

MARCH 2014

The Newsletter of the Wellspring Community Inc • An Australian Community inspired by the Iona Community

## Mary Gilchrist: Tribute from the Wellspring Community

*Mary Gilchrist was farewelled by an overflow congregation at St Christopher's Catholic Church, Holsworthy, a suburb in Sydney's south-west on Wednesday January 15. There were five officiating priests, giving us all some idea of the respect in which Mary was held in the Catholic Church as a whole. Many women took part as well in the Service of Thanksgiving for Mary's life, both friends and family members.*

*Fourteen Wellspring people were present coming from as far away as Brisbane and Newcastle. The eulogies gave us an even greater insight into the dedication and commitment that Mary gave to the various organisations and groups she was working for. Early in her life she worked for the Paulian Society, later with PALMS, and spent a number of years in Ghana. We were all aware of her wonderful work in the mental health area, with sufferers, carers and professionals. It was a privilege to see the rapport she had with a Ghanaian nurse who was working at the Nursing Home where Mary spent some of her last days. Mary was able to speak to the nurse in her native tongue which was a thrill for them both.*

*Mary is already being missed so much in Wellspring circles as the bubbly person she was, the practical 'doer' of jobs, the friend to so many and a motivator. We loved her. She had the rare distinction of*

*being a very new Wellspring friend who from Day 1, attended an AGM, chaired it while the Chairperson stood down, resumed her seat, later to become very involved in Wellspring Council, and a Co-Leader with Jill Robertson.*

*As many of Mary's colleagues, family and friends say: May her soul rest in peace.*

*Peggy Goldsmith*

Being a member of the Wellspring Community gave Mary scope to share with others of many Christian traditions her strong commitment to ecumenism, which had been developed during a lifetime of service to those in need in many countries, particularly with the Paulians. Wellspring is a geographically dispersed Australian Community, modelled on the Iona Community in Scotland. Those who belong commit themselves to the rule of the community, and to acting for peace and justice in their everyday life. Mary exemplified all these qualities.

In over ten years of membership, Mary became greatly loved by those who shared with her, particularly after they had experienced a personal relationship at one of the National Gatherings of the Community. It seemed that she took a close interest in every one she met, and you soon felt that you had known her for a lifetime. Mary always told it as she saw it, and gained great respect for her

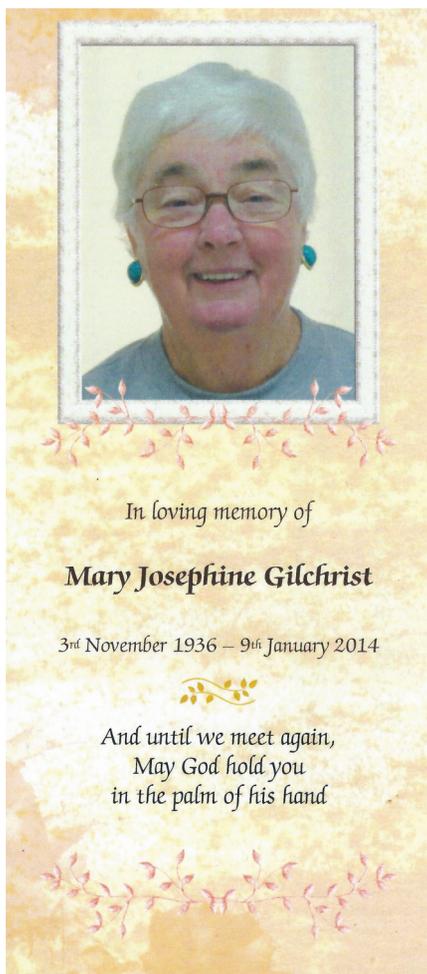
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cheerful frankness. We have lasting memories of her laughter ringing out as she talked or worked with others in the Community.

Mary's organisational skills came to the fore in assisting in the detailed planning of at least three of the biennial National Gatherings of Wellspring Community. Two of these were held near Canberra and one at Collaroy in Sydney. Her extremely careful attention to detail meant that she was a tremendous asset in receiving registrations, handling the receipt of money and ensuring that the program for a four day conference ran to schedule. No one could match those exceptional skills, and we dared not give the job to someone else!

These abilities equipped her well for a leadership role in the dispersed community. In 2007, she became a co-leader of the Community with Jill Robertson, and Mary's love of people was obvious as she maintained contact with scattered members throughout Australia. She took very seriously her commitment to visit those living in the states for which she was responsible. She wrote regularly for the Community journal, Pipeline. After the Gathering at which she was elected as co-leader, she wrote: "Taking part in a Gathering is always a shot-in-the-arm for those attending. Meeting wonderful people and



sharing a multiple of ideas, devotions and faith. This does and should happen on a smaller scale as well." To fulfil this she took an active role in the Community's Cell Group in the southern suburbs of Sydney and members of that group have visited

her regularly in recent months during her illness.

It was Mary's love of people and her ability to empathise with those who had particular needs that endeared her to the members of Wellspring. We always looked forward to her reports of "Bits and Pieces" in Pipeline, where we read accounts of our colleagues that Mary had gleaned from her travels, phone calls and personal contacts. There was always humour in her stories, and the title of "Mary G" became her name after we saw in action the Aboriginal female impersonator Mary G at the Perth National Gathering in 2011.

In her final column as leader Mary in 2011 urged us all to observe the World Interfaith Harmony Week, based on "Love of God and Love of Neighbour," held in the first week of February. This was typical Mary. Maybe you would like to do this in 2014 in her memory.

Vale Mary. We in the Wellspring Community will greatly miss your graciousness, honesty, love and unfailing commitment to each one of us. You will have your reward with God.

(Prepared by Doug Hewitt on behalf of Wellspring Community Council)

## *A Spring Sunday in September*

*Mac and Margaret Nicholl (Princes Hill, Vic, Day 4) are long time members of Church of All Nations, Carlton Vic. The Church of All Nations (CAN) is an open, questing community of faith and its people seek to live out faith at work, at home and in the community. It took its name in the 1960s when it offered simultaneous translation of the Sunday service into five or six different languages, with interpreter booths in the balcony and headsets in every pew. The Church of All Nations is a busy*

*community hub every day of the week. It is host to the Carlton Senior Citizens' Centre, the Indigenous Hospitality House and CAN Community Support. In addition to two Uniting Church, English-language worship services every week, CAN is host to a number of other Christian communities offering Bible study, worship and other activities.*

*(For more information see <http://carlton-uca.org/>). Here Mac reflects on a special service in 2013.*

September the eighth, the second Sunday in September, the liturgical season of Creation -- a special day at Church of All Nations, a Uniting church in Carlton, in the inner city of Melbourne.

It so happens that our church building is under renovation and this fact, when applied to the season, led the worship planners to organize a service outdoors.

Picture the scene .... a quintessential early Spring morning, calm, warm,



Mac Nicholl

peaceful. Our church is physically part of the Carlton Housing Estate, the home of several thousand people, and the second Sunday is the time when we open the drop-in centre to welcome locals to a barbecue meal in the large room with double doors that opens directly onto the Estate.

Worship ... a table with a cross, a sand tray in which to receive our gleanings from the flower beds nearby, seagulls hovering about, a lovely paved setting partly shaded by the casuarinas, readings from scripture and modern poetry, the sounds of people gathering for the barbecue, a powerful yet



Typical Drop in Centre scene

gentle sense of being in and of the community of Carlton.

