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**Winter 2019**



## **THE STORY OF FEMALE SUFFRAGE IN AMERICA**

This year marks the centenary of the passage by the US Congress of what became the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, which gave women the right to vote at the federal level (and, therefore, at all levels). It was passed by the House of Representatives on 21 May 1919 and by the Senate on 04 June of that year. Its wording was elegantly simple:

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

However, any such Amendment needs to be ratified by the Congresses of three-quarters of the states before it can take effect. That ratification happened relatively quickly in this case, with Tennessee becoming the 36<sup>th</sup> signatory on 18 August 1920.

Prior to that time, voting rights were a state matter and a number of states had already allowed women to vote – but not at the federal level, as that was not within their purview. Indeed, some of the original Thirteen Colonies had permitted at least limited suffrage; that is, women could vote but not stand for office. (Even then, they usually had to be property owners, which qualification applied to male voters, as well. During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the franchise was progressively extended to all native-born white adult males, then to naturalised white males and finally to non-white males.

The organised movement for female suffrage began with the Seneca Falls (New York) Convention in 1848, which was attended by some 300 women and men. Most of its leaders had been active Abolitionists prior to that, including the main organisers, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott (pictured left and centre). The delegates drafted a ‘Declaration of Rights and Sentiments’, foremost of which was the principle that “all men and women are created equal”. (The whole document was very cleverly based on the US Declaration of Independence.)

Other large meetings followed, including the first National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1850, which became an annual event. In 1851, Stanton met Susan Brownell Anthony (pictured at right), a Unitarian temperance worker whose mother and sister had been at the Seneca Falls Convention, and the two of them campaigned around the country for decades (see p 6). Their activities included encouraging female workers who were excluded from men's trade unions to form their own Working Women's Associations and demand equal pay for equal work.

In 1866, the National Women's Rights Convention transformed itself into the American Equal Rights Association, with the objectives of universal suffrage for men and women of all races. Lucretia Mott was its first president, while Stanton and Anthony co-edited its newspaper, *The Revolution*. The new organisation had some tensions over the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments of 1868 and 1870, which removed the property requirement and gave the vote to adult males of all colours. Some leaders saw the enfranchisement of black males as part of a longer process which would eventually embrace women, while others (including some prominent black women) refused to compromise.

The movement split over this issue and, after 1870, another tactical one: Lucy Stone's American Woman Suffrage Association campaigned to obtain the vote for women on a state-by-state basis while the National Woman Suffrage Association, led by Stanton and Anthony, saw a federal Amendment as crucial. In 1871, the NWSA adopted the 'New Departure' strategy of encouraging women to turn up at polling stations and file lawsuits if they were not allowed to vote. Many did, and some of their rejected lawsuits were appealed to courts as high as the US District Court in Washington, DC. Anthony was arrested in 1872 for attempting to vote in the presidential election and fined \$100, which she refused to pay. In 1875, the Supreme Court put a stop to these proceedings by ruling that "the Constitution of the United States does not confer the right of suffrage upon anyone".

In 1878, Senator Aaron A. Sargent of California, a friend of Anthony's, proposed a bill identical to the future 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to Congress which, of course, failed. At about that time, the movement received a boost when the Women's Christian Temperance Union decided to endorse female suffrage, submitting a petition to Congress with 200,000 signatures. Further support came from the American Federation of Labor in 1890, whose petition had 270,000 signatories. Also in that year, the AWSA and NWSA resolved their differences and merged to form the National American Women's Suffrage Association, led by Stanton, Anthony and Stone. Between 1887 and 1914, numerous attempts to pass what was called the 'Anthony Amendment' failed in one or both houses of Congress.

The final struggle took place in 1918, by which time 15 states had enfranchised women. Despite support from President Woodrow Wilson, the amendment bill passed by one vote in the House of Representatives and failed by two votes in the Senate. Congress voted on the bill four more times between January and June of that year, finally passing the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment with convincing majorities after the Southern Democrats gave up on opposing it. The ratification process was smooth enough in the western and northern states, 22 of which had done so by the end of 1919, but most of the 'Deep South' states either rejected the Amendment or sought to delay voting on it. It took some intense campaigning by the NAWSA and other organisations to get another 12 states to ratify and the crucial vote in Tennessee bitterly contested, passing by a single vote.

Sadly, none of Stanton, Anthony and Stone lived to witness those events. It is thought that women's participation in the workforce during World War I had a major influence on this tectonic political change, as women were enfranchised in Canada in 1917; the UK, Germany and Poland in 1918; and Austria and the Netherlands in 1919. (Our part of the world was ahead in this respect, with women allowed to vote in New Zealand from 1900 and in Australia from 1902.)

