



Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship
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Schedule of Services

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

6 February Janet Horton "The sounds of transition"

Wouldn't it be nice to think that our personal growth comes in a nice steady pattern? But, psychology has shown that it is more like fits and starts. How are you making meaning of your current situation? Are you in transition? We will use music to help us understand what these transitions look and feel like.

13 February Ginna Hastings "On Gratitude."

This talk will be on how gratitude enriches our lives and makes life more meaningful, as well as some discussion about what gratitude entails to be truly helpful.

20 February Colin Whatmough "Government for all or only the Established Privileged."

27 February Rev. Steve Wilson "The Science of Love" (and our anniversary party)

6 March Rev. Steve Wilson "Religion beyond Faith"

13 March Laurence Gormley "Arianism and Unitarianism: Are they related?"

13 MARCH WILL BE OUR AGM

20 March Professor Sir Lloyd Geering * Guest Speaker

Lloyd has given us a choice of two topics: "The Jesus Seminar" and "The Evolving Concept of God." We will keep you posted.

27 March Ross McLuckie To be announced

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\* **Lloyd Geering** will also be speaking for CPRT Freedom to Explore on March 19, together with **Rev. Dr. Greg Jenks**, on "**Jesus— better known, and Bible—better read**" at Beecroft Community Centre. Cost \$60.00, Lunch, Morning and afternoon tea provided. Enquiries 040 575 811

## A Devilish God?

*Evan Davies*

A number of years ago I read about a strange religion that was unknown to me, but appeared as a small article in "The Herald" newspaper. The Yazides are a nice people who worship Satan as their God, but they are not devil worshippers in the European tradition.

Here I should repeat part of the original article, but do not know the author.

"If God is all-knowing and all-loving he doesn't need human beings running round praising him all the time. His self-esteem is secure. But Satan is the one who causes all the trouble in the world; he's the one with the psychological problem. The Yazide believe that if they are nice to Satan, stroking his ego, he may leave them alone."

Many years went by without learning more about these people, even where they lived, until I came across a reference to them in a biography of Agatha Christie. She had gone with her second husband (an archaeologist) to the Eastern Syria area in the mid 1930s, on a "dig". While there, her husband had employed some of the locals and a few were Yazides.

In 2007 there were two reports again in "The Herald" about the sect. One said they had been caught up in the Iraq war for no obvious reason. There is a sidelight on one of Agatha Christie's books where she gave the name Shaitana (Satan) to one of her characters.

### **Some research by the Editor**

There are different accounts of these people and their religion. Here are some extracts from *Wikipedia's* version:

The Yazidi (also Yezidi, Kurdish: or Êzîdî) are members of a Kurdish religion with ancient Indo-Iranian roots. They are primarily a Kurdish-speaking people living in the Mosul region of northern Iraq, with additional communities in Transcaucasia, Armenia, Turkey, and Syria in decline since the 1990s – their members emigrating to Europe, especially to Germany. Their religion, Yazidism, is a branch of Yazdânism, and is seen as a highly syncretic complex of local Kurdish beliefs and Islamic Sufi doctrine introduced to the

area by Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir in the 12th century. The Yazidi believe in God as creator of the world, which he placed under the care of seven holy beings or angels, the chief of whom is Melek Taus, the Peacock Angel.

The Yazidi are a Kurdish-speaking people who adhere to a branch of Yazdanism that blends elements of Mithraism, pre-Islamic Mesopotamian religious traditions, Christianity and Islam. Their principal holy site is in Lalish, northeast of Mosul.

...In the Yazidi belief system, God created the world and it is now in the care of a Heptad of seven Holy Beings, often known as Angels or heft sirr (the Seven Mysteries). Preeminent among these is Tawûsê Melek (frequently known as "Melek Taus" in English publications), the Peacock Angel.

.....the Yazidi story regarding Tawûsê Melek's rise to favor with God is almost identical to the story of the jinn Iblis in Islam, except that Yazidis revere Tawûsê Melek for refusing to submit to Adam, while Muslims believe that Iblis' refusal to submit caused him to fall out of Grace with God, and to later become Satan himself

Tawûsê Melek is often identified by Muslims and Christians with Shaitan (Satan). Yazidis, however, believe Tawûsê Melek is not a source of evil or wickedness. They consider him to be the leader of the archangels, not a fallen angel. They also hold that the source of evil is in the heart and spirit of humans themselves, not in Tawûsê Melek. The active forces in their religion are Tawûsê Melek and Sheik Adî.

