



Schedule of Services

Services are held every Sunday at 10:30 at Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre

5 November, Colin Whatmough, "An Historical Look at Islam."

12 November, No meeting.

19 November, Morandir Armson, "George Gurdjieff, guru or fraud"

George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866/1872/1877? - 1949) was a spiritual teacher and mystic, of Armenian descent, who pioneered a method of spiritual development, which he referred to as "the Fourth Way". Both during his life and after, Gurdjieff has been alternately praised as a great mystical teacher, and scorned as a charlatan. His followers, the Gurdjieffians, have had a wide influence on the New Age movement, but have also been labelled "the strangest religion in history". This address will seek to examine the truth about Gurdjieff; was he a guru, mystic, and spiritual guide, or was he a base and cynical fraud?

26 November, Rev. Geoff Usher, "175 Years, Channing and Philipps."

This service will mark the 175 anniversary of two distinguished Unitarian Ministers: William Ellery Channing (USA) and Nathaniel Philipps (UK).

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### **Glorious insults from before the English language got taken over by four letter words**

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your book; I'll waste no time reading it."

Moses Hadas

"I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it."

- Mark Twain

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend, if you have one."

- George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill

"Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second ... if there is one."

- Winston Churchill, in response

## The Enchanting Arthur Rackham.

- a sinuous pen line softened with muted water colour
- forests of looming, frightening trees with grasping roots
- sensuous, but somehow chaste, fairy maidens
- ogres and trolls ugly enough to repulse but with sufficient good nature not to frighten
- backgrounds filled with little nuggets of hidden images or surprising animated animals or trees

These were the traits which made the illustrations of Arthur Rackham (1867 – 1939) widely regarded as among the best of the 'Golden Age' of British book illustrations



The twa corbies.

The family in which Rackham was raised was heavily religious.

In a household marked by death, (many of his siblings did not survive childhood.) the consolations of religion were stressed. His mother could have been worn out with child bearing but instead sustained herself with her strong religious (Church of England) beliefs. His father was drawn to Unitarianism and influenced by the spirituality of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Frederick Denison Maurice (the son of a Unitarian minister who became himself an Anglican minister). Both parents impressed upon young Arthur the Victorian belief in hard work and self reliance. It is a wonder that the glorious imagination of the boy who went on to be an artistic genius was not snuffed out at an early age.



The valiant little tailor

While working as a clerk, Rackham at-

tended the Lambeth School of Art at night for seven years, getting a thorough grounding in draughtsmanship. With his illustrations for

The Zankiwank and The Bletherwitch 1896 Rackham's unique style came into its own.



Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens.



Siegfried Leaving Brunhilde.



The Three Bears.

Out of fashion by WW2, Rackham's art has seen a recent revival of interest along with fantasy literature like that of Tolkien.

## John Frederick Denison Maurice

Frederick Dennison Maurice, as he was commonly known, (August 29, 1805 - April 1, 1872) was an English theologian and socialist recognized as one of the most important thinkers in the Anglican tradition. Influenced by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and a close friend of the popular clergyman and novelist Charles Kingsley, he in turn influenced the poet Alfred Lord Tennyson who considered him 'the greatest mind' of the age. His friends included some of the leading intellectuals of his time, such as John Stuart Mill and Thomas Carlyle. His interests were not limited to theoretical issues but extended to the education and welfare of the working class, helping to establish Queen's College, London, as the first women's higher education institute in England and the Working Men's College, of which he became Principal (1854). He was a professor at King's College, London, from 1840 to 1853 and from 1866 he was Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Cambridge. He was one of the best known clergy in Victorian England. He has been described as a prophetic voice on behalf of the poor. He is also considered as one of the founder of the trades union movement. His stress on Christian social responsibility was a major influence on, among others, William Temple.