Ironically, 2019 is also the quadricentenary of the arrival of the first African slaves in the American colonies. Twenty of them were brought to Hampton, Virginia, in August 1619 on an English ship which had taken them from a Portuguese slaver headed for Mexico and they were quickly sold, even though the colony had no laws for or against slavery at the time. Starting with Massachusetts in 1641, slavery was legalised in every one of the Thirteen Colonies by 1750, leading to an estimated 388,000 Africans being brought to what became the United States by the end of the Civil War.

[Just with the Southern states, once an Amendment is ratified, it doesn't matter when or if the other states do so. Strangely, though, most of them did not ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment until after 1950 – the last being Florida and South Carolina (1969), Georgia and Louisiana (1970), North Carolina (1971) and Mississippi (1984).]



## ICUU NEWS

### Asia-Pacific Conference

### UN Recognition of the IWC



Rev. Rebecca Quimada-Sienes has retired as President and Executive Minister of the UU Church of the Philippines after 30 years in those positions (but for a brief interlude in 2008/9). She is the daughter of Rev. Tosibio Quimada, who founded the UUCP's precursor, the Universalist Church of the Philippines, in 1954. Her successor is Rev. Tet Gallardo, minister of the Bicutan congregation in Manila.

Rev. Gallardo has proposed that a conference of U\*Us in the Asia-Pacific region be held in the UUCP's headquarters of Dumaguete City in East Negros Province on 23–27 October. In addition to established churches in India and Australia-New Zealand, there are U\*Us in Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. If this first meeting is a success, it is hope that similar conferences will be held in other countries in the region in the years between the biennial ICUU Council Meeting and Conference; i.e., 2021, 2023, etc.

A Skype meeting was held on 08 June between representatives of the UUCP, the Indian Council of Unitarian Churches and ANZUUA (James and Rene Hills), at which it was agreed that the conference should go ahead. While some attendees will be leaders in their various countries, the event is open to all comers and it will have features to suit a variety of tastes.

This event will be less formal than the ICUU Council Meeting and Conference, though Rev. Gallardo does plan days that will be devoted to business matters, learning sessions in which various groups will present on their local worship practices, and fellowship. Other days will feature touristic events, both locally and further abroad – there will be visits to village congregations and to Tosibio Quimada's tomb, and even a day on the water for snorkelling and diving!). The conference also coincides with the end of the island-wide Buglasan cultural and music festival, which conferees will be able to attend.

Food, accommodation and just about everything else is incredibly cheap in the Philippines, so anyone who has ever been interested in visiting that country should give this event serious consideration. For more information, please see their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1207190452789048/>.

The UU-United Nations Office recently issued the following announcement:

On 26 July 2019, the International Convocation of Unitarian Universalist Women, [now known as the] International Women's Convocation (IWC) received an official notice from the United Nations (UN) stating that IWC is granted "special consultative status" with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). By granting this special consultative status, ECOSOC officially confirms that the activities of IWC are relevant to the work of the UN and invites the organization to actively engage with ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, as well as with the UN Secretariat, programs, funds, and agencies.

With special consultative status, IWC has the right to designate official representatives to the UN Headquarters in New York and the United Nations offices in Geneva and Vienna; IWC representatives can register for and participate in events, conferences, and activities of the UN. In addition, IWC can submit written statements or make oral presentations relevant to the work of the Council on subjects in which IWC has a special competence. IWC also has the privilege to be informed about the provisional agenda of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. Commissions and other subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC may consult with IWC and such consultations may be arranged at the request of IWC.

At the same time, the special consultative status carries responsibilities and obligations: IWC commits itself to complying with the UN Charter and its principles, actively participating in UN meetings and events, and submitting a report on its activities in support of the work of ECOSOC and the UN once every four years.

We would like to thank all our members, volunteers, and donors for their trust in and commitment to IWC, and Ms. Karen LaFrance for coordinating the complex and rigorous two-year application process. Thanks also go to the UU Funding Program for its generosity in partially funding this initiative.

# THE PHENOMENON OF LOVE

By Godfrey Barrett-Lennard

[This is the text of an Address to the Perth Unitarians on 04 November 2018.]

The nature, meanings and role of love in human life is a venerable topic. I spoke about it once before (2003), in the early days of this Fellowship – and am keen to revisit it somewhat freshly for today. My main aim is to search into the question “What is love?” – and what does it give or do for us? Thus, I will speak of love largely in positive vein, but touch also on some potential hazards of engaging with love and mention dangers of living in a world where love plays very little part.