...Yazidi accounts of creation differ from that of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. They believe that God first created Tawûsê Melek from his own illumination (Ronahî) and the other six archangels were created later. God ordered Tawûsê Melek not to bow to other beings. Then God created the other archangels and ordered them to bring him dust (Ax) from the Earth (Erd) and build the body of Adam. Then God gave life to Adam from his own breath and instructed all archangels to bow to Adam. The archangels obeyed except for Tawûsê Melek. In answer to God, Tawûsê Melek replied, "How can I submit to another being! I am from your illumination while Adam is made of dust." Then God praised him and made him the leader of all angels and his deputy on the Earth. (This likely

further what some see as a connection to the Islamic Shaytan, as according to the Quran he too refused to bow to Adam at God's command, though in this case it is seen as being a sign of Shaytan's sinful pride.) Hence the Yazidis believe that Tawûsê Melek is the representative of God on the face of the Earth, and comes down to the Earth on the first Wednesday of Nisan (April). Yazidis hold that God created Tawûsê Melek on this day, and celebrate it as New Year's Day. Yazidis argue that the order to bow to Adam was only a test for Tawûsê Melek, since if God commands anything then it must happen. ...In other words, God could have made him submit to Adam, but gave Tawûsê Melek the choice as a test. They believe that their respect and praise for Tawûsê Melek is a way to acknowledge his majestic and sublime nature.

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More from Hans Küng
The Surprising Catholic

What I believe:

To be sure I do NOT believe everything and anything:

I am not gullible!

Believing is, for me, reasonable trust - one which I can give good reasons for.

I trust in life; I still see meaning in my life, despite the meaninglessness in the world around me.

For I believe in a FIRST, invisible and Unfathomable Reality -

the source of the "Big Bang" and of space and time and of all the myriad forms of life -

At the same time , the ULTIMATE eternal Reality

beyond space and time, into which I hope to die.

In short, I believe in a primal ground and a primal meaning

that bears up the whole great mystery of reality,

one referred to by that much misused term "God".

A Reality accessible to all human beings,

though in different names and images.

For me, as a Christian, this Reality Is revealed in Jesus Christ, Who is for me the Way, the Truth and Life itself.

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Hans Kung will shortly be 83 years old. His latest book is:

"Ist die Kirche Noch Zu Retten?"  
 (Can the Church Still be Saved?)

**Contributed by Jim Scarfe**



In **Launching of the Manifesto, The Global Economic Crisis Requires a Global Ethic, The Manifesto for a Global Economic Ethic** (after the global meltdown) Küng says:

**1. The failure of markets, institutions and morality calls for an ethical framework**

"Recent experiences have proved that the sustainability of the market economy is by no means guaranteed. Indeed, one cannot escape the fact that the emergence of global capitalism has brought with it an entirely new set of risks. Trying to find a single reason for, or solution to the challenges of the global market economy in a particular country or in a particular region is unlikely to be successful. In fact, what we often observe is that, in such a situation, mutual recriminations occur: economists accuse politicians and politicians accuse economists; while the average citizen frequently sees the moral defects of both protagonists. In any case, if only one of the three elements, whether it be economics, politics, or morality, does not work, it can cause serious difficulties for the market economy".

Scholars distinguish between three types of

failures of the capitalist system (cf. John Dunning, Global Capitalism at Bay, 2001):

- 1. A failure of markets: moral hazard, inappropriate macroeconomic politics, excessive speculation (property and stock market), etc.**
- 2. A failure of the institutions: inefficient functioning of the regulatory and supervisory systems, an inadequate legal and financial infrastructure, lack of accountability and/or transparency and inadequate standards in financial reporting.**
- 3. A failure of moral virtues, which lies at the core of the failure of the markets and institutions. Such failures include casino-capitalism and corruption, lack of truthfulness, trust and social responsibility, and excessive greed of the investors or institutions, falsified balance sheets and illegal manipulation of the markets.**

Of course, all three dimensions are man-made and can be influenced by men: the markets by the behaviour of customers and the supply-structures, the institutions by wise regulations, enforced standards and transparent self-commitments. People have therefore the moral responsibility to build an adequate institutional framework for the economy.