Part of the service was an invitation to turn our hands to the garden around the church building . . . so we set off, gathering gloves, spades, secateurs and black garbage bags for 20 minutes of gardening . . . not a break from worship but an expression of worship.

In my small group consisting of an historian, a former politician and a retired teacher, there was some lovely reflecting on weeds, cannas, vegetable gardens, old Methodist hymns, the discovery of an old set of car keys, rotten potatoes, and a warning from one of the locals to watch out for needles! Creation indeed!

Returning to the worship space, now joined by still more seagulls, we sang, unaccompanied, that beautiful hymn of Shirley Murray's:

*Let there be greening,  
birth from the burning,  
water that blesses and air that is sweet,  
health in God's garden,  
hope in God's children,  
regeneration that peace will complete.*

[Together in Song 668]

We have been using a small resource booklet on Creation, produced within the congregation, and one of the extracts was included in our Church bulletin, an appropriate thought to ponder for the day:

*Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with  
God;  
But only he who sees, takes off his  
shoes,  
The rest sit round and pluck  
blackberries*

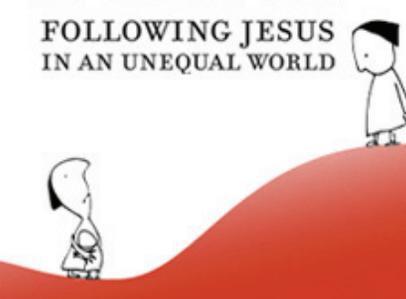
[Elizabeth Barrett Browning]



Church of All Nations, a Uniting Church in Carlton, inner city of Melbourne

# JUST FAITH

FOLLOWING JESUS  
IN AN UNEQUAL WORLD



Designed by TEAR Australia, this resource explores the connections between faith and the big issues of the world today. There are eight sessions: Introduction, What about poverty? What about money? What about the environment? What about war and violence? What about speaking out? What about poverty on our doorstep? What about us? The Just Faith kit consists of a small group study guide (x10), an accompanying DVD and a daily devotional booklet (x10). Each of these can also be bought individually. For further information: <http://bit.ly/OloK19>

# *Wellspring: A Community, Movement, or Network?*

## *Neil Holm Leader's Letter*

As I reported in the last issue, I have been meeting with various people within Wellspring Community to discuss a process of formation (or transformation). Since that report, I have had meetings in Western Australia and South Australia. When we first discussed this at the 2013 Gathering, some of us expressed concerns about whether this would be good for Wellspring while others could see subsequent meetings continue to reveal this breadth of opinion.

When I met with Mary and Mark Hurst (Mona Vale NSW, Day 23), some of Mark and Mary's friends joined us: Sally Longley (Spiritual Director and Team Member of Canisius Centre of Ignatian Spirituality) and Justin and Jenny Duckworth (Founders of Urban Vision, a contemporary Order following Jesus on the margins in NZ). Justin is the newly appointed Anglican Bishop of Wellington. Jenny and Justin's experience in Urban Vision (see <http://www.urbanvision.org.nz/about-uv/a-brief-uv-history/> for details of its history) prompted the question, "Is Wellspring a community or a network?" [Or are we a movement?] Urban Vision's members mostly live together or close to each other in various centres. This question came back to me during some of my recent Wellspring discussions.

As reported in the June 2013 Pipeline (p. 6), the discussions on formation at the Gathering included the following ideas: The proposed formation process would not affect current Members and Friends. However, Members and Friends may choose to join the process. The process envisaged a means of moving from Friend to Seeker to Companion over a two year period. Recent discussions have shown a concern about four membership categories within Wellspring. Some have commented that the distinction



*Neil Holm*

between Friends and Members is not apparent because many Friends exemplify all the characteristics of Members. They suggest that it is not in the interest of Wellspring or consistent with its ethos to distinguish in qualitative ways between Members and Friends. Some have stressed the need for Wellspring to be open, that it should be flexible and not be overly structured. Embedded within these discussions may be the notion that Wellspring should not be too demanding. In some small ways, these differences parallel discussions within the history of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) in Australia.

I recently had cause to look at "A Century of Influence: Australian Student Christian Movement, 1896-1996" by Renate Howe (UNSW Press, 2009). Howe records an interesting debate on whether SCM was a movement or a club. In the 1920s, SCM considered whether membership should be open to those who, having considered the aims and objects of the movement, "desired to enter into the fellowship and proposed to take an active part in its work." However, some groups had the "freest possible interpretations of the membership test" while others

made the implications of membership much more explicit. (p. 149).

### **Movement or Community?**

So is freeing membership requirements typical of a movement or a community? Some argue that communities have strong ties while movements have weak ties. Communities have rich, frequent, and often intimate interaction while movements have little. Communities focus on learning, doing, and supporting while movements focus on significant social change. (<http://bit.ly/1iNcXpG>)

In the last issue of Pipeline, I outlined why we might have a formation process: it assists us to grow, not in isolation but as part of a vibrant community, and to be supported and encouraged in our growth. Therefore, a formation process designed to help members, particularly new members, to develop strong ties, promote rich even intimate interaction, and to assist members to learn and to support them as they learn and engage in activities, will strengthen a community. However, an organisation that is flexible, not overly structured, not too demanding, and has minimal requirements for those who wish to join, does not require a formation process and is much more like a movement than a community.

### **Network or Community?**

The following diagram shows some differences between networks and communities.

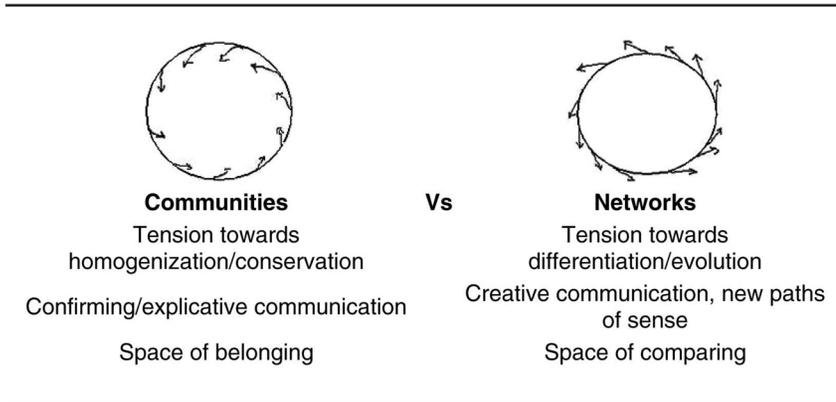
Diagram 1, at the top of page 5, comes from a paper by Dal Fiore (2007) called "Communities versus Networks." Fiore suggests that communities emphasise a common obligation. Communities tend to maximise social control of individuality (hence membership

requirements, Rules, formation, a sense of being closed as opposed to open) while networks maximise individual control on individuality (freer to do your own thing, limited obligations, more flexible structure, a sense of being open as opposed to closed). Communities demand a degree of conformism in exchange for a sense of trust, belonging, and a well-defined identity. Networks become lived spaces for discovering new aspects of self and new understandings of own potential. The diagram shows that communities draw people in, shaping them, forming them, helping them feel a sense of belonging, and committing them to an agreed goal and purpose. Networks are more open to innovation: people feel free to 'think outside the square,' to break boundaries, and to become more radical or at least significantly different from others. From this perspective, communities are much more likely to have processes of formation than networks.

