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The views expressed in *De Numine* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the Alister Hardy Society or the Religious Experience Research Centre.
The Editor



Dr Greg Barker, one of our new Directors, is a keynote speaker at the Alister Hardy Society/World Congress of Faiths conference in June (see page 52).

*

David Hay's biography of Sir Alister has now been published and is listed in 'Books for Review (page 49).



Information for contributors and contact details are shown on the inside back cover.

Editorial

This is a celebration issue of *De Numine*. It marks the end of an era, that of Professor Paul Badham's and Dr Wendy Dossett's Directorships of RERC, the rise of the global project, of the 8 years that Lampeter has been home to the Research Centre, the archives, AHS and the AH library. All these elements that make up the AH organisation are happily still present on the Lampeter campus of Trinity Saint David, but there is no longer an Alister Hardy library. The books, although separately catalogued, will now be part of the main library. I for one will miss the AH library as a place to read and browse; I will even miss being chased by Anne Watkins to bring back books as though she were corralling her chicks against the night fox! She looked after such a unique and eclectic array of books, many of them bequeathed by AHS members. The changes undoubtedly represent progress, but I wonder if it will still be felt that there is a safe and special place to make bequests of personal libraries. The books will be dispersed, no longer there as reminders of the person who loved them and valued the work of the Alister Hardy Trust enough to endow it with a lifetime's collection.

Things change, and it was always Sir Alister's wish that the archive and the research operation should become part of an academic institution, and some things do remain the same: we are fortunate that Jean Matthews remains as Archive Supervisor, so the help she gives researchers, which has always been offered with a happy balance between the professional and personal, will still be available. And although David Greenwood has now retired from his position as Administrator, he is still with us as Honorary Treasurer.

Things change... there is at last a really good Alister Hardy Society website (see 'Web News', page 34) which will give the AHRERC and AHS a wider accessibility. This I suppose is the future of information: the web is the first port of call for more and more of us, so it's possible that even *De Numine* may become obsolete in hard copy form – there is already a previous issue available online; maybe this is the shape of things to come. My own view is that *De Numine* as a forum for the exchange of ideas, for the airing of views and sharing of experiences, and for reference, needs to remain an entity in a way that is not possible for an online journal, where one can only see one page at a time... *De Numine* is more than a newsletter and source of information, it has a spirit all its own, sustained by members' interest and contributions.

There is debate at committee level and higher about whether to describe *De Numine* as a journal, a magazine or a review (and newsletter of course – see the front cover). Please write in if you have a view on this. Just as I had declared myself for 'journal' so as to convey a certain gravitas, and indicate a publication worthy of scholarly articles like that contributed by Professor Marsh (page 5), this issue decided to manifest a cheery sort of 'magazine' ethos, not least with Ben Korgan's birthday photo and vivid marine paintings. But as this is the last issue with colour, it may be that gravitas will reign supreme in black and white from now on... I would like to thank Kevin Evans of the print room at Lampeter for his input on the colour pages – I would turn up with a collection of pictures which he would always transform into the creative and professional graphics these pages have demonstrated.

Patricia Murphy

A View from the Chair

Recently we moved house, to return to our former home in the small town of Montgomery, just over the Shropshire/Wales border into Wales, where we had rented out our house for 3 years. Moving house involves (amongst a multitude of things) changing telephone number and line. I could fill the pages of *De Numine* with the frustrations we had with BT to achieve this, involving about 45 – 50 phone calls. Unbelievable.

A good friend sought to ameliorate my frustration by pointing out that so many people today have to sit in front of a computer screen, where the computer screen becomes the sole reality and authority, and where people must follow 'standard procedure'. British Telecom (like many other organisations) becomes a British non-communicator!

The computer world affects us all, and I suspect that, with all our modern technology of communication, true communication – the communication of energies between people – is often sadly diminished rather than improved. Are we breeding a lonely society, a society where individuals feel separate and isolated, a new age where we are told that in a few year's time depression is likely to be the second biggest cause of illness? Mother Teresa rightly observed that the greatest form of poverty in the West is loneliness.

The Alister Hardy Society is concerned about spiritual and religious experiences, those experiences which come unannounced and unplanned, experiences which come from a listening to the heart, experiences which are more real than all else. I do not believe that these experiences happen because 'we' receive them. Rather they happen because there are moments when we are able to let go of our separate identity to discover our truer selves in an interconnected whole. Thich Nhat Hanh* talks about awakening from the illusion of separation. St. Paul says, in an exalted moment 'I live, yet not I, but Christ within me' (Galatians 2.20) and Jesus: 'Dwell in me, as I dwell in you' (John 15.4). Also: '(I pray) that they may all be one ...' (John 17,21)

Some people talk about the human aura, or energy field, which expands beyond the boundaries of the physical body. Some of us would go further. A quotation from my audio-visual presentation *A Glimpse of Glory* says: 'Each and every one of us ... is enveloped by an extension of our being as vast as the universe'. Satish Kumar, editor of the magazine *Resurgence*, wrote a book with the title *You are, therefore I am*. Albert Einstein said 'A human being is part of a whole.' The Dalai Lama says 'The self is the root of mental poisons ... Egocentrism is against nature, for it ignores interdependence.' And Ramana Mahashi, that revered voice of non-dualism, invites us to ask the question 'Who am I', and go on asking the question until we realise there is no answer – no separate individual ego to find.

I could continue. All I want to suggest is that religious/spiritual experience comes when we 'go beyond' our normal, conditioned perception of ourselves, or are taken beyond. It is a realisation of ourselves in the greater whole. It is the discovery of ourselves in God.

In the 2011 census I can understand why some people want to describe their religion as 'holistic'. We surely have a long way to go if we are to build a more healthy, happy, compassionate, and contented society. The recognition and valuing of experiences which are more authentic, and true to who we really are, is surely a move in the right direction. If the AHS can play a part in advancing this, we will be in tune with the progressive thinkers and spiritual explorers of our time.

Revd Jonathan Robinson, AHS Chair

* *Thich Nhat Hanh: Vietnamese Zen Master, founder of the 'Engaged Buddhism' movement. Ed.*

Concerning Alister Hardy and his 'Biology of God': Do Near-Death Experiences Advance his Cause?

What are religious experiences and why do they occur? For Alister Hardy, religious experiences are ancient, even evolutionary traits, being sources of great transcendental discovery and outreach, received and evoked through word, music or painting – even science. The cosmological discoveries of Copernicus onwards revealed Nature's intricate, mathematically-designed relationships – direct manifestations of the Creator God's handiwork.

Hardy welcomed experimental demonstrations of the divine in nature, insisting that *personal* experiences of God, the Holy or the Numinous are intrinsic to human life: that there are fundamental relationships linking those experiences to human biology, inter-relationships he desired to explore. Such explorations would not be inimical to their experiential valence: current understandings of the neurochemistry of love, a kiss or an orgasm do neither detract from the sense of mutual belonging, nor the responsiveness of one for the other – each underpinning these natural and deeply inbuilt features of human attachment.

Hardy anticipated moves from the purely observational towards a scientific underwriting of these experiential typologies. As Evolutionary Theory had grown from the observations of Wallace and Darwin, and Molecular Genetics from Mendel's monastic peas, could not a Biology of God, likewise, be ultimately realised from religious behaviour and experiences – however ineffable in their articulation?¹ But Hardy did realise that a brain is necessary. From that neural perspective, I briefly consider in this article near-death experiences (NDE), asking whether they could throw light on the transcendent or numinous – that is, on the possibility of other-worldly existence as evidence of divinity, thereby connecting earth with 'Heaven'.

In *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, Hardy analysed ~3000 submitted accounts of alleged divine encounter. In my meta-analysis², I critically perused ~700 reports contained within the eight books of five authors on which the collective background to NDE phenomenology was established³. According to this collective authorship, ~80% NDE arise from severe metabolic insults to subjects' brains following sustained reductions in blood pressure from heart attacks or haemorrhage. Each of the 5 authors takes a different slant on 'what it is' that leaves the brain for distant shores. Furthermore, while patients are 'unconscious' and their brains non-functional, these authors envisage that either 'consciousness', or 'mind', or 'soul' are enabled to escape corporeal bondage, thus to witness 'heavenly' events. My interpretative readings (I-V below) of subjects' testimonies upon which those authors have published are, unfortunately, inconsistent with their collective presuppositions.



Professor Marsh giving his lecture at Open Day

I. Empirical-Logical Approaches:

First, NDE cease as conscious-awareness resumes: there is no case to the contrary. The key to my argument depends on this critical, third-party objective time-point⁴. *Second*, it follows that

NDE phenomenology occurs in the run-up to that time-point. *Third*, it becomes clear from word counts of subjects' recollections that NDE are ephemeral events, lasting only minutes or seconds. *Fourth*, since the event is remembered, it must occur when the brain can elaborate memories – and thus only when subjects are awakening: memories are not made when subjects are 'unconscious'. *Fifth*, it clearly follows that NDE are due to mental activity taking place as brains rapidly recover during the waking process: they are not voyages to a 'somewhere else'.

Other independent, empirical evidence from subjects recovering from other causes of unconsciousness, such as suicide survivors from the Golden Gate Bridge, military pilots centrifuged to unconsciousness under laboratory conditions, pranksters deliberately inducing fainting, corroborates my view. During their recovery phase, subjects experience transcendent episodes of beautiful, vividly coloured surroundings, encounter deceased relatives, feel deliriously happy, and undergo such highly emotive feelings that they are reluctant to 'return' to earth. Moreover, *these events are elaborated and remembered* during measured time-frames c10-40 seconds: therefore, brains can rapidly generate dream-like sequences, and remember them, while recovering from such trauma.

II. Examining The Semantic Detail in Subjects' Reports:

Next, critical review of NDE language reveals its bizarreness and banality. The outright silliness of the 'world' visited is expressed in extremely anthropomorphic, geo-centred terms. Thus, a subject meets his deceased father '... dressed just like he used to be in grey trousers and a cardigan. He hadn't changed a bit. We chatted quite naturally and he joked ...'. Or: a woman agonises: 'I'm not staying here – [my husband] can't cope and I've left a pile of shirts to be ironed and he doesn't know how to do them'. Exemplary descriptions of Jesus fare no better: 'He was tall – had a white robe on – his face was beautiful – his skin was glowing and absolutely flawless', and, 'There was Christ with a robe – he had jet black hair – very short black beard – teeth extremely white – eyes blue, very blue'.

Is this kind of material meant to be serious, to portray sensibly a supposed life beyond earth's domain – wherever? We learn nothing new whatsoever, and yet my key authors seem to enthuse over these accounts as revelatory of things to come. But we are served mere trivialities, worldly memories – from Hollywood or Sunday school – uninteresting, day-to-day stuff that is boringly uninformative. And do we really think such tedious material would convince a disinterested, sceptical public?

Additional critical aspects of the reportage buttress my arguments. *First*, the phenomenology of repeat NDE is non-uniform (as with quasi-dream states): a 'real' place should engender identical experiences. *Next*, NDE phenomenology is culturally-determined, historically and geographically. The mediaeval account of Bede (c. 800AD) with 'Hell' and 'Heaven' physically juxtaposed, diverges from Indian or Pacific Rim accounts, or typical anodyne Anglo-American experiences. *Third*, subjects report this-worldly experiences (painful injections etc) concurrent with other-worldly illusion, a double-aspect consciousness common to lucid dreaming and epilepsy. *Finally*, we should note the markedly idiosyncratic content of each experience. All accounts encapsulate the cultural, historic and geographic *loci* of narrators, thereby exposing authors' erroneous portrayals as death-mimicking⁵. There is no reproducible sequence in what ('core'), or how much ('depth'), is experienced; the author-induced concepts core and depth are mis-interpreted fabrications about subjects' accounts. And, of course, as is plainly evident, none of these subjects actually died. Subjects do not return to body from 'elsewhere', but their brains do wake up and in doing so rapidly conjure up this weird dream-like material and remember it. That's the difference.

III. The Out-of-Body Component:

NDE commonly feature some kind of perceived motion due, in my opinion, to perturbations of the brain's 'vestibular system' which maintains balance, protects us from gravity and undergirds angular or rectilinear body movements. This vast neural mechanism sustains the complex, reciprocal interplay between self and environment, incorporating inputs from the eyes, head, neck, joints, skin, and inner ear. Its disturbed functioning during episodes of reduced blood flow to the brain is understandable, accounting for the varied perceptions of rapid motion, gyrations, floating and weightlessness during NDE. These illusions are physiologically-determined and commonly occur in other circumstances – migraine or temporal lobe seizures: they do not require imposed 'mystical' or 'psychic' interpretations.

IV. Concerning Possible Spiritual Aspects:

I draw on William James (1902) whose reports of classical divine disclosures act as benchmarks for NDE testimony. I give one exemplary portrayal: 'All at once I felt the presence of God' ... 'God was present, though invisible; he fell under no one of my senses, yet my consciousness perceived him' (Anonymous). Irrespective of its validity, a comparison with typical NDE reporting is demonstrative of gross differences. 'I could see my mother and Christ saying, 'Come home' and waving their hands at me. She [wore] a long sparkling silver gown, and so did Christ – long hair, long beard – they were both smiling'. Or: 'I heard his voice say 'Go back!'. I said 'Why me, Lord?' and whoever spoke said my work on earth wasn't over yet .. all I heard was his voice: it was loud, thundering, just like a clap of thunder coming out of nowhere' [sic]. In comparison with the quiet, almost evasive introspective reflections offered by James, the NDE contexts are summed up very well by Moody (1977, p. 31): 'Again and again, my NDE subjects ... described ... a panoramic, wrap-around, full-colour, three-dimensional vision of the events of their lives'. Given the 'spiritual go/no-go' contours of NDE reports, one could hardly ascribe to them divine import or revelatory content.

V. The Brain and Eternity

To return to the beginning: do NDE throw light on the numinous otherworldly domain, offer proof of divinity, or even underpin the human-divine link? My critical responses indicate that NDE represent anomalous phenomenology engineered as subjects' brains recover from immediately preceding insults. They are ephemeral, personally idiosyncratic and culturally-determined, their semantic content merely offering this-worldly bizarreness and banality. Hence they resemble vivid hypnopompic* dream-awakenings, but accentuated because the brain is regaining normal working from an antecedent position of severe physiological stress.

It is unclear why only ~15% subjects (who undergo a medical crisis) experience NDE, develop changed attitudes to society, yet are strengthened in previously-held religious convictions: those undergoing identical clinical emergencies but *without* NDE are subsequently *unchanged*. What is the difference? This is likely the effect of altered brain-states, as manifested in subjects undergoing other physiological/psychological stresses. These remarkably differential, post-NDE responses may be compounded through previous influences on the brains of these subjects *in utero*, in infancy, childhood or adolescence, such as infection, febrile fits, trivial head trauma, and varied types of psychological abuse and stress. Such influences may marginally compromise the functional capacity of vulnerable brain centres, especially the frontal and temporal lobes. These subtle, cerebral predispositions clearly differ from cerebral pathology in schizophrenia, whose expressions of 'religiosity' are far more clearly discernible and usually responsive to drug therapy.

