



LATIN LOVERS

Gil Appleton's article in *SAM* last year about the Latin Summer School at Sydney University caught my attention. What a great idea, I thought. Intervening years of the study and practice of Medicine hadn't completely expunged the memory of five years Latin at Manly Boys High School in the '50s. Although I live in Cairns, I decided there and then to try and attend the next one. And so I did.

Excellent organisation, enthusiastic, experienced and immensely capable teachers, an eclectic and diverse collection of students of every age, competitions, prizes, lunchtime guest speakers, an *capella* choir and an excellent venue all combined to make the week a memorable and worthwhile experience. This year there was the extra treat of hearing the first guest speaker – Justice Michael Kirby – in stellar performance two weeks before his retirement from the High Court, on 'The decline and fall of Latin and everything that matters'. And for me, the Medical Heritage Trail and the chance to re-explore the old University after an absence of 44 years – the Quad, the Old Med School (with that lingering olfactory hint of the dissecting rooms instantly recognisable to anyone who's ever been a medical student), the New Med School, the Union, the Edward Ford Building and the Nicholson Museum. But overall, the wonder of the Latin language and the chance to catch a fleeting glimpse again of the glory that was Rome – Caesar and Catullus, Virgil and Ovid and Horace.

I'll ever be grateful to Gil Appleton and of course to *SAM* for drawing

my attention to the Latin Summer School. It does the University proud.

David Bradford AM (MBBS '65)
Cairns Qld

SEPARATION OF POWERS

Reading Professor Lyn Carson's article "Let's do democracy" (*SAM* Autumn '09) prompted me to try to crystallise my thoughts on the subject. This is the result.

I think the fundamental cause of the problems in our system of government is the tendency to break down the doctrine of the "separation of powers" and merge the functions of the legislature and the executive. The root cause is the appointment of a member of the legislature as the head of an executive department in a field in which the member has no expertise. It was ever thus. WS Gilbert recognised the problem when he created Sir Joseph Porter in *HMS Pinafore* in 1878. "Stick close to your desks and never go to sea and you all may be rulers of the Queen's navee". Concisely and clearly expressed to get the message across.

Governments, particularly cabinet ministers, make decisions on matters that should be left to the experts. Take for example the deplorable case of Dr Haneef. A magistrate, having presumably heard the facts and the

arguments, released him on bail whereupon Kevin Andrews, the then Minister for Immigration, slapped him into detention on suspicion of having links with terrorists. A blot on the reputation of Australia, a country renowned for giving people "a fair go".

Should governments run enterprises such as railways and hospitals? I don't think so. They should not be under the control of a minister. My suggestion is that statutory corporations should run them somewhat like the ABC (which seems to function efficiently), but not by companies with shareholders. In that case they would be motivated by profit not by service. The big problem with this suggestion is: how do you elect the boards of these corporations? I regret that the answer to that stumps me! The corporations would depend to some extent on the legislature for their funding, so the legislature should have at least one representative on the board.

State parliaments should be abolished. It is ridiculous in this age of cheap and quick transport between the states that there are eight systems of law. This was recognised when the current corporations law was passed. Eight parliaments passed identical legislation. What a wicked waste of resources!!

Another anomaly, which should be fixed, is that each state has the same number of senators. This was devised so that the larger ones would not outvote the smaller states, but it has not worked in that way. The senators tend to vote on party lines.

My hope is that someone, cleverer than I, will come up with a plan to motivate the legislature to pass the necessary laws to solve the problems and correct the anomalies mentioned and to call a referendum if necessary (which could be held at the same time as a referendum for a republic, but other considerations for that apply which I will not go into here).

Barrett Badham (LLB '51)
Kincumber NSW

CHAMBER OF HORRORS

Lyn Carson makes some good points in her article, "Let's Do Democracy", (*SAM* Autumn '09). I have always felt that turning the Upper Houses of Federal and State parliaments into Eminent Citizens' Chambers could enhance our democracy. I actually floated this idea – with little success – when my friend Sir Asher Joel retired from the NSW Legislative Council and I wondered why his and other people's talents could not be retained in a chamber



An idea isn't responsible for the people who believe in it.