**Conclusion**

What conclusion, can we draw? For a start no entity ever fits perfectly the category to which it is assigned.

**Figure 1**  
**Differentiating Communities From Networks**



Source: Dal Fiore (2005).

*Diagram 1*

Wellspring is not and is unlikely to become a perfect example of a community. It is likely always to exhibit some aspects of a movement or a network. But where do we lie on the spectrum? Are we more like a community or more like a movement or network?

Let's look at some indicators.

To some extent, we are stagnant. We are not growing either in the number of Friends or in the number

of Members. Is there any significance that we have sometimes chosen Leaders on the understanding that they will first become a Member? Is there any significance in the fact that several Members in recent years have reverted to become Friends? Why do few people ask to become Members? Are they frightened by the Rule? Are they unwilling to be accountable for time and money? If you are a Member, did you use the accountability checklist when you discussed your renewal of Membership with another Member last year? Being accountable is a very intimate act. Is concern about accountability a sign that we are not ready for community? Do we need a process to assist us in becoming more accountable?

We are not growing in intensity of interaction. Some people have always chosen to remain as unconnected Friends and few have changed to become more connected. Despite our emphasis on hospitality, how often have you had an offer of overnight accommodation accepted or how often have you asked for overnight accommodation? When you go on holidays, do you connect with local Wellspring people or have people connected with you when they visit your city? Do you take your directory on holidays with you? If you are

*Left: Image from Cool Art Vinyl website  
<http://bit.ly/1cvGeUc>*

# ACCOUNTABILITY

It is not only what we do,  
but also what we do not do,  
for which we are accountable.

[Moliere]



a member, did you attend the last Gathering? How often do you phone someone in Wellspring simply to say hello? To what extent does low intensity in interaction reveal a desire to be free of constraints, time to do your own thing?

Are we growing in our communal prayer life? When you had your last personal crisis, did you ask for prayer throughout Wellspring or even from those in your cell? When you had a significant decision to make, did you discuss its features with Wellspring friends? Did you workshop the problem together?

As you think about Wellspring as a whole, what conclusion do you draw? Does Wellspring tend toward those of a network or movement? If so, Wellspring may need a formation process – perhaps not for you but at least for those who join us in the future. This was the conclusion of one Member who wrote recently:

*I find myself wondering if I would have welcomed this formation process if it had been in place in the early nineties. Perhaps so!!*

*SO:....My position: I don't see myself as moving far beyond my present position as a Member whose state of health is such*

*that I am now somewhat on the fringe. I envisage continuing to use the Prayer Diary daily, hopefully broadening and deepening my continuing commitment to the three dot-points on the sheet 'Why Seek Transformation?' and doing as I am able in the matter of the Central Commitments. [See page 5 of December Pipeline] I am hopeful of being able to attend the National Gathering in 2015.*

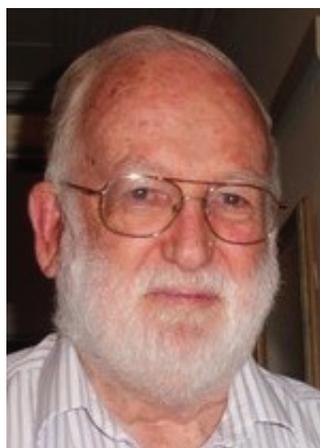
*In essence, I would not seek to be a hindrance if your proposal gained the approval of a majority – although I would much prefer the system of voting 'for' and 'against' be replaced with that of 'consensus'.*

## *Christianity and Buddhism in dialogue*

*Douglas Golding (Riverwood NSW, Day 11) is a former Methodist local preacher who became an Anglican, inspired by the ministry of the late John Hazlewood as Dean of Rockhampton. After retiring as a long-time journalist and lecturer in media and marketing, he studied theology at the University of Queensland, and is now a lay associate minister in the parish of St Mark's, South Hurstville. He is a regular lecturer in religion, media and history with the WEA Sydney and is on the WEA Board. With his wife, Marty, he is an active Friend of Wellspring. Here Doug shares some ideas from a course he taught at Nan Tien Institute (<http://nantien.org.au:88/en/>) on dialogue between Buddhists and Christians.*

I had the privilege recently of co-teaching a course on Buddhist-Christian Dialogue, as an elective unit in the Master of Buddhist Studies program at the new Nan Tien Institute, at Berkeley, south of Wollongong, Australia's first Buddhist university.

Like all the units in the program, the course is taught in one week's intensive study. I lived in at the Pilgrims' Lodge at the Nan Tien temple, gave ten presentations on the Christian story, and answered the students' questions



*Dr Douglas Golding*

on the Christian faith. It was a testing time for me, as well as for them – a

week living on boiled rice and steamed vegetables, three times a day, left me craving for roast chicken and baked potato!

The students also visited three local Christian churches – the Catholic cathedral and the Uniting church, in Wollongong city, both of which are struggling, and the conservative evangelical Anglican parish in Figtree, a southern suburb, which has just completed building a new, rather stark, auditorium behind the old church, and appears to be flourishing.

Why was I invited to take part in this course, when many other people



*Nan Tien Temple*

are better-qualified? Mainly because Marty and I have visited the temple each year for several years to take part in inter-faith prayers on Harmony Day, offering prayer for peace and justice and inter-faith harmony. The local Anglican bishop has campaigned against Wollongong Council's support for the temple and for the Institute, which is being built on an old Council rubbish dump, leased to the Buddhists for \$1 a year. But Ian Barnett, the minister at Figtree, could not have been more welcoming.

The course had six students—a professor from Wollongong University, a convert to Buddhism; two Buddhist nuns, one a convert from Newcastle, the other from one of Singapore's many temples; a Malaysian Chinese, now living in Brisbane, a German Buddhist, now living in Sydney, and a local chiropractor, who is using Buddhist meditation techniques

in her practice. An interesting and challenging group.

My co-teacher was a Buddhist nun from the temple's teaching staff, JueWei, who was born in Singapore, gained her PhD in a Buddhist university in California, and now leads courses in the four universities of the Fo Guang Shan order of Mahayana Buddhism in various parts of the world.

Each of us gave PowerPoint presentations on our own faith perspective on issues of common concern: on Monday, belief and knowledge, religion and culture; on Tuesday, God and Scripture; on Wednesday, Creation and evolution, life and death and life after death; on Thursday, ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, living our religion; on Friday, religion and politics, religion, science and eschatology.

The experience not only forced me into a focused study of the Scriptures, and basic theological texts; it compelled me to review my own faith knowledge and experience, and to be willing to learn from another faith tradition. For me, the highlight was the Thursday afternoon session on 'meditation' – the abbess of the temple led us in Buddhist meditation, and a member of St Mark's parish came with two other members of the Christian Meditation group to lead us in Christian meditation. For that hour, at least, we were as one.

Now I am working to revise my notes into a suitable format for a Lenten study series in my own parish. It may not happen, but the experience has drawn me closer to God and to others whose beliefs and practices are more similar to mine than I had ever realized. I am blessed in being given such an opportunity to learn.