First, on the meaning and variety of love? Although love is hugely important in human life, it comes in many forms and diverse contexts, and isn't easy to define: *Is it* a feeling, *or* an attitude, *or* an energy that motivates or carries us along, or is it not exactly any one of these but a varying blend of all of them, and more? One approach to discovering its meaning is think of all the contexts in which ‘love’ is the word chosen to describe a basic human experience:

- There is *romantic love* - love between intimate partners, with qualities of passion and of intimacy in sharing felt experience and meaning. This is a love that may extend to, or mature into, enjoyment of companioned activity together, a sense of deeply knowing and being known, a sharing of feelings toward significant third persons, a revisiting of memories together, and other features you could add.
- There is the different quality of love of one's children, this too evolving as children grow through adolescence and into adulthood and independence.
- On the other side, there is the love of children for their parents; and potentially for other family: brothers, sisters, grandparents, and/or other close kin.
- Some of us would speak of love for special friends or a bonded group or fellowship, love for our distinctive community (where the sense of this *is* strong), even love of one's country or ‘homeland’.
- From experience I know, as you would, that it's possible to develop loving affection for animal friends; for “fellow-children of that same nature that spawned our kind” (from my poem, *Love*). [See p. 7.]
- Some people feel deeply attached to their own beloved home, their sanctuary, the personal living space that they have fashioned to their taste and values, and with contents that have precious familiarity and meaning to them.
- I know directly that it is possible to feel embraced by a natural environment, to feel a loving affinity with the natural world, with land- and waterscapes, especially of one's homeland portion of the earth.
- In some of the circles I have moved in, it is a familiar idea that genuinely caring for and loving others goes hand in hand with an acceptant caring toward self, with a kind of love for one's own being – as part of a wider love of life and living?
- Many still experience a reverence and love for their God, and deep attachment to a system of belief and value that supports and goes with that love.
- One quite often hears it said of someone or some group that they have a love of ideas, of the life of the mind, perhaps of great books and art or music. I have a kind of love in in this sphere, including a longing to see more deeply into things.

At times, the word love is used with the meaning of liking; e.g., we may say we love certain food, we love football or another sport, etc. One of my grandchildren loved to climb trees. I have a younger brother who has loved to run distances, and who encourages or help others to do so. One could add many examples of people saying ‘love’ when they mean that they ‘enjoy’ or get a buzz from something. There are lots of positive feelings that we might not usually regard as love, although there's no sharp boundary, and one person's liking might be another's passion and love.

So, granted that love takes many forms, what do experiences that we *can* confidently identify as love have in common? I'll take a stab at a partial answer – *I suggest that love, worthy of the name, involves:*

- a considerable depth and strength of feeling, not simply an attraction but feeling with an infusion of meaning and which can, at least at moments, be felt with passion.
- mostly there is a reciprocity of attachment between oneself and that which is loved, at least if it is love of another living being.
- there is a quality not only of liking or prizing but of cherishing what we love.

- loving engagement usually is also connected to our sense of identity and belonging, of who we are and where we fit in the scheme of things.
- loving extends us. What or who we love works as an enlargement of our being and, if it taken from us, we feel deprived, even *diminished*, lesser than we were when living in and (partly) through the transformative experience of love.

This is a partial list, at least ... and I have further thoughts:

- Love engages us, may even shake us awake when we didn't know we had been sleeping, brings us more to life.
- It contributes to fulfilment of our nature and personal being. It's *possible* to live a rather isolated life, largely detached from others, but it's more in our nature to be engaged and involved. *Loving is a strong expression of connection.*
- Love brings increased purpose and meaning to life. In loving engagement, we know more of what we are about and what's precious to us.
- Thus love tends to bring people further into their lives, *nearer* to what might be called a fruition of being.

But is love *always* positive in its form and impact? What are potential hazards of love? On the one hand, love can enlighten us, bringing perception and feeling about what really matters, with great clarity and force. But it *can* also be an arousal that is relatively blind. Unseeing 'love' is not responsive to the whole presence of another (or of a setting, or belief, or god) but a suffusion of feeling arising essentially from within us – as, for example, in attraction driven by hormonal sexual desire or lust but little else. In religious fervour the depth of feeling may come in major part from a powerful need for something to believe in, perhaps to give meaning to an existence that is otherwise barren and devoid of any fire of engagement. Loving, as experienced, can have an urgency that is demanding, can have a hugely protective quality (as in some parental love), and can channel our lives so that we no longer see sideways as well as fore and aft.

Love has a magnetism to which many meanings can be attached. It can help to sanction actions that the person would otherwise consider to be wrong. Some inquisitors might have believed that they acted out of love for their victims' immortal souls.

*How can we discriminate love that is life-enhancing*, that self and others and communities are truly nourished by and grow through, as against 'love' that can drive and carry us along in a kind of possession that risks diminishing us and those we influence? My immediate further thought about *life-enhancing love* is that:

- It moves us not just to want and take, but to express and give more of ourselves.
- It can bring people into an ignition of brimming engagement but does not force or impose itself.

Consummation of such love invites and depends on reciprocity.

