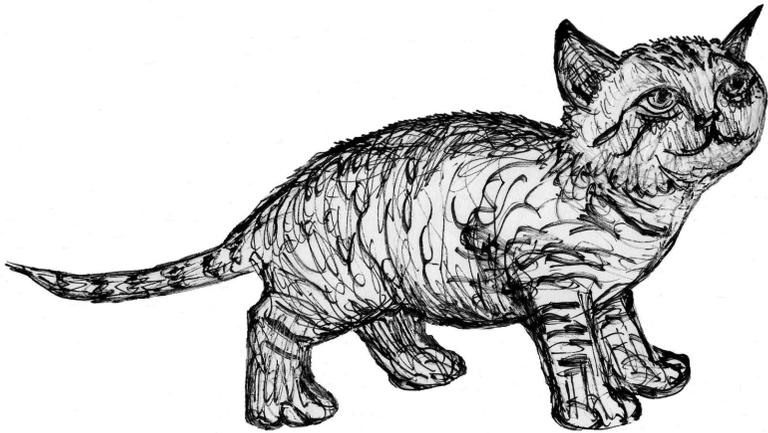


NATIONAL UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP

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NEWSLETTER



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JOHN'S JOTTINGS

I write these Jottings in mid August. You will be reading this in September, often one of the best months of the summer. I hope you are enjoying good weather as the season's change. I note that cross Pennine communications are under threat due to lack of rain! The Leeds and Liverpool canal has been closed due to insufficient water in the reservoirs which top it up. A little to the south, the Rochdale canal is also under threat of closure for similar reason. 'Heavens above' one might say! This lack of precipitation could prejudice the canal boating plans of those hoping to navigate this part of the resurgent canal network, a legacy left by our 18th and early 19th century forbears much of which had fallen into disuse but now largely restored.

The inconvenience of a waterway without water is nothing compared to the fate of millions in Pakistan caused by a surfeit of water responsible for devastating floods. We can sometimes close our minds to the problems of 'a far off land about which we know little', compounded by the negative media coverage associated with 'terrorism' in the region. I don't have sufficient space or knowledge to explore the political complexities of the region but I do hope that a concerted humanitarian, compassionate response will prevail, providing help to those whose lives and livelihoods are imperilled by this natural disaster.

In my working capacity I am already thinking of and planning for 2011. I have a teaching commitment which begins in October and will continue until next Spring. A tour I will be hosting next summer brings a couple from the United States. It turns out that they are Quakers and can trace their family roots back to Quakerism in North Wales. In 1657, many inhabitants of Dolgellau converted to Quakerism. Religious persecution led to a large number to emigrate to Pennsylvania 1686. It will be a privilege to accompany them and I hope to write about it in a future Newsletter.

A combination of teaching and customised tour arranging, together with family commitments in recent months to which I must give priority have forced me to review my ability to undertake my role as NUF secretary. I took on the role in November 2008 because my predecessor, Joan Wilkinson, having fulfilled the role for 5 and a half years, was in need of a well earned rest. I did this to fill the gap but I can no longer do so as I do not have the time to devote to doing so. This is with regret but it would serve no-one if I didn't face up to the situation. These may, therefore, be my last jottings. I have enjoyed writing them as I hope you have enjoyed reading them. I will continue to be a member of the NUF and an occasional contributor to the Newsletter.

John Greenwood

Cover picture: 'Kitten' by Liz Egeback Foxbrook (See Reflections p.4-5)

THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Walking along the narrow path at the edge of the little wood all appeared still and green as we ambled along, me with my wits a-wandering and Elsa sniffing. Elsa was a large black cross breed dog from a rescue centre. She had in the past been beaten when young to the point of torture and her leg had broken and though she was settling down her responses were still unpredictable.

Suddenly, quite close, round a curve in the path, came a large thirtyish man on a bicycle who proclaimed in stentorian tones, "There are no lions or tigers in this wood". My meandering wits flew back. Collect dog. Avoid eye contact step aside. The cyclist passed by and in that moment I glimpsed, sitting on a child's seat behind him, a tiny boy previously hidden from sight. He was observing the wood with round eyed wonderment but his question had been answered. Things are not always as they seem.

Our Parish Church is quite old. It was first built as a chapel of ease by the monks of Roche Abbey, Rochdale. Decades later land was bequeathed so that a priest could be appointed and the chapel was rebuilt. By Tudor times the church was in disrepair and too small and was rebuilt. The same thing happened in Victorian times. Meanwhile the villagers had moved off downhill to the sheltered valley which had in earlier times been flooded.

The church still occupies the same rather lonely site on the hillside in company with two pubs, the stocks, a horse trough and the sexton's hut. It is an ideal setting for period films and is often used for this. Recently a film was made which featured a graveside scene. Two fibre glass headstones were duly made and then appropriately placed by the sexton. The film was made, the actors and the camera men departed. The sexton was left clearing up.

It was a hot, sunny afternoon and two widows having toiled up the hill to see the family graves were glad to sit down on the seat opposite the lych gate. Presently along came the sexton with a gravestone under each arm. They stared. One whispered loudly, "What a strong man he must be." The sexton heard her. "Aye, Missus," he said, keeping a straight face, "it does take some doing."

Things are not always what they seem. Our eyes and ears are assaulted daily by the vast amount of information that is poured out by the media and by individuals and needs assessing, sorting, testing and perhaps rejecting. Misinformation can be hurtful or even dangerous. We should be careful what we do with it and how we present it to others.

Finally avoid graveyards and woods. Strange things seem to happen there.