## *Ruminations on my Pilgrimage to Israel 2009*

*Many of us may have seen the two-part SBS TV documentary, In the Footsteps of Paul, in which actor David Suchet undertook an epic journey spanning the Mediterranean. His inspiration was a charismatic Paul the Apostle whose own travels through this region, two thousand years ago, changed the world forever. On this journey, David sought to uncover how an obscure Jewish sect from the edge of the Roman Empire shattered the world of the classical gods and challenged the might of Caesar, to become the dominant force in Western civilization. This documentary argued that the catalyst for this social and religious revolution was a 173cm powerhouse called Paul. After Jesus, Paul is the most significant figure in the history of Christianity and the Western world. He was the first international ambassador of this new faith, catapulting the radical salvation message of Jesus from Judea to the wider Mediterranean world. Here Ingerid Meagher (Fairfield Qld, Day 16) records her journey, less extensive than Suchet's, to Israel in 2009.*



*Ingerid Meagher*

I went on a pilgrimage to Israel in May 2009. A most amazing experience, to walk in such familiar, and yet never personally seen, places. The closest I have ever come to visualizing the Holy

Land has been, as a five-year old, at the Salvation Army Sunday School where a large sand tray on legs was used to act out the Bible stories!

I travelled with a group of eleven Canadians led by the Rev Sally French and the Rev Joe Walker, (Episcopalians) both very experienced and knowledgeable pilgrimage leaders. Sally French spent a year at St George's College, Jerusalem researching her PhD thesis subject of Pilgrimage. Joe Walker (still a young family man, but sadly now deceased) was an expert on Semitic languages as well as having experience in the area of archaeology. Both had superb knowledge of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Scriptures.

The quest of the historical Jesus has long fascinated me and I guess I went to find the evidence of the historical Jesus in the landscape, the buildings, the streets etc. Instead, I found "the evidence" in one Fr Fouad Dagher,

of Syrian origin (an ethnic group in Israel that still uses Aramaic in their liturgy and daily life).

While visiting the Galilee area and places such as Mount Tabor, where I had the privilege of reading out the story of the Transfiguration, places like Tabgha, the site of the last “BBQ” on the shores of the Sea of Galilee (as in John 21: 9), Nazareth, Tiberias, Capernaum etc., our group was also taken to an Anglican church in the township of Shefa-‘Amr, some 20 km from Nazareth.

Fr Fouad Dagher, the rector of St Paul’s Anglican Church introduced himself as an Arab, Palestinian Christian and Israeli citizen. He most poignantly pointed out that they (the Arab Palestinian Christians) are not converts but that they were the first to accept the faith. And that this happened some 600 years before the rise of Islam. A truly awesome thought - this continuous line, this collective memory from first meeting Jesus of Nazareth. “They are the original Christians”, Fr Fouad said. “They see themselves as holy people, not to guard Jesus’ holy shrines but to witness to Jesus’ presence. They are living, worshipping communities, who not only walk where Jesus walked but with those with whom Jesus walked. They have no role of converting, but they have a role of being peacemakers instead - they are peace-makers, not peace-talkers!! “We don’t evangelize,” he said. “I don’t believe we need to convert people from being Muslims to Christians. This is not the aim or vision in our mind as a church. We belong to the same tradition, whether we are Muslims, Christians or Jews,” he added. “We have the same ambitions and walk the same tunnel and we need to see the light at the end of this tunnel together.”

Fr Fouad was proud of the fact that Shefa- ‘Amr is the most peaceful

town in Israel, owing to the influence of the Ministers Fraternal made up of the religious leaders of the three faith traditions, Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

Fr Fouad lamented the fact that the local Christian community feels forsaken by Western Christianity. Fr Fouad’s concluding comment to us was that hope builds bridges and fear builds walls. Education is a great opportunity to teach how to build bridges! He therefore was passionate about expanding the education facilities in his parish and hoped to raise financial assistance from the worldwide Christian Community.

Out of the many deeply felt experiences on this pilgrimage, I can mention but a few. The Mount of the Beatitudes is foremost in my mind because of the contrast with the holy places in the Old City of Jerusalem that are filled with throngs of pilgrims. Here it was quiet, peaceful and serene. It was a place with the potential to experience transcendence. For the Sermon on the “Mount” (as in Matthew’s gospel) or Sermon on the “Plain” (as in Luke’s gospel), whatever you want to call it (there are no actual mountains around that area but just a series of hills), can be used as a personal roadmap, a guide to transcending human values. Without actually quoting the dual elements, the Beatitudes teach detachment. In an indirect way they give us the formula for happiness/enlightenment or, if you wish, experiencing divine Presence.

I also liked the site of the “Last Breakfast” (Tabgha). One young member of our group of pilgrims, Lynne Reckow, wrote: “Out of all the things Jesus could’ve done or places he could’ve gone to, he chose to break bread (or fish) with his friends. Out of all the meaningful and everlasting things he could’ve chosen to do, he chose something so remarkably simple, and yet, at the same time, so inexplicably powerful.”

It was profoundly moving also to walk down from the Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane and across the Kidron Valley.

This important connecting ‘road’ between the Mount of Olives and the city of Jerusalem has held significance throughout Biblical History.

I marvelled at the gnarled, propped up ancient olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane, purported to have been there since Jesus’ days. True or not, it did not seem to matter. The millions of footsteps left around this garden were testament to the holiness of this place.

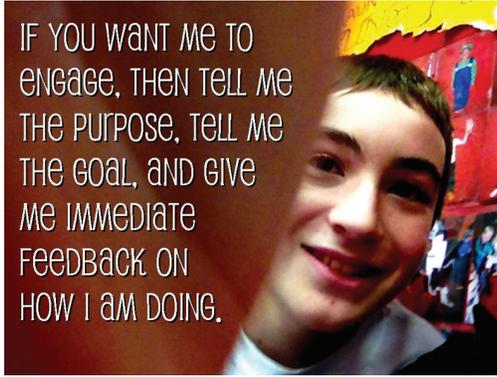
The Muslim call to prayer, coming from many directions, and simultaneously heard over the whole of the ancient city of Jerusalem made one realize how daily life in Jerusalem is imbued with spirituality and devotion. The call to prayer, particularly at sunset, is a welcome sound and invitation to reflect upon the day, and to give thanks for the many blessings received and to pray for a peaceful night and new beginnings.

This pilgrimage has opened my eyes and mind to many thought provoking things. I have come home enriched, but also shocked and saddened about the plight of the Palestinians.

The ancients used to seek God in high places – mountaintops. Today people seek evidence of the Divine in the history, much of it buried in the soil, in layer upon layer of archaeology, in shrines built on top of one another or in remnants of archaeology incorporated in the places held sacred by generations of devout people of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions.

I went to find the evidence of the historical Jesus in the landscape, the buildings, the streets etc. I searched for the divine and found it in the memory of the people. I searched for the holy and found it in humanity.

# ENGAGEMENT



**Engagement:** Members and Friends will have an opportunity to engage with or respond to ideas that were addressed in the previous issue of *Pipeline*. Engaging with the ideas of others, respondents will affirm and / or commend the ideas and also take the opportunity to recommend other points of view.