The direction of my argument implies that the brain itself is a predisposing source of some (or more) religious experiences. I am extremely intrigued by Hardy's analysis (1979: Tab II, p. 146)

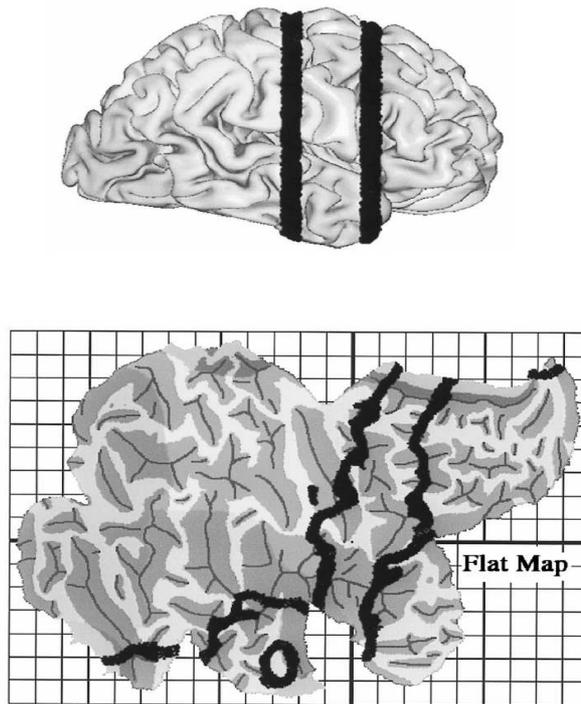


Figure 1. Above, the conventional representation of the human cerebral cortex, from right hand side. Below, the 3-dimensional, convoluted contour of the hemisphere is now flattened onto a 2-dimensional grid, thus permitting calculation of the precise occupancy of different sensory modes

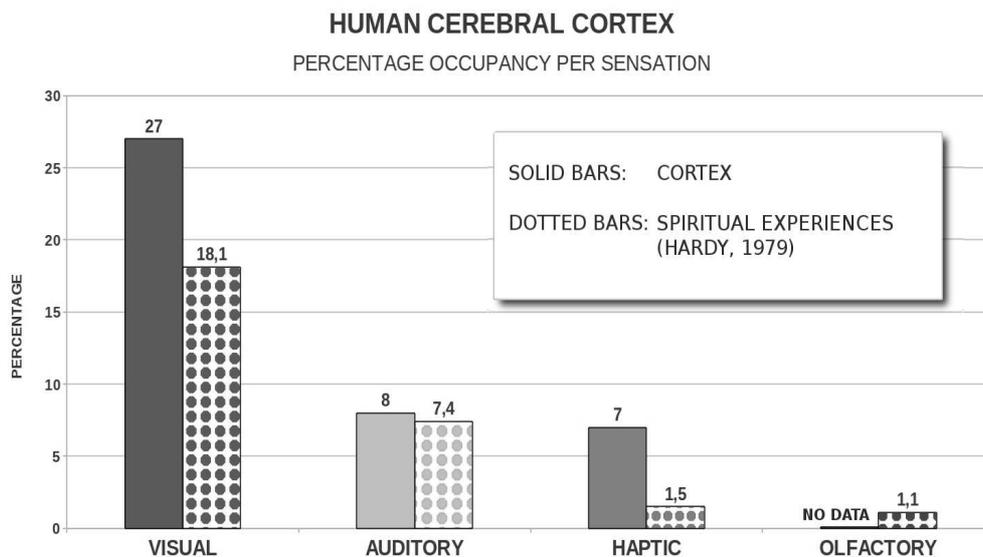


Figure 2. The solid bars (left hand) represent percentage occupancy of the cerebral cortex for vision, hearing, touch (haptic) and smell. The dotted bars (right hand) depict the percentages from Hardy (1979, p26) of the frequency of similar sensory perceptions experienced as religious

of 3,000 respondents because it is unclear why females predominate ~2:1, their experiences peaking a decade earlier than men. Recent computational analyses of the percentage occupancies for vision, hearing, and touch throughout the cerebral cortex, and displayed on a 2-dimensional grid (Figure 1), have been recently published. If we plot (for the first time) Hardy's classifications (1979) alongside these recent data, the correspondence is striking (Figure 2), suggesting that many of these experiential claims could be of cerebral origin. Of course, there may be other explanations, but we are still forced back into considering the brain and its crucial relationship to these phenomena.

Hardy wanted new experimental systems to explore precisely these problems⁶. It is my conviction that significant advances would accrue if serious, neuro-scientific approaches were used since they provide quantifiable answers. Some approaches are already being made, but far more needs to be done through imaginative experiment. From another perspective, we might be concerned with Hardy's panentheism, seeing God as nature. His embrace of 'Process Theology' could be exchanged for a more robust footing in the 'Otherness' of God⁷, envisioned as triune hypostatic inter-relationships of Father, Son, and Spirit. The relationality of the Godhead to creation is exhibited through the dual nature of Jesus who is at once intrinsic to the Triune Godhead, but also incarnate Man, thereby bridging humanity and creation to the divine⁸.

Thus my feeling is that Hardy's approach becomes too aligned with nature and the natural: the psychological, rather than the ontological domain. His encompassing of 'panpsychism' leads so easily to ideas about 'cosmic consciousness', a term easily said and used, problematic for research, but extremely difficult to erase once planted in the mind⁹. And in avoiding the excesses of panpsychism, the otherness between people requires acknowledgement, a relationality achieved through love.

That said, it seems clear that the pursuit of NDE phenomenology, and its certain neural origins would provide little of additional value here to support Hardy's endeavours in elucidating human-divine interactions – *a Biology of God*. It is curious that in his first review of 3000 submitted testimonies, no subject offered NDE as such, while OBE were a minimal component of his portfolio (179 cases).

Professor Michael N. Marsh B.Th., D.Phil., D.M., D.Sc., FRCP, Wolfson College, University of Oxford

This is a reduced form of a lecture given at the AHS Open Day at the Friends' Meeting House, Oxford, November 2010, at the invitation of Professor Paul Badham. I am most grateful for his suggestion that I should submit this work as a paper to De Numine.

References

- ¹ Alister Hardy, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1979. pp.1-16.
- ² Michael N Marsh, *Near-Death & Out-of-Body Experiences: Brain States or Glimpses of Immortality?* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010.
- ³ Raymond Moody, *Life after Life*. New York, Bantam Books, 1976; Raymond Moody, *Reflections on Life after Life*. New York, Bantam Books, 1977; Kenneth Ring, *Life at Death*. New York, Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980; Kenneth Ring, *Heading toward Omega*. New York: Morrow, 1985; Michael Sabom, *Recollections of Death*. New York, Harper & Row, 1982; Michael Sabom, *Light and Death*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1998; Margot Grey, *Return from Death*. Boston, Arkana, 1985; Fenwick & Fenwick, *The Truth in the Light*. New York, Berkeley Books, 1998.

⁴ Ring (1980, p. 101) observes: 'Once the individual has returned, painfully or otherwise to his body, the ... experience is over ...' [but] '... how exactly does one accomplish this return?' – that is, re-unite with one's body. But what is it, though, which needs re-uniting with the body? Maybe nothing – only re-awakening of the brain to full conscious-awareness, which immediately dispels one central mystery of NDE!

⁵ Ring, 1980, p. 39. His 'Thanato-mimetic Sequence': unfortunately Ring paints himself into a rather awkward metaphysical corner here: there is NO 'core' sequence, a difficulty not yet widely perceived.

⁶ Alister Hardy, *The Biology of God*. London, Jonathan Cape, 1975. p. 195.

⁷ See Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution and the Problem of Evil*. Louisville, John Knox, 2008. pp. 22-25.

⁸ Zizioulas John, *Communion & Otherness*. London, Clark 2006. pp.13-98.

⁹ Hardy 1975: these ideas are considered throughout his chapter 11, especially p. 206ff. In this respect, see Grey 1985, p. 186 seq, who invokes cosmic consciousness, universal brotherhood, the 'fourth dimension', energy, and much more.

* *A hypnopompic state is the state of consciousness leading out of sleep; when the awakening occurs out of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, in which most dreams occur, the hypnopompic state is sometimes accompanied by lingering vivid imagery. Ed.*

Rambling Through Internal Landscapes: Reflections on a Lifetime Exploring Inner Worlds

I waken to darkness. It has a strange quality. It is not the familiar behind-the-eyes darkness nor the nocturnal darkness of my bedroom. Where am I? What place is this? The idea of movement as the initial means of exploring this space immediately becomes the expectation of movement in arms and legs. And then – the shock – no arms and legs are to be found. No movements can be initiated; all contact with my remembered body is lost. I cannot discover any part of me that is substantial. All the while panic grows and strengthens as the disorientation, strangeness, and inability to act take hold.

Where can I find help? My mother! I struggle to call out to her; to shout, to make her aware of my distress but I cannot find, let alone make contact with, my mouth, tongue, throat or lungs; they do not respond to my appeals for action. No sound issues forth. Eventually, after many attempts, the reconnection is made, my call springs out and a comforting mother appears. I am twelve years old and within a short period of time am to suffer several more of these nocturnal experiences.

I now know that such episodes are termed *sleep paralysis*. Are they are a form of 'religious experience'? I certainly did not consider them to be so at the time but in retrospect they were one of the seeds that grew to become a lifetime's fascination, perhaps obsession, with the nature of mind, the psyche and the numinous. In adult life many other varied experiences were to follow and I would now be happy to include sleep paralysis on the spectrum of these. As a child I did not attach a name or label to my experience of sleep paralysis, I more or less accepted it as just one of those things. This, in a somewhat more sophisticated form, has coloured my attitude to all my inner explorations, which I view with a determinedly naturalistic eye. An eye which views and focuses on the phenomena of inner experience as they are in themselves, or at least as they are to me; phenomena of the natural world with no

need for recourse to the supernatural, magic and even, if you will forgive me, to religion or God as modes of explanation.

As a young adult my concern with these topics was brought into sharp focus on reading Frieda Fordham's *An Introduction to Jung's Psychology*. I came upon this little book at a time when my formal education was exposing me to the big ideas of the natural sciences, particularly in geology and biology; and in *An Introduction* I found someone talking about inner experiences in a way that I could feel an affinity with. In a way that stuck a chord, that made intuitive sense. At the same time it offered a way of systematising and ordering thoughts about the inner world. It provided a framework for understanding, claimed to be, and provided evidence to support, a universal theory of mind. Jung was providing at least the prospect of a unifying big idea for the human psyche, one that might complement those big ideas I was so familiar with in earth history and life science. And at the heart of it all, dreams: working with dreams as a means of achieving insight, of working with the natural inner reality and with the inner dynamics of the psyche to follow a process, to forge a path, to the desired goal.

It was all truly revelatory and life changing.

About a year after reading *An Introduction*, and having now read several of Jung's own works, I obviously had enough confidence that I was on the right track to begin my Dream Diaries begun in April 1972; little did I realise that I would still be recording dreams in 2010. Throughout this time dreams have formed a key strand of my 'spiritual quest' and I have been frequently amazed by their ability to bring new insights and to forge fundamental changes in my mental orientation and outlook. I have come to see dreams much as I see other forms of human communication. Our words and vocalisations can be used in a wide variety of different ways to match varying circumstances and needs. Our conversations can be banal and everyday, formal and highly structured, convoluted and contorted, simple and straightforward or deep and profound. It now seems to me that dreams can be all of these too. It's just that the 'conversation' is an internal one and not directed by the everyday self.

Although the unconscious may communicate using words in dreams, it is the symbols and images that form their important content, and the relationships set up between these symbols that provide their main communicative power. In charting the inner journey I see dreams as being of particular value because they are reports independent of the waking mind. They are involuntary, spontaneous and entirely natural expressions of deeper states of mind. They offer reports on developing relationships between aspects of mind, providing critiques, encouragement and milestones along the way. In this sense they introduce a measure of 'objectivity' into an overwhelmingly subjective developmental process.

But what of the dream journey itself? Dreams were not infrequently long and complex but I hope that the three short examples, selected from a series of over four hundred, will give some idea of their flavour, feel and content.

Dream 1: Early April 1972 – *The Voyage Begins*: I am alone at the rudder of a Roman style barge with a single central mast and one large sail. I stand at the stern on an elevated platform. There is no crew. Also on the platform is a large simmering cauldron, which is giving off steam. I am sailing through a network of canals or narrow natural channels with thick vegetation on either side. I observe my progress from my position on the platform but also from outside myself, from a position high above the barge. After a while I come across a small sandy beach and ground the barge upon it. I make my way up the barge and jump

from the prow onto the beach. On the beach I pick up a handful of material, sand perhaps. Back on the platform I add the granular material to the contents of the cauldron. As the grains fall I see that they are red, brown and white in colour and that the mixture in the cauldron is fawn in colour. I proceed to stir the contents of the cauldron with a very large wooden spoon.

Dream 27: 1st November 1972 – *The Dawning of the Light*: A state of semi-consciousness? I seem to make out shadows of objects in my room. Or a very real dream? Power! Energy! A brilliant light of large dimensions exists before the window. I see only its iridescent yellow-gold-white edge. Even this is tremendously bright. I cannot bring myself to look upon the centre. Huge amounts of energy burn through my body and power through every nerve. Immense pleasure alternates with the fear that if look at the centre I really will let myself go. Succumb to the energy. This is a loss that I cannot let myself make. Slowly the energy dies away. The whole experience seems to last for 15 to 20 minutes.

Dream 47: 12th January 1973 – *Union*: I am sitting on a harbour wall. It appears to be of an old Cornish or Welsh type. The harbour has a narrow mouth with cliffs rising on either side. I am sitting near the mouth. I look across the harbour to the point on the opposite harbour wall. There I see a small grey wispy figure of a woman. She has a somewhat ghostlike appearance. My feelings towards this woman are predominantly of curiosity, no fear, no love. Suddenly she has transported herself across the harbour and is standing no more than a foot from me. I am still seated. I begin to merge with her. As this occurs I become aware that she is the image of THAT ENERGY. I am frightened for a moment but then resolve, as I have previously promised myself, to merge with it fully this time. We merge. I and it are one. Just pure golden light, soft, warm and loving. The transition to this state of total union is accompanied by a rushing, whooshing sound like a sharp inhalation of breath, quickly building in strength and terminating in a deep Uhhh! This state exists momentarily. I become aware of my boldness in coming this far and rapidly withdraw. Or perhaps the cognition of my state can only occur by my withdrawing from it. Afterwards there are feelings of surprise, amazement and satisfaction at the achievement. Growing in confidence I resolve to try and extend such periods. High-energy contentment prevails. There is excitement at the prospect of further exploration and future possibilities.

These, and the 250 dreams that were to come, have left me in little doubt as to the reality of 'spiritual experiences'. This will hardly be of much surprise to members of the Alister Hardy Society, but perhaps it is not so evident that working methodically with your dreams is a realistic and readily available method of following a path to awakening; of exploring the universal human birthright. In choosing to follow a spiritual path we are often asked to embrace perspectives and practices that have been developed and made a home in other cultures, or sometimes even stranger ones from within our own, but after forty years of dancing with dreams it seems to me that working with our own dreams is something that many people could potentially find a very natural thing to do.

Jung encouraged the individuals he counselled and advised to bring the contents of their unconscious, their dreams, into the light of day. I took this to heart early on. My 'Dream Diaries' were one result but, as Jung suggested, I also sketched and painted dream material to give it a presence in the everyday world, and found that by doing this my ability to recall and engage with my dreams significantly increased.

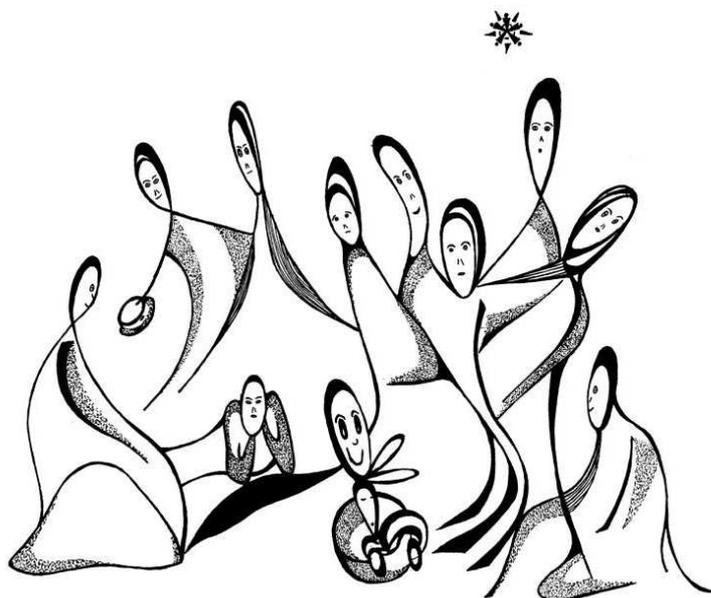
My experiences have left me with the firm conviction that there is sense, method and structure to the world of dreams, if we would only look methodically and diligently at the phenomena they present, as Jung encouraged us to do. Dreams offer an entirely natural

approach to exploring of our inner world, one that is accessible to us all wherever we live and in whatever culture we have been raised. They deserve more of our attention and more serious consideration than our dominant western culture currently prescribes.

Sleep on it. Sweet dreams everyone.

Newborn:

And amongst all of this something new emerges. Something not seen before. Something to amaze, delight and confound; beyond previous experience. Observe, cultivate and nurture it as you would a babe.



For those who might be interested I offer a much larger sample from my dream diaries on my website where they are accompanied by other reporting formats including, sketches, jottings, and some dream interpretation, that further chart my ramblings through internal landscapes.

Alan Underwood, www.openfoot.net

Experience

Dear Editor,

Thierry Vissac's article 'What is Love' (pp. 8, 9 *De Numine* 49, Autumn 2010) reminded me of the following [prose]poem of mine. I thought it might be a variation on his theme.