Best wishes,

Dorothy Archer

THE MINISTER'S MUSINGS

I have mixed feelings about the 'Big Society'. In a negative sense it seems such a misnomer because the politics of the day are going to make society smaller. Society is to be broken up so that communities can determine their own futures, start their own schools, direct their own police force and health service and have more say in their local government. This means that we will no longer be an equal society nation because every community will be different. The economic and social map of the country will be fragmented. Most functions running at different speeds at different strengths.

On the positive side, instead of the central government in London dictating everything and leaving local authorities with very little discretion to anything differently, local decisions will now have value. Perhaps in future, neighbourhoods will be just that - neighbourhoods with house holders, churches and community organisations at the centre and working together. We might well see the 'Community Organiser' becoming a key figure in the area where we live. Perhaps in the Big Society the central government will give its annual grant to the local council and say, 'Do with it what your community needs'. Perhaps it will empower every individual to be ambitious for themselves and the 'us and them' attitudes will disappear from our thinking. 'Local' will mean something once more. Perhaps the 'Broken Society' will begin to repair itself. I hope so.

Has the wheel turned full circle? Towards the end of the nineteen forties The Beveridge Report highlighted the problems that society faced then because of the Second World War. There were 'Five Giants' to overcome: Want, Disease, Squalor, Ignorance and Idleness. The welfare state was set up to overcome them. National Assistance, National Health Service, Housing, Education and Full Employment would be the foundations of the modern society where everyone had the same opportunity in life. The shadows of those giants would no longer darken the doors of the people.

Of course it all depended on having a strong economy that would be able to fund the welfare estate. No one envisioned the growth in population; or the growth in global trade which made our traditional industries redundant; nor the power of the financial markets that sit in judgement on the world's economies.

I will feel more at ease if we see the Big Society become the next and successful phase in the continuing efforts to overcome those five destructive giants which continue to blight not only our society but societies all across the globe.

Tony Mcneile

REFLECTIONS

Once upon a time there was a little girl called Esther

Esther, her kitten Tighearnan purring on her shoulder, sat by

Wexford Harbour and waited patiently for her Papa to come home. But Papa's bones, picked clean by small fishes, lay deep in the ocean four thousand miles away. Eight months later with a bitterly complaining Tighearnan in a small rush basket, Esther, Mina and Mama waited in the autumn cold of a Dublin evening for the steamer which would take them across the sea to a new life in Liverpool.

There was no more money in Liverpool than there was a welcome for a nearly destitute family. Both the sisters had to go out to work, Mina aged 13 to look after a rich merchant's backward daughter, and Esther aged 10 to mind the alcoholic wife of an absent sea captain. Fifteen years later, Mina was travelling the world keeping a succession of backward daughters safely away from the disdain and condescension of upper class Liverpool society while Esther, at last, was engaged to be married.

Charles was the youngest son of a wealthy business man; Esther although poor was the daughter of an officer and a gentleman, and the niece of two generals. As such, she was made grudgingly welcome by her new family and her three children were born at the big family house in the rue des Ormeaux where Grandmama held court. Her highly critical and ironic wit was mercifully well moderated by a great natural courtesy, and Esther was content.

Esther loved her children with a love as fierce as it was undemonstrative and her patience was severely tested by the war in France. Towards the end of 1917 Frederick, her regular army son, returned home an invalid. Over the fields of Arras where the land was made blackly sticky with allied blood, her youngest son Bryan flew during the dreadful Spring of 1917, and then lay impatiently in an English hospital waiting for his eyes to heal and his sight to return. He rejoined his squadron, but Frederick died. Esther mourned silently for one and quietly rejoiced for the other, accepting whatever the Good Lord chose to throw at her.

Charles, who played the international stock markets, died in 1930 most of his money lost to the Wall Street Crash. Sixty years after Papa's death in the Red Sea, Esther yet again found herself almost penniless. Encroaching arthritis gradually crippled her; the sheer weight of her years began to destroy her body until at last in 1950 she was taken into a geriatric ward. There with flashes of bright humour and great patience she waited three years for death to come gently for her.

In worldly terms Esther was a totally undistinguished woman; she was not beautiful, she was not famous, she had no brilliant accomplishments. The World failed to notice her brisk kindness, her undemandingly respectful friendship with children, her unquestioning acceptance of the madman, the vicious stray cat and the slings and arrows of an outrageous Fortune. She inspired great love in those around her and a wonderful sense of security and self worth. This was her distinction and her wisdom was indeed more precious than rubies.

‘YOU ALWAYS HURT . . .

. . . the one you love . . .’ An old refrain begins this article, and a poem written by my sister, Christine Short, concludes. Both reflect two kinds of strategies that we humans may use in times of stress, fear, pain, anger, impotency or any of the many unpleasant vicissitudes that life can throw at us.

The first is a negative reaction. We can all put our hands up to giving in to this easy way of venting our feelings on ‘the one you shouldn’t hurt at all’. For example, returning home from a miserable day at work and off-loading our frustrations on our other half, who has probably also had a difficult day and is also in need of understanding or a cuddle. Result, cross words from both and then the sulky silence. How often have we put down a friend to boost our own self-esteem or not controlled that irritable response to a mum or dad who can’t hear very well. Why do we do it to those we love – because we know they will forgive us. Well, mostly they do!

The second kind of response is to try and channel those negative emotions into something more positive, and it is here that the written word can be of enormous help. When my mother, who had dementia, came to live with me and my husband, I had to give up an O.U. course I was doing on the English Language, because she needed constant attention. My tutor suggested that I keep a log – she intended it to be an exercise in monitoring how language was affected in the course of mum’s dementia – but it turned into a diary recording events and the emotional reactions of all family members. In that diary I poured out my pain and hurt for this beloved parent who turned into a child before my eyes, and also recorded my shame when my patience snapped and I was cross with her. Fortunately for me, mum never lost her sweet forgiving nature and a hug and a ‘sorry’ healed the breach.