*June and Allan McLaren (Grovedale Vic, Day 19) and Jeannie Walker (North Sydney NSW, Day 23) engaged with the Spirituality and Aging theme of the last Pipeline.*

*June wrote:*

Pipeline has just arrived and congratulations on an excellent paper on ageing -- so appropriate for most of us as we are in that stage. I found a quote that expresses something I have long realised: "The Soul never ages." I only seem to feel my age when aches and pains trouble me. We were pleased to read John Martin's book review. He was our founder as well as our first leader of Wellspring. Allan was in the Assembly when he first gave voice to the vision and we have been associated ever since. Many have built on the vision and no doubt will continue to do so.

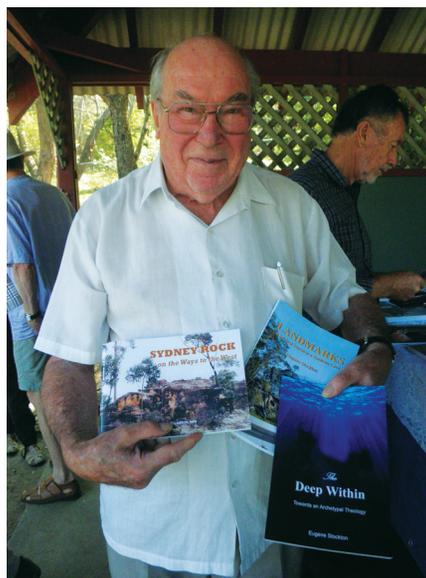
*Jeannie wrote:*

I LOVED the latest "Pipeline". I found it so encouraging, especially as everything at my church is geared for the younger generation. I'm hoping I might be able to share it with our minister and perhaps others in our church.

As I think more about the Spirituality and Aging theme, I'd like to encourage others to join me at St Clement's Galong for Fr Pat Corbett's retreat on the *Johannine scriptures - Gospel, Letters, Revelation* from Monday 7 - Monday 14 April. I'm really

looking forward to it. It might be a silent retreat, but we normally get around that from time to time, and it is refreshing... Sr Helen Barnes is giving a retreat on signs and symbols in the Christian faith on the weekend 5-6 April

*Recent issues have engaged with the life of some fascinating characters within Wellspring. Here Jim Tulip (Woodford NSW, Day 3) offers an insight into the life and character of Fr. Eugene Stockton (Lawson NSW, Day 3).*



*Eugene Stockton*

## An original Australian

Eugene Stockton, a much loved Wellspringer, launched a book on Saturday February 1 by Gil Jones. It was titled *Wasteland, Wilderness, Wonderland*, the subject being "getting to know Sydney's Sandstone country". Eugene and Gil were standing as they spoke near where Charles Darwin stood in 1836 on his ten day trip across the Blue Mountains; and where in spite of the many critical remarks he made elsewhere about Australia Darwin could say here "this kind of view was to me quite novel, and extremely magnificent".

Gil Jones' book, interestingly, begins and ends with a eulogy to Eleanor Dark, a long time Blue Mountains resident and the Australian author of books such as *The Timeless Land*, whose mid twentieth century reading of life and landscape is slowly regaining its hold on contemporary imaginations. Dark could speak of Australia as "a harsh country, which kept its inner tenderness concealed; a country reticent of its beauty, demanding awakening of the heart and a new perception in the eyes of the beholder before it opened its treasures

for his eyes". Eugene Stockton stands in this tradition, but with originality in the way he harnesses Australian close experience of the environment with Christian and strongly Catholic teaching.

A retired Catholic priest, consecrated as a parish hermit, his prayer in the Wellspring Prayer Diary is "that my life as a hermit may be a resource to others". He is a very sociable and active hermit, his role going well beyond his many duties in his church. He takes part in the Mountains lively Wellspring and Interfaith communities. Few places in Australia can lay claim to such a charismatic and highly original spiritual presence. He lives at Lawson close to where he was born. Now almost 80 he has a full life to look back on. As a biblical scholar, a parish priest, an anthropologist and archaeologist, a researcher in aboriginal cultural sites and customs, he relishes interfaith and ecumenical activities ("we are one," he says all too

simply), he is a good friend and jovial companion. Members of Wellspring will remember Eugene's role in the Pilgrimage to the Centre in 2005, and his generous leadership in worship. He enjoys reading *The Tablet*, the UK Catholic journal, and passes it on to John Connor for Wellspring Prayer Diary quotations.

He has become a publisher in recent years, setting up the Blue Mountain Education and Research Trust with an impressive and highly attractive list of publications. Readers may know his *Landmarks: A Spiritual Search in a Southern Land; Blue Mountains Dreaming / The Aboriginal Heritage; Aboriginal Church Paintings / Reflecting on our Faith; Sydney Rock – on the Ways to the West; A Scriptural Way of the Cross; The Deep Within / Towards an Archetypal Theology*. This final book represents his ambitious effort to harmonise his feeling for landscape and environment with his deep learning in Catholic history,

theology and spirituality. It is both rational and mystical.

His most recent book, *Sydney Rock*, is an account of an historic point in Blue Mountains life where travellers from the West could first get a sighting of Sydney. It is just round the corner from where Eugene lives, and when the Great Western Highway was being built through Lawson he had enough clout in local affairs, with others, to get the train line changed to preserve the Rock. It is a book where several contributors from professional and research backgrounds – engineering, geology and natural history – were pleased to share in Eugene's effort to save this historically significant site.

His books are available from Blue Mountain Education and Research Trust / 254 Great Western Highway, Lawson, NSW, Australia 2783. Phone (02) 4759 1034 / Email: olon@tpg.com.au / www.bmert.org / ABN: 28 284 312 624

## BAMM: BOOKS, ART, MUSIC, MOVIES



*BAMM is a place where Members and Friends reflect on their recent viewing, hearing, creating, and reading in ways that engage the central concerns of the Wellspring community.*

### BAMM: BOOKS

*Honest to God* by John Robinson (SCM Press, 1963) is reviewed by Peter Fensham (Annerley Qld, Day 16). Peter examines the extent to which *Honest to God* and the recent Progressive Christianity Movement have been revolutionary.

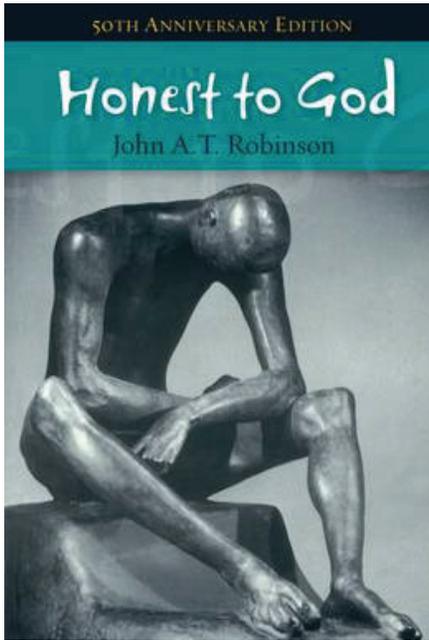
During 2013 there have been groups reflecting in a variety of ways on the slim book, *Honest to God* by Bishop John Robinson that was published in 1963 by the SCM Press in Britain. The title came from his stance of trying to be honest – honest to God and about God – in discussing theological questions he felt must be addressed.

It quickly became a sensation with more than 1 million copies being sold in 17 languages. There were front page headlines in national newspapers and magazines.

At Common Dreams 3 in Canberra in September, Rev'd. Alan Race from Leicester, England spoke on this

theological phenomenon, illustrating his reminiscence with some fun shots of John Robinson and other clergy at a Butlin's holiday camp.