Best wishes and thanks for your work.

Mike Perks

Singularity

One morning in January I drive onto an expanse of car park, wet-grey, tending to black – almost empty at this time. I'm on my way to work, being employed (professionally) to advance (innovatively) the education and training opportunities on this deprived modern estate peripheral to Edinburgh.

Walking past the Hailes Hotel, stained and graffiti scarred, on my way to unlock the doors of opportunity, a knocking on a window pane, second floor, makes me look up. A girl is

waving, pointing – I have left the car with the lights on. I wave to show that I have understood and turn back to take care of this little problem.

Second time round, past the Hailes Hotel, I look up to the second floor. The girl is still there. I try to reach her eyes (I would not even recognise her face again at this distance). I wave and touch my cap in flippant but honest gratitude. She waves back. I walk on to work.

I can't forget this commonplace thing. The girl and I have exchanged messages with a greater potential than the obvious. A particle of love has gone from me to her: an instant of understanding. Not the usual way of things on these occasions. I hope it is the same for her.

In the unpredicted outcome of this tiny event I sense, experimentally, a chain reaction of love: a vast network of inter-relationship. Not stereotyped, not constrained, not equitable, not hierarchical, not logical, not predictable, not quantifiable – beggaring conception: some elements infinitesimal and some of consuming immensity; but all positively charged with love: a burgeoning interlinking.

In love for family and for friends its always been apparent that the universe could unfold without end – but always constrained it seems by that real world in which we are born, we live, we work, we suffer and we die.

Now I see that same potential obscurely: in chance encounters, passing smiles, words overheard, words exchanged casually with a stranger, the touch of a child, a workmate's concern, problem, complaint. This is glimpsed.

Levels down in the mine of self must be a vision.

If revelation were absolute to us all then things would change right enough: new evolution for the earth. Slowly the kingdom would come while the dark side stayed endemic, driving the glance – that might set fire to the world – across a car park: bearing witness to the reality of the miracle.

A Big (and Belated) Thank-you

A few days before my 70th birthday on October 31st 2010, a surprise card arrived from Dr Bettina Schmidt, the current secretary of the British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR) and also a Director of RERC and Director of the MA in Religious Experience at Trinity St David. It contained an even greater surprise, an invitation from BASR members and other colleagues such as RERC / AHS to a tea party on Saturday October 30th in the senior common room of Oriel College, Oxford, the college where Bettina was based when working in Oxford. I naturally accepted. Afternoon tea is my favourite meal and I had heard that Oriel do a particularly good one! On the day I approached somewhat nervously, but immediately met colleagues converging on Oriel's gateway, and felt more relaxed as we walked through the quads. In a festive way, one of these was lined with diverse pumpkin lanterns, which I suppose were part of an undergraduate competition for Hallowe'en the next day. Bettina met me at the common room door and I found the most welcoming gathering of valued friends and colleagues from BASR, various Oxford faculties and the Religious Experience Research Centre and Alister Hardy Society.



Bettina Schmidt and Peggy Morgan

Bettina had driven that morning from Anglesey in order to finalise arrangements and 'chair' the celebrations. Others too had travelled long distances, such as Cork in Ireland and Liverpool, to bring the generous gift of their presence. Professor Brian Bocking demonstrated his usual lively humour in his account of me, and also held up a bright green tea towel of Ireland to make sure we could locate his current pioneering enterprise as Professor of a new Department of RS in Cork. Dr Paul Joyce (currently Chair of the Oxford Theology Faculty Board) talked about current developments in

the study of religions in Oxford, and not only my own but Bettina's contribution to that. I was then presented with a book of cards, photographs and messages Bettina had compiled. Many of the messages are from people who could not be present because of other commitments, personal and professional. This book, along with additional photos taken at the event, will give me lasting pleasure, and be a reminder of the many valued friends and colleagues in the academic study of religions who have provided me with much intellectual stimulus and sustained me with such a wonderful community over many years. I have considered it a privilege to serve both as conference organiser, secretary and also as president of BASR and to have been director of RERC for six years. Needless to say, after the party I went home bubbling with champagne as well as replete with tea and white chocolate profiteroles, holding flowers and cards, and with a wonderful memory of many kind people.

For all this and much more from past and, I hope, future years (this event did not signal retirement!) my warmest and sincere thanks for all your friendship, and in particular to Bettina for having first of all the creative idea of a party and then for her efforts in organising it so successfully.

Peggy Morgan
Mansfield College, Oxford.

Tributes to Professor Paul Badham, Director AHRERC 2002 – 2009

The academic study of the religious experience of men and women, and of children and adults across the globe today and throughout past generations is a matter of central importance, not only to institutes of theology and religious studies, but to all serious attempts to understand what it is to be human, living life with consciousness of time and with possibilities of eternity, and facing death with notions of mortality and with glimpses of immortality.

Sir Alister Hardy bequeathed to the academic study of religious experience both a methodology and a mechanism for securing ongoing research. The methodology privileged

the authority of first-hand experience. It listened to and took seriously the accounts of individuals. The mechanism established a Centre through which others could follow in Sir Alister's footsteps.

The continuation of Sir Alister's work has rested in the hands of a series of capable and distinguished Directors. Each, in his or her turn, has built on the foundation Sir Alister put in place and left a distinctive contribution to the furtherance of Sir Alister's vision and ambition. Paul Badham inhabited the role of director at an important point in the history of the Centre and his term of office will be remembered for three crucial achievements.

First, Paul was crucial in securing the safe and sustainable transition of the Centre from its position in Oxford to Lampeter. In Lampeter the Archive of Religious Experience (the very heart of Sir Alister's achievement) was guaranteed professional care in a properly controlled environment.

Second, Paul was crucial in mainstreaming the Centre within a vibrant and expanding university Department of Theology and Religious Studies. In this context, the Centre could draw on a broad body of academic expertise and also contribute to a broad range of academic programmes, including taught masters and doctoral research.

Third, Paul was crucial in the strategy to capture sponsorship for and to see to completion the inspirational and innovative project on Religious Experience in China. Through this project the Centre gained new visibility within the Templeton Foundation and within the international academic community concerned with the study of religion.

The good news for the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre is that Paul's enthusiasm and expertise did not go into retirement when he retired as Director, but was repositioned in a new capacity, not merely as a Trustee, but as Secretary to the Trustees.

Professor Leslie Francis, Chair, Trustees



It's amazing how the name Paul Badham is almost a household name! Over the years I have met so many people who know Paul, or who know of Paul. He has brought well-deserved distinction and respect to the college which is now Trinity St. David, University of Wales, and his directorship of RERC has extended his recognition world-wide.

Paul was the person I first met when I took the initial tentative steps to enter the university world about 13 years ago, in enquiring about the Masters Degree in Religious Experience. It was Paul's encouragement which helped to give my life that distinctive turn, and it was his personal interest which helped me so much. It was so good to know that my interest in the afterlife question and near-death studies was a legitimate and important area of academic study, that it resonated so well with Paul as a distinguished professor and scholar, and that I was not so quirky after all!

Paul has the gift of enthusiasm. It is such a valuable gift. I believe it comes from the Latin words 'en theos', the god within (although I am no Latin scholar.) Don't lose it, Paul. I know you won't. We need it. I remember you once gave a lecture on Karl Barth at Gregynog, and your wider vision had the audience spellbound!

Paul's ability to connect with different areas of human endeavour and study in a professional manner has contributed to our recognition that scientific and theological studies are valid and necessary fields of enquiry which need not be in contradiction. Rather they each need to pursue their own disciplines into human life and the world around us in a spirit of open-minded research, and good results will come. His contribution to RERC has been enormous, and it is through his contribution that the global project has taken off and achieved recognition and respectability.

Thank you, Paul. I believe your vision, your commitment to demonstrating that the essence of religion and spiritual experience are an essential and integral part of who we are, give us hope for the future, and encourage us to strive for what is best in human living.

Jonathan Robinson, AHS Chair



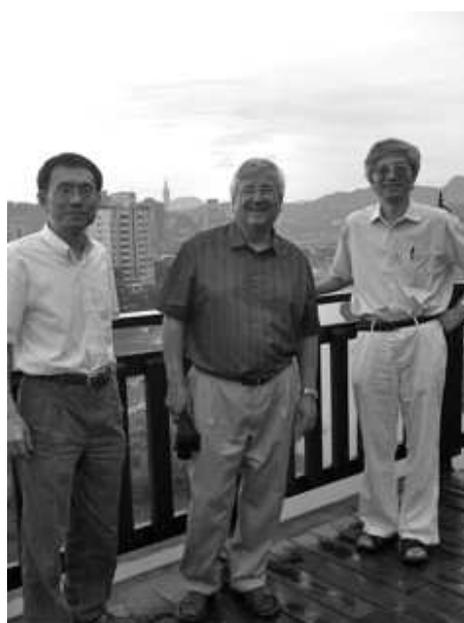
I would like to express a personal tribute and thanks to Paul, for all he did for the Centre and the Society during his period as Director, and for his warmth and support to me in my role of Hon. Secretary of the Society. He took over from Peggy Morgan at the end of April 2002, and besides his successful work of promoting the expansion of the Centre's horizons through the advancement of the Global Project, Paul dedicated time to looking after the Society and its relationship with the University. Throughout the period of his Directorship, Paul took a warm interest in the affairs of the Society, regularly attending and contributing to the meetings of the AHS Committee. Following on from the revival of the Centre's annual conferences by Peggy Morgan when she was the Director, Paul encouraged and supported the conferences at Lampeter during the years 2002 to 2005 – and was a keynote speaker at a Joint AHS/CFPSS Conference in Exeter in September 2006. He organised the involvement of the Centre and Society in the BASRA Edinburgh Conference in 2007, and has given talks at Local Group meetings. It was with great pleasure that I heard that Paul is to continue his association with the Centre and Society as a Trustee and Hon. Secretary of the Alister Hardy Trust, and I very much look forward to continuing what has always been a happy relationship.

John Franklin, Hon. Secretary AHS



When I first joined the Department of Theology and Religious and Islamic Studies at Lampeter, I shared an office with a visiting professor and I saw that on a notice board she had written a list of 'second markers' with their areas of expertise. Paul Badham's list was by far the longest, beginning with the Early Christian Fathers through Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas to a final note which read – 'practically everything'. That sums up Paul as the consummate academic – he can quote (to mis-quote W. S. Gilbert) the theories theological and Biblical hermeneutics from Genesis to Revelation in order categorical.

During his period as Director of the RERC, his greatest achievement has been the initiation of the



Professors Yen-zen Tsai**, Paul Badham, and Xinzhong Yao at the Taipei Conference in June 2010

Global Project – a project the first phase of which has been supported with a grant that Paul and Xinzhong Yao gained from the Templeton Foundation, enabling the completion of comparative studies of Religious Experience in Britain and in China.*

But, in addition to these academic achievements, my personal memory is of a Director who has always been most supportive – his enthusiasm and positive outlook can always be relied upon to raise one’s spirits. Indeed one of his greatest qualities is always to see the very best in all with whom he comes into contact. In all the changes that have occurred over the past two or three years Paul has always remained positive and has ensured a secure future for the RERC in the new University of Trinity Saint David.

Although we have both come to the end of our time within the RERC, I am very pleased to say that Paul and I will be continuing to work together as members of the Alister Hardy Trust, as Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer.

David Greenwood, Administrator RERC, 2002-2010

* *The Global Project, despite funding setbacks, is ongoing and is a sterling legacy from Paul’s time as a Director of RERC. Ed.*

** *Prof Yen-zen Tsai of NCCU in Taipei, who visited Lampeter and gave a talk on ‘Religious Experience in Taiwan In Global Perspective’ on Oct 27th in the Founder’s Library*



It was through Peggy Morgan and Paul Badham that the RERC found its home in Lampeter and he and Dr Wendy Dossett became joint Directors on Peggy’s retirement. As Chair of the AHS I worked closely with Paul, especially in organizing our annual Open Day and conferences, and I much enjoyed joining Paul in welcoming our guests and speakers. His own contribution through his lectures, books and papers was invaluable in generating interest in the subject of Religious Experience in general and Near Death Experiences in particular. I am especially grateful to Paul for his interest in and support of *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience*.



Professor Xinzhong Yao, Marianne Rankin and Professor Paul Badham at the conference in Taipei in 2010

We are also particularly grateful to Paul for the success in obtaining Templeton funding for the Global Project. This involved an immense amount of work and persistence and led to fascinating surveys in Turkey and India and set up more possibilities for the future. Most important was the study undertaken in China with Professor Xinzhong Yao, recorded in *Religious Experience in Contemporary China*. A similar survey was undertaken in Taiwan and I have happy memories of our trip to the related conference in Taipei in 2010.

Paul was always enthusiastic about the AHS and its activities, which enabled us to work well with the RERC in Lampeter. I am delighted that he will remain involved as Hon. Secretary to the Trustees and look forward to continuing to work with him in the future.

Marianne Rankin (Chair AHS 2002 -2008)

Tributes to Dr Wendy Dossett, Director AHRERC 2002-2010

AHS members may not always have appreciated the important role played by Wendy Dossett as Director of the RERC. She kept a low profile but her work was among the most important undertaken by the RERC: teaching the MA in Religious Experience at the then University of



Wales, Lampeter and supervising research at the RERC; working as an A Level examiner; speaking in schools and writing an excellent guide: *Religious Experience for A Level students*. All this led directly to students joining the Society and generated much interest in religious experience as a subject for study.

Wendy often spoke at our conferences and I thoroughly enjoyed learning about Pure Land Buddhism through the papers on her own research. I am most grateful to her for her endorsement and support for *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience*, and for her advice and contribution to my Pack for Speakers.

I always found it a joy to work with Wendy and will very much miss her. I wish her well both in her professional career and in her personal life as she moves on.

Marianne Rankin



Both Wendy Dossett and Anne Watkins were a very important support to me in all practical and other ways when I moved the archives and library of the Religious Experience Research Centre and the Centre itself to Lampeter. We had to get quite dusty and develop extra muscles to sort everything out ourselves as there was no preparation made ahead of the move. They kept me cheerful and, knowing the campus and its personnel, were invaluable.

I was very confident and happy, when I retired as Director in 2002, that I was leaving the distance learning MA in Wendy's very capable academic and educational hands, and that in Anne there was a very helpful human face of contact for the library and membership. As the collaborative colleague she is, Wendy kept me in touch with the updating of the course materials for the core unit, and I was very pleased with its development in her hands. Her own work on Pure Land Buddhism also added to the Buddhism option and her considerable administrative skills as well as talents as a teacher will be missed, I know.



Wendy Dossett, Edward Robinson and Peggy Morgan in the Archive room at Lampeter

The very successful series of seminars on religious experience she organised most recently showed just what an important academic range this theme incorporates*. We all wish her

well in her new post in Chester. Our paths will continue to overlap, I know, within the British Association for The Study of Religions. Thank you, Wendy, for all that you are and do.

Peggy Morgan (RERC Director 1996-2002)

** This seminar series has been continued by the TRIS Department, and continues to cover a wide range of religious traditions and subjects, and to stimulate interest in religious experience and its study. Ed.*



Letter from India

I was delighted to be invited by Paddy to write something about working with Dr Wendy Dossett because it reminds me of a very interesting and happy period of my life.

Wendy was already a friend when she became my boss. We had met when she was an undergraduate and our friendship really developed after we had both spent time at Tokyo Honganji, a Jodo Shinsu temple. (The Supreme Primate of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism is now a patron of AHRERC.)

Wendy and I became involved with RERC under the capable and inspiring guidance of Peggy Morgan. This was prior to the division of the directorate into areas of responsibility of the Centre, the MA, and research; so Wendy really had her hands full!

I think Wendy and I were motivated by a number of factors. Of course we had our own professional standards to maintain but we also wanted to protect and develop the legacy we had inherited. We also sensed that it was difficult for the Oxford administration to hand over responsibility for something they cherished and we wanted to reassure the 'outgoing team' that we could look after the Centre and Society of which they were rightly proud.

The beginnings were exciting as the Alister Hardy Library, Archive and Art arrived and was sorted. The real 'fun' began when researchers began arriving. (Our first was Mary Bowmaker.) Wendy and I were struck by what genuine, appreciative and fascinating people they were. The new accounts of experiences, when they arrived, had us entranced. I recall Wendy saying what a privilege it was for us to be able to read people's ...