My sister expresses herself wonderfully in poetry, capturing in this form her response to life’s drama. The poem, which concludes this article, was written while she sat with her husband in the hospice where he was dying of cancer. She had cared for him for two long years at home and borne his anger at, and fear of, this devastating disease, which took him too soon from his beloved family.

Pat Caddick

CANCER

I did not invite you
But anyway you came
And though I did not ask you in
You entered just the same

I did not show you to your room
You were no welcome guest

But still you claimed my room for yours
And settled down to rest

For quite some time you lay quite still
I hardly could discern
That you were even there at all
But very soon I learned

This was the calm before the storm
The sun before the rain
The sense of ease before an unknown
Truth reveals great pain

You started with the smaller things
Adjusting here and there
A book, a vase, a photograph,
My little wooden chair

All this was quite uncomfortable
How dare you just assume
That you could alter anything
Inside my private room?

But there, of course, was worse to come
And very gradually
My room, my secret sanctuary,
No more belonged to me

My guest had taken over and
Quite systematically
Inflicted damage everywhere
Despite my anxious plea

The law enforcers were informed
Imposed a heavy fine
And for a while a calm prevailed
Could my room still be mine?

But then the hammering began
Insistent in its rhythm
The weakened walls were falling down
This could not be forgiven

The Heavy Mob was ordered in
To tame my violent guest
Who laughed and mocked at their attempt
To stop his evil quest

The Mob fought well but suffered pain
And loss of many men
The guest rose up victorious
To start his quest again

I knew that I was beaten and
The battle now was lost
My room, destroyed, had gone for good
No need to count the cost

I wonder why the guest chose me
To wreak his vengeance on
Had I, unknowingly, done wrong
Upset or hurt someone?

I'm feeling quite exhausted now
My pain runs very deep
I think I must lie down and let
Myself succumb to sleep

Christine Short

THE HONEY BEE

The debate over climate change continues. But there is another problem with an even more serious potential: the honey bee is disappearing – and so will much of our food unless corrective steps are taken soon. There is no division of opinion on this one.

Between 1985 and 2005 there was a 50% decline world-wide in honey bee colonies. In the six months from November 2008 to April 2009 almost one in five colonies was lost. Concern in the UK is such that membership of the British Beekeepers' Association jumped 25% to 17,000 during the period 2008-9.

Almost 150,000 people signed a Downing Street Petition in October 2008 showing their concern for the health of the honey bee. The drop in the number of colonies has, naturally, given rise to grave anxiety about the impact on our diet.

The British government is aware and has granted a £10 million ‘pollinator decline’ fund. The zoologist and television presenter Dr. George McGavin states that the sum is ‘nowhere near enough’. Without bees, ecosystems would change dramatically. In Dr. McGavin’s opinion the human population would survive for barely a decade as a consequence of total bee disappearance.

Bees and flowering plants have evolved together over the past 100 million years. Honey bees have been in Great Britain for about 30 million years.

There are 17,000 known species of bee in the world and the honey bee is considered to be the most important and economically effective pollinator insect. Honey bees are essential to our diet as they pollinate a third of all the foods that we eat. Their value as pollinators of commercial fruit and vegetables has been estimated at over £200 million a year in the U.K. They also pollinate more than 50% of the wild plants on which birds and animals depend.



A myriad of crops rely on the bee for fertilization as this selection from a very long list shows: onion, beet, celery, cauliflower, cabbage, turnip, carrot, Brussels sprout, mustard, cucumber, apple, plum, cherry, apricot, pear, tomato, grape, peach, nectarine, mango, lychee, kiwifruit, tangerine, avocado. Add to

Honey Bee this many types of bean, berry and clover. We rely so heavily on the honey bee but take it largely for granted.

When winter is over and the sun comes out, bees begin their spring cleaning. Dirt and litter has gathered in the hive and must be removed along with the remains of last year’s pollen. The hive is thoroughly cleaned.

Pollen is the fine, powdery substance discharged from the anther which is part of the stamen of a bloom. The pollen is the male element which fertilizes the rudimentary germ cell. Watch a honey bee as it goes from flower to flower and you will see a little coloured pellet on the outer side of its hind legs. This is the pollen that the bee has gathered and mixed with honey to make ‘bee-bread’ to feed the larvae.

Honey bees have a patch of stiff hairs on their back legs to which the pollen/honey mix adheres. The pollen is so light that it would otherwise blow away in the breeze.

Each tree and plant produces its own distinctively-coloured pollen.

The apple and the willow make a greenish-yellow pollen, the chestnut a red pollen, the poppy's is dark-grey and the dandelion produces a bright orange-coloured pollen.

The bee works carefully and to a plan. If she starts collecting pollen from a willow tree, for instance, she will continue to visit that tree for as long as it is in bloom. Almost never will you see a bee carrying differently-coloured pollen pellets at the same time. When she has collected all that she can carry, she flies straight back to add her load to the store in the hive.

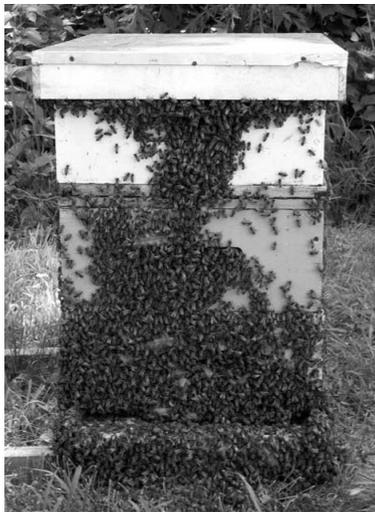
When a bee visits a blossom to gather nectar, her back, head, wings and legs will often be smothered in pollen. She goes to flowers which have no pollen but a pistil. This is the female part which sticks out above the flower. When a bee goes in to suck up the sweet nectar with her long tongue, the pollen on her body touches the pistil and fertilization occurs. The pistil, when fertilized, does not wither and die with the rest of the flower but develops into the fruit of the plant. So without the bee there would be little or no fruit.