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### Educational projects

During his residence in London, Maurice was identified with several important educational initiatives. He helped to found Queen's College for the education of women (1848) where he also lectured, and chaired the council until 1853. The college was granted its Royal Charter in 1853. This was the first such institution in England. In 1854 he co-founded the Working Men's College (1854), of which he was the first principal - elected by the students. The College was also supported by John Stuart Mill. He served in this capacity until his death. He was helping to establish the Working Women's College when he died, which, founded in 1874 later became Francis Martin College and merged with the Working Men's College in 1964. Maurice edited the Educational Magazine

from 1839 to 1841, and admired the ideas of Robert Owen. The distinction between teacher and learner was minimized in the Working Men's College thus pioneering the emphasis in Adult pedagogy that teaching and learning is a process to which all involved contribute, those traditionally called 'learners' also teach and those traditionally called 'teachers' also learn. He strongly advocated the abolition of university tests (which prevented Dissenters and Catholics - and Jews - from graduating), and threw himself with great energy into all that affected the social life of the people.

### Christian Socialism

Attempts at co-operation among working men, and the movement known as Christian Socialism, were the immediate outcome of his teaching. ***Maurice and his friends had noticed that on the continent socialism and Christianity were regarded as incompatible. In fact virulent anti-clericalism was 'one of the driving forces of continental socialism.'*** ***The reason was that religion was associated with the dominant economic and political order, and the obstinate religiosity of some communities from the lower classes was widely perceived by socialists as an obstacle to their enlightenment and emancipation.*** Maurice did not want socialism in England to develop in the same way and so when the Chartist's petition had been rejected by the House of Commons a meeting was held on April 10, 1848 to discuss how the Church could help to prevent revolution by tackling what they considered were the reasonable grievances of the working class. Maurice was acknowledged as the leader of the group and his book The Kingdom of Christ (1838) became the theological basis of Christian Socialism. Together with Kingsley, who did much to popularize his ideas, and Thomas Hughes, who succeeded him as principal of the Working Men's College, Maurice published the journals Politics of the People (1848-1849) and The Christian Socialist (1850-1851) and a series of tracts, Tracts on Christian Socialism. They also established a number of co-operative associations and friendly societies which helped to give impetus to the Co-operative movement, which



Owen is considered to have founded a few years earlier.

St Peter's, Vere Street London where F.D. Maurice served As minister for nine years



With its farms, shops, banks and other associational activities including a political party (the Labour Party), the cooperative movement represents a working alternative to the capitalist and communist models. Its ventures are owned and operated by and for the benefit of workers, not by and for the benefit of shareholders or by and for the benefit of the state. The trades union movement has also been traced to an early Christian Socialist initiative supporting worker rights.

In 1870, he served on the government Commission on Contagious Diseases. Among the many institutions he founded or co-founded was a girl's home in Portland Place, London.

## Theology

As a preacher, his message was apparently simple; his two great convictions were the fatherhood of God, and that all religious systems which had any stability lasted because of a portion of truth which had to be disentangled from the error differentiating them from the doctrines of the Church of England as understood by himself. The prophetic, even apocalyptic, note of his preaching was particularly impressive. He prophesied "often with dark foreboding, but seeing through all unrest and convulsion the working out of a sure divine purpose." Both at King's College and at Cambridge Maurice gathered a following of earnest students. He encouraged the habit of inquiry and research, more valuable than his direct teaching.

Kingsley's Water Babies popularized Maurice's theology, with its re-expression of the

golden rule.

As a social reformer, Maurice was before his time, and eagerly gave his support to schemes for which the world was not really not quite ready. The condition of the city's poor troubled him; the magnitude of the social questions involved was a burden he could hardly bear. Working men of all opinions seemed to trust him even if their faith in other religious men and all religious systems had faded, and he had a power of attracting both the zealot and the outcast. ***He was inspired by the Hebrew prophets' profound concern for social justice, preferring loving action to empty words asserting faith.***