- It is truly connective, bringing the lover and who or what is loved together.
- Love implies arousal but, in life-enhancing love, it is not an arousal of demand, does not *bind* the other, but sings with them a melody of engagement.
- Such love expands our consciousness, extends our knowing and contributes to life *wisdom*. ...

Yet, notwithstanding this richness, love is endangered in our cultures. Loneliness and alienation are rife; for some the experience is so unbearable that they take their own lives. It can include *self-loathing*, and I think we need to acknowledge an extreme where love of others, of self, of nature, or of any system of belief and meaning, is effectively absent. Mostly, however, in the bleakest of circumstance and mood, I believe people have some *memories* of caring or being cared for, so there are many more survivors than those who give up completely. And, of course, there still is a great deal of caring love that goes beyond 'survival', if not continuously then in significant episodes.

I think you'd agree that there is great emphasis in Western cultures on winning or being out in front, on the 'virtue' of competition, on achieving wealth, on developing ever more sophisticated "intelligent" but non-feeling systems, and on reshaping and depleting the habitat that spawned and supported the wonderful variety of life on our planet? Imagine the difference if love and empathically caring connection were experienced and practiced *throughout the culture*, as what mattered most in quality of life?

*To end:* Love does not work to rule. It cannot itself be regulated, or *engineered* into being, but it certainly can be diminished and undercut. Yet, given a chance, and at times when it seems unlikely, love comes forth *unbidden* from the flowering of our own connective and outreaching human nature.

## THE BLOOMER'S COMPLAINT



Dear me, what a terrible clatter they raise,  
Because that old gossip Dame Rumor  
Declares, with her hands lifted up in amaze,  
That I'm coming out as a Bloomer,  
That I'm coming out as a Bloomer.

I wonder how often these men must be told  
When a woman a notion once seizes,  
However they ridicule, lecture or scold,  
She'll do, after all, as she pleases,  
She'll do, after all, as she pleases.

They know very well that their own fashions change  
With each little change of the season,  
But Oh! it is "monstrous" and "dreadful" and "strange"  
And "out of all manner of reason,"  
And "out of all manner of reason".

If we take a fancy to alter our dress,  
And come out in style "a la Bloomer,"  
To hear what an outcry they make, I confess  
Is putting me quite out of humor,  
Is putting me quite out of humor.



I'll come out next week, with a wide Bloomer flat  
Of a shape that I fancy will fright them,  
I had not intended to go quite to that,  
But I'll do it now, only to spite them,  
But I'll do it now, only to spite them.

With my pants "a la Turque" and my skirts two feet long  
All fitting of course, most completely  
These grumblers shall own after all, they are wrong,  
And that I, in a Bloomer, look sweetly,  
And that I, in a Bloomer, look sweetly.

Sadly, it is not known who composed this little gem, but it came with (apparently) original music and its full title was 'The Bloomer's Complaint: A Very Pathetic Song for Piano Forte'. It was published by one A. Piott of Philadelphia in 1851. The picture on the cover page (above) was made by Christian Schuessle, a German-American artist who is also credited with designing the US' Medal of Honor.

The garment was named after women's rights advocate Amelia Bloomer, though it was initially known as 'the Turkish dress' and featured a knee-length skirt over Turkish-style pantaloons. While she did not invent it, Bloomer came to advocate and promote the garment, including instructions for making it, in her newspaper, *The Lily*. She was the first woman to own, operate and edit a newspaper for women, still less a paper dedicated to the 'Emancipation of Woman from Intemperance, Injustice, Prejudice, and Bigotry'.

This inspired a craze for the garment, particularly among suffragists. Bloomer balls and picnics were held; dress reform societies and bloomer institutes were formed. (The garment was promoted as being healthier for women than the prevailing heavy dresses and corsets) Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone adopted it in the 1850s, calling it the 'freedom dress', but they soon came to regard it as a distraction at their public meetings and reverted to conventional dress.

Another woman who advocated publicly for dress reform was Mary Edwards Walker, a Civil War surgeon who had worn bloomers while working at a military hospital. She openly wore men's trousers and was arrested several times for wearing male attire. Her earliest arrest was in 1866, in New York and her final arrest was in 1913 in Chicago, at the age of 80!

## TO SUSAN B. ANTHONY

My honoured friend, I'll ne'er forget,  
That day in June when first we met:  
Oh! would I had the skill to paint  
My vision of that "Quaker Saint":  
Robed in pale blue and silver gray,  
No silly fashions did she essay:  
Her brow so smooth and fair,  
'Neath coils of soft brown hair;  
Her voice was like the lark, so clear,  
So rich, and pleasant to the ear:  
The "'Prentice hand", on man oft tried,  
Now made in her the Nation's pride!