Anne Watkins Librarian RERC, 2000 – 2010

Here Anne is cut off by the vagaries of the Indian internet (or of course ours), or possibly by a procession, as she wrote that it was Independence Day. We heard nothing, then ...

Breaking news: a postcard from Tamil Nadu, where Anne is teaching seminarians spoken English – with a Welsh accent. Ed.



Reports

The Summer of 2010 or 'We are not alone!'

I can't remember much about the weather last summer, but there's something that will stick in my memory: the conferences and gatherings that I attended as a postgraduate researcher; being at the end of my second year of study, this was to be the first real airing of my hypotheses and findings on *Transcending Thought: The roles of transcendent experiences and suffering in personal development*. It was a scary prospect. I need not have worried. From the British Psychological Society's Consciousness and Experiential Psychology Section's Annual Conference (CEP2010 – *Nature and Human Nature*, 10-12 September, St. Anne's College, Oxford) to the Wrekin Forum's Round Table 2010 (*Evolutionary Consciousness*, 29-31 October, Hawkwood College, Stroud) via the AHS All Wales Gathering at Llantarnam Abbey, Cwmbran (17-19 September) I was not only warmly welcomed but immediately found kindred spirits and like minds.

From what Jane Winship writes about her 'Uncle Alister' (*De Numine* No.49 pp14-18) I'm sure Sir Alister Hardy would have been equally impressed by the number of 'instant friends' one makes (or should that be 'finds'?) on such occasions. Likewise he would have been gratified by the large numbers of individuals who continue his work in an ever diverse range of settings, from schools and universities to community groups and climate change debates. There is no doubt in my mind now that what I call the 'transcendence movement' is very much alive and thriving. We, as members of the AHS, are by no means alone in our exploration of the true fruits of religious/spiritual/transcendent experiences.

Saving the detailed, academically referenced, discussion for my PhD thesis, I would like in this report to highlight a few, typical, examples of the ideas and practices of those within the transcendence movement, as observed in this summer's conferences. These are very much reflections of (and will be reflected in) my thesis as to what 'transcendence of thought' means in practice. For example, within the transcendence movement, each individual recognises that they always have something to learn and, conversely, that they may have something to offer others on their spiritual journey. Whilst emphasising uniqueness there is a focus too on sharing as equals. This is nicely illustrated by the terminology typically used to describe events. The Wrekin Trust, for example, holds an annual 'Round Table' which one participant likened to King Arthur's round table of Camelot.

Not only is the conference given this title but the whole event emphasised total inclusion and equal value of participants. This is demonstrated at the physical level too: wherever and whenever practically feasible, all participants would sit in a circle, continually expanded to make way for new attendees. Just as importantly, both this and the AHS gathering started with every participant being given the opportunity to introduce themselves and their reasons for being present. At the start of each session, as new participants joined the conference, these too were invited to identify themselves. In contrast to most conventional conferences where there tends to be a definite ranking: keynote speakers; organisers and speakers and 'just attending', nobody at a 'round table' is anonymous (unless they want to remain so) and everybody is welcomed as equal contributors. Imagine if we were to translate this practice into all situations where humans come together.

Allowing and encouraging transcendent states of mind requires, I've long felt, 'maintaining a childlike curiosity about the world'. These words, quoted by Jane Winship, were said of Sir Alister by none less than Desmond Morris. Precisely this total engagement in life was so much more evident at my choice of conferences than in the more typical academic gatherings. Our Saturday afternoon at Llantarnam, for example, was devoted to the construction of a Group Mandala. Using a 6ft diameter base and process devised by Roger Coward, chairman

of the All Wales Group, we each contributed our offering of 'our place in the world' 'our higher self' and 'oneness', being the outer and inner rings and centre of the mandala respectively. We were amazed and appreciative of the huge range of ways in which these ideas were presented, using soil and discarded spider skin to an origami crane and tea cup, for example! By opening to such a breadth of meaning, we feel an ever deeper connection to each other and to the all prevailing Oneness of life.

Not surprisingly, song and dance also featured in all my attended gatherings, from our wide-ranging self entertainment at Llantarnam to more structured activities elsewhere. At the CEP conference in Oxford, most participants allowed themselves to join in with Richard Golsworthy's 'Biocentric Movement: The Sensing Body in Relationship'. Such first-hand experiences, as recent teaching and learning theory emphasises, is essential in acquiring new skills and awareness. We cannot 'be' in theory, only in practice! At Hawkwood, James d'Angelo led around fifty Wrekin Associates and friends in Buddhist, Chippewa (Native American) and Hindu chants: a tremendously effective way of uniting the group on the first night at a level above and beyond the rational.

Such unity in diversity (if you'll excuse what has become a bit of a cliché) is gaining grounds at all levels: AHS, Wrekin Trust and the Scientific and Medical Network (SMN), as educational charities all working to promote the spiritual dimension to life, are increasingly coordinating their activities and working ever more closely together, whilst retaining their unique heritage and focus. Interconnecting, and now sharing a common platform, are numerous other groups of kindred spirits with a common object: to bring spirituality into the mainstream in all walks of life. Examples from this summer's conferences include the Newcastle Emlyn Group's community initiative (described to the AHS gathering) to prevent the building of a large supermarket in the town; little seemed to be happening until meditation replaced conventional campaigning. Another, particularly impressive, example was Clarence Harvey, Vice Principal at The Steiner Academy, Hereford describing (at the Wrekin event) how the Steiner school of which he is vice-principal is becoming a state funded Academy.

A further example was my presentation to a research students' conference, *Human Behaviour and Climate Change* at Cardiff University (21st September 2010). In response to concerns expressed at how few people are admitting to the compelling evidence which demonstrates the reality of climate change, I presented a paper called 'Post-modern Attitudes; a transcendent way of thinking and behaving'. I have found AHS and Wrekin Trust members generally to be in agreement with such a notion, and many members at the CEP event in Oxford emphasised the need for such a change if humanity is to survive. Indeed, the keynote speaker there was David Adams, author of *The Spell of the Sensuous, A Climate of Mind: on the Ecology of Consciousness*. I was less confident however presenting evolutionary consciousness ideas to the more mainstream conference in Cardiff. Thankfully, Leon Sealey-Huggins, (from the University of Leeds) speaking before me, paved the way. His paper on 'Climate change, instrumentalism and ethics' based on Zygmunt Bauman's theses on modernity, illustrated how ways of thinking are changing in society. The audience (at least in my parallel session!) were thus ready for my paper which received a respectful and thoughtful response.

One has to conclude that there really is an increasing readiness to hear and respond to what we in the AHS have to say: that there is but one world for us to make the most of. I hope this report illuminates the very real changes that are happening in and through gatherings such as AHS local groups up and down the country. Thank you, everyone!

Keith Beasley, PhD student at Bangor University and Coordinator of BUTT (Bangor University Transcending Thought), the North Wales local group for AHS, Wrekin Trust and the SMN.

Open Day 2010

The Society's annual Open Day was back this year at its usual venue of the Friends Meeting House in St. Giles, Oxford, on Saturday 7th November. Some 50 members and friends attended the meeting. A notable absence was the smiling presence of Anne Watkins, who for many years ran the AHRERC book stall and greeted members on arrival. Unfortunately, she was unable to be present this year (see report on AGM, page 24). Her place was taken by Marianne Rankin, former Chair of the Society, ably assisted by John Rankin – sincerest thanks to both of them! The 2010 Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture, held in the morning, was given by Professor David Voas on 'Life after Death without God: unconventional religion or Gothic romanticism?' Some 30 members stayed on for the Society's AGM. In the afternoon Professor Michael Marsh gave a most interesting talk on 'Out of Body & Near-Death Experiences: brain-state phenomena or glimpses of immortality?' which stimulated much thought. An article by Michael Marsh, based on his lecture, is included in this issue of *De Numine* (see page 5) so a précis is not included here. The day, enjoyed by all, finished at 4.30 pm.

Life after Death without God: unconventional religion or Gothic romanticism?

In this year's Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture, Professor David Voas, former Consultant Physician in Gastroenterological Medicine in Manchester and Fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford, spoke of his interest from a socio-scientific point of view in issues regarding religion and science, and recent changes in religious trends. His lecture outlined the general nature of religious change, and presented some new data on spiritual and religious belief; and core findings on belief in life after death but not on God. He referred to, and compared, findings between surveys on religion carried out in 1991, 1999 and 2008 by the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) in four countries, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Republic of Ireland, and Denmark. Surveys had shown that there had been a decline from 90% to 40% in the 20th century in the numbers claiming to have a religion. The ISSP surveys showed, amongst other things, large differences between old and young on religious belief and commitment. This suggested, he said, two theories: one gets more religious as one gets older; or, alternatively, religion is less important to younger generations today. Findings showed that conventional beliefs in God, Heaven and Hell are declining, but beliefs in Nirvana and reincarnation are growing amongst the young, with belief in life after death displacing belief in God. Key questions were, why is this; is it a persistence of spirituality; a move away for conventional religion; or is it something to do with popular culture, focussing on the individual but not having much perceived personal or social significance? One finding was an apparent flight from 'certainly' to 'maybe' in belief – a reluctance to 'disbelieve', with more people willing to believe in the possibility of there being more things than those we know. Discussing trends, David Voas said that successive generations are more likely to believe in life after death – but age-related trends were not so clear: in Britain, the older generation are now less likely than the younger generation to believe in life after death; and this, he said, remains a mystery.



Professor David Voas

John Franklin

[CDs of the A.H. Memorial Lecture, and Prof. Michael Marsh's lecture (£6.00, incl. p&p), or DVD containing both talks (£8.00 incl. p&p), are available from Jean Matthews, Archive Supervisor, Religious Experience Research Centre, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter, Ceredigion, SA48 7ED. j.matthews@tsd.ac.uk Cheques payable to 'The Alister Hardy Trust'. Overseas members may pay by credit card.]

AHS Annual General Meeting 2010

The Annual General Meeting at the Friends Meeting House, St. Giles, Oxford, on Saturday 6th November, was attended by some 35 members and guests. The meeting was opened by Revd. Jonathan Robinson, Chair of the Society, who extended a warm welcome to all. Apologies were expressed for the absence of Directors, due to the settling in of the new University of Wales Trinity Saint David at Lampeter.

The Minutes of the AGM of 2009 were agreed and signed, and thanks given to John Franklin for his work as Hon. Secretary during the past year. Under Matters Arising, an update was given on the Publicity Statement and timing of future AGMs.

Jonathan Robinson, delivering his Chair's Report, referred to the integration, now completed, of the AHRERC within the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, the retirement of the previous Directors, Paul Badham, Wendy Dossett and Xinzhong Yao, and the appointment of the new Directors, Dr. Greg Barker, Sally Wilkinson and Dr. Bettina Schmidt. He reported on the changes to the office administration at Lampeter, including the integration of the RERC Library into the main University Library; the departure of Anne Watkins, the Librarian; the pending retirement of Ruth Russell-Jones, Hon. Treasurer, and David Greenwood as Administrator – David to take up the position of Hon. Treasurer on 1st January 2011. He referred to the activities of the Society and thanked all concerned for the part they had played during the past year in the running of the Society.

The Chair of Trustees' Report, read by Professor Paul Badham in the absence of Professor Leslie Francis, referred to the need for a significant reduction in expenditure, with ability now only to fund one member of support staff – Jean Matthews, who will be continuing as Archive Supervisor. Professor Francis remarked on the warm welcome given to the Research Centre by the new University of Wales Trinity Saint David; thanked the out-going Directors, and welcomed the three new Directors.

Presenting the Directors' Report, Professor Paul Badham paid tribute to Dr Greg Barker, the author. In his report, Greg expressed appreciation of the work of the AHRERC, its staff and others associated with the centre. He said that over 90 first year students had enrolled in the Department of Theology, Religious and Islamic Studies, many of whom, it was hoped, might be staying on to take the MA course in Religious Experience; and that he had received many inquiries from around the world about the archives and the Centre.

Professor Badham then went on to read a report submitted by the Administrator, David Greenwood, on behalf of the Treasurer and administrative staff. David reported that, due to the need to reduce costs involving loss of staff, the Society would have to rely much more on the use of volunteers (the administration of the Research Centre would now be handled by other University support staff). *De Numine* will continue to be published as at present on a bi-annual basis, but without colour pictures. Tribute was paid to Ruth Brinkman, the new Membership Secretary; and it was mentioned that, due to the integration of the RERC library into the University library, AHS members will now be able to borrow books from the University Libraries in Lampeter and Carmarthen. Regarding the financial position, it was reported that the AH Trust had a deficit this year of around £30K, with income essentially derived from subscriptions, sale of publications and donations amounting to approximately £9K – income from interest on capital being significantly reduced from previous years. The main item of expenditure was on the Centre's administrative staff salaries, other expenses including printing and stationary and staff and volunteers' expenses. Tribute was paid to

Paul Badham, Wendy Dossett and Professor Andrew Prescott – and to Anne Watkins, who left at the end of October, and who will be much missed

Paul Badham was thanked for reading the above reports – and Jonathan Robinson went on to pay tribute to Paul, thanking him on behalf of the Society for all he had done for the Centre and Society during his period as Director since 2002. Paul was handed a signed card and a gift to express the appreciation and regard of the Society. Jonathan also paid tribute to Anne Watkins, expressing the Society's great appreciation for all that she had done over the years for the Society, and saying that a signed card and a gift would be sent to her as a mark of the Society's regard* – and he expressed the Society's appreciation, too, to Wendy Dossett for her work in running the MA course in Religious Experience and her dedication to the Centre.

AHS Committee elections: the following had been nominated, and were elected unopposed:
Sheelah James: for a further period of three years; Proposer, Jonathan Robinson, Seconder Roger Coward;
Tristram Jenkins: for a further period of two years; Proposer, John Franklin, Seconder, Sheelah James;
Michael Rush: for a further period of three years, Proposer, Tristram Jenkins, Seconder, Sheelah James.

Under Any Other Business, it was suggested that possible links be sought with St. Anne's College Oxford and the Jupiter Trust, Oxford: and it was asked if there would be an AHRERC/Society/Lampeter weekend conference and pre-conference workshop this year. It was agreed that both would be investigated. Members expressed a wish to meet Dr. Greg Barker – who, it was reported, is equally keen to meet members. [Greg will be delivering a talk at a one-day AHS/World Congress of Faiths conference in London on 12th June 2011, and he has agreed to speak at the Society's Open Day in Oxford in November 2011.]

The date of the next Annual General Meeting, which again will be held in Oxford, was provisionally agreed for Saturday 5th November, subject to confirmation.

John Franklin Hon. Secretary.

** Anne Watkins expressed heartfelt thanks to everyone who signed her card and contributed to the gift. See also her letter on page 36. Ed.*

[Copies of the full Minutes of the AGM and written reports presented at the meeting can be obtained from: Jean Matthews, Archive Supervisor, RERC, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter, Ceredigion, SA48 7ED – please send stamped and addressed C5 (162 x 229mm) size, or similar, envelope]

Reports from the Local Groups

AHS Midlands Group

On September 17th 2010 we were due to have Rev. Jonathan Robinson presenting 'A Glimpse of Glory' but the difficulty for Jonathan of being in two places at once [he was due to be at a retreat weekend with the Welsh group later the same evening] was resolved by our postponing the event until 2011, and instead we had a video entitled 'Healing Spirit – a Journey Within, to a Place where Spirit and Matter Touch'. The film features Dr Bernie Siegel,

Dr Deepak Chopra and Dr Marion Woodman and was produced by The National Film Board of Canada in 1993. Several case histories are given. The group felt that Dr Chopra's comments were particularly spiritually perceptive, one remark standing out especially: 'Love is the expression of a unitive Consciousness'. Although the video is more than 20 years old we felt that it was not out of date but gave us much to reflect on in its challenge to materialism, recalling for us the inter-connectedness of everything in Nature and the Universe, and echoing the ideas expressed in the talk on 'Modern Paganism' given by Druid priest Gary Cousins at our meeting in July.

Bearing in mind the Pope's visit later that weekend to Birmingham, Rodney had brought a crucifix blessed by Pope Pius XII to our group for members to pass round.

