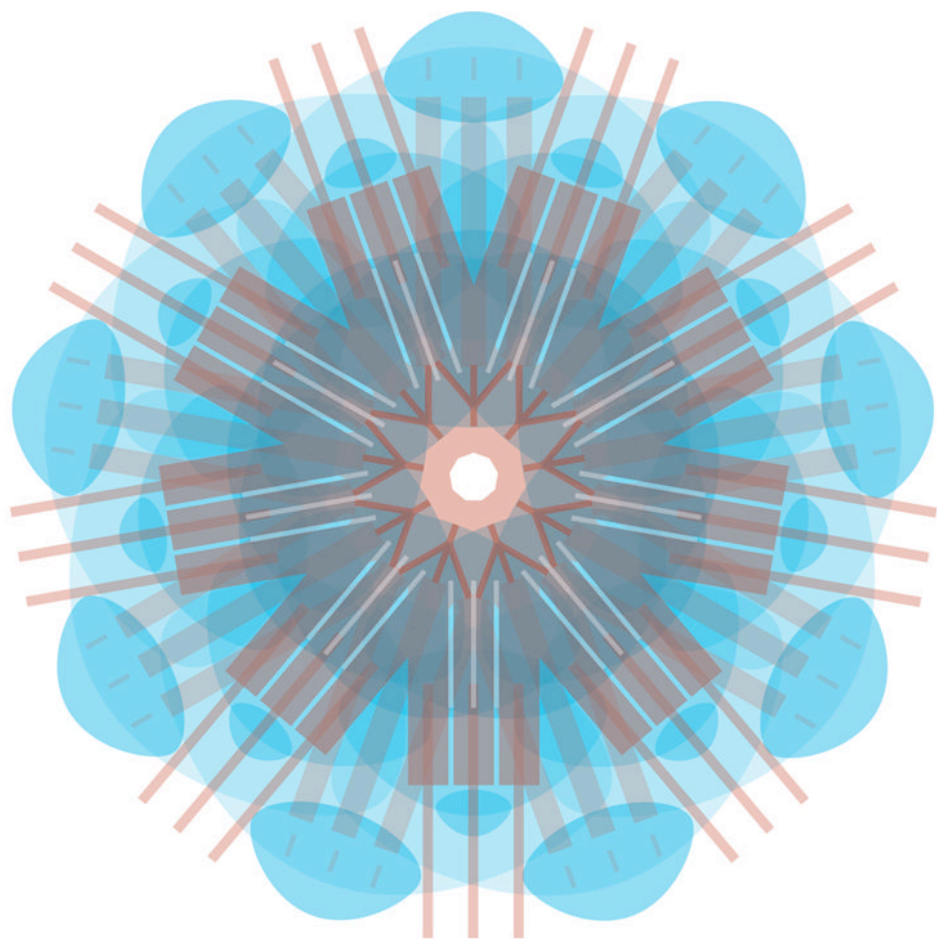


Soul Food

The Light Within



September 2007

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Program

01. *Aboriginal Dreaming*
02. *Michael Leunig, The Prayer Tree*
03. *Buddhist Teachings*
04. *Hinduism, Mundaka Upanishad*
05. *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Bahá'í Writings*
06. *Abu Sa'id b. Abi 'l-Khair*
07. *Confucius*

08. *Attributed to a Rifa'i dervish*
09. *Thomas Merton, from Christian Tradition*
10. *Paulo Coelho*
11. *Francis Bacon*
12. *'Abdu'l-Bahá, from the Bahá'í Writings*
13. *Bruce Lee*
14. *Zen Buddhism*

15. *A Meeting with the Son of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith*
16. *Bhagavad Gita*

17. *Dalai Lama*
18. *'Abdu'l-Bahá, from the Bahá'í Writings*

The words that enlighten the soul are more precious than jewels.

– *Hazrat Inayat Khan*

01. **Earth Dying, Earth Reborn**

Once, the earth was completely dark and silent; nothing moved on its barren surface. Inside a deep cave below the Nullarbor Plain slept a beautiful woman, the Sun. The Great Father Spirit gently woke her and told her to emerge from her cave and stir the universe into life. The Sun Mother opened her eyes and darkness disappeared as her rays spread over the land; she took a breath and the atmosphere changed; the air gently vibrated as a small breeze blew.

The Sun Mother then went on a long journey; from north to south and from east to west she crossed the barren land. The earth held the seed potencies of all things, and wherever the Sun's gentle rays touched the earth, there grasses, shrubs and trees grew until the land was covered in vegetation. In each of the deep caverns in the earth, the Sun found living creatures which, like herself, had been slumbering for untold ages. She stirred the insects into life in all their forms and told them to spread through the grasses and trees, then she woke the snakes, lizards, and other reptiles, and they slithered out of their deep hold.