In the Australia Student Christian Movement in the later 1940s, I had encountered Karl Barth's two commentaries on Romans and



Charles Birch's fascination with A.N. Whitehead's ideas of process and relationship. The British SCM then introduced me to Tillich, Bultman, and Bonhoeffer, as well as Martin Buber's profound sense of relationship in I and Thou. So re-reading *Honest to God* in recent weeks has also brought these authors, on whom Robinson almost exclusively draws, back to my mind.

This reflection has enabled me more keenly to draw a distinction between the "revolution" in Western Christian thinking that Robinson's book represents and the more recent "revolution" that has been described in Australia as Progressive Christianity/ Spirituality. Although actively participating and enjoying the latter for well over a decade through lectures, conferences and book discussions, there has, for me, been a vague sense of not being convinced.

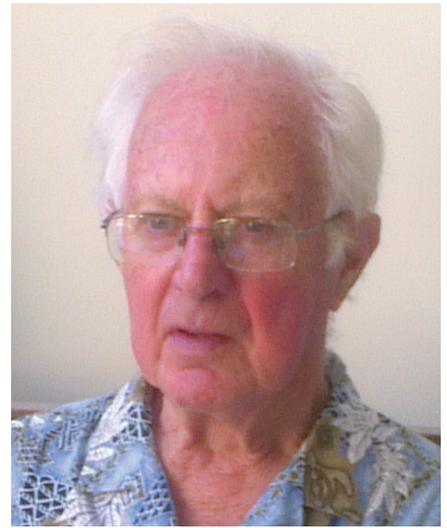
The distinction I am now drawing between these two "revolutions" can be set out in the comparative table below.

The contrast is stark. So stark that it is very hard to see that there is any clear link or continuity between these two movements. The reason for the first revolution is usually given to be the cataclysmic turmoil that German theology found itself in following two world wars of hitherto unknown human loss and the inhumanity of Nazism leading up to the second. What then is the correspondingly catastrophic catalyst for the second revolution?

I'm sure this is a more complex issue than I am painting it, but my suggested answer is the rise in the USA of the Religious Right, theologically and politically. This ascendancy of fundamentalist Christianity and its political and social consequences in the USA as a world power are also the very things that Richard Dawkins and the new atheists have been so concerned about.

It may be then, I speculate, that the progressive biblical scholars, like Spong, Borg, Crossan etc., have been taking the fundamentalists on at their own game of seeking and claiming truth about bits of the Biblical text, but now what is truth depends on the battery of new tools that are available to analyse ancient texts. I remember that Bishop John Spong in three charismatic lectures in Melbourne and Brisbane acknowledged his personal indebtedness to John Robinson, but he moved quickly to his skilful and extended demolition of fundamentalist approaches to the Bible.

The new biblical scholarship of the recent progressives has been a breath of fresh air to me and it has opened up all sorts of intellectually satisfying nuances re the biblical text I had not thought of before. For this I am, and



*Peter Fensham*

will continue to be grateful, but their revolution has not been for me a personal hurricane as the earlier one was.

To conclude this reflection I will guesstimate a score card for the two revolutions for the years ahead.

A focus on God rather than on Jesus is more useful in a multi-faith world.

Jesus as a "model person" is more communicable than God as "the ground of being".

An appreciation of new textual analyses of the Bible requires old interpretations for comparison that fewer and fewer persons now have.

Ancient contextual knowledge of Judaism and the Roman Empire is an unreasonable expectation for understanding the gospels and the epistles.

God as "the ground of all being" is more basic to the environmental crisis we face than the historicity of Jesus' words or which epistles Paul actually wrote.

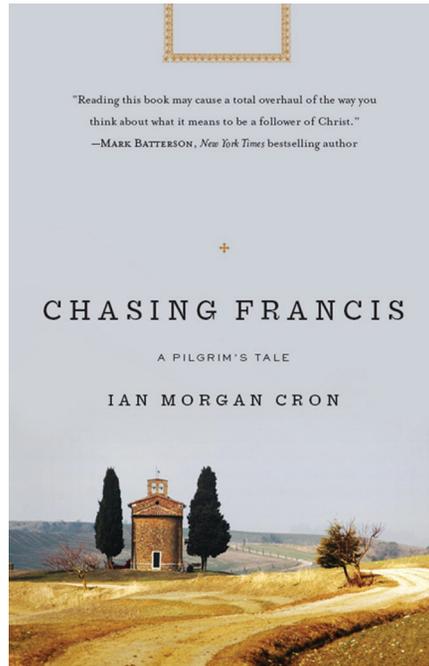
Aspect	"Revolution" Honest to God - 1963	"Revolution" Progressive Christianity - 1990s on
Centre of influence	Germany	USA
Focus	Meaning of GOD	Meaning of JESUS
Bible	Resource for insights	Text to be deconstructed and reconstructed
Biblical Context	Not explicitly attended to	Great importance for understanding

*Chasing Francis: A Pilgrim's Tale* by Ian Morgan Cron (Zondervan, 2006) is reviewed by David Sloane (Corowa NSW, Day 15)

This is one of those rare Christian novels that will change lives. After confessing before his church that he had come to doubt his faith and was burnt out, American mega church CEO pastor Chase Falson, was sent on extended leave to sort himself out. Otherwise, he would be sacked! So following the advice of his Franciscan uncle, he undertakes a pilgrimage of discovery in Italy following the footsteps of Francis of Assisi.

Falson explores the life of a saint who 800 years ago breathed new into disillusioned Christians and into a church on the brink of collapse. Guided by some loyal Franciscan friends, Chase Falson rediscovers the life and teachings of Francis, which give him renewed inspiration and vision on how to follow Jesus in today's world.

Chase returns to America fired with what Francis had discovered back in the turbulent 13th century. But we have to wait to the last page to find out whether he gets his job back. Cron



masterfully weaves lessons from the life of Francis into the story of Chase Falson, even including a romantic twist.

The book has clear implications for the postmodern church, embedded in an individualistic and materialistic

culture... I found this book a joy to read with numerous witty metaphors and similes and packed with wisdom. The book falls into the category of modern wisdom literature which is a delicate balance of fiction and non-fiction, pilgrimage, and teaching. The themes of evangelism, pilgrimage, worship and preaching [keep it simple], the arts, peacemaking, consumerism, and poverty are all covered. The book has a study guide for those who want to explore more deeply some of the issues raised in the story. Eric Metaxas, Rowan Williams, Shane Claiborne, Phyllis Tickle, and Richard Rohr commend the book. As one reviewer says, "Caution. Reading this book may cause spontaneous kindness, charity towards others and total overhaul of the way you think what it means to be a follower of Christ." It certainly did for me. This is a life changing book especially for those of us who have been in the church for many years. I picked up my copy from a Koorong book sale box for \$7-00!

*For many years Dave Andrews was a Friend of Wellspring. He is a member of the Waiters' Union, a network of Christians who serve in the inner city of Brisbane ([www.waitersunion.org](http://www.waitersunion.org)). Here is a review of his latest book *Crux - The Place of the Cross in the Process of Transformation* (Mosaic, 2013)*

Dave Andrews has long been a voice of passion, grace and truth for those who seek to follow the radical way of the cross of Christ. These provocative essays force us to confront our propensity to distort the cross, making it into the very same kind of violent myth it seeks to subvert.