On November 19th David Taylor gave a very interesting presentation 'Paradigm Lost, Paradigm Regained; an holistic approach to psychical and spiritual Research'. A short sound meditation on a Tibetan bowl was given by Clement prior to the talk. David has spent over 20 years investigating aspects of psychical phenomena, especially in the Midlands, and his research included home visits and sometimes all night vigils in haunted places. He is the founder of *Parasearch*, and his work has featured on BBC2 and other programmes and also in many journals, and he has lectured to several large audiences. We are fortunate to have him as a member of our group! He illustrated his talk with artistic pictures on a large flip-chart, beginning with the story of the blind men and the elephant*, and likening this to the different aspects of paranormal research foci. He also reminded us that Sir Alister Hardy had said that psychic and spiritual research as a field was no less worthy of exploration than that of outer space. David covered the topics of Marian apparitions, hooded monk aliens, winged creatures and shamanism, and touched on the parallels between his research and Carl Jung's theory of archetypes. Stone circles, mandalas, and star patterns were all mentioned in a sweeping history of phenomena and David pointed out that the common element in all of these was man [sic]. David ended his talk by saying that he saw psychic/paranormal experiences as 'gateways' and said that many of his witnesses went on to tell him that their experience had a transformative effect, akin, he suggested, to that of mystical or near-death experiences. Discussion followed, ranging through Milton's unorthodox theology (echoed in the title of the talk referring to Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained), Swedenborg's experiences, the Cottingley fairy hoax, Sheldrake's work on animal sensitivity to owners' homecomings, St Teresa of Avila's visions and the healing effects of exorcisms. David's talk really struck 'home' as many of the incidents he mentioned had occurred very close to where we meet!

On December 12th we had a planning meeting and pre-Christmas social. A wealth of topics, speakers and outings were suggested.

On 21st January Rev Jonathan Robinson, AHS Chairman gave us his audio-visual presentation 'A Glimpse of Glory' and this was well attended with 14 present. Jonathan's beautiful visual images and the accompanying words, spoken by people of different ages, and music, gave us a truly breathtaking experience. We had more than a 'glimpse' of glory in the way in which the images of beauty in the natural world led to the theme of unity and interconnectedness and the awareness of Love Divine. To me it was a form of Christian Advaita, to another member it was 'reminiscent of Plato's Symposium and the mystical longing for union with the eternal and transcendent Beauty', and yet another found the message essentially 'Christian' although non-Christian texts were among the readings. Jonathan's own compassion and personal spiritual journey shine through this presentation, and animated discussion continued until well past midnight! Members have asked for his other audio-visual offering, 'From Darkness to Light' in a future programme.

My thanks to Rodney Reeves for kindly taking good notes and writing up accounts of our meetings.

Sheelah James

** In various versions of the tale, a group of blind men (or men in the dark) touch an elephant to learn what it is like. Each one feels a different part, but only one part, such as the side or the tusk. They then compare notes and learn that they are in complete disagreement. (www.wikipedia.org)*

London Group

On 30th September, Dr Joanna Collicut McGrath, a tutor in psychology at Ripon College, Cuddesdon, Oxford Diocese Adviser on Spiritual Care of Older People and Fellow of Harris Manchester College, Oxford, spoke to us on 'Using Good Psychology for Better Theology and Spirituality'. She spoke of how psychology could bring a new understanding to the study of theology, and help in answering the question of what spirituality is and what it meant to receive divine communication. Observing many people to say that they were spiritual but could no longer 'take' religion, she warned that taking religion away from spirituality ran the risk of 'throwing the baby out with the bath water'. Doctrine was a mark of group identity, but could be a barrier – and ecumenism was only really possible if doctrine ceased to 'demarcate'. Biblical authority was the basis of Protestantism, but the Bible was also a story of accidents, slavery and exile and the trauma, central to Christianity, of the Crucifixion. She said that psychology could help towards a new understanding of the Bible, and questioned how many of our beliefs were fulfilling psychological as well as religious functions.

In the evening, Alan Rainer, AHS member, led a wide-ranging discussion based on his doctoral thesis on the philosophy of Dom Bede Griffiths, the Benedictine monk who left England for India to find links fundamental to all religions, particularly between Christianity and Hinduism. He himself was concerned about what he felt was wrong with religion, and was seeking to find a unity between the faiths. Cerebral thinking might not be the best approach, he thought: Bede Griffiths had shown him that this way of looking at religion was not the rule with Hindus. Life close to religion could be more stable and he felt that true happiness could only come from a simple life of reality, and that religion, properly understood, was the only thing that could bring people together again. In consequence we should aim for a real revival of religion – in which, he thought, other faiths' teachings could be extremely helpful. There was much interested discussion around this, though no conclusions were reached.

In November, we heard a talk on 'The sacred Heart of Evolution: Teilhard de Chardin and the challenge of Harnessing the Energies of Love' given by Professor Wayne Parsons, Professor of Public Policy at Queen Mary University of London. He spoke of the increasing marginalisation of religion, considered irrelevant, even problematic by those in the political, economic and social worlds, but which, he felt, should be seen as valuable and helpful. Reason should be supplemented by intuition and judgement, and religion can guide us beyond the certainties of reason – doing this through *heuristics* or icons, such as the Catholic's *Sacred Heart*, used by Teilhard de Chardin to explore evolution by going beyond reason to explain the concept of love. He spoke of Teilhard's mystical experiences, including the Sacred Heart as a glow of love energy filling the universe which, as a scientist, he believed, was the direction marked out by Christ. Wayne Parsons argued that to solve our increasingly complex problems, Teilhard's noosphere needed to evolve to a higher sphere, which he called an agorasphere, where public policy could be developed, communicated and applied to solve the global problems of all the other interacting spheres. He held that it was necessary to find a

way to integrate spiritual/religious experience into our thinking about public problems and policy design: we need to appreciate that we can never know enough about our problems to control them by reason alone, but only if guided by core values – the classical and theological virtues – endorsed by religious experience.

Discussion after the break continued with this theme, members appreciating the direction of the afternoon talk, but commenting that the experiences reported to the Centre were for the most part private and that the Society was not involved in public sphere activities. How to work towards such an agorasphere as envisaged by Wayne Parsons is a question that might exercise the minds of members....

John Franklin

[CDs of the talks given to the London Group (£5.00 or £6.00 incl. p&p), and 'Notes' of both afternoon and evening meetings (£1.50 per set), can be obtained from: John Franklin, 21 Park Vista, Greenwich, London, SE10 9LZ – cheques payable to 'AHS London Group'.]

Oxford and Cotswold Group

On 4 December we welcomed back Marianne Rankin and Dr Marcus Braybrooke, to speak on 'Spiritual Experience through the Ages', using material from their latest books. Marianne and Marcus gave us fascinating and wide-ranging presentations that sparked a lot of discussion amongst the dozen of us gathered on an icy day in Oxford. Marianne showed a lovely set of photographs and pictures to accompany her presentation about the many spiritual experiences and significant people covered in her book. Marcus enlisted the help of Mary (his wife) to include some poetry readings illustrating the themes of his talk on how we are moving towards a global spirituality. If you were unable to attend and would like to buy their books, the details are: Marcus Braybrooke: *Beacons of the Light, 100 Holy People who have shaped the history of Humanity* (www.o-books.net); Marianne Rankin: *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience* (www.continuumbooks.com). Please email me if you would like the notes from the presentations.

On 19 March we have invited Jonathan Stedall, documentary film-maker and author of *Where on Earth is Heaven?*, to speak and to present his film of the same title at Oxford Friends Meeting House (see details in the events listing – please book by email). I am planning another study group at a member's house for this year, and investigating the theme of encounters with spiritual lights. On which topic, members will be interested to know that a new version of the Scoble Experiment DVD is now out and with a new title: *The Afterlife Investigations*. The DVD is 86 minutes long plus bonus material, price £14.99 including postage. Please see the web site: www.theafterlifeinvestigations.com We hope to have a showing of this DVD later this year.

As always, I welcome suggestions for future meetings and any offers to help with organising them. I use email to communicate with the members; please send me a message if you'd like to be on the list (and you need not live in the Oxford & Cotswold Area to join us).

Email: ahs@riachi.free-online.co.uk

Rhonda Riachi

Chesterfield and Northern Group:

A report of the year's activities will appear in Autumn 2011

AHS Wales

The **All Wales Group** programme, consisting of a Spring and Autumn Lecture and Annual Retreat is listed in the general AHS Programme for 2011. Group meetings and the bi-annual lectures have been scheduled for the afternoon so that members can travel to and from Lampeter comfortably during a day. B&B accommodation can be had at reasonable cost in a Student Residence (contact Anne Jones, 01570 422351), and snacks and light meals are available from the university 1812 coffee bar. Our local, or mini groups continue to flourish in Swansea, Pembrokeshire, Mid-Wales, Lampeter and Bangor, and we have a contact in South East Wales in Cwmbran. See contact details below for all groups. Here's what's been happening:

The **Swansea Group** has met five times since September 2010 with about 6 – 7 people attending. Patrick Walters writes: The group has a life of its own and though Marie and I convene the group I am sure each different member has a different view of what it is about!

Generally the Swansea group is interested in the broad question of spirituality in the contemporary world, how it might be established, and how it relates to culture generally. This has led to discussion of a wide range of issues, from the near death experience to the nature of morality and secularization. We have not kept to any single theme, but allowed the conversation to take us into sometime unexpected realms. Some of the issues discussed have been followed up with web links. We now meet in a room at the university, which allows uninterrupted discussion and the possible use of computer equipment when necessary. Some subjects touched on are: the idea of oceanic feeling; Penny Sartori's book on NDEs in hospital, and the question of how to disentangle reality from superstition in NDEs and other phenomena often classed as psychic. What is time? What is consciousness? How are they related to the cosmos? And existence is innately strange!

Jennie Annis writes: **The Pembrokeshire Group** of the Alister Hardy Society regrouped last October at the home of the Revd Dr Jennie Annis who has succeeded Dr Pat Craig as the Pembrokeshire Co-ordinator. The major part of the meeting discussed the future of the group and agreement was reached on the following matters: a) future meetings would be mobile, preferably meeting in members' homes to eliminate the need to hire meeting rooms. b) meetings would be of approximately two hours duration and alternate between afternoons and evenings to enable those working to attend meetings. c) meetings would be bi-monthly to enable members to attend All Wales meetings in Lampeter. Dr Graham Wilson gave a very enlightening account of the Llantarnam retreat weekend in the second half of the meeting.

The following meeting, in November, was held at the studio of artist Christine Kinsey whose talk was entitled 'The Significance of the Gap in Word and Image'*. As an introduction to her paintings and drawings she described why she was an artist and how a spiritual experience as a child was central to her creativity. Christine referred to the poetry of R S Thomas and the writings of Feminist Philosopher and Theologian, Grace M Jantzen. Throughout her development as an artist Christine asserted that historically Christian visual imagery has been influential on the way women are perceived and the way they perceive themselves. The imagery which links women with sin, sex and death has been a male dominated interpretation of Christian mythology, which still perpetuates a prejudice against women in society today. She also maintains that this imagery has projected violence and death as a major symbol of Christianity.

In her works Christine has developed a group of female characters who inhabit imagined worlds where they act as guides and messengers conjoining an inner and outer world. An important symbol in her works is the 'Gap' where the characters become embodied as the subject of the painting, a counter balance to the images of submissive women which male

artists have mostly portrayed in painting, up to the present time, as objects of seduction, sentimentality and titillation. Christine has recently been awarded an Arts Council of Wales, Arts Grants for Individuals Production Award, to produce a film based on her paintings.

The February meeting will be hosted by Dr Howard Jones who will introduce his latest book entitled *The World as Spirit: How Science supports the Mystical* in which he describes how 'science today opens a gateway to the mystical'. Further details of this meeting can be obtained from Revd Dr Jennie Annis (see below)

**A presentation in 2 parts by Christine on this subject was printed in De Numine issue nos. 44 and 47 with some of her work reproduced in colour in issue 44*

Roger Coward writes from the **Mid Wales Group**: Most members missed an excellent December meeting when a great sharing of mysteries and reading materials took place around the theme of the year 'Spirituality and Sacred Place in Wales'. The January meeting was well attended with two new members joining us and three apologies. After a meditation, a lively discussion around the theme of the year occurred including an explanation by Bob Murrin of his Welsh Spirituality Mandala that appears on the front of our 2011 leaflet. For our next meeting on March 23rd we agreed to read Chapter 1 of *Sacred Place, Chosen People: Land and National Identity in Welsh Spirituality* by Dorian Llewelyn (Religion, culture, and society Series, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1999).

Patricia Murphy writes, 'the **Newcastle Emlyn Group** is in hibernation for the winter; ice and snow are creating a magical landscape around here, but making travel problematic. We hope to emerge in Spring, and also to take part in the biennial International Dragon Festival which is happening in Newcastle Emlyn in July this year'. Since writing the above it was agreed that the Newcastle Emlyn group, down to just three members, would merge with Lampeter.

Marian Mac Polin writes from the **Lampeter Group**: The first meeting in 2011 of the Lampeter group took place in the Founder's Library, University of Wales Trinity St. David on January 18th. The speaker was Dr. Jonathan Wooding, Senior Lecturer in Church History and Director of MA in Celtic Christianity in the University of Wales Trinity St. David. He is also a Trustee of the Alister Hardy Society and a noted scholar of Celtic religion. His lecture on 'Religious Experience in the early Celtic Tradition', which included both Welsh and Irish examples, was inspiring and enlightening.

Dr. Wooding remarked that the function of monasteries was often evaluated by their material achievements such as their contribution to the economy, whereas their function was essentially the sanctification of the monastics. Likewise lives of 'holy men' or saints were often studied 'externally' and little attention paid to their inner spirituality, possibly because so little was known about that aspect of their lives. One Celtic saint, Saint Patrick, whose religious experiences are extremely well documented in his own words, describes how the experience of captivity and exile from his homeland, herding sheep in isolation in remote places brought him into mystical union with God.

In Jerome's 'Life of Malchus 5' there are similar ideas of captivity, exodus and the 'desert' place where he had a religious experience and 'found what he was on the point of losing in his own country'. This echoes the archetypal experience of Moses and the chosen people saved from captivity and wandering in the desert.

Dr. Wooding noted that the life of many of the early Celtic Christian saints is often defined by the title of *peregrinus* or traveller, one who leaves family and country in his search for God. Some of these monks experienced these conditions within the monastic life – others became

hermits. *Peregrini* live in the liminal world – partly in this world, partly in the other and this is often the locus of the spiritual/religious experience.

A Welsh saint mentioned in the Book of Llandaff is St. Elgar who after being taken as a slave to Ireland, returned to Wales and became a hermit on Bardsey Island in the late twelfth century. Again there are similar themes of captivity, exile and the search for God.

A saint whose experiences would merit a place in the Alister Hardy archives is the Irish saint Fursey. He lived in the sixth century, travelled as a *peregrinus* to East Anglia where he founded a monastery at Cnobheresburg and then later to Lagny in north-eastern France where he died. His relics are in the Peronne area. Two of his experiences are recorded – an ‘out of body’ experience and experiences of angels and fire. Regarding Fursey, Bede in *Historia Ecclesiastica* in 730 C.E. says that a monk told him about Fursey ‘sitting in the frost in a thin garment and sweating ...’ It was remarked later during the question period that this experience is common in other traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism and is typical of mystical states.

In the afternoon a group of nine met to plan future meetings. The All Wales theme for 2011 is ‘Spirituality and Sacred Place’ and members agreed to reflect on this theme and to bring with them the fruit of their reflection in some physical form to the afternoon meeting on February 23rd. The idea is to share these reflections with the group using the token object, photo, etc. as a focus. This meeting will finish in time for members to attend the lecture given by Dr Mawil Izzi Dien, entitled ‘Islamic eco-theology; from the “green man” to the trust concept’, at 4pm (for next event in this seminar series see Other Events calendar, page 54). A further meeting was planned for 23rd March, and suggestions were made about outings to some ‘sacred places’ in Wales later in the year.

Building on the experience of the Bangor University *Transcending Thought* (BUTT)* over the past few years, Keith Beasley of the **Bangor Group** writes: Over 30 people attended a fascinating and inspiring experience on 30th January, allowing themselves to fall under the spell of Professor Nick Clements (Stafford University): a colourful character in both dress, manner and personal stories. His enthusiasm enabled the typical BUTT mix of students from across the disciplinary spectrum and locals from bard to therapist, to engage in his description of ‘2012, The Confluence of Two Rivers’.