Obviously ethic is not just the icing on the cake, is not marginal or artificially put on features in shaping global market economy. No, it is justified to talk of a moral framework which is both interactive and interdependent with the economic function of the main institutions of the economic system: markets, governments, civil society and supranational organisations.

One conclusion we can draw is that ethic does not only denote moral appeals, but moral action. Nevertheless a strain is often needed in the economy, as within the contemporary crisis, in order to create the pressure to reform which can turn into a political agenda. I strongly believe that in the long run, the global market economy will only be accepted in the different regions and nations if it is socially acceptable. After all, in a democratic society the majority of the electorate has repeatedly to be convinced that a

strong ethical framework supports both the operation and effects of the global markets and the extramarket institutions. Such a framework influences the behaviour and the decisions of those who are directly involved in the process of production and distribution and of those who bear political responsibility. But what could be elements of this ethical framework? In this respect a lot of people have doubts: Is a global consensus possible? Hence my second reflection on:

## ***2. The claims of the UN Global Compact as well of the OECD guidelines require cross-cultural ethical values and standards***

Obviously, all ethical values and standards are culture bound, but there are core values and standards that are universal. In this respect, the UN Global Compact, which was initiated by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 1999, offers a most valuable starting point. It has already been joined by more than 5200 corporate participants and stakeholders from over 130 countries. I am most grateful to its Executive Director, Georg Kell, for having accepted to be a co-convenor of our symposium. The claims it makes on the corporate conduct in a globalized economy are fourfold:

- (1) Respect and support of Human Rights,
- (2) adhere to responsible labour standards,
- (3) protect the environment according to the precautionary principle, and
- (4) work against corruption in all its forms.

**These claims are obviously based on the conviction that everywhere on earth i.e. in all societies, cultures and religions - people need to recognize and accept comparable basic pillars which allow them to live together peacefully without compromise to their interests and concerns.** In this respect, the contents of the UN Global Compact are very much in accord with the ideas of the Declaration Toward a Global Ethic of the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1993 of which I had the honour and burden to function as drafter. It has been confirmed by the InterAction Council's proposal for a Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities and by the Manifesto Crossing the Divide. Dialogue among Civilizations.

Based on the Chicago Declaration, the new Manifesto, Global Economic Ethic Consequences for Global Businesses intends to support the Global Compact from the angle of ethics.

At this point also the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises (MNEs) (OECD 2000) deserve to be quoted. Their claims presuppose very specific ethical standards, notably

- **the claim for disclosure: it requires the will to truthfulness, honesty, transparency.**
- **the claim for environmental protection, public health, and safety: it requires reverence for life, all life including that of animals and plants;**
- **the claim to refrain from slush corruption and bribery: it requires both a basic attitude towards justice and fairness and the will to encompass a just economic system;**
- **the claim to avoid any kind of gender, colour or age discrimination at the workplace: it implies the ethical conviction of the partnership of men and women and the necessity for equal rights.**

Who assumes that these are only abstract and general statements should read the already mentioned Declaration Toward a Global Ethic; the text can be found on the homepage of the Global Ethic Foundation ([www.global-ethic.org](http://www.global-ethic.org)). There, principles stemming from all the major ethical and religious traditions are applied to contemporary situations. All this leads us to conclude that the question of cross-cultural global values and ethical standards which is crucial for the success of global market economy can, indeed, be answered, despite all cultural differences. This leads me to my third reflection:

### ***3. Such a Global Ethic is based on the principles of humanity and reciprocity and the basic standards of non-violence, fairness, truthfulness and partnership***

A lot of what is proclaimed as God's commandment in the Hebrew Bible, in the New Testament and in the Koran can also be found in the religions and philosophies of Indian and Chinese origins and also in humanist philosophies not rooted in any religion.

The Global Ethic Declaration identified two basic principles which underlie all ethical values and standards: humanity (“ren” in Chinese) and reciprocity (“shu”):

- **First, the principle of humanity. When this is applied, it changes the atmosphere in any office, factory, store or business: Every human being – man or woman, white or coloured, rich or poor, young or old – must be treated humanely and not inhumanely, even bestially.**
- **Second, the principle of reciprocity or the Golden Rule. It can be found already in the analects of Confucius, but also in the biblical, Islamic and other traditions: “What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others.”**