When a bee discovers a source of nectar she tells the other bees where it is by means of a special dance which is in the shape of a figure eight. The nectar is carried in a honey sac which holds only a tiny drop. To make one pound of honey requires the nectar of thousands of flowers. The amount of nectar collected by a single bee during its life makes a little less than a teaspoon-full of honey.

Bee range up to three miles from their hive during the months April to October, flying twelve feet above the ground at a speed of about eighteen miles an hour. The insect will forage for about forty minutes in order to fill its honey stomach or to replenish it pollen pellets. You will notice a bee only at these times or when it stops to drink from a stream or pond.

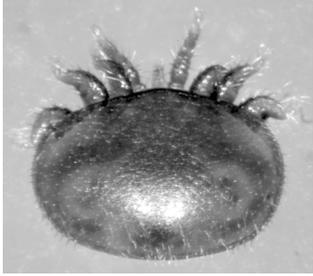
Bees have enemies which must be kept at bay. The wax moth can invade a hive and lay its eggs. When the larvae hatch out they will eat the beeswax combs and the bees may then desert the hive to seek another home. Wasps smell the honey in the hive and try to get in and steal it. The bees post guards at the hive entrance to fight off intruders. Even bigger are hornets which will attack and eat the bee pupae, devastating the hive.

Bees must also contend with bad weather. Heat, cold, wind and rain can make life difficult for them.



Honey Bee Hive

There are many reasons for the decline in recent years of both honeybees and bumblebees. Many creatures have suffered from the spread of intensive farming since the Second World War. Inbreeding has reduced the genetic diversity of the honeybee. Viruses and infections can spread throughout colonies.



Research is being done into combating the effects of the varroa mite. This is a parasite which weakens the bee's immune system, leaving them susceptible to other diseases.

In the U.S.A. there have been reports of a mysterious event known as Colony Collapse Disorder (C.C.D). Almost overnight hives were abandoned and the phenomenon spread to the

Female varroa mite U.K. and into Europe.

In general, wildlife must cope with pesticides, herbicides, loss of natural habitat and G.M. crops – the effects of which are yet to be discovered.

There are many organisations working to raise the Bees' profile and to give them practical help. We can all do something to help practically as well as financially. For instance, void the use of garden pesticides, grow nectar-rich flowers, buy honey – it makes a wonderful substitute for sugar – and think about installing bee boxes in your garden.

Michael Ablett

Find out more from:

Bumblebee Conservation Trust: www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk

The Global Bee Project: www.globalbee.org

The British Beekeepers' Association: www.britishbee.org.uk

There is another sky

There is another sky,
Ever serene and fair,
And there is another sunshine,
Though it be darkness there;
Never mind faded forests, Austin,
Never mind silent fields -
Here is a little forest,
Whose leaf is ever green;
Here is a brighter garden,
Where not a frost has been;
In its unfading flowers
I hear the bright bee hum:
Prithce, my brother,
Into my garden come!

Emily Dickinson

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born in Boston, America, in 1803. He was descended from a long line of Unitarian, New England ministers, men of refinement and education. As a school-boy he was quiet and retiring, reading a great deal but not paying much attention to lessons. At fourteen he entered Harvard.

At this early age Emerson had realised that the 'Great Teacher' was in fact 'Life Itself'. It follows that every situation, whether we consider them to be good, bad or indifferent, will provide an excellent opportunity for spiritual practice. In order to get the full benefit of the teaching Emerson did not just turn up and pay attention. He recorded his thoughts, feelings, emotional states and observations in great detail all through his life.

Unceasingly he strove to develop his 'spiritual practice', what I would call 'Skillful Means'. Drawing on his carefully considered direct experiences, his meticulous records and research, he brought together the spiritual and intellectual in a unique way. He not only developed a distinctly American literary style, but he was also considered one of the great orators of his time. His essays could well serve as notes for talks and his years as a minister had provided him with a clear voice which held an audience's attention.

Carlyle, who was a close friend of Emerson, supported and encouraged him constantly. 'Alas, my friend,' Emerson wrote, 'I do not belong with the poets, but only to the low department of literature, - the reporters; suburban men.' Make no mistake; Emerson is no country hick; indeed his 'Collected Essays' are considered to be one of the best 100 books of all time.

Ultimately, what Emerson is saying to us all is that we each have our own 'Treasure House' and asks us like the Zen master Baso, 'Why do you search outside?' Like Baso he realised that there is no truth outside ourselves, and no place to find it other than within ourselves. Enlightenment is not some special quality that we have to acquire but, rather, it is the ordinary quality we already have.

When we consider the history of Western thought, Soren Kierkegaard is accepted as the 'Father of Existentialism' but it is Emerson who gets my vote. Of course, this aspect of 'Dharma' was addressed by Eastern philosophers 2,600 years ago when Buddha said, 'Place no Head above your own' (use your own treasure house). When an American who is in the group I attend for Vipassana Meditation asked me what book he could recommend to his friends who wanted an introduction to Buddhist thought, his answer was to read Emerson.

Perhaps my few personal observations will encourage people to consider this great man's work along with Thoreau who writes in the same place and time.

Colin Carvel

BELA BARTOK – UNITARIAN COMPOSER

The recent BBC4 series ‘Sacred Music’ introduced viewers to a feast of music with religious texts, beautifully sung in a variety of settings by the renowned professional choir, The Sixteen, conducted by Harry Christophers; this was the second series; an earlier set of programmes concentrated on music from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, while the new set of programmes featured music from the Romantic and Modern periods.