Forming part of Bangor University’s annual postgraduate conference – *Beyond Boundaries 2011 – Transition*, Nick’s theme explored the transition that Mayans (and others) associate with the year 2012: from the fourth to the fifth evolutionary cycle of humanity. In the third cycle human behaviour can be equated to Shamanism and ‘the community’: everybody played their part, without question, in the collective. Then (in the fourth cycle) Science and the rational mind have been predominating, leading to the (over-) importance of emphasis on the ‘I’, the individual. Now, with 2012 as its doorway, we embark on the fifth cycle which brings a balance between self and community and a harmony between individual freedom and collective responsibility. Key to this is having the courage to live our passion.

To help us understand this, Nick led a pairing off exercise, where we shared the things that fired us up. For Nick it had been the creative engagement of community artist, a ‘job’ that had, eventually and to the surprise of the local bank manager, turned spontaneity into profit. 2012, we heard, is not a year in which to expect a catastrophe (although a few in the audience suspected we might have a few of them), nor a brief window of opportunity for humanity to ‘sort itself out’, but the continuation of an ongoing evolutionary process towards a new humanity that is able to combine the best of both shamanism and science.

* BUTT is an interdisciplinary research group open to anyone interested in exploring non-rational and transcendent states of consciousness, based at Bangor University in North Wales. It also serves as the local group for the AHS, the Wrekin trust and the Scientific and Medical Network Ed.

Local mini-group contacts:

The All Wales Group, as well as hosting events for everyone, comprises a number of smaller local groups who hold meetings at various times. Please contact the local Convenor for information:-

<i>Swansea</i>	Patrick Walters, 07598 926560	p.walters@swansea.ac.uk
<i>South-East Wales (Cwmbran)</i>	Mary Cook, 07794 294432	maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk
<i>Pembrokeshire (Trecwm)</i>	Jennie Annis, 01348 840689	jennie.annis@btinternet.com
<i>North Wales (Bangor)</i>	Keith Beasley, 07760 305636	keith.beasley@bangor.ac.uk
<i>Mid-Wales (Abbeycwmhir)</i>	Roger Coward (See below)	
<i>Lampeter</i>	Marian Mac Polin, 01570 423799	mmpolin@yahoo.co.uk
<i>Chair AHS Wales:</i>	Roger Coward, 01597 851929	roger.coward@smartemail.co.uk
<i>Secretary AHS Wales:</i>	Marian Mac Polin, 01570 423799	mmpolin@yahoo.co.uk

First All-Wales Group Annual Retreat at Llantarnam Abbey

The first All-Wales Residential Retreat was to be the 'Centre Point' for the local groups from around Wales who had been working all year with the theme of 'Oneness and Mandala'. Arriving from the station or the motorway, and turning in through the tall stone gates, we found ourselves in the different world of the ancient parkland of Llantarnam. Llantarnam Abbey, once a Cistercian Monastery, and now home to the Sisters of St Joseph, is still a place where a monastic atmosphere of industry and calm prevails. We were welcomed in from the cobbled Garth of the Abbey to a spacious and light workshop room, leading out onto a walled garden with an apple orchard. A path through the trees led to a paved maze with a fountain at the centre.

After introductions and an excellent dinner in the main Abbey building we plunged straight into our subject with a keynote PowerPoint presentation by Roger Coward entitled 'Mandalas Outer & Inner' which distinguished between mandala-like images such as stone crosses or rose windows and Tibetan mandalas which were designed to help meditators to achieve a spiritual or religious experience – or enlightenment. Afterwards we were led in a guided visualisation to find our own personal subjective mandala which we were then invited to draw and share with the group (see centrefold).

Saturday started with a presentation by Patricia Murphy from the Newcastle Emlyn Group on 'Thought Power and Oneness'. Their group had engaged with a practical town matter about the proposed huge supermarket which would put the high street under threat. Thought Power was a reaction to the generally negative feeling of protest and powerlessness in the town, so townspeople were invited to join in a 'positive thought experiment' i.e. to visualise the positive for the town, rather than concentrating on the negative. After their third meeting, said Patricia, 'ARUP rode into town, commissioned by the County Council to run a workshop, asking the townspeople to come up with ideas of how to spend half a million quid in Newcastle Emlyn! We were one of four towns chosen from the whole of the county' and at a town meeting, it was decided to use the money to clear and create river walks, to improve access to and amenities near the river which surrounds the town. The river had featured largely during the meditation sessions; Patricia said she couldn't prove the connection, but serendipity at least played a part!

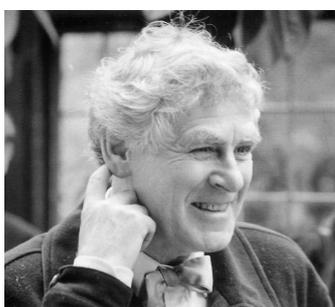
Serendipity again came into play with the maze. Patricia had not expected to be given a whole session to lead the group, so the gift of a beautiful morning, and the maze glimpsed in the sunlight through the apple trees, drew us outside. We entered one by one, and after walking in separate contemplation round the maze, each one of us arrived in the centre, where we held hands in a silent but joyful celebration of oneness.

After coffee it was the turn of Keith Beasely from the Bangor Group to present 'A Mandala Experience' through a PowerPoint presentation of contemporary mandala-like paintings set to music. We were invited to think that mandalas can be freestyle and imaginative. Indeed, besides enabling meditation, they are highly effective at enabling our sub-conscious and higher-consciousness to communicate their thoughts and feelings. As Jung said, mandalas are great therapy! We were invited to draw and share our experiences. The afternoon was spent walking and meditating and finding or making symbols to contribute to the large circular round table mandala that had been beautifully prepared. Each person brought something to represent their everyday selves, their higher self and their idea of Oneness and spoke about their significance as they set them in place on the board. The amount of creativity and spiritual wisdom that came forth from this talented and inspired group was remarkable. This was a high point of the weekend. In the evening we had informal fun in a 'Creative Contributions' social occasion with song, musical performance, writing, story telling and ending with lovely circle dances called by Mary Cook and Jonathan Robinson.

The Sunday morning meeting revealed a tension between a need for independence and for Oneness – all at the same time! Eventually the group decided that the subject for the next year would be 'Spirituality and Sacred Place in Wales'. After coffee we celebrated with Jonathan Robinson's 'Oneness Celebration' – celebrating the unity of life and the essential Oneness of all from his 'Grail Celebrations'. This appropriately symbolic ending left one thing to be done after lunch – destroy the Mandala! This had stayed in the room with us since its creation the day before. The task of destruction was entered into with great gusto, chanting and incense burning. Rubbish bags were fetched and stones, flowers, paintings and sculptures were destroyed and consigned to the rubbish tip. (The rice we used was saved to be eaten later!) Eventually the Mandala was empty – awaiting a new creation. It was time to go, to leave the Centre Point for our homes around the country.

Our thanks go to all those who made practical contributions and especially to Mary Cook for suggesting we have a retreat in the first place, finding Llantarnam and convening bookings, arrangements and the Creative Contributions evening. We have already booked for next year – see AHS events.

See photographs of this event in centrefold. Ed.



James Roose-Evans

This year the Spring Lecture hosted by the All Wales Group is 'God is a Feel not a Think – what is Spiritual Experience?' given by James Roose Evans. Details can be found in AHS Events, page 51, although unfortunately De Numine will not reach readers before the lecture. We look forward to a report for the Autumn issue. Ed.

I invited James to come to speak to us on April 12th partly because I knew him quite well but more because of what he stands for and what he has done – and because he is a marvelous speaker. I first met him at the Bleddfa Centre for the Creative Spirit in Powys which he founded and directed for many years. Here, meditation, the arts and spirituality come together – reflecting his own background and conviction as well as his personal interest in spiritual experience as mediated through the arts of ritual and theatre.

He recently led two workshops at Southwark Cathedral, one on the theme of Milestones, and the other, entitled 'Autumn Leaves: rituals for dealing with loss'. He has led ritual workshops for many years both here and in America; many of these are recorded in his book *Passages of the Soul*. He has also preached in Westminster Abbey as well as several other cathedrals. 2009 marked the 50th Anniversary of his founding the Hampstead Theatre in London leading to a highly successful West End Career with '84 Charing Cross Road' winning Best Play and Best Director here and on Broadway.

He refers to both David Hay and Sir Alister Hardy in the introduction to his book *Finding Silence: 52 Meditations for Daily Living* where he distinguishes between spirituality and religion. 'What often happens is that such (religious) structures become fossilised and our energies are no longer vitalised by them. The latter half of the twentieth century saw hundreds of thousands leaving the particular form of Christianity into which they had been born, and exploring further afield to find their own means of spiritual growth because the beliefs proposed so authoritatively no longer seemed to ring true. Such beliefs were often at variance with people's experience ... spiritual awareness is biologically built into the human psyche and that this holistic awareness of reality is found potentially in every human being whatever their religious beliefs or none.'

This, ironically, was written many years after his own call to the priesthood. As Ronald Blythe wrote in his review (in the TLS) of James' autobiographical book *Opening Doors and Windows*, 'Although Roose-Evans can be seen to have been on some kind of Christian pilgrimage all his life, with the customary byroad towards Roman Catholicism, his ordination as an Anglican priest in Herefordshire is as dramatic as any other event in his life'. Not that it was easy – the bishops made certain of that. In the light of what went before, however, the outcome was clearly right. He concludes by speaking of himself as 'interstitial', a term coined by Jonathan Miller to designate a person 'who stands at the cross-roads of society, at a frontier ... whose task is to stand at the inter-section of paths and hold the tension of opposites within themselves.'

Compiled by Roger Coward

WebNews

Alister Hardy Society Website

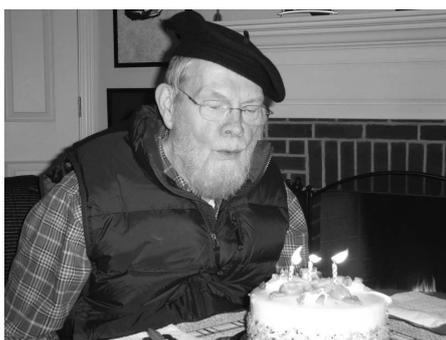
We are pleased to announce that the Society now has its own website: www.alisterhardysociety.org With the assimilation of the AHRERC into the new University of Wales Trinity Saint David, and the AH Trust now acting in a supporting role, the former AHT website, www.alisterhardyreligiousexperience.co.uk, has been taken offline and no longer exists.

The new Society website has been designed by Mike Rush, an IT professional and member of the Alister Hardy Society Committee, who is acting as webmaster. It contains up-to-date information about the Society and its Local Groups – including a downloadable membership application form – also web pages on events, contacts and AH publications; this now includes some back issues of *De Numine*. The site also contains information about the Alister Hardy Trust, and Sir Alister Hardy himself – and a Lectures section, where a start has been made on making available online some of the interesting talks given to the Society.

Being a new site, it is under consideration for further development – and the views of members here would be welcome. In view of the confidential nature of religious experiences

and relationship to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, we have not included a Facebook or Twitter page, but the prospect of a Members' section, where matters of interest might be raised, is under consideration.

Any comments or suggestions concerning the website, should be addressed to: John Franklin, Hon Secretary, Alister Hardy Society, 21 Park Vista, Greenwich, London, SE10 9LZ; e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com



Ben Korgen blowing out candles on his 80th birthday.

Ben's 'Rolling Waves' website has featured in 'Webnews', and his serialised account of the voyage of the *Te Vega*, on which he sailed with Sir Alister, appeared with some stunning photos in issues 40-46.

Many happy returns Ben

See Ben's marine art in the centrefold. Ed.



Letter

Dear Patricia Murphy,

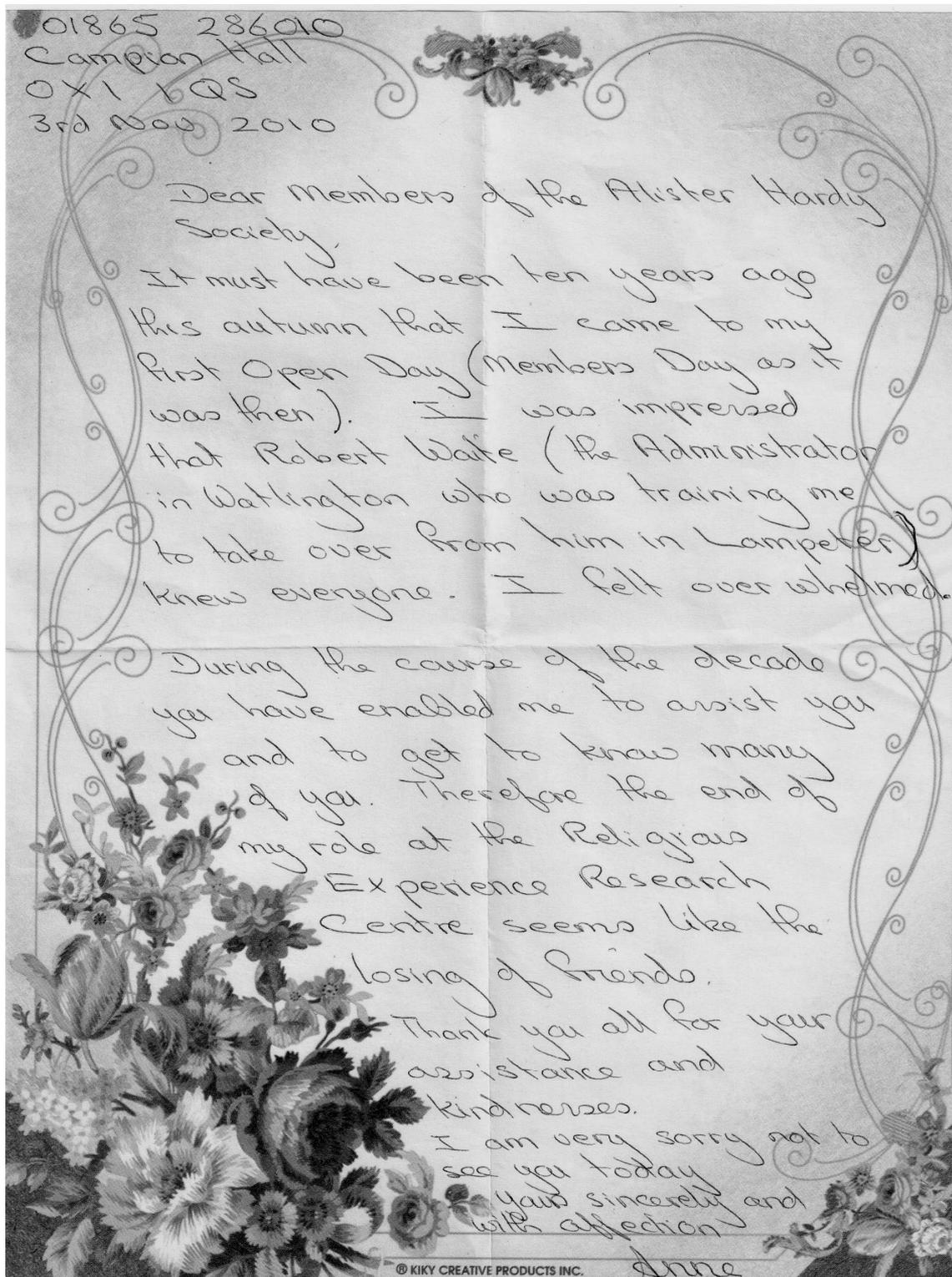
I am dismayed to find the review of Mark Townsend's book in Issue 49 of *De Numine* published above my name. I realise it is the right of an editor to omit (though not, I think, to add), but for such essentials as Mark Townsend's utter disregard for grammar and abysmal use of language (all too often) to be omitted from my review gives, in my opinion, a false impression of the book, more especially as it does not warn prospective readers what they'll have to wade through to get at what the book is about. I find it hard not to be ashamed of such a bland review being attributed to me.

Yours sincerely

*Janet Leythorne,
Pakefield, Lowestoft*

Sorry, Janet, I did omit, but I didn't think I'd added anything. See Janet's second review on page 45, just as she wrote it! Ed.

De-Luxe Letter



Real Thing

My angel is the real thing:
No white feathers drifting
On glossy pages between
'Find your soul-mate' or
'Messages from my dead grandma'.
The editor of 'Hi-Spirit'
Betrays celestial emissaries
Monthly on supermarket shelves.

My angel is beyond the palette:
No fragile pre-Raphaelite
Draped with ethereal pleats,
Not a curl or a sweet pout.
Burne-Jones and Rossetti
Signed contracts with the status quo,
No clause allows a shaft
Of magisterial light to
Burn the canvas.

My angel is a night thief:
Slips invisible between thoughts
In twilight hours
Stirring my curiosity,
Giving no answers.
Brushes my bones.
My sinews sing
In the darkness.