The Global Ethic Declaration of 1993 is the ethical frame of reference of this new Manifesto for a Global Economic Ethic. The principle of humanity, supported by the Golden Rule of reciprocity constitutes also the foundation (Part I) of this new Declaration. Based on these two fundamental principles, there are four basic values and standards one can find already in the writings of Patanjali, the founder of yoga, but also in the Buddhist Canon and in all major religious and non-religious traditions: not to murder, not to steal, not to lie, not to abuse sexuality. They structure also our Declaration:

- **a commitment to a culture of non-violence and reverence for life;**

**a commitment to a culture of fairness and a just economic order**

- **a commitment to a culture of truthfulness and tolerance**

- **a commitment to a culture of partnership and equal rights of men and women**

***4. The Declaration on a Global Economic Ethic reminds all stakeholders in global businesses of their individual responsibilities for humanizing the functioning of the global economy: globalization needs a global ethic.***

Read more:  
[http://www.globaleconomicethic.org/04-new-york-02\\_3-kueng.php](http://www.globaleconomicethic.org/04-new-york-02_3-kueng.php)

***Contributed by Jan Tendys***

## FORREST GUMP GOES TO HEAVEN

The day finally arrived. Forrest Gump dies and goes to Heaven. He is at the Pearly Gates, met by St. Peter himself. However, the gates are closed, and Forrest approaches the gatekeeper.

St. Peter said, 'Well, Forrest, it is certainly good to see you. We have heard a lot about you. I must tell you, though, that the place is filling up fast, and we have been administering an entrance examination for everyone. The test is short, but you have to pass it before you can get into Heaven.'

Forrest responds, 'It sure is good to be here, St. Peter, sir. But nobody ever told me about any entrance exam. I sure hope that the test ain't too hard. Life was a big enough test as it was.'

St. Peter continued, 'Yes, I know, Forrest, but the test is only three questions.

First: What two days of the week begin with the letter T?

Second: How many seconds are there in a year?

Third: What is God's first name?

Forrest leaves to think the questions over. He returns the next day and sees St. Peter, who waves him up, and says, 'Now that you have had a chance to think the questions over, tell me your answers.'

Forrest replied, 'Well, the first one -- which two days in the week begins with the letter 'T'?

Shucks, that one is easy. That would be Today and Tomorrow.'

St. Peter's eyes opened wide and he exclaimed, 'Forrest, that is not what I was thinking, but you do have a point, and I guess I did not specify, so I will give you credit for that answer. How about the next one?' asked St. Peter.

'How many seconds in a year? Now that one is harder,' replied Forrest, 'but I think and think about that, and I guess the only answer can be twelve.'

Astounded, St. Peter said, 'Twelve? Twelve? Forrest, how in Heaven's name could you come up with twelve seconds in a year?

Forrest replied, 'Shucks, there's got to

Forrest replied, 'Shucks, there's got to be twelve: January 2nd, February 2nd, March 2nd...'

'Hold it,' interrupts St. Peter. 'I see where you are going with this, and I see your point, though that was not quite what I had in mind....but I will have to give you credit for that one, too. Let us go on with the third and final question.

Can you tell me God's first name'?

'Sure,' Forrest replied, 'it's Andy.'

Andy?' exclaimed an exasperated and very frustrated St. Peter. 'Ok, I can understand how you came up with your answers to my first two questions, but just how in the world did you come up with the name Andy as the first name of God?'

'Shucks, that was the easiest one of all,' Forrest replied. 'I learnt it from the song:

ANDY WALKS WITH ME,

ANDY TALKS WITH ME,

ANDY TELLS ME I AM HIS OWN.'

St. Peter opened the Pearly Gates, and said: 'Run, Forrest, run.'

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You can blame the above on

Geoff Matthews, who has been a very active member of our Fellowship as well as a source of jokes. Geoff's cheerfulness is phenomenal, although sorely tried recently by a nasty bout of ill health.

Sadly, Geoff is going to leave us as he is off to the Hunter Valley to live. He has been a very able Treasurer for the group and has been a good facilitator for many of our discussions as well as giving us talks of his own. An unusual one was "Horses Birthday Today" (up on our website blog) into which Geoff was able to weave "The Man from Snowy River" and an uplifting description of how supervised horse riding can be a treat for disabled people.

A big "thank You" to Geoff for all he has done. The committee awarded him a lifetime membership of SOL in gratitude for his work as treasurer.

We hope to see him from time to time.

Green Growth, South Korea's National Policy, Gaining Global Attention

Is there such a thing as "green growth"?

A new economic paradigm is arising out of the ashes of the global financial crisis. Could it take hold?