We met and love, ne'er more to part,  
Hand clasped in hand, heart bound to heart.  
We've travelled West, years together,  
Day and night, in stormy weather:  
Climbing the rugged Suffrage hill,  
And bravely facing every ill:  
While resting, speaking, everywhere;  
Quite often in the open air:  
From sleighs, ox-carts, and maybe coaches,  
Besieged by beetles, bugs and roaches:  
All this for the emancipation  
Of the brave women of our Nation.

Now, we've had enough of travel,  
And, in turn, laid down the gavel, –  
In triumph having reached four score,  
We'll give our thoughts to art, and lore.  
In the time-honored retreat,  
Side by side, we'll take a seat,  
To younger hands resign the reins,  
With all the honors, and the gains.  
United, down life's hill we'll glide,  
Whate'er the coming years betide;  
Parted only when first, in time,  
Eternal joys are mine, or thine.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1900)

The full title was 'To Susan B. Anthony on her Eightieth Birthday' (15 February 1900) and I'm sure you'll agree that it is a very heartfelt poem. Unlike the feature article, these pictures are of Stanton (top) and Anthony (bottom) in their advanced years. Elizabeth Cady was born in 1815 in Johnstown, New York, to a wealthy Presbyterian family (though she eventually became an atheist) and she excelled in mathematics, languages and debating at the local academy. She married Henry Brewster Stanton in 1840 and they were living in Seneca Falls, New York, when she organised the legendary convention there. As is adumbrated in the poem, she pre-deceased Anthony in 1902.

Susan Anthony was born in 1820 in Adams, Massachusetts, to a Quaker family who moved to Rochester, New York, and attended the Unitarian church there. (She added her middle name later.) She was educated at a Quaker boarding school in Philadelphia and went on to be a teacher, temperance worker and Abolitionist before she joined the women's movement. She famously upstaged the centenary celebration of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia in 1876 by reading a Declaration of Rights for Women. She never married but she was still politically active until her death in 1906. It should be noted that her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday was celebrated in the White House at the invitation of President William McKinley.

## ANZUUA CONFERENCE 2019

As was explained in the last issue, the Conference will be hosted by the Brisbane UU Fellowship on the weekend of 23–25 August. The venue is the Theosophical Society Retreat Centre in the Springbrook National Park, well inland of the Gold Coast.

The program for the Conference is tailored to suit the natural beauty of the area:

### Friday afternoon

Arrival onsite – registration from 3 pm (you can arrive earlier if you wish)  
Refreshments/Afternoon tea  
Meet and greet  
6.00 pm Dinner  
7.30 pm Congregation reports

### Saturday Morning

7.00 am Walk to the waterfall – optional  
8.00 am Breakfast  
9.00 am Opening address: Clay Nelson, President of ANZUUA  
9.20 am Presentation by Melbourne Church on Australian Human Rights Charter  
9.50 am Presentation by Brisbane UU Fellowship on UUA Program called Our Whole Lives (OWL)  
– lifespan education on relationships and sexuality  
10.15 - 10.35 am Morning tea  
10.35 - 10.45 am Set-up for World Café  
10.45 - 11.55 am World Café

### Saturday Afternoon/Evening

12.00 – 1.00 pm Lunch  
1.00 – 3.00 pm Bush walk, drive to lookouts, Purlingbrook Falls, Antarctic Beech trees  
3.00 - 3.30 pm Afternoon tea  
3.30 - 5.30 pm ANZUUA General Meeting  
6.00 - 7.30 pm Dinner  
7.45 pm Group activity (unless there is carry-over General Meeting business)

### Sunday Morning

7.00 am Walk to the waterfall - optional  
8.00 am Breakfast  
9.00 am Collect an item from nature for the Flower Communion  
10.00 am Sunday UU Service – Flower Communion  
11.45 am Tidy up for leaving after lunch  
12.00 Lunch  
After lunch – departures or visits to natural beauties

## REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

*Auckland UC* completed their Pledge Month in April with an excellent talk by the chairperson, Jonathan Mason, ‘The Sermon on the Amount’. At the end of that month, they had their fourth annual Quiz Night, which featured a brief presentation by their Treasurer, Terry Child, on how pledges support the congregation, a free dinner and an outrageous quiz challenge prepared by Rachel Mackintosh (partner of the minister, Rev. Clay Nelson), who presided as a very demanding and unforgiving Quiz Mistress. One new feature of the night was the Treasurer’s ability to show his pledge information on their new high-quality projection system. That system is also used in their services and Adult Religious Education meetings.

Their Peace and Social Justice Committee has become more active, supporting the Muslim community and advocating for gun control after the dreadful event in Christchurch. They have also assisted immigrants and continued their efforts to bring back the Indian students they gave sanctuary to last year. So far, they have brought back four of the twelve by lobbying the government.