It was not until the emergence in the 19th century of the ‘freelance’ composer, not necessarily beholden to a wealthy patron, that the personal faith of a particular composer came to be of interest or have a bearing on the music he wrote. Both Brahms and Verdi were agnostic in religious belief, yet both composed notable religious works of enduring significance. Verdi was an avowed freethinker and it is ironical that aside from his operas, it is his Requiem, composed in memory of the poet Manzoni, that remains one of his most popular works. It has been said that you don’t understand what music is capable of until you’ve heard the Dies Irae of this work and its operatic treatment of the Day of Wrath. In the case of Brahms, his ‘Requiem’ employs biblical texts to convey a humanist message, omitting words about salvation or immortality, and focuses on the living rather than the dead. Although he had a conventional Lutheran upbringing, he certainly inclined to freethought in his later life; his friend, the Czech composer Dvorak, stated, "Such a man, such a fine soul - and he believes in nothing! He believes in nothing!"

In contrast, contemporary composers, such as James Macmillan (Roman Catholic) and John Tavener, (Greek Orthodox) have made the act of composing into a religious devotion, so closely is it related to their deeply held religious beliefs; without the listener having at least imaginative sympathy with the faith that their music seeks to express, it is doubtful if their work will make any significant impact. The case of the modern English composer, John Rutter, is rather different; he writes music that is hugely popular across a wide variety of the listening public; his tuneful Christmas carols, such as “Jesus Child” and the “Nativity Carol” have become the staple fare of Carol Concert programmes worldwide and he declares a deep affinity and commitment to the Anglican choral tradition, yet he also states, “I don’t think you have to be religious, or at any rate seek to promote religious faith, to write good religious music.” Rutter concedes that when the music stops he remains agnostic in his beliefs.

The only major composer to have openly declared himself a Unitarian was the Hungarian Bela Bartok. His music is deeply imbued with the traditional music of his native land and of Eastern Europe in general, which he researched, together with his compatriot, Kodaly and which resulted in many arrangements of folk songs and tunes, both for choirs and for piano, on

which Bartok was a virtuoso performer. Not only did Bartok collect folk material but its often unusual melodies, scales and rhythm patterns entered into his composing 'blood', creating a style that is unique but not easy listening in its often gritty modernity while clearly showing links to classical precedents. This is particularly evident in his 6 string quartets, which were written over the whole course of his musical life and are often compared in status to the late quartets of Beethoven.

Raised as a Roman Catholic, the ethical legalism taught in the religion classes at school drove him away from his early faith. By the time he was 26 he was declaring himself an atheist; he called the conception of God as 'a bodiless, everlasting and omnipresent Spirit who has decreed all that has happened in the past, and similarly ordains the future,' a 'muddled notion.' The existence of the universe did not require the hypothesis of a creator. "Why don't we simply say: I can't explain the origin of its existence and leave it at that?"

In 1917, Bartok joined the Hungarian Unitarian church in Budapest; it is said that this was 'primarily because he held it to be the freest, most humanistic

Bela Bartok

Faith' but also because it prevented his son from having to attend compulsory RE classes. He was a regular attender at services but there is no record of him producing any music for the church; indeed, apart from folksong arrangements, he composed little choral music throughout his life.

An important extra-musical source of inspiration was his love of nature and he had a keen interest in collecting specimens of plants, minerals and insects. Many of his works contain slow movements and sections that are often described as 'night music, characterised by eerie dissonances providing a twittering and fluttering backdrop of the sound against which are placed lonely melodies. Milan Kundera writes, "Sounds of nature inspire Bartók to melodic motives of a rare strangeness". Peter Bartok, the composer's second son has written of how his father's study always seemed to contain flying insects, which the composer seemed hardly to notice, only occasionally interrupting



his work to usher one gently out of the window. One of his later pieces for young pianists bears the title 'From the Diary of a Fly!'

In the inter-war years Bartok showed a strong dislike of the Fascist inclined government in Hungary led by Admiral Horthy and he refused to accept an award for his music from the leader's hands and would not allow his music to be performed in Nazi Germany or Mussolini's Italy.

It would be misleading to describe Bartok as a religious composer in the narrow sense of the term; he wrote no oratorios and his only large choral work is pointedly entitled 'Cantata Profana'; Bartok later said that this work contained his own personal 'credo'. The subject concerns a hunter whose sons are turned into giant stags that their father narrowly avoids killing.

Although based on a folk tale, it does certainly carry a subtext of longing for personal freedom, as the transformed sons tell of their inability to return to their human state: 'Our antlers cannot pass thy doorway...our slender bodies cannot wear clothes, but only the wind and sun.' Written in 1930 the work clearly has a subtext of the political repression and difficulties that Bartok was increasingly encountering in his native country and which eventually led to his decision to emigrate to America.

It was in the years 1930–1940 that many of his most important works were composed including the 'Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta' which represents his mature style, with the folk music influences, the 'night music' and the closely written textures of his string quartets fully integrated in a single work. Other pieces from this period include the sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, which he and his wife, Ditta, performed many times and the suite Contrasts for clarinet, violin and piano, written for and dedicated to Benny Goodman.

With the birth of his second son, Peter, he embarked on a series of short piano pieces, Mikrokosmos, eventually reaching 6 volumes, starting from the earliest stage of learning and progressing to concert level works in the last volume. The first two volumes were dedicated to Peter but it seems like many another young pupil he did not stay the course and the later volumes bear other dedications! They form not so much a standard piano tutor, as a set of studies, not only in piano technique but in the compositional styles that he used in his larger works and are unique in the work of a single composer.