As the snakes moved through and along the earth they formed rivers, and they themselves became creators, like the Sun. Behind the snakes mighty rivers flowed, teeming with all kinds of fish and water life. Then she called for the animals, the marsupials, and the many other creatures to awake and make their homes on the earth.

The Sun Mother then told all the creatures that the days would from time to time change from wet to dry and from cold to hot, and so she made the seasons. One day while all the animals, insects and other creatures were watching, the Sun travelled far in the sky to the west and, as the sky shone red, she sank from view and darkness spread across the land once more. The Creatures were alarmed and huddled together in fear. Some time later, the sky began to glow on the horizon to the east and the Sun rose smiling into the sky again...

– *Aboriginal Dreaming*

02. **From Leunig's The Prayer Tree**

We search and we search and yet find no meaning.
The search for a meaning leads to despair.
And when we are broken the heart finds its moment
To fly and to feel and to work as it will
Through the darkness and mystery and wild contradiction.
For this is its freedom, its need and its calling;
This is its magic, its strength and its knowing.
To heal and make meaning while we walk or lie dreaming;
To give birth to love within our surrender;
To mother our faith, our spirit and yearning;
While we stumble in darkness the heart makes our meaning
And offers it into our life and creation
That we may give meaning to life and creation
For we only give meaning we do not find meaning;
The thing we can't find is the thing we shall give.
To make love complete and to honour creation.

– *Michael Leunig*

03. The Inner Light is beyond both praise and blame,
Like unto space it knows no boundaries;
Yet it is right here with us,
Ever retaining its serenity and fullness.
It is only when you seek it that you lose it.
You cannot take hold of it nor can you get rid of it;
While you can do neither, it goes on its own way.
You remain silent and it speaks;
You speak and it is silent.
The Gate of Heaven is wide open with not a single obstruction before it.

– *Buddhist Teachings*

04. Bright but hidden, the Self dwells in the heart.
Everything that moves, opens, and closes, lives in the Self.
He is the source of love and may be known through love but not through
thought.
He is the goal of life. Attain the goal!
The shining Self dwells hidden in the heart.
Everything in the cosmos, great and small, lives in the Self.
He is the Source of life,
Truth beyond the transience of the world.
He is the goal of life. Attain the goal!

– *Hinduism, Mundaka Upanishad 2.2. 1.2*

05. The soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel. It is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its Creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and to bow down in adoration before Him. If it be faithful to God, it will reflect His light, and will, eventually, return unto Him.

Blessed is he that hath recognized the true stature of such a soul, that hath acknowledged its station, and discovered its virtues. Much hath been written in the books of old concerning the various stages in the development of the soul, such as concupiscence, irascibility, inspiration, benevolence, contentment, Divine good-pleasure, and the like; the Pen of the Most High, however, is disinclined to dwell upon them.

Every soul that walketh humbly with its God, in this Day, and cleaveth unto Him, shall find itself invested with the honor and glory of all goodly names and stations.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Bahá'í Writings*

06. If men wish to draw near to God, they must seek Him in the hearts of men. They should speak well of all men, whether present or absent, and if they themselves seek to be a light to guide others, then, like the sun, they must show the same face to all. To bring joy to a single heart is better than to build many shrines for worship, and to enslave one soul by kindness is worth more than the setting free of a thousand slaves. That is the true man of God, who sits in the midst of his fellowmen, and rises up, and eats and sleeps, and buys and sells, and gives and takes in the bazzars amongst other people, and who marries, and has social intercourse with other folk, and yet, is never for one moment, forgetful of God.

– *Abu Sa'id b. Abi 'l-Khair*

07. It is only he who is completely genuine in the affairs of this world who can develop his own nature to its fullest. If he can develop his own nature to its fullest, then he can help in the development of the natures of other men. If he can help in the development of other men's natures, then he can help in the full development of the natures of all animate and inanimate beings. If he can help in the full development of all animate and inanimate beings, then he can help in the production of Nature above and Nature below. When he helps in the production and maturation of Nature above and Nature below, he likewise becomes a creative agent of the universe.

– *Confucius*

The kingdom of inexhaustible light, whence is derived the
radiance of the sun,
To this kingdom, transport me, eternal, undying.

– *Hindu, Rig-Veda, IX.113:7*

08. **The Doctrine of The Seventy Thousand Veils**

“Seventy Thousand Veils separate Allah, the One Reality, from the world of matter and of sense. And every soul passes before his birth through these Seventy Thousand. The inner half of these are veils of light: the outer half, veils of darkness. For every one of the veils of light passes through, in this journey towards birth, the soul puts off a divine quality: and for every one of the dark veils, it puts on an earthly quality. Thus the child is born weeping, for the soul knows its separation from Allah, the One Reality.