A major influence on his thinking was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who had praised Eustace Conway. Maurice never met Coleridge but he did correspond with his daughter, Sara. For Maurice, religion could not be divorced from politics. The Church's stress on personal salvation neglected Christian social responsibility. He argued for a mid-position between a capitalism that over-stressed individualism, which he saw as competitive and selfish. His alternative, which saw some practical application in the Cooperative movement, was a modified form of socialism, a socialism with religious values at its core. He strongly supported extension of the franchise and the views of the Chartists. Underneath all his teaching and social and educational initiatives was the conviction that the Christian calling is not only about preparing to meet God after death, but about creating a Christian society –God's kingdom – in the here and now. ***He thought that the Church of England should put worship and sacraments before dogma, since the former connect people with God while dogmas represent human opinions which can stand between people and God. This can be seen as a continued Unitarian influence on his thinking.*** The incarnation places social justice and redeeming the world centre-stage for any Christian concerned with doing God's will 'on earth, as it is done in heaven'. Like the later advocate of Christian social responsibility, Walter Rauschenbusch, much of Maurice's thought stemmed from his understanding of the 'kingdom of God' as a 'kingdom of the Father come on earth', the

'Living Kingdom of the Living Christ'. He thought that in the Kingdom - if this can be achieved - there would be neither rich nor poor, oppressor nor oppressed. Created in God's image, all people are equal. He certainly did not see the Kingdom purely in terms of a future event or as a reality that God will impose on the world but as a co-operative venture between humanity and God. ***The Christian Socialists also advocated negotiation to resolve international disputes, regarding 'persuasion' as 'the first weapon, and violence the last, in the Christian armory'*** Maurice and his fellow Christian socialists were interested in people holistically. Worship was important but so was art and culture, hence Maurice's own interest in poetry and literature and his concern to make education available through alternatives to traditional schooling (such as opportunities for evening and week-end learning).

### On Other Religions

Maurice also pioneered a re-thinking of the Christian attitude towards other faiths in his Boyce Lectures, published as The Religions of the World (1846). He began his lectures with the premise, itself shocking to many Christians at the time, that all religions have their origin in the divine. They stem, he argued, from some something that is better than their human followers, which sustains them despite human weakness. This 'inner strength' was not due to man's own spiritual nature or faculties but to what he called 'the higher ground', or, anticipating Paul Tillich, 'the ground of our being.' ***Each religion, he suggested, stressed a vital aspect of divine truth while only Christianity holds all aspects together in absolute harmony. Christianity, in contact with other religions, can therefore supply the wholeness they need to become effectual. Christianity, though, like all systems, suffers decay and stands itself in need of the revitalization that contact with other faiths can supply. Therefore, if other faiths need Christianity, Christianity also needs them; thus theology of religions becomes a universal concern.*** Maurice reacted against Thomas Carlyle's pantheism, although Carlyle's psychological portrait of Muhammad was his principal source. Through their mutual friend, John Stuart Mill, Maurice knew Carlyle (with

whom he also corresponded.

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Maurice's main contribution was the placing of a theology of religions that positively valued other faiths within a wider theological framework. Briefly, this centred on his profound conviction that God had both created and redeemed mankind. All are therefore 'in Christ' whether they know it or not, anticipating Karl Rahner and his concept of anonymous Christians. Hindus and Muslims as well as Christians stand in a relationship with him. 'Unity', says biographer Florence Higham, 'whether in a person or a people, was of the essence' of Maurice's understanding of the Gospel. Islam's value, Maurice suggested, was its clear proclamation that God is and that he seeks men out. Islam emphasises the fact of God's being and is most vital when proclaiming that fact. It degenerates, said Maurice, when it attempts to substitute 'visions of His nature' for that fact. This becomes fruitless speculation and results in Muslims becoming worshipers of a 'dead necessity' instead of witnesses of a 'Living Being.' Maurice found little comfort in beliefs about God, thus his reluctance to make creeds binding which he inherited from his Unitarian upbringing. Instead, he demanded belief in God, 'unobstructed intercourse with the Deity.'

