that one unintended effect of the current 'growth' programme is that many are now questioning just what it is that we feel should grow? Larger congregations certainly, but congregations who believe or agree on what, exactly? I want to tell you a story.

Some years back an English cattle farmer went to visit his Australian cousin who also farmed cattle. Of course, each farmer thought that his were the best. But one thing puzzled the English farmer and eventually he raised it with his cousin. 'Tell me' he said, 'you have fine cattle, but how do you keep them in, I see no fences?' His cousin answered 'We have no fences but we have wells'.

Just what sort of 'well' of inspiration do we offer visitors to our congregations; a well of platitudes or of deep spiritual knowledge?

Now David Usher gives us all a clear and very well written account of an every-day approach to Unitarianism (or religion). In the first two chapters of this book he has given us material that could be quoted to both those of us in the movement and perhaps more importantly to absolute newcomers to our church. I would go so far as to say, that the pages I have mentioned would

church. I would go so far as to say that the pages I have mentstand alone as an excellent introductory booklet for all our churches. He begins by reminding us that we are self conscious animals and that as a species we create rituals and mythologies to explain the mystery in our lives. He continues that we also have a spiritual propensity and that this is just the way it is. In an interesting parallel he compares our human knowledge of the spiritual with our love and appreciation of music and elaborates that although some people are tone deaf and cannot 'see' any point in music, that does not invalidate the music. He argues further that in a similar way a person having no propensity for spiritual matters cannot gainsay the experience of those who appreciate and seek to deepen their investigation of this area of human endeavour.

David goes on to explain that in the world of religion and our own 'spiritual development' there is no linear progression. In this sphere he asserts we are not in the world of Newtonian but of quantum physics. (One has to say that this assertion may eventually turn out not to be a metaphor!) He goes on to give an excellent exposition of the meaning of the term 'spirituality', a term which he rightly observes to be often ill used and often meaning little or nothing. A short examination of the collapse of traditional religions leads him to re-defining spirituality as search for connection or re-connection to meaning in a post religious world. He then examines in some detail the areas where meaning is most often found; connection with the universe; in meaning and purpose; or as an ethical basis to life. He then reminds us that to explore spiritual-ity demands constant work, a real commitment.

The 'Steps' then follow and with the reminder that it is not necessary to follow these in order or to even follow all of them, since we are dealing with a 'quantum' subject. The steps range from those that will receive general support, such as 'caring for one's body' and 'being in contact with the natural world' to those which will be subject to great debate such as 'tithing one tenth of your income to charity'. I am currently working hard at the twelfth step 'Relax and smile at yourself'. Perhaps what I found lacking in the book was instruction on particular 'religious' activities, such as meditation, prayer and reading. Although there are enough books on these elsewhere David Usher's common sense style would be welcome in this area; perhaps the next book?

In all a thoroughly recommended work and one that myself at any age from sixteen onwards would have welcomed because it answers so many basic questions. It still does not provide the 'lift speech' but I sense that this will not be long coming.

Book Review

George Cope

The Spiritual Level with the subtitle 'Why more equal societies almost always do better', in my opinion, succeeds admirably in substantiating this assertion by presenting data from reputable authorities, experimental evidence, and supportive narratives from everyday human experiences.

The book is by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. The former is Professor Emeritus at the University of Nottingham Medical School and Honorary Professor at University College London. Kate Pickett spent four years as an Assistant Professor at the University of Chicago, and is Senior Lecturer at the University of York. Both authors have a background in epidemiology.

I found this book a greater challenge than Richard Wilkinson's earlier book, *Unhealthy Societies*. I abandoned a first attempt at review, but having heard such good reports of it, besides it being on Rev Phil Silk's list, I now make a further attempt at reviewing this important book.

In order to be able to compare like with like, the authors have restricted their field of enquiry to the 23 richest countries with populations over 3 million, using data from World Bank, the UN., etc. They have also studied the individual states of the USA, using US government data. From these sources they have built up a picture, which points ever more persuasively to there being an association between inequalities of incomes and societies with greater health and social problems, such having higher rates of mortality, crime, ill-health, mental illness and obesity. On the contrary, countries having greater equality of incomes have fewer such problems and also have higher levels of trust – trustful societies are better equipped to deal with catastrophes (examples given). The authors, after considering many issues, go further, concluding that inequality of incomes is the cause of many of the problems listed above.

The one social ill which does not seem to fit the authors' schema is suicide. Various reasons are put forward for this anomaly; one is that sometimes suicide can be seen as the obverse of homicide as directed against oneself. [We hear of tragic cases of certain dedicated and respected individuals, who have possibly set themselves too high a standard of excellence – any falling away from such a standard is impossible for them to live with – GC]. The book also draws on that great study *Suicide*, by Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917), and on research in the 1970s, which showed that suicide rates are lower where there is a greater sense of community, where one has friends, is married, or belongs

to religious or other supportive groups. Lack of such support and lack of friendships brings with it a higher risk of death.