How we understand the cross forms the very centre of how we answer questions regarding what it means to be God's people—who are we, what are we to do, and how are we to do it? Dave offers us an alternative to contemporary violent atonement theories by showing that the cross, far from asserting violent power, unmarks it, puts it on public display! With his characteristic sensitivity, Dave shows us that the problems inherent in the narrative

of the cross lie not with the cross itself, but with our telling of the story, with our understanding of that crescendo of history.

Discussion of the atonement is of course fashionable in the Western Church in recent times, and so Dave's subject matter is not unprecedented. However his approach is refreshing. Dave manages to communicate difficult concepts, typically argued in scholarly contexts, in language that is accessible for all people. What he has written is a fantastic starting point for those who are exploring these themes for the first time as well as a stimulating read for those more experienced.

In addition to Dave's well-reasoned arguments are his wonderful stories that emanate from a life of trying

to embody what he teaches. Dave's persuasive power goes beyond the mere cerebral as he shares both personal and anecdotal tales of cross-centred love. These stories put 'flesh on the bones' of the theology Dave outlays, a theology of subversive ethics and incarnational love. Through such stories we are challenged and encouraged to more faithfully take up our own crosses and exhibit the costly grace and revolutionary compassion of Christ who suffered and died to save his people from their sins. Dave's liturgies, songs, poems and questions also provoke us into deep reflection and prayer, a response both appropriate and necessary.

I'm sure Dave's essays will prove controversial for some, simply because of the sensitive nature of the

subject. However I wholeheartedly believe the challenge they pose to violent interpretations of Christ's redeeming work is a crucial one in the Church today. I wouldn't

hesitate to recommend these essays to anyone questioning the meaning of the cross, those wanting to better understand the relevance of Jesus' death for kingdom mission today,

or those who simply wish to be challenged and transformed by Jesus' revolutionary love.

*(Reviewed by Matthew Anslow)*

## **BAMM: ART**

*Amy Daniel (Singapore, Day 31) offers a poem written during Holy Week in the 1980s while on holiday in Angers, France, while she was studying theology at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium.*

### **Divine Vicissitude**

Lord, you have captured my heart  
And my entire being vibrates within  
The waves of your mysterious rhythm.  
Sometimes I am transported  
By the ecstasy of your creativity.  
Then, I behold again my own  
transcendence  
As if from mountain heights.

At other times, a quiet, breathtaking  
serenity  
Takes me in its soothing arms,  
And for days, I grace the turmoil  
Of life's daily provocations.  
Then, it is no longer I who lives  
within me.

But sometimes, days of darkness  
Descend upon me, suddenly,  
Like the fog and mist of winter.  
Then I behold your Calvary

And your tears for Jerusalem  
Fall into my out-stretched hands.

And your groans for humankind  
Reverberate within my being  
As if that fateful lance has pierced  
My woman's side. The blood and water  
Of my own sinfulness flow forth anew  
To purge my spirit of its gloom and  
shadow.

Soon, refreshed, I stand victorious  
As the darkness clears and I behold again  
The glory of your Transfiguration  
- A foretaste of my final resurrection?

How long more, Lord must I  
undergo  
The vicissitudes of your relentless  
rhythm?  
The constancy of it inconstancy,

Is this the only permanence in my life?  
Can enduring serenity be mine  
Only when my time and tasks  
On earth are through?

And then, Lord, do your guarantee  
Eternal Tranquillity?



*Amy Daniel*

## **BAMM: MOVIES**

*In Bob We Trust (2013) is recommended by Jeannie Walker (North Sydney NSW, Day 23) as an example of vital Christian ministry sustained over many years and continued into the senior years. It is a real tonic, especially for those of us who despair of the church sometimes.*

In this film, I found in Fr Bob to be full of common sense and love. He took in many of the "down-and-outs" from the streets around his parish church. They were part of his church community in ways that weren't patronising. Two scenes that I loved - he said, "I leave some money (stray coins) on this mantelpiece, and of course it gets taken, but that is good." Another one was when some "Melbourne Occupy" people were in the grounds of his church as Fr Bob was arriving on Christmas Day, he greeted them with "Of course you can stay here. If the police come and want to move you on, just tell them you were following a star and it led you here." Common sense and funny.

I went with a lapsed Catholic who loved the film too.



*Jeannie Walker*

*Margaret Pomeranz raised some further insights in her review*

a fascinating insight into the  
idiosyncratic Catholic priest

Father Bob Maguire whose take on religion is as entertaining as it is unconventional. The church hierarchy is eager for Father Bob to retire, but he wants to stay put in his South Melbourne parish. He rails against the institutionalized nature of the church while actually going about its real business of servicing the community. Directed by Lynn-Maree Milburn this is an irreverent and actually very moving account of this church maverick as he tries to stay where he feels he belongs. John Safran, with whom Father Bob shares a radio program, does a Seventh Seal chess game with him on the beach. Very entertaining and ultimately quite sad.

*The Seventh Seal* chess game references the Bergman movie, "The Seventh Seal" (1957). The following review by Dennis Lim in the LA Times on June 14, 2009 suggests that many Members and Friends of Wellspring may find it fascinating:

The definitive Ingmar Bergman movie, *The Seventh Seal* (1957) looms over practically all of art cinema. A heavily symbolic allegory of faith and doubt set in plague-ridden medieval Sweden, this seminal movie was the height of midcentury existentialist chic and ground zero for the cinephile golden age. It gave the cultural intelligentsia permission to take film seriously.

*The Seventh Seal* has since fallen victim to changing tastes and to its own popularity. (If anything, it is now more middlebrow emblem than highbrow badge of honor.) And it is precisely its unabashed seriousness, once so seductive, that has contributed to its somewhat diminished reputation.

Many of the film's images have passed into cinematic immortality, none more so than the recurring motif of a brooding knight locked in a mortal chess game with Death, assuming the form of a cowed, white-faced ghoul, and the final hilltop danse macabre, led by the scythe-wielding Grim Reaper. But the hooded figure of Death also has proved spoofable, popping up in such places as Bergman mega-fan Woody Allen's *Love and Death*, Monty Python skits and *Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey*.

It might not be possible to liberate *The Seventh Seal*, reissued in a new two-disc edition this week by the Criterion Collection in both standard definition



*Knight and Death in Chess Game*  
(Image from <http://bit.ly/1f6B7qb>)

and Blu-ray, from the historical baggage that surrounds it. But first-time viewers, and those revisiting it after many years, might be surprised to find a movie that feels at once dated and timeless: Its deadly earnest sensibility harks back to another era, but its stark iconographic power is undimmed, stubbornly resistant to parody.

The film's spiritual quest unfolds as a long homeward journey. Returning from the Crusades to the ravages of the Black Death, an idealistic knight (Max von Sydow) is visited by Death himself (Bengt Ekerot) and tries to forestall his fate by challenging the Reaper to a chess game. They take turns making their moves as the knight and his cynical squire (Gunnar Bjornstrand) travel through a blighted landscape in the grip of religious fanaticism.

Their entourage grows to include a troupe of traveling players, including

Jof (Nils Poppe), a kind of holy fool, and his wife, Mia (Bibi Andersson).