Exiled in the United States from 1940 until his death in 1945, he struggled both with the onset of leukaemia in 1940 and difficulty in securing performances of his works; it was only the intervention of prominent musicians such as Yehudi Menuhin, the violist William Primrose and the conductor Serge Koussevitzky who provided him with commissions for major works that spurred his creativity in these years. It was Koussevitzky who commissioned his last major piece, the 'Concerto for Orchestra' which remains his most frequently performed orchestral work and is less 'hard edged'

than his earlier works and contains some of the rare traces of musical humour to be found in his mature work.

His funeral in 1945, attended by only ten people, was conducted by Rev. Laurence I. Neale, minister of New York's All Souls Unitarian Church. He was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in New York. In 1988, as the 'iron curtain' separating Eastern Europe from the West was being lifted, Béla Bartók, Jr., then lay president of the Hungarian Unitarian Church, was able to have his father's remains transferred to Budapest. A statue of Bartók stands in front of the Second Unitarian Church in Budapest, which now bears his name.

Ken Smith

Further information about the Bela Bartok Unitarian church can be found at:-
<http://w3.enternet.hu/sandor64/bartokbela/e/index.html>

Bartok has been well recorded – see Amazon for details. There is a fine recording of the Cantata Profana by the Budapest Festival Orchestra conducted by George Solti – his last recording.

NUF BOOK COLLECTION

The NUF Book Collection has been sitting on shelves at Essex Hall for many years, since the last NUF Librarian retired with no replacement being found. Being in danger of losing the collection it has now been transferred, here, to 10, Shirley Close, Castle Donington, Derby DE74 2XB. Many are now outdated but the rest includes some treasures that members may wish to hear about. The collection does need sorting through but in the meantime, I along with 'willing' volunteers, will briefly review a selection over the coming months, and members can get in touch with me if they would like a book posted to them on loan. If any member has a book, which they would like adding to our Collection then please get in touch as it would be excellent to extend or range of reviewers and bring the Collection up-to-date.

The first one is a very short pamphlet by Francis Terry, an article first published in Faith and Freedom but reprinted by the NUF in 1981. *Jesus Man and Myth* is a personal approach by someone who states in it that he does not classify himself as a Christian or non-Christian, a position I imagine is shared by many of us. He is perfectly content with this as it is one in which he can continue to value all that he can learn from wherever it may come.

The second book is a recent gift I received from a good NUF friend and which will now be added to the NUF Book Collection. This complements the Terry pamphlet, showing just how the gospels can still speak to spirituality rather than religion or addressing the historical validity of Jesus. Both book and pamphlet recognize the difference about what was written and how it can

be valued, when all too often what religion has done to it can't. Both books are relevant in a society struggling more than ever with materialism and superficiality. *Writing in the Sand – Jesus, Spirituality and the Soul of the Gospels* by Thomas Moore is published by Hay House in 2009 and easily available from Amazon and other outlets or on loan if requested.

Sunday's Child – From Victoria to Elizabeth 11 with a Unitarian background, by Catharine T Herford was published in 1979. This book of only 95 pages was a joy to read as the subject of the book came across as warm, no nonsense and just a very ordinary woman dealing with the vicissitudes of life. Being a daughter of a minister from Stand, near Manchester, who later became curator of the Dr Williams Trust and Library, she is able to give an insider view of Unitarianism and the changes that it went through, just as did the social upheavals of the twentieth century, two world wars, the shaking off old traditions in the 1920s as a new world was being forged. The inventions that we now take for granted were major steps in a changing world – the telephone, the radio, education provision, motoring and so I could go on. What is particularly interesting about the book are the insights into what it meant for a generation of women whose male contemporaries had been killed, leaving many single and having to support themselves. Catherine became a teacher and through her work we learn more in the incidentals of how it was for the last generations than many weightier tomes. If you wish to read more about Catherine please do read the book or go to my website: www.yorkshiregirl.org.uk where a fuller biography is included under the list of Unitarian women.

The final book I would recommend is for the historians amongst you. *Truth Liberty Religion – Essays celebrating Two Hundred Years of Manchester College* published in 1986 by Manchester College Oxford 1986 and edited by Barbara Smith, Librarian at Manchester College 1974-1985 consists of an Introduction by Asa Briggs followed by ten essays by respected scholars in their area of expertise. We learn about the origins of the college and why and when it moved from Manchester to York and back again before it went to London and finally Oxford. There were some essays that appealed to me personally but every one built up a comprehensive picture of the college and its centrality to the movement and to the issues of the day, the changes of focus but most of all the commitment of groups of people, not often large groups, who recognised the importance of a centre of excellence as well as being committed to the improvement of society for all. I have finished the book feeling I know more about the position of myself and the movement as it now is, through the importance of books, science, medicine, anti-slavery, James Martineau's massive influence, J. Estlin Carpenter, education and many more issues and individuals. A crucial read for those who haven't read this book before and who have an interest in understanding how we have come

together over the years and the changes now that can only be understood against the development through the years. Many would be surprised to find that much of what is said is an echo of what has been said before and we can learn hugely from the upheavals of change and challenge that are central to the freedom, truth and honesty we are allowed to express in our religious/spiritual search.

Any members interested in any of the above please get in touch with me at 10, Shirley Close, or telephone, 01332 814055 or email: joan@yorkshiregirl.org.uk

Joan Wilkinson

THE MAN THEY CALLED CHRIST by **David Doel**

By definition a religion must have a founding prophet, a holy book and a deity. Christianity meets these criteria but with differences. The founding prophet was Jesus who used the antithesis of the holy book of Judaism to give his message. 'The scripture says this but I say otherwise'. His message was delivered by direct teaching, parables and miracles. After his death a new holy book was written, the New Testament. Jesus the prophet/teacher was magnified to become a mythological figure. From the Hebrew Bible that he had taught from he was later said to be the Messiah predicted. He also became the Sacrifice to atone for the sins not just of Judaism but also of the whole world. And the intellectual world of the Greeks added something more. The love of God which Jesus taught about became manifest and personalised as the Christ and this manifestation was then written back into the character of Jesus himself. This relationship is central to the religion which then called itself Christianity.