My angel is dangerous:
Summons me to uncharted lands,
Through echoing
Cloisters of dusty history,
Where shining flagstones
Lead to heavens
Paved with glittering possibilities.
He is my route master.

My angel possesses me:
Intangible fire, he and I
Wrestle nightly
Until, pivoting on
A pin-head
I claim my blessing
And I see his face.

Theolyn Cortens

On Bumping into an Archangel

I wasn't expecting an angel.
Walking down a cold summer's road,
there he was, crumpled, slightly woebegone,
halo askew across his glowing forehead.
His eyes shone grey in the pale Welsh light.
I've lost my way, he said.
I knew he was an angel straightaway
(wings and a halo are usually a clue).
And he was wearing a flowing sheet, not usual
attire for a farmer. Underneath, but very discreet,
a glimpse of gilded loins.

But he was a charmer all right. And his wings!
smooth as buttermilk, preened back behind
hard muscle. Each feather had a different sheen
like Indian silk. Plumage to die for.
And you could see that if he lifted them,
and the span of pinions spread across the sky,
they'd blot the earth out, like a nuclear cloud.
You could go for a man like that, I thought,
glider, bird-man, someone (you might say) divine—
soaring into the heavens on a wing and a prayer.

As I stared at his shining body, I started to feel afraid.
Where had he come from? And what was his name?
For it came to me that he might be Lucifer, Beelzebub,
a demon combing quiet Welsh lanes for converts.
I'm Michael, he said. And as he smiled,
the sun exploded quietly in my head.

*Kathy Miles,
Assistant Librarian, University of Wales Trinity Saint David*

The full text of this poem can be found in The Shadow House, Cinnamon Press, 2009.



Remembering Friends

We would like to express our deepest sympathy to Alexander Gorbenko on the death of his wife Irina, who died last year. Alexander also lost his mother earlier last year. To him and his daughter Tamara we send love and kind thoughts, always.

Alexander was a PhD student of Professor Paul Badham, and has made some scholarly contributions to *De Numine*.

Book Reviews

Kate Adams, Brendan Hyde and Richard Woolley, *The Spiritual Dimension of Childhood* London: Jessica Kingsley, 2008. 160pp. ISBN 987 1 84310 602 9 (pbk), £16.99

The days when children were to be 'seen and not heard' have passed. Today the focus is on empowering children to develop their full potential. Educationalists promote the development of the 'whole' child and 'spirituality' is seen as an important component in their well-being. But this book argues children's spirituality often remains invisible to the adult world and is therefore not always sufficiently valued or nurtured.

The book aims to help parents, and all those working with children, to be more aware of the 'geography' of children's spirituality. The authors adopt an inter-disciplinary approach and look at recent studies in psychology, religion, anthropology, neuroscience and education. Each chapter concludes with recommendations for nurturing the spiritual dimension of children in relation to the particular issues discussed. One of the strengths of the book is that its arguments are well supported with both academic references and children's own accounts of their experience – an important factor when dealing with a subject as elusive as 'spirituality'. The book is engagingly written because the authors are passionate about their subject. They persuade us that if we engage more fully with how children experience their inner worlds, we can better understand how the inner and outer worlds interact to shape the spiritual dimension of their lives. We are then in a better position to help children regain their spiritual voice, which many struggle to find.

The book begins with a discussion of the meaning of spirituality, pointing out that today, 'spirituality' is no longer synonymous with 'religion'. William James first argued it was the psychological, inner experience of the individual that was the primordial religious experience. However, British scholars Adrian Thatcher and Andrew Wright believe referring to spirituality outside of religion is meaningless because it requires theology for articulation.

Alister Hardy proposed that spirituality evolved through natural selection because it has survival value. David Hay sees spirituality as a natural human disposition if understood in terms of our relationships. 'Relational consciousness' involves a person's sense of connectedness with themselves, other people and the world. Hay and Rebecca Nye have shown that spirituality may be biologically selected by humankind but repressed by socially constructed processes that thwart it.

Insights from wisdom traditions and transpersonal psychology also contribute to our understanding of spirituality. Thomas Merton connected the discovery of the true self with the experience of God. Eastern traditions teach us to expand our awareness beyond a socially constructed ego; psychologist, Ken Wilber, sees spiritual life as the development of consciousness. Activity in the brain has been directly linked to spiritual practices, such as meditation, and may explain experiences of oneness and unity recorded by sages of all traditions. While not exhaustive, the summary suggests spirituality is concerned with a sense of connectedness to self, others, the world and the transcendent, where 'self' and 'other' ultimately become one. Most people's experience of spirituality will lie somewhere along this continuum where connectedness, rather than unity, is a characteristic feature.

The book then divides into three parts. Part I: Children's Voices, explores how the prominence given to children's 'voices' in western society does not extend to their spirituality. While open and heated debates on religion happen in the public arena, in daily discourse religion and spirituality remain taboo subjects. There is a 'suspicion of the spiritual' David Hay has argued. Children are quickly aware of what is acceptable to talk about. In a study of children's dreams, many children feared ridicule if they shared a significant dream. One 11-year old Christian boy said he had only been able to tell a pet cat about his dreams; another girl said that in the eyes of her peers it was 'uncool' to talk about dreams.

Other research shows the cultural taboo associated with sharing the experience of seeing a dead relative, a sense of awe, or God's presence. There is a cycle of secrecy. Children are reluctant to open up to adults; and in turn adults are unaware of children's inner experience and appear uninterested. Brendan Hyde, drawing on experience in Australia, said many children wanted to share questions of meaning and value but made light of their concerns – giggling, chatting and creating a façade of complacency. The right of children to privacy is paramount, but while it was noted that their 'voice' was strong in areas of health and education, it remained weak and hidden in matters concerning their inner life.

Finding the child's spiritual voice is related to discovering a sense of identity. Spiritual experience is not easily measured by attainment targets but is an essential part of developing a sense of 'being' rather than 'doing'. An appreciation of the inner self can help develop self-esteem and self-identity. We can value asking questions not just finding the 'right' answer. Rigid timetables can exclude opportunities for curiosity, reflection and imagination. As one researcher put it: 'Listening to intuition means noticing those subtle cues that we often tell children not to pay attention to – a gut feeling, a vague discomfort, a fleeting idea'. Schooling driven by western socio-economic values of personal achievement can inhibit such growth. A more holistic approach that builds on connections with others can help build positive relationships based on empathy, care and kindness. It can help children voice their aspirations for a better world.

Part II – Children's Worlds, explores the diversity of children's spiritual experience in different disciplines and countries. Again, the material is not exhaustive, but it offers 'signposts' along the path to recognising and nurturing children's spirituality. Children

respond to the present moment, eager to touch and taste everything: rolling in autumn leaves, building a snowman or being lost in nature or a piece of music. One girl said: 'I was the water. I love it and it loves me I don't know how else to say it'. A girl from a Hopi community in North America explained how she often, in her thoughts, met with her ancestors. A devout Muslim boy living in Tunisia said 'Allah hears prayers and answers them through the wind'. Experiences of awe, encounters with angels, ideas of the afterlife or pondering ultimate questions are described by children in their own words.

This section also explores how spirituality connects us to the social, political and economic contexts of our world. In the words of Martin Buber: 'Spirit is not in the I but between the I and the you. It is not like the blood that circulates in you, but like the air in which you breathe'. We use a myriad of senses to help us understand the world. Appreciating emotion, sensitivity, care, kindness, love and sensuality are important elements in nurturing spirituality, as we only understand who we are through relationship with others. We learn to care about ourselves, make healthy choices and feel positive about who we are. Good behaviour comes from self-esteem rather than having rules imposed from outside. In this context the impact of Aids on adolescent self-identity in South Africa is also explored.

The section ends with a chapter on 'Spiritual Intelligence'; like Emotional Intelligence, it can help us address problems of meaning. Forms of spiritual experience can be life transforming. They can help children transcend their suffering as well as answer questions of meaning and value. The contemplation of these issues requires silence and stillness. Stillness is often equated with laziness and children are encouraged to fill in spaces with activity; opportunities for reflection need to be built into the curriculum.

Part III – Children's Lives, explores our connectedness to others at a local, national and global level. Spirituality has a political dimension because the competitive nature of society has consequences. As children become consumers we need to help them consider the impact of their choices and share responsibility for the well-being of others. Children can 'be critical moral agents in society' said one researcher. The authors comment: 'If one's drive for wealth, power or possessions undermines the humanity of another person, it is questionable whether one is really experiencing quality living'. Other research argues it is essential for adults and children to appreciate *not knowing* as an acceptable way of being.

The penultimate chapter looks at Australian spirituality. Expressions of spirituality do not arrive 'pre-packaged' but arise out of the convergence of social, political and philosophical currents at a particular time in history. In Australia, landscape and geography shape spiritual experience: 'the haunting silence' of the bush, desert or sea. Australians are often seen as outwardly secular. David Tacey argues spirituality is expressed holistically in the ordinariness of everyday life because it is grounded in the earth. For thousands of years indigenous aboriginals danced upon the ground to summon spirits from a sacred landscape with its 'songlines' and 'dreamtime'.

The final chapter explores the importance of 'big dreams' and our receptivity to the child's dream world. A clear message from this pioneering book is that adults need to find their own spiritual voice if they are to be sensitive to spiritual encounters with children. No easy task. But the authors' willingness to engage positively with so many of the issues raised is truly inspiring.

Reviewed by Shirley Lancaster

**Alistair Conwell, *The Audible Life Stream: Ancient Secret of Dying While Living*
Winchester: O Books, 2010. 255 pp. ISBN 978 1 84694 329 4 (pbk), £11.99**

This book taps into perhaps the greatest human fear of all, that of death – thanatophobia. In *The Audible Life Stream: Ancient Secret of Dying While Living* Alistair Conwell aims to assuage that fear. The book is clearly set out with a helpful overview of the argument in the Introduction although there is no index. It is a comprehensive and wide-ranging study of a little-known phenomenon.

The book begins by looking at our fear of death and the work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and Darryl Reanne in *The Death of Forever*. Then scientific theories such as quantum, superstring and the Theory of Everything are explored and shown to be consistent with the Audible Life Stream. According to Conwell, the essential message of the mystics and founders of religious traditions was dying while living through immersion in the Audible Life Stream. This should have put an end to the fear of death in their followers, but too often the message has been lost in meaningless ritual. We need to understand that it is merely the ego, our sense of ‘I-ness’ which dies and that this phenomenon is in fact an illusion. It is time-bound and created by our senses. When the body dies, such sense-related experiences cease but consciousness, a vibratory wave-form, transcends time and space and is eternal.

As well as drawing on scientific theories and mystical ideas, Conwell examines research and personal testimony from Out of the Body Experiences, Near Death Experiences and sound healing to give evidence for the existence of the Audible Life Stream. Understanding the primacy of this vibratory principle, which encompasses light and sound, is fundamental to the realization that death does not put an end to the spirit. Experience of the Audible Life Stream enables us to become familiar with the process of dying while we are alive, to live life to the full without fear and to die a peaceful death. Conwell’s contention is that ‘... death is a spiritual doorway into the realm of the spirit, from where we have all originally come. We can enter through this doorway temporarily while still living in this world by consciously immersing ourselves into the current of the Audible Life Stream.’

What exactly is the Audible Life Stream or Primordial Sound Current? In the book it is variously equated with the Holy Spirit; the Word (as in the Gospel of John); the Tree of Life and the eternal stream which waters it; the Holy Stream of Life, the Holy Stream of Sound and the Holy Stream of Light; the Water of Life that Jesus taught; the Buddha Nature; the music of the spheres; the natural sound of Reality in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*; the ‘Subtle Music of the Soul’ in the Sikh *Adi Granth*; the ‘Great Tone’ or ‘unimpeded harmony’ in the *Tao Te Ching*. ‘Resounding within each and every one of us, the Audible Life Stream is quite simply the Universal Principle, God-power, Allah, Brahma, call it whatever you like.’ According to Conwell, the Audible Life Stream is the quintessential message of the mystics, ‘Put simply, this stream of conscious vibrating energy, which has the most enchanting musical quality, is our immortal essence.’

The actual sound of the Audible Life Stream is said to be ‘a universal and inherently non-material vibratory force manifesting as countless sounds and even music ... The type of sound perceived, whether music or not, depends upon the level of vibrational frequency of one’s consciousness.’ With the right Audible Life Stream Master as a teacher and after following certain precepts, such as becoming vegetarian and teetotal, an adept can eventually practise going in and out of the body safely, thus ‘Dying while Living’.

The book is fascinating, and despite some generalizations and leaps of logic (such as maintaining that because 'eye' and 'I' sound exactly alike they are linked in meaning) it is well worth reading. Alistair Conwell opens the door to an important field of enquiry.

Reviewed by Marianne Rankin (Former Chair AHS)

**Carol S. Robb, *Wind, Sun, Soil, Spirit: Biblical Ethics and Climate Change*
Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010, xii 195 pp. ISBN 978 0 8006 9706 8 (pbk), £13.99**

Carol S. Robb is professor in Christian Social Ethics at the San Francisco Theological Seminary. Her involvement with climate change started when she was asked to speak at a consultation meeting in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, organized by the World Council of Churches' Climate Change Program. She was to contribute a theological-ethical perspective to representatives of the WCC, who would be observers at an upcoming session of a conference on climate change at The Hague in November 2000. Her message to the Saskatoon Consultation was that the Bible is surprisingly relevant to the contemporary debate over climate change policies. This book she wants to be 'an amplification of that initial message.'

Part 1 of this book is an evaluation of climate change discussions, and Part 11 envisages a potential Christian contribution based upon a certain new interpretation of New Testament texts. Despite the word 'Spirit' in the title, it is not a book about spirituality or religious experience. Pondering, therefore, whether it is suited for a review in *De Numine*, it occurred to me that Sir Alister Hardy wanted to discern and communicate that there is a spiritual dimension to natural evolution. I also read in Professor Ursula King's reminiscence (*De Numine* 48) that at the Postscript to *The Divine Flame* he wrote: 'We believe that religion exists that we may have life, and have it more abundantly'. Natural evolution is at the moment to a certain extent being determined by our own species, and climate change deliberations have some part to play in this. The life or death of many species, and of many human beings, is dependent upon the values that get the upper hand in human behaviour. Religion has indeed some part to play in this. Hence, a book such as this may be of interest to AHS members.

At the beginning of chapter 1 the author points out that according to climatologists a 'no-regret' level of greenhouse gas emissions will require a yearly emission allowance of two tons of carbon dioxide per capita, worldwide. (The book mentions other greenhouse gasses, but focuses upon carbon dioxide.) The average for Californians appears to be thirty four tons, and eight worldwide. She mentions a Californian couple who spare no effort to keep their carbon footprint down, who cycle, use public transport wherever possible and only rarely use their hybrid car, who recycle, wash their laundry with cold water, shop at the farmers' market, etc. But despite all their effort, they found (using a carbon footprint calculator from a University of California website) that they used 18 tons each per year. The reason Californians, apparently, can get no lower is that the structures that provide energy, transportation, etc. are rooted in what Robb calls 'the Kingdom of Oil'. She reflects that they are, as it were, 'prisoners in the Kingdom of Oil' and that their 'hope is lodged in treaties.' In this context she describes the Kyoto Treaty that was drawn up in 1997 and that governs emissions of its signatories for a first commitment period, 2008-2012. She notes that the United States is not a signatory (since George W. Bush's administration withdrew from the treaty in March, 2001). At the time of writing, the treaty that was supposed to follow after 2012 was being negotiated at the Copenhagen Climate Conference of December 2009. (Copenhagen is in the meantime long past and it has become a shameful failure as no commitments to emission reductions were made.)

Chapter 2 explores the disagreements among nations in drawing up policies. In chapter 3 she outlines different scenarios, or story-lines, for the future.

It appeared to me that the first part of the book was well informed, but I think that more could have been said about the necessary effort required of each and every one of us; if people would live more conscientiously, as the Californian couple mentioned above does, then the Kingdom of Oil would become less powerful. Further, it is not only a matter of influencing governmental officials and gaining the negotiators' minds, but also very much a matter of corporate responsibility. And sadly, I have never heard a sermon in the Church I attend that expresses concern about environment or the impact of environmental issues on people worldwide.