*Brisbane UU Fellowship* have been busy organising the forthcoming ANZUUA Conference in addition to their usual activities. Attendances are averaging 20 or more, with up to seven in their children’s program. They have been holding monthly pot-luck ‘Sustainable Dinners’ of food made from organic and sustainable ingredients, rotating through members’ homes.



On 30 June, they held a gathering and lunch on the Gold Coast, where a number of UUs live who cannot attend services in Brisbane. It is hoped that, given sufficient attendance, these meetings can be held more regularly. On the international front, they are sponsoring two female students in the Philippines for the next year, one in high school and the other starting university. They also plan to send one or two members for OWL (Our Whole lives) training in Honolulu in August.

*First UU Fellowship of Melbourne* have continued with their 'Faith Rocket' subscription, whereunder they receive worship materials (including videos and podcast sermons) from the UUA for their bi-monthly services. Members are now more comfortable delivering services, so overall their experience with the subscription has been positive.

Connie Gibbons, a new member, has joined the Committee of Management and also led the services in May.

*Melbourne UC* will celebrate NAIDOC week by hosting an Indigenous art festival and having an Aboriginal guest speaker at the service on 07 July. They will hold the annual Hiroshima anniversary commemoration on 06 August in conjunction with ICAN, Pax Christi and the Quakers.

They continue to support the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) with regular donations and food collections. The Human Rights Charter steering committee is meeting regularly and working hard to develop outreach to more Interfaith and secular bodies, both in Victoria and nationally.

*Perth Unitarians* had a Special General Meeting on Sunday 02 June 2019 to update their Constitution (Rules) to comply with the 2015 Associations Incorporation Act. They continuing to have one gathering per month, with members presenting interesting talks followed by great discussions and enjoyable lunches. They presently have a visitor from the United States who is staying for three months.

Their social justice activities have involved assistance for abused women and obtaining legal help and care for people experiencing elder fraud. The Annual Retreat at the Benedictine monastery in New Norica will take place in August.

*Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship* continue to hold three meetings each month. Regular speakers include members Martin Horlacher, Morandir Armason and Rev. Rex Hunt, plus their minister, Rev. Geoff Usher, who gave two addresses on Sikhism in June. In July, Carolyn Donnelly will speak on the life and works of the Norwegian Unitarian composer, Edvard Grieg.

Their KIVA loan program is still providing assistance to collectives, farmers and others in Third World countries.

*Sydney UC* have had the usual presentations by members and guest speakers, and also few Music Services involving both the current and previous Music Director. The latter was visiting from London, where he now lives, and the latter left in July to find more and better work in Berlin. Just before that, he produced a fare-well concert of classical music with four of his colleagues who have performed with him at SUC in the past.

They recently sent another donation (usually twice yearly) to their sister congregation in the Philippines. These funds are used either for capital works on their church or for education expenses for their children.

## **SPECIAL REPORT FROM BLENHEIM**

We don't hear from the Marlborough Unitarian Fellowship in New Zealand often because, while they are affiliated with ANZUUA, they don't have a representative on the Council. However, the group has existed since about 1990 and it was led for many years by a retired lady minister from the UK, Rev. Elspeth Vallance. Their report to the forthcoming Conference reads as follows:

The Blenheim group meets monthly with a dwindling but loyal membership of 15 people. We get ten or so at each meeting, which is held at the Blenheim Croquet Club. Five of the services each year are taken by Derek McCullough, who travels up from Christchurch. The rest of the services are led by members, with the occasional guest speaker.

The social actions of the group were the support of the Muslim community in Christchurch and Blenheim after the March 15 shootings. A community vigil, addressed by the mayor, with local iwi and faith communities attracted nearly half the population. Tongan students sang and acted as ushers.

[Information provided by Rev. Derek McCullough, retired minister of the Christchurch Unitarians.]

## SCIENCE AS RELIGION

By Mike McPhee

[Abstract of an address given at the Sydney Unitarian Church on 19 October 2003.]

Some of you may think from the title that I'm going to proclaim science as my religion – and I could, but only in the colloquial sense of people saying football or golf or jazz is their religion. However, I don't worship science or even the Universe, wonderful as they both are. Suffice it to say that science is central to my life and my thinking, but a true scientist knows the limitations of science better than some lay zealots do. What I'm seeking to present here is a range of views affecting science and its role in both history and present-day society.

While the primacy of reason is a fundamental principle of Unitarianism, and while some prominent scientists like Newton and Darwin were Unitarians, I'm painfully aware that scientific logic is not the only valid form of reasoning. Neither is reason, of and by itself, the best means of approaching the deepest of human quandaries – emotions may be natural, but by definition they are not rational. As someone once said, science can explain how a rainbow is formed but not why it is so beautiful; and, as someone else said, science can only tell us what is – but not what *should* be.