However, the Gospel's picture of God's nature as incarnate in Christ, if 'grounded' in a Muslim's 'original faith' and not presented as a substitute for it, can 'preserve the precious fragments of truth' in Islam and, 'forming them into a whole', make it 'effectual for the blessing of all lands over which it reigns.' For Maurice, Islam possessed spiritual values and occupied a place in God's providence. Christians need not, said Maurice, 'regard its continuance wholly as a calamity.'

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 The above is part of an article "Frederick Maurice" in the new World Encyclopedia:

http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Frederick_Maurice

The Wikipedia version of Maurice's life gives this interesting quote:

“My father was a Unitarian minister. He wished me to be one also. He had a strong feeling against the English Church, and against Cambridge as well as Oxford. My elder sisters, and ultimately my mother, abandoned Unitarianism. But they continued to be Dissenters; they were not less, but some of them at least more, averse from the English Church than he was. I was much confused between the opposite opinions in our household. What would surprise many, I felt a drawing towards the anti-Unitarian side, not from any religious bias, but because Unitarianism seemed to my boyish logic incoherent and feeble.”

See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Denison_Maurice

Yet in his concern for the practicalities of this life in this world and his attitude to other religions, we can see a positive influence from his father's Unitarianism. JT

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## Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Coleridge (1772-1834) went in the opposite direction to Maurice, being born the son of an Anglican Vicar but converting to Unitarianism. He earned his living as a Unitarian minister 1796-97. However, he returned to his father's Church in 1814.

The following poem belongs to his Unitarian phase:

### Frost at Midnight

The Frost performs its secret ministry,  
Unhelped by any wind. The owl's cry  
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.  
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,  
Have left me to that solitude, which suits  
Abstruser musings: save that at my side  
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.  
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs  
And vexes meditation with its strange  
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,  
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,  
With all the numberless goings-on of life,  
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame  
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;  
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,

Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.  
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature  
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,  
Making it a companionable form,  
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit  
By its own moods interprets, every where  
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,  
And makes a toy of Thought.

But O! how oft,  
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,  
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,  
To watch that fluttering stranger! and as oft  
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt  
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-  
tower,  
Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang  
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,  
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me  
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear  
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!  
So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,  
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my  
dreams!

And so I brooded all the following morn,  
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye  
Fixed with mock study on my swimming  
book:

Save if the door half opened, and I snatched  
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,  
For still I hoped to see the stranger's face,  
Townsmen, or aunt, or sister more beloved,  
My play-mate when we both were clothed  
alike!

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my  
side,  
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep  
calm,  
Fill up the intersperséd vacancies  
And momentary pauses of the thought!  
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart  
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,  
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,  
And in far other scenes! For I was reared  
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,  
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.  
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a  
breeze  
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the  
crag  
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the  
clouds,  
Which image in their bulk both lakes and

and shores  
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and  
hear  
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible  
Of that eternal language, which thy God  
Utters, who from eternity doth teach  
Himself in all, and all things in himself.  
Great universal Teacher! he shall mould  
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to  
thee,  
Whether the summer clothe the general earth  
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing  
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch  
Of mossy apple-tree, while the night-thatch  
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-  
drops fall  
Heard only in the trances of the blast,  
Or if the secret ministry of frost  
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,  
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

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Coleridge's development as a theologian

Jan Tendys

According to one account:

<http://www.victorianweb.org/previctorian/stc/religion1.html>

“Coleridge became known in the Victorian period as one of the most important apologists for the liberal Anglican point of view, clearly foreseeing the difficulties which would inevitably beset the Evangelicals who insisted upon literal interpretation of the Scriptures in defiance of scientific discoveries.” (Glen Everett, University of Tennessee.)