Bergman first conceived of *The Seventh Seal* as a play, and the dialogue retains a certain declamatory stiffness; literary allusions abound, from Cervantes to Camus. For the director, it was a deeply personal undertaking, a film he seized the opportunity to make after the international success of *Smiles of a Summer Night*, which won a prize at Cannes in 1955.

The son of a Lutheran minister, Bergman drew on his religious upbringing. The title comes from the Book of Revelation; ancient church frescoes first encountered as a child, in particular the work of Albertus Pictor, were a primary inspiration. But in devising a myth of the end of days, Bergman also tapped into his own mortal dread and into a very contemporary anxiety, the Cold War fear of a nuclear apocalypse.

Bergman, who died two years ago at age 89, explored the notion of an absent or indifferent God with greater complexity in a '60s trilogy: *Through a Glass Darkly*, *Winter Light* and *The Silence*. But *The Seventh Seal*, a film that dares repeatedly to ask Big Questions out loud -- Does God exist? Why are we here? -- remains his most expansive and most elemental depiction of spiritual crisis.

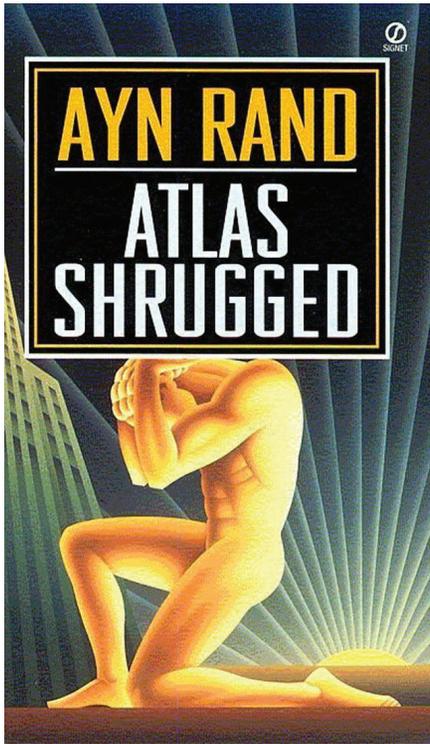
## BAMM: MOVIES

*Atlas Shrugged*, a book by Ayn Rand (1957), and *Millions*, a movie directed by Danny Boyle (2004), featured in Doug Golding's second presentation at the 2013 Gathering. Both electives were based on his continuing research into methods of comparing and contrasting religious and philosophic traditions based on what he calls 'the 4 Bs' of religion: believing, belonging, behaving and becoming. The first session considered the five major world faiths (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism), the second session looked at humanism. Following is an extract from the second paper. For the complete article go to <http://wellspringcommunity.org.au/index.php/contributions/spirituality-and-worship>

Secular humanism rejects any belief in any supernatural power, any power beyond the human. Secular humanists

argue that religious belief cannot be supported by rational argument, so it is invalid. Everyone has beliefs but,

to be valid, beliefs must be based on physical evidence, on reason, and must be weighed and tested by each



believer, not simply taken on faith. The term 'secular humanism' is actually quite recent, even though humanism began as a secular movement, as a rejection of theism.

Objectivism is a particular expression of humanism in the work of the American philosopher Ayn Rand. Objectivism says that the only true form of knowledge is objective knowledge, knowledge that can be measured, studied, and reasoned about. The good person is the person who pursues his or her own rational self-interest, having full respect for the rational self-interest of others. Art is the supreme achievement of humanity because art transforms abstract principles of design into objects that people can respond to with the whole of their consciousness, with their reason, but with more than their reason. The chief character in the novel *Atlas Shrugged*, John Galt, gives voice to the author's philosophy:

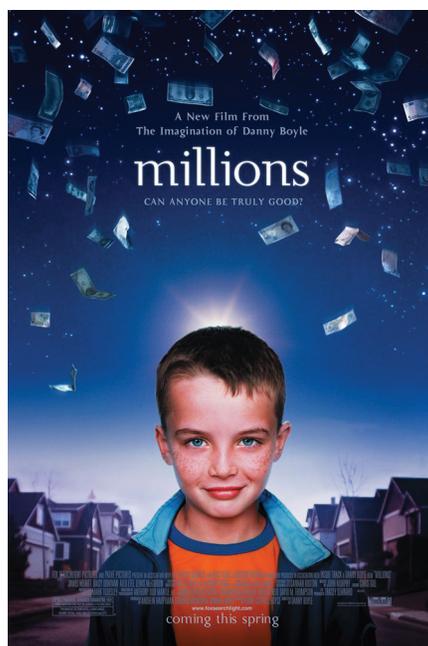
### Objectivism

*In the name of a return to morality, you have sacrificed all those evils which you held as the cause of your plight. You*

*have sacrificed justice to mercy. You have sacrificed independence to unity. You have sacrificed reason to faith. You have sacrificed wealth to need. You have sacrificed self-esteem to self-denial. You have sacrificed happiness to duty. (p.1010)*

To live, man must hold three things as the supreme and ruling values of his life: Reason – Purpose – Self-esteem. ... These three values imply and require all man's virtues, and all his virtues pertain to the relation of existence and consciousness: rationality, independence, integrity, honesty, justice, productiveness, pride. (p.1018)

There are movies, too, which challenge religious principles with a humanist outlook on life. You may have seen the British movie *Millions*, released in 2004. Two boys find a fortune in British pounds. They have only days to spend it before the currency changes to Euros. Seven year old Damien, who is a Catholic, believes the money has been sent by God and uses it to help the poor, and is supported by visions of St Peter and of other saints. Nine year old Anthony is, of course,



*Damian (Alex Eitel), a seven-year-old schoolboy and his friend Anthony find a fortune in stolen British pounds*

older and wiser, he is a humanist, and he spends his money buying things for himself – including many new friends. Damien is worried about how many people he can help before the money becomes worthless, Anthony is worried about the tax rates that apply to sudden fortunes, and about interest rates on particular investments and other practical issues. However, the money is part of the proceeds of a robbery and the robbers are after the money as well. Eventually Damian runs off to the train tracks to burn the money, convinced that it was doing more harm than good. His religious faith could not help him.

*The review in Christianity Today asserts, "Millions refuses to tell us that saving the world is a simple process of good deeds. It instead focuses on the differences between the brothers' worldviews, and how one's perspective can determine the fullness of one's life. Where Anthony's "grownup" disregard for spiritual realities lead directly to his materialism and anxiety, Damian's assumptions enable him to experience sincere joy as he serves others." Doug's full paper addresses the issue of worldview. It would be interesting to analyse this film using Doug's guidelines. The Christianity Today review has some discussion questions. See <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/marchweb-only/millions.html?start=3>*

## For Your Diary

### 2015 National Gathering

Thursday 17 to Sunday 20  
September 2015  
Ballarat Grammar School,  
Ballarat Victoria

Ballarat Grammar School is an Anglican school in extensive parklands near Lake Wendouree.

It provides boarding facilities for over 200 students in family-oriented boarding houses.

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**NEXT ISSUE:** June 2014 has the theme of My Daily Practice or My Daily Disciplines. Please take this opportunity to share the Spirit-empowered rhythms and relationships that create, redeem, sustain and transform the life God invites you to humbly fulfill for Christ's glory.

Editor: Neil Holm neil.holm.wellspring@gmail.com, phone 07 3372 2562.

**Deadline for material** is Monday 4th May, 2014.