And when the child cries in its sleep, it is because the soul remembers something of what it has lost. Otherwise, the passage through the veils has brought with it forgetfulness (*nisyyan*): and for this reason man is called *insan*. He is now, as it were, in prison in his body, separated by these thick curtains from Allah.

“But the whole purpose of Sufism, the Way of the Dervish, is to give him an escape from this prison, an apocalypse of the Seventy Thousand Veils, a recovery of the original unity with the One, while still in the body. The boy is not to be put off; it is to be refined and made spiritual— a help and not a hindrance to the spirit. It is like a metal that has to be refined by fire and transmuted. And the sheikh tells the aspirant that he has the secret of this transmutation, ‘We shall throw you into the fire of Spiritual Passion,’ he says, ‘and you will emerge refined.’”

– *Attributed to a Rifa'i dervish*

09. **Called Out Of Darkness**

The brightness of the eternal light is so great that we cannot see it, and all other lights become darkness by comparison with it. Yet to the spiritual man, all other lights contain the infinite light. He passes through them to reach it. And as he passes, he no longer hesitates, comparing one finite light with another, one empirical object with another, concept with concept. Travelling with haste, in the unerring security which transcends all objects, instructed by the Spirit Who alone can tell us the secret of our individual destiny, man begins to know God as he knows his own self. The night of faith has brought us into contact with the Object of all faith, not as an object but as a Person Who is the centre and life of our own being, at once His own Transcendent Self and the immanent source of our own identity and life.

– *Thomas Merton, from Christian Tradition*

10. **From The Manual for the Warrior of Light**

From now on—and for the next few hundred years—
the Universe is going to help warriors of light and hinder the prejudiced.

The Earth's energy needs to be renewed

New ideas need space.

Body and soul need new challenges.

The future has become the present, and every dream—
except those dreams that involve preconceived ideas will have a chance to
be heard.

Anything of importance will remain; anything useless will disappear.

However, it is not the warrior's responsibility to judge the dreams of others,
and he does not waste time criticizing other people's decisions.

– *Paulo Coelho*

11. Certainly, virtue is like precious odors, most
fragrant when they are incensed or crushed:
for prosperity doth best discover vice;
but adversity doth best discover virtue.

– *Francis Bacon*

12. How good it is if the friends be as close as sheaves of light, if they stand together side by side in a firm unbroken line. For now have the rays of reality from the Sun of the world of existence, united in adoration all the worshippers of this light; and these rays have, through infinite grace, gathered all peoples together within this wide-spreading shelter; therefore must all souls become as one soul, and all hearts as one heart. Let all be set free from the multiple identities that were born of passion and desire, and in the oneness of their love for God find a new way of life.

– *‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from the Bahá’í Writings*

13. **The life of perfection is the simple life**

– A simple life is one of plainness, in which profit is discarded, cleverness abandoned, selfishness eliminated, and desires reduced. It is the life of perfection which seems to be incomplete, and of fullness which seems to be empty. It is the life which is as bright as light, but does not dazzle. In short, it is a life of harmony, unity, contentment, tranquility, constancy, enlightenment, peace and long life.

– *Bruce Lee*

14. Ryokan, a Zen master, lived the simplest kind of life in a little hut at the foot of a mountain. One evening a thief visited the hut to find there was nothing in it to steal. Ryokan returned and caught him.

“You may have come along way to visit me,” he told the prowler,

“And you should not return empty-handed. Please take my clothes as a gift.”

The thief was bewildered. He took the clothes and slunk away.

Ryokan sat naked watching the moon.

“Poor fellow,” he mused,

“I wish I could give him this beautiful moon.”

– *Zen Buddhism*

The mind of a bigot is like the pupil of the eye. The more light you shine on it, the more it will contract.

– *Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. (1841 - 1935)*

15. **A Meeting with the Son of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith**

Two ladies, delighted that their request to have an evening with 'Abdu'l-Bahá while He was in London had been granted, were warmly received by Him. How they relished having this intimate evening! Half an hour passed in His warm presence, when suddenly they were filled with consternation – an aggressive reporter strode into their midst and seated himself – he wanted information about 'Abdu'l-Bahá. His talkative, impolite manner left the ladies speechless – such an intrusion could spoil their precious evening.

Then, to their surprise, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stood up and, beckoning the reporter to follow Him, led the way into His room. The ladies had indeed got rid of the intruder, but they had also lost 'Abdu'l-Bahá. What were they to do? Before long the hostess went to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's secretary and asked that He be informed 'that the ladies with whom the appointment had been made are awaiting His pleasure'.

Very soon kind words of farewell were heard. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá returned, pausing by the door. Gravely, He looked at each and said, 'You were making that poor man uncomfortable, so strongly desiring his absence; I took him away to make him feel happy.'