Rev. Richard Truss believes the later Coleridge to be the most insightful. Truss is a Church of England minister who sees Coleridge's rejection of Unitarianism as related to its too great reliance on rationality instead of inner religious experience. He writes:

“Coleridge faced much the same issues as Christians do today – a new rampant atheism and a Christianity set on defending itself either by biblical “evidence” or by dogmatic pronouncement. Whilst embracing the scientific advances of the Enlighten-

ment, he felt that in many ways philosophy and theology in England had lost their way during the eighteenth century, by concentrating solely on the mechanistic or on a God who acts as a ‘deus ex machina’, and whose role was increasingly diminished by scientific advance. He, like many of his contemporary defenders of the faith, wanted a liberal and rational theology, but one which recognized the priority of the subjective, of the immanent God found within the human imagination. It is only in this inner experience, and not in “proofs” or “evidences for Christianity, that we will find the reality of faith.”

<http://www.anglicanism.org/admin/docs/coleridge2.pdf>

It seems doubtful that Coleridge would have defended much of the traditional teaching of the Church of England. His attraction to the God of the Mystics who, he believed, can be grasped by the human imagination but never explained, had nothing to do with the doctrine of the Trinity or the miracles wrought by Jesus.

Of course, modern Unitarianism continues to emphasise what is reasonable, whilst leaving strictly spiritual beliefs up to the individual.

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## **SYDNEY SPIRIT OF LIFE UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP REPORT TO ANZUUA ADELAIDE BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 2017**

Greetings from Sydney Spirit of Life (Kirribilli).

Our president Helen Whatmough offers her apologies for not being able to attend this weekend's gathering. As well two former Adelaide Unitarian members, Sandy Biers and Rev. Dan Jantos send their regards. They touch base with us when they can, despite their busy schedules and both have contributed with presentations over the recent year.

SOL meets at the Kirribilli Neighbourhood

Centre three Sundays out of four as local markets occur on the second Sunday of each month, thus making parking very difficult.

We have a small constant group of enthusiastic 10-12 attendees. We often have overseas visitors attending, usually from the USA, it is great to discover we have a lot in common.

Our talks are usually presented by members of the Fellowship Group, with some occasional presentations from our resident retired "Revs".

Some recently presented topics have been 'Diversity Without Division'; 'Taking Inventory' – a chance to take inventory of our minds and souls; 'Post Truth, Post Fact' confusion of reality and truth in a post truth era; 'Was Monotheism a Mistake?'

There is usually a short time included in the service for valuable discussion and Q&A on the presented topic.

We are able to reach out and publicise our meetings etc., via a local "Sydney Talks" website as well as our own and also on Facebook and via the publishing, mostly online, of our monthly magazine "Esprit", to let people know of our presence at Kirribilli.

We feel we are an alternative for people who are disenchanted with mainstream churches yet who wish to still attend a structured group with freedom to discuss their own thinking, contrary to the mainstream church.

We look forward to an opportunity of comparing and exchanging programming activities and ideas with the other groups during the conference, or at other times. Thank You for all the hard work done by so many and for the generous hospitality to make the conference so informative, enjoyable and friendly.

Adelaide Unitarians, you are a hard act to follow!!

Regards,  
Carolyn and Peter Donnelly

### **Would you care to join Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship?**

**Membership is open to all adults and includes this newsletter.** *Full membership \$50 concession \$20*. Please note that all membership applications are subject to approval at a meeting of the Committee. Ask Rev. Geoff Usher for an application form at the Sunday service.

***If you have a news item or written article you believe would be of interest to the congregation, we invite you to submit it for Esprit.***

It would be helpful if items for publication, including articles and talk topics with themes could reach Esprit editor by the 15th of each month: [jantendys@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jantendys@yahoo.com.au) or hand to Jan Tendys at the Sunday service.

***Do you have a topic of a spiritual / ethical nature that you would like to share with the congregation?*** As Unitarians, we support an "Open Pulpit" and invite members of the congregation to lead the service if they so wish. *Please see Caz Donnelly at the Sunday service*

**Fellowship contact 0466 940 461**

**Website [www.sydneyunitarians.org](http://www.sydneyunitarians.org)**