By Stacy Feldman, Jan 26, 2011

SolveClimate

When the global financial crisis rippled through economies around the world in 2008, experts warned that global warming would slide down on the list of the world's priorities. In part, they were right.

Trillions flowed to resuscitate teetering economies, which were based on fossil fuels. Money pledged to address climate change was never mobilized.

But something else happened at the same time: Many nations' fiscal-stimulus packages included billions to finance clean energy projects.

No nation was as bullish on the idea as South Korea. Asia's fourth-largest economy poured 80 percent of its \$38 billion stimulus program into what it calls "green growth." Later, it committed 2 percent of its annual GDP over five years to the same national cause.

Now, both rich and poor nations are turning to Seoul for lessons in green-powered development, and the new economic approach that was born out of financial mayhem.

Could it take hold?

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) seems to think so.

"It's on the minds of many countries who want to preserve their national capital and limit the risk to economic growth," said Nathalie Girouard, an economist and coordinator of OECD's green growth program.

Whole story: <http://tinyurl.com/4nder2l>

Editor's comment: It is a terrible pity that the tradesperson accrediting of the state governments let down the home insulation scheme of the Rudd government. Isn't it frustrating that scamming and shoddy workmanship by a few people always have to be factored in?

Snowstorms and Cyclones

Oh, there have been snowstorms before, and cyclones--our planet has always produced extreme events. But by definition extreme events are supposed to be rare, and all of a sudden they're not. In 2010 nineteen nations set new all-time temperature records (itself a record!) and when the mercury hit 128 in early June along the Indus, the entire continent of Asia set a new all-time temperature mark. Russia caught on fire; Pakistan drowned. Munich Re, the biggest insurance company on earth, summed up the annus horribilis last month with this clinical phrase: "the high number of weather-related natural catastrophes and record temperatures both globally and in different regions of the world provide further indications of advancing climate change."

You don't need a PhD to understand what's happening. That carbon we've poured into the air traps more of the sun's heat near the planet. And that extra energy expresses itself in a thousand ways, from melting ice to powering storms. Since warm air can hold more water vapor than cold, it's not surprising that the atmosphere is 4% moister than it was 40 years ago. That "4% extra amount, it invigorates the storms, it provides plenty of moisture for these storms," said Kevin Trenberth, head of the climate analysis section at the (US) government's National Center for Atmospheric Research. It loads the dice for record rain and snow.

The above is part of an AlterNet article by Bill McKibben, author of bestseller, *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*, an account of the onset of climate change. *Scientific American* published excerpts.

Politicians need to know what we care about. Remember, they are influenced by the number of letters they receive on a topic. (If writing, always add your home address & phone). How about writing to:

The Hon. Greg Combet, AM, MP
Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency

Email: greg.combet.mp@aph.gov.au

PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



House in Mourilyan near Innisfail following Cyclone Yasi - photo Glenn Hunt, Via SMH

Mother Nature has been on the rampage.

The committee is making a donation from the emergency fund, as well as working on an efficient way to send an equal amount to help flood victims in Brazil.

As well as the suffering of human beings there is the suffering of animals to be considered. The Queensland Horse Council, RSPCA and other organisations will be locating missing animals, patching up damaged animals and sadly putting down others.

On the whole, despite looters, people have behaved splendidly in all the affected parts of Australia. The volunteering spirit is not dead.

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 publication.

Please note that Esprit is assembled usually in the last week of the month so longer items should be handed in or sent by the second last Sunday of the month. Items for the Schedule of Services (talk titles etc) should be in by the Friday of the last week. Variations to this timetable may be necessitated by circumstances.

Preferred method is as an MS-WORD file or email to jtendys@bigpond.com
Hardcopy (or electronic media) submissions can be hand-delivered to Jan or posted to:
Spirit of Life
PO Box 1356
LANE COVE NSW 1595

Please note:

Do you have a topic of a spiritual 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.

Just let Candace know what you would like to speak about and when you are available and we will fit you into the schedule.

Also, please feel free to give us your feedback on any of the services. This is the best way to ensure the services address the needs of the congregation.

Would you care to join us? Membership is open to all adults and includes this newsletter If you would like to join us as an active member of Spirit of Life, please ring 9428-2244, consult our website www.sydneyunitarians.com or speak to one of our members before or after the Sunday service. Please note that all membership applications are subject to approval at a meeting of the Committee.