Don Marquis

WE WALK BY FAITH NOT BY SIGHT

CORINTHIANS 5:7

i'd like to see that



Illustrations by Maggie Renvoize

for citizen review of legislation and public policy. People who have ideas, experience and wisdom should and could be invited to play a constructive role and exert a useful influence without needing to be part of the bear-pit partisan politics of the Lower Houses.

Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple AO RFD
Jerusalem, Israel
(Emeritus Rabbi of the Great Synagogue, Sydney)

UNTO THE GENERATIONS

It was most enjoyable to have the Alumni Relations Office and the Vice-Chancellor attend the Dubbo Medical School campus. It's so worthwhile having the University alumni maintaining their contacts with each other and the University.

I enjoy reading, in the magazine, about families with long connections to the University. I am pleased to report that my family has established a modest tradition with our daughter Emily (BAppSc '05) recently joining one of our sons, Adrian (BE '00), as fourth generation graduates. They follow their great-grandfather Walter Atkins (BA '14), grandfather WTG (Tom) Atkins (MBBS '37) and father. Even the carillonneur on Emily's graduation day, Dr Jill Forrest

(MBBS '61 MD '75), has a family connection being my first cousin and granddaughter of Walter Atkins!

Tom Atkins (MBBS'73)
Dubbo NSW

BOUNDLESSLY OBVIOUS

Clyde Long's letter (*SAM* Autumn '09) well exemplifies the sceptics' obsession with the "who created God?" non-issue. Long puzzles over "religionists" who allegedly ignore the concept of infinity, when in fact they (we) embrace it with respect to God. The God of the Bible (I will not presume to speak for other religions) is infinite in space, and infinite in time. Hence, to quote Long, "Boundlessness, obviously, negates a beginning".

Alas, the reasoning in Long's letter seems all too characteristic of those self-styled guardians of Reason who constantly seek to reduce God to a rejectable size. Such a god is, after all, much easier to shoot down than the God revealed in the Bible or actually believed in by anyone.

Dr Peter D Kruse
(BSc (Hons) '76, PhD '81)
Second Valley SA

INFINITELY MYSTERIOUS

Clyde Long's letter (*SAM* Autumn '09) reveals that the mystery of infinity led him to atheism – but clearly agnosticism would be a more logical response.

Most religions leave a place for mystery within their theologies and admit some agnosticism about aspects of their belief, such as the nature of the hereafter. No one is going to be persuaded into or out of belief by philosophical arguments and this holds true for faith and love which both involve the whole person.

As a teenager I grappled with the problem of infinity, failed to solve it and just moved on while Clyde Long has been led by infinity into a dogmatic belief.

James Moore (LLB'55 MA '72)
Kingsgrove NSW

HEAVEN FORFEND

Lest my colleagues think I've succumbed to senile dementia, or (heaven forbid) that you have made an error with the graduation year, I'd like it known that I am not the Don Nicholson whose letter about "intelligent design" appeared in the Autumn 2009 issue. Although I am prone to making sweeping

generalisations, I'd never go so far as to claim "few people today ... cannot see that the universe and our world simply shout design". I, for one, shudder to think that anyone would have designed a human being, for example, with all its obvious faults. To me, the universe and our world simply shout "time and natural selection".

Don Nicholson (BSc '60)
Warrawee, NSW

HOT AIR

Why is it that scientists, particularly biological scientists, appear not to be asking why biogenic methane emissions, such as those from ruminant livestock, have been given the same global warming potential (GWP) as fossil methane? Livestock methane emissions are carbon neutral as they do not add carbon

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to the atmosphere. They involve the removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere by plants, emission of methane during digestion of the plants eaten by the animals and its return to atmospheric CO₂ as it is oxidised. By contrast, fossil methane adds to the atmosphere carbon that has not been there for many millions of years.