Having established pretty convincingly that higher inequalities of income give rise to greater social dysfunction, the authors elaborate on how this could have come about. Human beings are particularly sensitive about how they may appear in the eyes of others, they don't like to be seen as being inferior. Research by Jean Twenge in the USA revealed the puzzling feature, that, over a roughly 40 year period since the 1950s, levels of self-esteem had risen concurrently with rising levels of anxiety and its related condition of depression. Subsequently, two types of self-esteem were identified, one positive, showing features of self-confidence and feelings of self-worth, the other insecure and on the defensive, expressing itself in violence or racism. The authors are quick to point out that they are not advocating a purely psychological solution to society's ills. Indeed, they question the supposed advantage of treating society's various problems as individual issues requiring its unique method of treatment and response. They stress that greater equality of incomes, just that by itself, brings about improvement in all categories of problems, making things better for all of society's members. This is not necessarily a call for state intervention to establish equality of incomes. For instance, Japan, which does not have a command economic structure but does have greater equality of incomes, comes out consistently well in the graphs showing the performance of different societies.

Almost half the book is devoted to a chapter each on the specific problems, which bedevil unequal societies. Towards the end of the book is an uplifting and almost lyrical passage on progress made so far, in most of the world, towards achieving greater equality: the growth of democracy, the ending of slavery and capital punishment, the development of free education, to name but a few.

Finally, the authors encourage us to question long-held beliefs that it is only the rich and powerful who understand how to manage the economy, a claim which, in the light of the 2008 global financial crisis, becomes ever more difficult to maintain. Thence, as the realisation that more equal societies almost always perform better becomes more widespread, this will provide the foundation upon which to build the political will to transform our society into one of greater equality and well-being. I hope this review will be a contribution to that process.

New Additions to the NUF Book Collection – by Joan Wilkinson

Members are generously donating new and interesting material to the Collection. Below is a list of books with brief descriptions. I have made notes of some, which have been added to the Book Review Section of the Internet Fellowship/Forum. Readers are invited to register through following the instructions from the front page of the NUF website: www.nufonline.org.uk.

The first three books make up a trilogy by Professor Richard Kearney, plus a fourth and later book of 2011. They are all quite hard going but for me broke new ground and offered new ways to move forward personally as a Unitarian. They were well worth the effort.

The God Who May Be – A Hermeneutics of Religion: 2001 puts forward a God of possibilities, the unforeseeable, unprogrammable and uncertain. Not the actuality of the God who says 'I am who I am' in Greek but the 'I will be who I will be' of the Hebraic.

On Stories – Thinking in Action: 2002 examines the ongoing role of narrative, through human history, as a creative function.

Strangers, Gods and Monsters: 2003 examines how we think of ourselves and strangers both internally and in society. It looks at relationships with open yet discerning hospitality.

Anatheism – Returning to God After God: 2011 offers a third way of being, which enables us to inhabit a space allowing us to question and move on, a space allowing dialogue between atheist and theist in a neutral space of possibilities.

A World full of Gods – Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Roman Empire: by Keith Hopkins, 1999. Hopkins, Professor of Ancient History, takes us back in time using various forms of narrative including time travel, comment, letters between academics, either wishing him well, in this brave new way of bringing history to a wider readership, and others condemning a way, which threatens academic purity. This is a more accessible book than the first four.

A Woman's Journey to God: by Joan Borysenko 1999 shows us why the author is a leading proponent of integrative medicine, a bridge between faith and reason. The book illustrates her journey with other women in the healing of body and mind. This is a book for both men and women, following in the footsteps of many feminist theologians of the past decades. The author is Jewish but works across faiths and the non-religious.

Taking out the Violence – Shedding Light on the Science and Soul of Human Behaviour: 2003 by Dr Ursula M Anderson examines child development.

Diary Dates

21 Sept: **Unitarian Society for Psychical Studies** EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN Rhonda Riachi – Mapping the Afterlife. John Hanson – Haunted Skies: UFOs and the Paranormal. Anthony Peake – Labyrinth of Time: Warwick Unitarian Chapel, 31 High Street, Warwick, CV34 4AX. Time: 10am – 4pm. Tickets: £18 . **Contact:** Jo Rogers 01539 568631

4-6 Oct:**The Meditational Fellowship:** The Meditational Fellowship meets twice yearly in the lovely retreat centre of Ivy House in Warminster. Some instruction, silent meditation and spiritual nourishment. **Contact:** Brenda Knopf 02380 555333

25 – 27 Oct: **Unitarian Women's Group Conference:**BLOSSOM – WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? BY CATHIE MASZTALERZ. The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire

8 – 10 Nov: **Unitarian Peace Fellowship Retreat:** INNER AND OUTER PEACE – Peace in our lives – Peace and the creative process – Commemorating World War I – a Peace Perspective. The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire. **Contact:** Sue Woolley 01604 870746

8 –10 Nov: **Unitarian Communication Coordinators Network:** Newspaper production, Blogging and Presenting to Video Camera. The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire. **Contact:** Joan Wilkinson 01332 815055 or joan@yorkshiregirl.org.uk. Go to www.uccn.org.uk to print off a booking form and programme.

22-24 Nov: **Unitarian Association of Lay Ministry:** ANNUAL CONFERENCE. THEME: SEASONAL SERVICES. Guest Speakers: Rev Alex Bradley, Rev Dr. Vernon Marshall, Ms Ingrid Tavkar . The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire. **Contact:** Sue Woolley 01604 870746

We are sorry to announce the deaths of members Bernard Spencer and Connie Thompson. Our thoughts are with their families and friends.

The closing date for submission to be included in the November edition is: 16 October 2013. Please send to Joan Wilkinson—editor.

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