

# SOF Sift

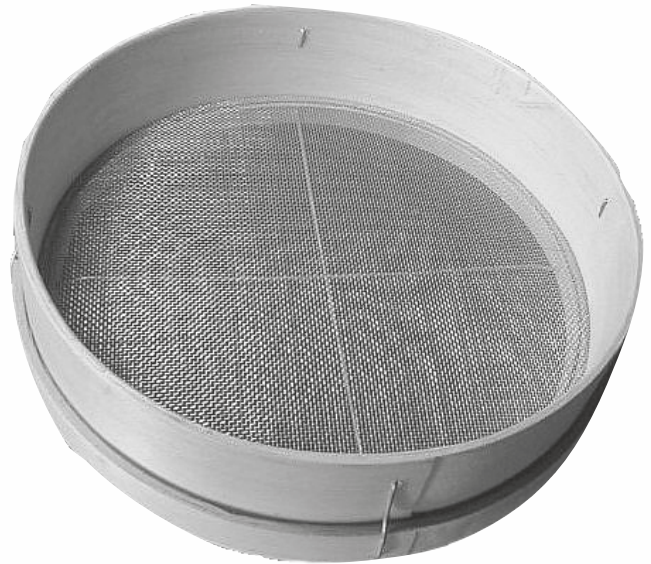
A column in which Network members think out loud about SOF and their own quest.

From Grenville Gilbert  
(Ottery St Mary)

This life on Earth is all that I know. (I had been led to believe that I knew something about a place called 'heaven' where someone called 'God' lived but this has proved to be false – see below). When I say 'all', I don't mean it in a belittling way. It's a wonderful 'all'! It's just that I have come to realise that my life on this Earth is the only life that I can know, really know. Oh, I know a little about other people's lives, thanks to a commonly agreed language but that's not the same as knowing what its like to be them. It's just the same with frogs or with any other living creature for that matter. But to be perfectly honest, I'm not too worried about it. I don't even know if trees are conscious or not! And then there is that super-hero that I first heard about at convent school – God. The number of people that I've known over my 59 years who claim to know all about Her; even claim to speak her language and to know precisely how she feels! But I now know that they have been telling little 'piggy porkies'.

I've got Don Cupitt to thank for letting me in on that little secret. Well it must be a secret because the churches don't let on about it. It's just like Santa Claus; adults were never very forthcoming on him either. Anyway, thank you Don, though why you keep on having to write so many books, God only knows; it's costing me a fortune and the basic message always seems the same. I'm beginning to wonder if you are beginning to doubt things; maybe you believe in God after all! Having said that, I believe that you are right; you can't get outside of your own head to see what's there, let alone talk about it. No, I only know this life on this Earth. All that I can do is to live it; just like the sun, day in day out. Mind you, I still can't help wondering where my life comes from; I didn't bring it about, so what clever clogs did?

Even old Darwin and Dawkins (sounds like a firm of accountants or perhaps an advertising agency, specialising in bus adverts!) haven't answered that one. They only answered the simple questions about evolution of species – all that survival of the fittest stuff. Obvious when you think about it – if it's fit for purpose, it's fit; if it isn't fit for purpose, it hasn't got



a cat in hell's chance of surviving! No, the really big question is how did life itself originate? Who wrote the code? Who programmed the chick, all that way back in time, to peck its way out of the egg in today's incubator? Not even a don from Emmanuel or New College has answered that one, albeit, I would dearly love to hear what they have to say. I guess that the answer lies necessarily outside of matter and energy, outside of time and space, even outside of language (including the language of DNA). And, of course, this in turn means that the answer also lies outside of the realm of science. I suppose that rather like the proverbial goldfish that only knows the confines of its own bowl of water; we too can only ever perceive answers in terms of our own human language and our own human experience.

So, maybe it was God after all (or whatever her name is in God language)! The lack of any other plausible explanation is certainly the reason why I continue to believe in God (but not in her existence). It's like the works of Shakespeare (with or without monkeys sat at typewriters); I cannot believe that the works wrote themselves and, furthermore, I cannot believe that they would ever be likely to do so, even if they had eternity within which to do it. It's all too much of a coincidence! Maybe, we need to have a look from the inside. Maybe, someone has sewn the answer into our lining! Maybe, we have been given an inner eye (but literally, for God's sake, don't tell R D or else he will try to make us believe that it is all down to cumulative selection!). I believe seriously that the God explanation is worth exploring. It's why I joined SOF many years ago – to be a part of the exploration network. And it hasn't been disappointing!

---

Grenville Gilbert is Churchwarden of Ottery St Mary Parish Church, Devon.