In 1992, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported that the direct GWP of methane was 11 times that of CO₂, the factor that should apply to livestock, and added to it the indirect effect of its breakdown products, mainly CO₂, to give a total GWP of 21, the factor that

applies to fossil methane. However, the GWP of 21 has been applied to all methane. This means that, when agriculture is included in the carbon trading scheme proposed by the Government, farmers will be required to buy twice as many emissions permits as would otherwise be necessary. It is odd that, to date, scientists have allowed this situation to pass unchallenged.

Dr Graham Faichney (MScAgr '63)
Mosman NSW

AGRICULTURAL SLANT

I wish to present my slant on two phrases in the letters pages (SAM Autumn '09).

First, the definition of faith "as an illogical belief in the occurrence of the improbable". This well defines the evolutionist but I would describe my faith as "confidence that God will do what He says He will do because history has demonstrated His power, wisdom, good character and faithfulness". The "ancient texts" are not necessarily wrong because they are old. Rather, they are the most studied writings on earth and urge us to use our minds. Moses was a scholar who carefully recorded selected events up to his time using common knowledge (800 years is not long after the flood) and patriarchal records. Later writers confirmed those who had written earlier, as they extended the story to their own time. Even after 2000 years, we have strong historical data to confirm the reality and influence of Jesus Christ.

My career has been in experimental agricultural science. All genetic improvement I have seen has been by design of breeding programs to exploit existing genetic variation. On the other hand, we have witnessed rapid extinction rates but no new species have evolved. We are setting up gene banks to delay the decay. I know of no evidence for any evolution ("goo to you" gain in genetic information) although there is plenty of disintegration of systems. I know of no evidence for an "old earth" that is not better explained by "young earth" theories.

Some have illogically assumed that if the universe is large enough and time long enough, then evolution MUST happen (that 0 times infinity equals 1). But the eternity of matter in an infinitely old boundless universe is just an illogical assumption. While there have not been enough creationist scientists to address every issue, many key issues have been addressed by intelligent men who accept the ancient texts as historical. There is a huge literature albeit not in the "scientific peer reviewed journals" of the Darwinian era. If God is, then to require "science" deny Him by definition is illogical. Rather, Jesus always taught spiritual truth by analogy (parable) with "nature".

Arthur Gilmour (BScAg '69)
Cargo NSW



FREE GIFT WITH A CATCH!

From this issue of SAM onwards, a gift will be on its way to the writer of the most interesting, illuminating, provocative or funny letter and the Editor's decision is final.

The inaugural gift-with-letter is *Museum – the Macleays, their collections and the search for order*. It features sumptuous art photography by Robyn Stacey and fascinating text by Ashley Hay, published by Cambridge University Press. It goes to Barrett Badham of Kincumber, NSW. Congratulations!



Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*
Photo by Linda Vergnani



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor should include: full name, address (not for publication), degree(s) and year(s) of graduation where applicable, daytime phone number and/or email address.

Please address your letters to:

The Editor

SAM

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Letters may also be sent electronically (with full contact details) to:

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Opinions expressed in the pages of the magazine are those of the signed contributors or the editor and do not necessarily represent the official position of the University of Sydney.

Space permits only a selection of letters to be published here. Letters may be edited by the editor for space or other reasons.

ONE GOOD TERN

A quick note to say two things: first, I enjoy reading SAM. I am fascinated by the article "From little things big things grow" (Dr Seth Grant on the evolution of the brain).

Second the tern on page 22 (SAM Autumn 2009) is a Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* and not a Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*. I worked on these two species for my PhD at One Tree Island.

Good to see an article about research at One Tree. Thanks for the news.

Dr Kees Hulsman (BScHons '73)
Griffith University
Nathan Qld