Human need and perhaps human cleverness created the iconic paradigm that was all things - the historic Jesus, peaceful messiah in a fractured world honouring the outcasts and the different, forgiving sins and challenging the religious hypocrisy of the day; the sacrifice who shared human suffering; the beautiful risen symbol of love shining down from stained glass and bedroom walls; the heavenly avenger and future judge of the apocalypse. An icon who was an enigma.

The Love of God dwells in every human heart, writes David Doel. This book is based on a series of sermons about Jesus, challenging the divine other worldly Christ figure of the early church and saying that they misinterpreted the meaning of the Gospel message. The theological discussions and conflicts of the early church resulted in Jesus becoming part of a heavenly trinity that demanded obedience to its authority.

In a book of ten chapters and 117 pages David Doel explores the life

and teaching of Jesus from the psychological perspective of the relationship between the Jesus of the Gospels and the hidden Christ that struggles to assert itself within the human being. The struggle is against the selfish ego that denies this Christ within.

Finding the Christ within is a personal spiritual journey and the mentor for that journey is the Jesus who perfectly embodies the Christ that was manifest as the total love of God.

The teaching of the gospels is a guide for achieving personal spiritual wholeness in the Commonwealth of God that is here on earth and not in a heaven after death. The miracles, the teachings, the healing, the crucifixion, the resurrection are metaphors for the restorative process of union with the God for the human soul.

Tony Mcneile

(David Doel is a retired Unitarian minister. The Man they called the Christ. ISBN978-0-557-23841-5 is published by the Unitarian Christian Association.)

A QUESTION OF INTENT

Many years ago I worked in a large open plan workshop. On the other side from me was a chap I detested on sight. This was tearing me apart as my Christian religion said that I should love mine enemy and I could not. So I thought, quite radically for me at the time, just so long as I do nothing to harm him or don't even let him know, then it will be OK for me to hate him. I did just that. Guess what, after a few days I had forgotten he even existed!

Some years later I broke free from my religious confines and a few years later still was paid the honour of being invited to join a Home Circle. The Circle was a serious weekly commitment whose purpose was to send out Distant Healing.

We were expected to sit upright, no problem, to have feet flat on the floor, no problem, and to have hands in lap palms up – problem! Sitting thus I felt a right Charlie, in any case, I thought, we are dealing with mental and spiritual things here so what's with the physical restraints? I let my thoughts go out and asked spirit to give me an answer.

I was given my answer in a way that spoke to me so vividly and so personally. All of my life I have been in love with aeroplanes, and, with developments to the jet engine, have been fascinated by the light and dark patterns sometimes seen in the exhaust. As I sat in the circle with my eyes closed I became aware that I was looking at a large relief map of southern England spread out before my feet. Healing power, like that jet stream, was pouring over my shoulder into my upturned palms. By angling my hands I could deflect that energy to anywhere on the map that I chose!

I later realised that although I was right in a sense, to sit as expected was to affirm my intent. I still do it to this day.

Eric Talbot-Batting

MANY-SIDED WISDOM: A New Politics of the Spirit

By Aidan Rankin

Many-Sided Wisdom is a very interesting discussion of how the principle of Anekant or many-sidedness from the Jain religion can inform and enrich the world of politics. In keeping with the holistic thinking intrinsic to Jainism the book explores the whole context of Anekant not just in politics but in every sphere of life including non-human. Certain themes run throughout the text which are constantly referred to in differing contexts. In the acknowledgements George W. Bush's famous remark that "either you're with us or against us" is said to have "expressed with surprising clarity everything that is wrong with our current political system" and been the inspiration for writing the book.

Jainism, a religion believed to predate Hinduism, is very much about synthesis. It believes each life to be both individual and related to all life. It is completely against violence and adversarial thinking. It believes truth to be many-faceted like a jewel. It believes people are not equipped to embrace the entirety of truth but through Anekant can approach closer to it. Many-sided thought is a process where the truth is looked for in everything and the false rejected, arriving at a new understanding through synthesis of what is gained from different sources.

It is essentially through a discussion of how these principles relate to the current political world that a way forward is envisaged. A large part of the book is devoted to Jainism and personal development and the spiritual aspects of the religion. The latter are, in the final analysis, the more important ones to Jains. Karma is defined at some length and there is a chapter called "Karmic Ecology" in which Karma is related to societies through the collective actions of individuals and their interconnectedness. A simpler, more cooperative way of life than the one we have is suggested.

It is stressed very strongly that Jainism does not involve relativism. Basically it aims to approach truth from the most eclectic of sources but does not then conclude that there are many versions of it, multifaceted though it is. Neither is it a repressive and restrictive religion. The importance of individuality is stressed throughout. Most modern political movements from communism to animal rights and new ageism are treated in a critical way. This is not because there is nothing in them but that they have fallen foul of adversarial politics, materialism or relativism. Very often they have come to embody the very things they stand against in their struggle for recognition. By contrast Jainism allows for the inherent vulnerability of taking a non-partisan approach.

It is about soft power and as such has survived literally for ages but not as a dominant force. Nevertheless a direct chain of thought is identified early in the book from the influence of Jainism on Mahatma Gandhi, his

influence on Martin Luther King and the latter's influence on Barack Obama at the present time.