Be As a Lamp... 'Abdu'l Baha's Advice

You must manifest complete love and affection toward all mankind. Do not exalt yourselves above others, but consider all as your equals, recognizing them as the servants of one God. Know that God is compassionate toward all; therefore, love all from the depths of your hearts, prefer all religionists before yourselves, be filled with love for every race, and be kind toward the people of all nationalities. Never speak disparagingly of others, but praise without distinction. Pollute not your tongues by speaking evil of another. Recognize your enemies as friends, and consider those who wish you evil as the wishers of good. You must not see evil as evil and then compromise with your opinion, for to treat in a smooth, kindly way one whom you consider evil or an enemy is hypocrisy, and this is not worthy or allowable. You must consider your enemies as your friends, look upon your evil-wishers as your well-wishers and treat them accordingly. Act in such a way that your heart may be free from hatred. Let not your heart be offended with anyone. If someone commits an error and wrong toward you, you must instantly forgive him. Do not complain of others. Refrain from reprimanding them, and if you wish to give admonition or advice, let it be offered in such a way that it will not burden the bearer.

- *From the Bahá'í Writings*

16. When our darkness is repelled by the light of the soul, the Truth is manifested, splendid and clear, as if the Sun of Wisdom had ascended to shed Its rays at dawn... The world is overcome by such as fix their faith on Unity. The perfect Creator dwells in Unity and they in the Creator.

– *Bhagavad Gita*

So powerful is the Light of Unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.

– *Bahá'u'lláh*

Religion is a candle inside a multicoloured lantern. Everyone looks through a particular colour, but the candle is always there.

– *Mohammed Negulb*

17. In today's highly interdependent world, individuals and nations can no longer resolve many of their problems by themselves. We need one another. We must therefore develop a sense of universal responsibility... It is our collective and individual responsibility to protect and nurture the global family, to support its weaker members, and to preserve and tend to the environment in which we all live.

– *The Dalai Lama*

18. Know thou of a certainty that Love is the secret of God's holy Dispensation, the manifestation of the All-Merciful, the fountain of spiritual outpourings. Love is heaven's kindly light, the Holy Spirit's eternal breath that vivifieth the human soul. Love is the cause of God's revelation unto man, the vital bond inherent, in accordance with the divine creation, in the realities of things. Love is the one means that ensurcth true felicity both in this world and the next. Love is the light that guideth in darkness, the living link that uniteth God with man, that assureth the progress of every illumined soul. Love is the most great law that ruleth this mighty and heavenly cycle, the unique power that bindeth together the divers elements of this material world, the supreme magnetic force that directeth the movements of the spheres in the celestial realms. Love revealeth with unfailing and limitless power the mysteries latent in the universe. Love is the spirit of life unto the adorned body of mankind, the establisher of true civilization in this mortal world, and the shedder of imperishable glory upon every high-aiming race and nation.

– `Abdu'l-Bahá, from the Bahá'í Writings

Let your light shine. Shine within you so that it can shine on someone else. Let your light shine.

– Oprah Winfrey

"When you were born, you cried, and the world rejoiced. Live your life in such a manner that when you die, the world cries and you rejoice."

– Indian proverb

Please join us for refreshments



All Soul Food programs are available for free download from
www.soulfood.com.au

About Soul Food

Soul Food is a monthly event held at the State Library of Victoria, providing an opportunity to relax in a tranquil environment and reflect on inspiring themes. It features music, audio-visual pieces and readings from various Faiths; indigenous, ancient and modern, from all over the world. Soul Food is a free community event open to all.

Venue

State Library of Victoria
Village Roadshow Theatre
Corner Swanston St & La Trobe St
(Enter via La Trobe Street)

Time

10.30am – 11.30am

Dates

First Sunday of every month:
Sunday, October 7th, 2007
Sunday, November 4th, 2007
Sunday, December 2nd, 2007

Further Information

For further information about Soul Food events in Victoria, South Australia or Western Australia please call 0402 245 752 or visit www.soulfood.com.au.

Study Circles

In response to interest from Soul Food guests, the Bahá'í community is now offering a series of regular 'Study Circles' – as an opportunity to further explore subjects related to spiritual development. Study Circles are small, informal groups, and provide an environment in which to discuss meaningful topics with like-minded people. The first Study Circle is titled "Reflections on the Life of the Spirit", from the Ruhi Study Circle series. It is a three unit study on; Understanding the Bahá'í Writings, Prayer & Meditation, and Life & Death.

If you enjoy Soul Food then a Study Circle may also appeal to you. For more information please contact 0402 245 752 or email soulfood@netspace.net.au

The Bahá'í Community of Victoria

Soul Food is an initiative of the Bahá'í Community of Victoria. For further information about the Bahá'í Faith please visit www.bahai.org. For books on the Bahá'í Faith and related subjects such as spiritual development, world religion, education and more please visit:

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