I accept the first proposition, because aesthetics isn't a branch of science – but I adamantly reject the second on the grounds that 'what should be' can only refer to conditions on this planet, and that is the responsibility of all of us. There are many questions and quandaries that humans wish to (or need to) address, but many of these cannot be phrased as scientific questions and are therefore not amenable to scientific answers. However, science may be able to make some input; for example, by identifying a part of the brain associated with 'mystical' experiences, or by finding ways to increase food production while leaving it to the powers-that-be to see that it is equitably distributed.

Further on matters of religion, no-one can fail to be inspired by the beauty and majesty of the physical universe, both in macrocosm and microcosm, and scientific training allows a deeper, though necessarily more abstract, appreciation of how it all works and of the amazing unities that prevail from the smallest to the largest levels of physical structure. But 'beauty' and 'majesty' are purely human valuations, not scientific ones, and we do well to remind ourselves of this if our thoughts drift to creators or designers of 'the majestic clockwork' or framers of the universal laws. As the philosopher, David Hume, wrote in the 1800s, for lack of anything to compare it with, our universe may not be so wonderful at all – it may have been a project assigned to a trainee god, the product of a senile god, or even (god help us!) the compromised work of a committee of gods.

Two contradictory perceptions confront scientists in public life which they didn't ask for and don't really want. One is that people often expect them to have expertise in metaphysics and, thus, to be able to answer questions on religious matters that by definition are totally outside their training and praxis. The converse is that many people automatically assume that scientists are anti-religion when, as before, their methodology requires them to simply plead the inability to address non-scientific questions. The two realms, science and metaphysics, just have no point of contact, and scientists have no more business stating other than their personal opinions on religious matters than religionists have making pronouncements about science.

This idea is not new – when Francis Bacon first proposed what we now call the scientific method in his book, *Novum Organum* (1620), he spoke of 'natural philosophy' rather than science. Here, 'natural' meant using information that can be obtained from the world around us, rather than from Scripture or the canonised works of Plato and Aristotle. Bacon spoke of theologians studying the Word of God whereas scientists studied the work of God, but he deplored those who looked to the Bible for scientific inspiration. This he denounced as:

...seeking for the dead among the living; which also makes the inhibition and repression of it the more important, because from this unwholesome mixture of things human and divine there arises not only a fantastic philosophy but also a heretical religion. Very meet it is therefore that we be sober-minded, and give to faith that only which is faith's.

Truly, scientists do act on faith, in the sense of essential assumptions that either have not been or cannot be proved. They have to assume that their senses and consciousness provide real and reliable information about what the world is really like. They affirm the Isotropic Principle that the whole of the Universe behaves in exactly the same manner, under the same laws, as our corner of the cosmos does. And they have to posit that human intelligence is capable of understanding the increasingly abstract analyses that relativity and quantum mechanics have provided, and whatever lies beyond those in the future.

Not for nothing did the astronomer and science fiction writer, Arthur C. Clarke, say: “The Universe is stranger than we think – and even stranger than we *can* think.” A similar statement in a British newspaper greeted Eddington’s confirmation in 1922 that light was affected by gravity: “The poet, Tennyson, wrote of ‘believing what we cannot prove’. Dr. Einstein is coming perilously close to proving what we cannot believe.”

But that is just the point! Even religious laypersons today accept the existence of all manner of things we cannot see, from atoms to genes and from quasars to black holes. Of course, we are assured that these things can be observed through microscopes and telescopes – but how many of us have actually done so? We may have seen pictures produced by such instruments, but what would that prove to a determined sceptic? The truth is that we all believe in what science has to tell us – even those who are most determined to frustrate such concepts as evolution and the ‘Big Bang’ have to meet science on its own terms in their vain endeavours to do so.

Science has other parallels with religion, such as having a rich history of heroes, prophets and even martyrs. To some, it has a teleology, moving forward (and sometimes backward) with the phases of human history in its quest for the Ultimate Truth – known these days as the ‘Grand Unified Theory’. Science has mysteries aplenty, not all of which anyone expects to see explained in the foreseeable future. Like many religions, science has at times been bitterly split along national or disciplinary lines despite official professions of unity and amity. There may be a ‘priesthood’ of scientists who declare that they know what is best, and so we shouldn’t question what their research may lead to, but most believe it is their duty to at least let the public know what they are doing. Scientists have ethics in place of morality, which they debate endlessly, and a firm conviction that a better world of peace and prosperity will come about through their efforts

The ‘scientific priesthood’ includes a school of what I consider to be mystics, who cite numerous critical conditions embedded in the make-up of the Universe that are essential to its functioning and to our existence. Interestingly, those who make statements to that effect tend to be physicists – I guess, because their equations are so elegant. Chemists perceive a somewhat sloppier set of empirical rules which only apply some of the time, so we rarely hear such lofty statements from them. Biologists see the messier side of evolution, with all its false starts and mass extinctions, and so tend to take a very jaundiced view of any ‘grand design’.