One of the difficult aspects of the argument is that it relies on changes of consciousness in individuals. It is always more difficult to achieve a change in consciousness on a mass scale than to pass laws. Nevertheless that is what is being suggested. That some of this wisdom has filtered through to a charismatic leader such as Barack Obama, who is capable of inspiring people, offers hope. There are challenges beyond what the current president of the USA is able to embrace however. The whole culture of progress and growth economies is eschewed. What is being outlined in principle might be called a "fourth way" which would be an evolving political climate in which no dogma prevailed.

Chris Barchard

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Mantras

In old age, and as a religious free-thinker, I advocate the use of simple, two-syllable mantras using the names of much-loved celestial figures who are expressions of vast compassion and sexual purity – figures such as the Buddha, Kan-yin, Jesus and Mary. In my experience, such mantras – mine is 'Kuan-yin' – which should be recited mentally as often as possible – are of tremendous helpfulness.

Ross Howard

THE ENLIGHTENMENT: HOW RELEVANT IS IT TO UNITARIANISM TODAY?

Following the beginnings of a debate at the 2010 GA on this important topic, a two-day seminar has been sponsored by The Hibbert Trust to consider The Enlightenment on Friday/Saturday 18/19 February 2011 at The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

The Hibbert Trust is seeking 12 participants from anywhere in the Unitarian Community. If you would like to be involved in this Seminar, please apply to the Trust Secretary, stating why you are interested in The Enlightenment. In the event of over-subscription the Trust will endeavour to allocate places on the basis of a mixed group with different perspectives on the subject.

Please note that participants will be expected to undertake some reading before the Seminar, and to be involved in the dissemination of ideas following the Seminar.

The cost to participants will be travel only; it is hoped that local congregations or districts would reimburse travel costs for those on a limited income. Kay Millard, 1 The Maltings, 63 Westbury Leigh, Westbury, Wilts, BA13 3SF Tel: 01373 827856 Email: kay.millard@btinternet.com

THE PARABLE OF THE MAIDENS WITH THEIR LAMPS

Do you remember the parable of the maidens with their lamps? Some had their lamps filled with oil, the others did not and so they missed the coming of the bridegroom.

The Chinese sage, Lao Tzu wrote in his Tao Te Ching, ‘30 spokes share the wheel hub. It is the centre hole that makes it useful. Shape clay into a vessel. It is the space within that makes it useful. Cut doors and windows for a room. It is the holes which make it useful. Therefore profit comes from what is there, usefulness from what is not there.’ Science has shown that the human body is made up of atoms. Now an atom is based upon exactly the same principle as is the solar system. A nucleus, just like the sun, is surrounded by a number of electrons, just like the planets, whirling around in a vast area of space.

So, what were Jesus and Lao Tzu trying to explain? Take these three facts together and what is the result? Your body is made up mainly of emptiness. It is the energy produced by the motion of the electrons whirling around which gives it the impression of solidity. But we are, in reality, all empty vessels. Exactly like those lamps which had no oil or that vessel that is empty. What we must learn to do is to fill that empty body with the Holy Spirit which flows from God and which flows through your body every second of your life.

I began to realise this when I was healing people. I could feel the spirit flowing from me into the person I was healing, What I realised was that, no matter who the person was – and some were not very nice people – yet within there grew a love for them. Not that sexuality so screamed about by the media but a gentle, understanding love, a realisation that almost every one of us has been fashioned by the ‘slings and arrows of outrageous fortune’. Life has made us what we are. This, then, was unconsciously filling me with the Holy Spirit. Yet people say to me, ‘But I’m not a healer’. We could all be healers. The most basic sign of healing is when a child falls and hurts itself. The mother picks it up and puts her hand on the hurt, gives the child a kiss and a cuddle – and the healing takes place.

But how many mothers take it on, to other people? Those who do are called healers – care workers! Yet the Holy Spirit is flowing through all of us so why don’t we all utilise it? That is what it is for. That is the way in which you can fill your lamp with oil and have your wick trimmed ready to meet the bridegroom – who is passing by at this very moment.

Maurice Cottam

A brief autobiographical account of Maurice’s life was published in Issue 363, January 2006. He describes his journey from RAF pilot to Spiritualist healer, working for charity under the auspices of the Wearside Council of Churches.

WEB NEWS

<http://www.unitarian.org.uk/info/events.shtml> A link to the events page of the web site.

Louise Rogers (NUF Committee member) has started two blogs – one about **governance** and one about **community development** “I have written these blogs in private for a couple of weeks and now want others to be able to see them and comment – in particular to add your knowledge and also to ask for specific items to be covered. This is a pilot – to see if it is helpful to fellow Unitarians and to help me to focus what I know into these blogs.”

<http://governance4unitarians.blogspot.com/>

<http://dev-spiritual-community.blogspot.com/>

BOB POUNDER

We send our congratulations and very best wishes to Bob Pounder, NUF member, who in June completed his studies at Manchester Unitarian College and became a Unitarian minister. He has now become minister of Oldham Unitarian Chapel.

Bob was editor of our ‘Viewpoint’ magazine from 1996-1998. He has also been the press and publicity officer to the Unitarian Christian Association.

We hope that he will be very happy working in Oldham and that it will be a very fruitful time.

Dorothy Archer

BOOK DETAILS 390

The following details of books reviewed in Issue 390 were omitted in error:

The Uttermost Deep (p.12) pb 2000 Amazon £16.99 new; from £12.90 used.

A Morally Deep World (p.19) pb 1993 Amazon £22.79 new; from £3.94 used

DIARY DATES

1st- 3rd Oct 2010 **Unitarian Youth Programme - Junior Weekend** (age 7-11 years) The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire

NEXT ISSUE

The deadline for the next issue is Monday 18th October 2010. Contributions on any theme and responses to any item in the newsletter are always welcome.

All contributions are acknowledged.