Science even attracts a breed of fundamentalists, although few adherents of ‘scientism’ are actually scientists. The *Skeptics Dictionary* says that: “Scientism, in the strong sense, is the self-annihilating view that only scientific claims are meaningful, which is not a scientific claim and hence, if true, not meaningful. ... In the weak sense, scientism is the view that the methods of the natural sciences should be applied to any subject matter.” I don’t hold with either view, not least because science (which adherents of scientism tend to exalt with a capital ‘s’) is just an ideal like other capitalised words such as ‘Truth’. But science is clearly a human activity and therefore subject to the same foibles, fads and errors as anything else that humans do.

I won’t deal with the popular anti-science that passes for ‘new age mysticism’, but I would like to offer one instance of scientific religion which I respect but couldn’t practice, myself. This is the branch of neo-paganism associated with the Gaia Hypothesis, essentially the belief that the Earth is a living organism – to some, even a sentient one. The basic premise of the hypothesis is that the various species and individuals are interconnected parts of the living Earth in much the same way as individual organisms are collections of cells. While the hypothesis is the product of speculative scientists, merely seeking a new approach to ecological questions, those Unitarians and others who favour ‘Earth-centred spirituality’ might find inspiration here.

In conclusion, it occurs to me that science is a bit like Unitarianism, in that it comes in many forms and you can make anything you like (well, *almost* anything!) out of it. Science seeks the right questions as much as answers and, as Bernard Shaw said, never answers a question without raising several more. This is inevitable due to the inexhaustibility of the Universe and its surprises – in Einstein’s words, the expanding circle of knowledge creates a greater boundary with the unknown that lies outside of it. Like Unitarianism, science must be open-minded and self-critical, or it will fail, and it must ‘endure not to know’ rather than arbitrarily declare ‘answers’ that will work if everyone just believes in them. Lastly, science is fun, as Unitarianism can and should be.

So, thanks for hearing me out, and I hope you see now why the physical Universe has always been enough for me to build my life around. It is sufficiently wonderful and mysterious that I’ll never need to seek anything ‘higher’ or ‘further’, ultimate or transcendent. To each their own, to be sure, but I maintain that a lot of other-worldly thinking is done by those who can’t or won’t delve into physical reality and appreciate it for what it is.

[Sorry to inflict something this ancient on you but I had nothing else suitably short. Much as I hate to admit it, I seriously doubt that I could have written something like this today – though I stand by what I wrote then.]

## LOVE

What means it to love? Is it feeling  
one's life flow brimming, merging  
with the bright motion of another?  
Is it sharing, listening, hearing, finding  
that the other also sees what we behold?  
Is it joining in a We, for each one of us  
enlivening, transforming Me; or, a bonding  
of lived loyalty, lasting, without possession;  
or, desire to be one flesh, in passionate embrace,  
white heat, wondrous shock, centred calm?

What about love of one's child,  
fruit of one's seed, miracle of nature?  
Wonder, tenderness, compassion, empathy –  
are these not also primary faces of love?  
Consider, too, the longing love of a child  
for its parent: life-giver, protector, guide,  
glad or reluctant hero, partner even  
in the sharing, learning world of play.  
Observe the love of brothers and sisters,  
sometime foes or rivals but with felt unspoken  
pledge, caring given unearned, without decision,  
the common heritage a wellspring of belonging.  
Ponder the oft-unspoken love of one's friends  
– not given by birth but chosen – or the loving  
fellowship of groups of like belief or action,  
or the ambient embrace of any larger community  
that our selfhood drinks from and flows into.

Can we not also love creatures differing  
from ourselves in kind, animal friends  
drawn to us as we to them, responsive  
and aware, fellow-children of that  
same nature which spawned *our* kind?  
Where it sleeps, shall we awaken love  
for all this natural world, our planet,  
precious inheritance, lifeline to futures  
bounteous and sown still with life?

What of love for a befriending god, for  
a spiritual world unseen but pregnant  
with mystery and meaning, for a cosmos  
beyond touch or present time but in reach  
of mind, for the questing spirit in humankind?  
In English, one little word – universe of meaning.

*Godfrey Barrett-Lennard, 1987*

[This goes with the article on pp. 4/5. Godfrey (Goff) Barrett-Lennard is a founding member of the Perth Unitarians, as well as a retired psychotherapist and counsellor.]

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I regret that my home situation hasn't improved, so I am still late with my publications and there's nothing I can do about it. I will need an assistant and more input in the way of articles before I can get back on track.