A key thought that is dwelt upon in chapter 5 (taken from Richard A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (1995)) is that 'Jesus was a reformer of the temple-state centralized in Jerusalem.' Robb refers here to the fact that the Second Temple in Jerusalem was associated with Herod the Great, who collaborated with the Romans. The high priestly families, who did not come from the legitimate priestly line, would have been collaborators as well and they would have accumulated land. The author considers that even though Scripture indicates that Jesus kept the law, 'it is possible to view Jesus' life, teachings, and healings as giving permission to the peasants not to pay the temple tax. Such permission would be in service of local rule, local economics, and local access to God's forgiving spirit.' In the following chapter she considers that 'for Jesus the Kingdom (of God) challenged the legitimacy of the Roman Empire.'

Finally, in the last chapter the Kingdom of God is perceived as an alternative to the Kingdom of Oil. There are interesting ideas in this part of the book, but I question some of Robb's convictions, such as that a faith that perceives Jesus as involved in a cosmic battle against the forces of evil is for its vindication necessarily tied to the destruction of the earth. I agree, however, that perceiving God's Kingdom solely in apocalyptic terms is detrimental.

Reviewed by Dr Robert Govaerts

Christine Valters Paintner, *Water, Wind, Earth & Fire: The Christian Practice of Praying with the Elements*

Notre Dame, IN, USA: Sorin Books, 2010. 149 pp. ISBN 978 1 933495 22 4 (pbk.) £ 10.99

Christine Valters Paintner is a Benedictine Oblate, is married and holds a few official positions including Program Coordinator for the Ignatian Spirituality Center in Seattle, and Art Editor for *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction*. She describes herself as having loved the natural world from childhood onwards. She grew up in the city of New York, but she liked going regularly to Central Park, so as to reconnect with nature. In the summers she went with her parents to Austria, her father's home-land, and they spent time walking in the Vienna woods and Tyrolean mountains. Even though her parents were not religious people, she already had as a child a sense that the natural world was as a window to a sacred dimension, which she later would come to associate with God. She now lives in Seattle where she is surrounded by nature in all its magnificence, and she continues to find 'moments of profound communion with the natural world in ways that reveal God's presence as abundant', such as during hiking and kayaking (p. 11).

The introduction to the book opens with four stanzas of *The Canticle of Creatures* that is attributed to St Francis. The first lines of these stanzas are 'All praise be Yours, my God, through Brothers Wind and Air', 'All praise be Yours, my God, through Sister Water', 'All praise be Yours, my God, through Brother Fire' and 'All praise be Yours, my God, through Sister Earth, our mother'. The main part of the book consists of four chapters respectively entitled, Brother Wind, Brother Fire, Sister Water and Sister Earth. The structure of each chapter is identical and includes a few series of quotations, various reflections, meditations, and suggestions for developing a prayer life with the elements. The quotations are taken from Scripture, from early Christian writers, from medieval mystics and modern spiritual writers. The sources section at the end of the book provides the works from which these quotations are taken, but not the page numbers. In the conclusion she expresses the hope 'that in reading this book, you have found resources for cultivating a contemplative relationship to nature and have discovered how much the four elements of water, wind, earth, and fire are at the heart of the Christian tradition' (p. 138).

This is a book to be read a few pages at a time. There are so many short sections that list questions for reflection, so many suggestions for possible ways of prayer: by focusing our minds on our breath; by thinking of this or that sacred phrase on the in-breath and out-breath; by considering the power of a windmill; the suggestion to keep a bowl of water or a shell on our altar, etc. These could quite easily be meaningless unless one makes an effort to take it slowly. The many short sections do however offer flexibility in that the book can be opened at any page.

There is much valuable material and thought in this book. It invites us, for example, in the section entitled Carried by the Wind, 'to release our grip of control and enter into a life where we are willing to be led to new places' (p. 31). A rather good meditation is offered in the section Fire of Illumination, where she speaks of being flooded 'with images of creation infused with radiant light' and of being reminded 'of the way God illuminates me from within, dwells deep within me as a spark' (p. 53). Throughout its pages the book invites the reader upon a path that is less self-directed and more open to the promptings of the Spirit: 'to follow where the Spirit leads us' (p. 32). A criticism, however, is that heeding the manifold suggestions and reflecting upon the many questions could easily defeat this intention and become too centred upon introspection. Perhaps I would have liked a more continuous storyline that clearly communicates the vision of a people rising with the elements towards God through a human cooperation with the possibilities offered by God.

Reviewed by Dr Robert Govaerts

Joyce Rupp, Prayers to Sophia: Deepening our Relationship with Holy Wisdom
Notre Dame, IN, USA, 2010, Sorin Books. x 117 pp. ISBN 978 1 893732 84 1 (pbk), £8.99

Having for many years been interested in the concept of God as Wisdom, Wisdom which is beyond knowledge and at least in part beyond understanding, Wisdom into which we must grow to attain any degree of maturity, I came to this book with high expectations. Joyce Rupp is an American Servite nun interested in communicating with what she perceives as the feminine in God, and finding Wisdom under its Greek name, Sophia, was her starting point. Sophia's play at the creation of the world (Proverbs VIII) she saw reflected in the dance of a friend's child, and after studying prayerfully the Wisdom passages in Scripture, she came to recognise Sophia not just as an aspect of God but as God Herself. As the years passed, she

sensed that Sophia, her intimate friend, 'constantly leads me deeper, challenges me to grow freer and keeps inviting me to be more truly my best self'.

Each of the fifty prayers to Sophia has a quotation from scriptural Wisdom literature below it, and ends with 'Journaling' [sic] – an invitation to each individual reader to look more deeply into both Sophia and himself. The relationship with God desired and explored in this little book is an entirely personal one: the aspect of prayer as intercession for anyone or anything beyond the self is absent, beyond the scope of the book; the intention is solely to improve the self in order to bring about better living, and better service of God in the world.

This book will, I'm sure, appeal to many, but some people could never be at ease addressing God as, for example, 'Juicy Life-Giver', 'Womb of Wonder', 'Passionate Presence', 'Source of Nurturance', and would find in the style of writing too much somewhat overpowering and embarrassing sentimentality, as in this passage, chosen at random:

Wise Lady of the Seasons,
you sing a spiraling [sic] melody,
urging me onward with your song
the only words of which I hear
are 'let go, let go, let go'.

But for those who are not put off by this, and for those who want to perceive the feminine in God, this little book may point to a way forward.

There seems to be no particular order in the presentation of the prayers, but there is a full theme index at the back.

Reviewed by Janet Leythorne

Charles Foster, *Wired for God? The Biology of Spiritual Experience*

London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2010. 330 pp. ISBN 978 0 340 96442 2 £12.99

This book is described on the cover as 'serious and entertaining' and it certainly is. Foster uses his talent as a barrister to explore and critique contemporary theories and studies on the relationship between the brain and spiritual experience. His exploration covers the physiology of the brain, and its relationship with consciousness, spirituality, experience, and religion. His approach to spiritual experience encompasses a wide range of phenomena: out of body experiences, near death experiences, sexuality, drug and trance induced experiences and religious experience, and he concludes that while there are differences they are all of the same type of phenomenon. The shamanic trance of the San Bushman, the visions of the psychoactive drug taker and the meditations of the Buddhist monk all influence the brain in a similar manner and allow it to experience new realms of reality through altered states of consciousness.

Each of the thirteen chapters discusses a different aspect of the subject which is critically yet entertainingly scrutinised. Nothing is beyond debate or even ridicule, and Foster is willing to challenge all theories, secular, scientific or religious, exposing their weaknesses, but also recognising their strengths. The conclusion of the author seems to be that spiritual experiences are real, not just a chemical change in the brain, and that people are able to find different realities, which are called by different names and will always be related to the context of the experiencer. So the Protestant Christian will experience Christ, the Catholic,

Mary, the atheist past relatives and the shaman strange beasts. But all this is far from proving that God is a myth, rather it indicates the existence of both alternative realities, and the Divine. Indeed Foster concludes that humans have always recognised the spiritual aspect of life and attempted by different means to experience it, and so we are by nature 'wired for God.'

'... almost everyone who has lived has thought that there is some sort of God or gods. Atheism is a position held by so few people that, if we're just counting heads over the aeons, we can forget about it. To a first approximation, there are not and never have been any human atheists. If you don't like this generalisation, you'll like the next one even less: no one, but no one, is an atheist when he's off his head on LSD or magic mushrooms, or in the throes of a shamanic trance. If Richard Dawkins twiddled his dial and received a slightly broader range of bandwidths, he'd never have written *The God Delusion* and would now be living in a much smaller house.' (p. 186)

I found it an interesting read that challenged me to take my understanding of spiritual experiences and religion less seriously, and yet affirmed the reality that life is more than the physical material world. The search for an experience of the spiritual realm, and a relationship with God, is part of the human reality that the western mind dismisses at its peril.

Reviewed by Revd Dr John Burgess

Andrew Holden, *Religious Cohesion in Times of Conflict; Christian-Muslim Relations in Segregated Towns*

London: Continuum, 2009. 224 pp. ISBN 978 184706536 0 (pbk) £19.99

After the 2001 disturbances in Burnley, a report was commissioned under Professor Ted Cantle of the Institute of Community Cohesion*. None of its recommendations mentioned the contribution made by faith communities, or how they collaborated with secular bodies to maintain a tranquillity in society. However, in 2005 the Home office sponsored the two year investigation led by Andrew Holden on behalf of the University of Lancaster, which is the subject of this book. As with its neighbouring town, Blackburn, people of Indian sub-continental background live apart from their European heritage neighbours. Andrew met with Building Bridges Burnley, which seeks to connect the two cultures on the basis of their faiths. He collected relevant literature, distributed and analysed questionnaires, performed interviews, attended meetings and events and observed two groups of young people engaging in shared activity. He found that faith communities address the aim of community cohesion in three ways:

1. Dialogue: Religious leaders and lay people of different faiths listen to presentations and then discuss them.
2. Experience: People of different faiths engage together in a joint project; celebrating a festival, putting on an event, performing practical work together.
3. Contributing: People of different faiths join in the work of secular bodies in the community.

His chapters explore the religious attitudes of young people – combative among whites with little knowledge of Asian culture, but mainly positive among young Muslims – and the ways schools and colleges attempt to produce a cohesive community, whether those institutions are monocultural, bicultural or multicultural. The longest and most detailed chapter gives

accounts of two interfaith initiatives where young adults worked together to experience worship alongside members of different faiths. Another chapter records his survey of the religious leaders and young peoples' attitudes to them, remarking on the predominance of elderly imams from overseas, out of touch with young British Muslims, and the increasing number of young female social activists.

He concludes that local working partnerships between Christians and Muslims help local communities reduce the effects of the segregation, which continues to increase despite innovative projects run by interfaith groups and official agencies in both towns. He encourages religious people to engage in social and cultural activities whereby their faith may be visible within the wider community, before considering the exclusive views of some members of both religions, and the risks involved should they fail to engage with each other and with the wider society.

Mr. Holden is a sociologist with no religious faith himself, and no religious experiences illuminate these pages; if it was not for the bitter experience of race riots, one might wonder why we should bother with these irrelevant religious institutions. But in the chapter on young people meeting together, one glimpses an all too rare vision of purpose, faith, and the meeting of warm human beings across human divides.

Reviewed by Philip Tyers

**In August 2001, Professor Cantle was appointed by the Home Secretary to Chair the Community Cohesion Review Team, and to lead the review on the causes of the summer disturbances in a number of northern towns and cities. The 'Cantle Report' was produced in December 2001 and made around 70 recommendations. The concept of 'community cohesion' was subsequently adopted by the Government. Ed. www.cohesioninstitute.org.uk 3/3/11*

Books Received for Review

The following books have been received for review. If any of our current reviewers, or other interested readers would like to write a review of any of these, please contact Jean Matthews (j.matthews@tsd.ac.uk), who will arrange for a copy to be sent to you. When we receive your review, the book will become yours.

- A and L Arbachakov *The Last of the Shor Shamans* (O Books, 2009)
- Michael Berman *Shamanic Journeys, Shamanic Stories* (O Books, 2011)
- T Berry *Christian Future and the Fate of the Earth* (Orbis, 2011)
- R Butkus, S Kolmes, ed. *Environment Science and Theology in Dialogue* (Orbis, 2011)
- L Cassidy, M O'Connell, (ed)
 Religion, Economics and Culture in Conflict and Conversation (Orbis, 2011)
- Geoff Crocker *An Enlightened Philosophy: Can an Atheist Believe Anything?* (O Books, 2010)

- Andrew Dawson, ed. *Summoning the Spirits: Possession and Invocation in Contemporary Religion* (I. B. Taurus, 2011)
- Ilia Delio *The Emergent Christ* (Orbis, 2011)
- Leo de la Houssaye *Wisdom of the Stars* (Floris, 2011)
- C Dempsey, E Shapiro, (ed) *Reading the Bible, transforming Conflict* (Orbis, 2011)
- Mara Freeman *Kindling the Celtic Spirit* (Harper Collins, 2001)
- Harry Freedman *The Gospels' Veiled Agenda: Revolution, Priesthood and the Holy Grail.* (O Books, 2009)
- S F Haeri *Happiness in Life and After Death: an Islamic Sufi View* (O Books, 2010)
- Nicholas Hagger *The New Philosophy of Universalism* (O Books, 2009)
- David Hay *God's Biologist: a Life of Alister Hardy* (Darton, Longman & Todd, 2011)
- Michael Henderson *No Enemy to Conquer: forgiveness in an unforgiving world* (Baylor University Press, 2009)
- Howard A Jones *The World as Spirit: how Science supports the Mystical* (Fairhill, 2011)
- Gary Lachman *The Quest for Hermes Trismegistus* (Floris, 2011)
- John Lampen *The Worship Kit: A Young Person's Guide to Quaker Worship* (Quaker Books, 2010)
- Dinah Livingstone *Poetic Tales: Logosofia Down to Earth* (Katabasis, 2010)
- Michael G Long (ed) *Christian Peace and Non-violence* (Orbis, 2011)
- Melissa Lowe *The Apocalypse of the Mind: Transforming Ego into Stillness of Consciousness* (O Books, 2011)
- Donald W Musser & Joseph L Price *Tillich* (Abingdon Press, 2010)
- J Quenby & J MacDonald Smith, ed. *Intelligent Faith: a Celebration of 150 years of Darwinian Evolution* (O Books, 2009)
- Steven Ogden *Love Upside Down: Life, Love and the Subversive Jesus* (O Books, 2011)
- Letty M Russell *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference* (John Knox Press, 2009)
- Simon Small *Star Pilgrim: a Story of the Deepest Mysteries of Existence* (O Books, 2011)



AHS Library News



The AHS library has now been incorporated into the main library of Trinity Saint David on the Lampeter campus. This has the undoubted advantage of giving AHS members access to the main libraries at both Lampeter and Carmarthen, but I for one feel nostalgic for the days when we could browse the shelves in the AHS library, and stay to read and reflect in the more intimate, informal space the collection once occupied. So I am grateful to Joseph Norwood, who worked as a volunteer in the library while he was a philosophy undergraduate at Lampeter, for sending us this account of the library while it was still a physical entity.

Ed.

The Alister Hardy Library as I Knew it

The collection:

The Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre (RERC) library is a collection of books on comparative religion, theology, religious experience, psychology, parapsychology and related subjects. Many of the books in the collection are donated posthumously by AHS members. The collection was housed with the Archive of religious experiences, which contains descriptions of various different types of religious experience, and an archive detailing the centre's work and past research. The RERC Collection was shelved in the main office of RERC in the Department of Religious Studies in Lampeter until its incorporation into a special room in the main university library on the Lampeter campus of Trinity Saint David.

What it contains:

The main themes of the RERC library are religious experience, comparative religion and psychology. The collection also contains significant sections on the New Age, occultism, Theosophy and Baha'i, the complete works of Carl Jung and the writings of Michael Berg, a modern writer who popularised the Kabbala. Books that were sometimes obscure or self published were stored and preserved; my personal favourite was a book on how to live on after death, written by 'The Reincarnation of Robin Hood.' The library contains a complete set of back issues of *De Numine* the journal of the Alister Hardy Society, along with dissertations and theses relevant to Religious Experience. Books and research papers published by RERC are also available.

In addition, two separate collections were stored as part of the library collection: the largest, the Christian Deliverance Section, is a collection of books covering a wide range of subjects such as exorcism, magic, the black arts and witchcraft, donated by the Christian Deliverance Study Group. The second, the Deirdre Green Collection, was donated to the Religious Studies Department but was shelved and catalogued in the RERC library as we had the time and space to maintain it.

How it was organised:

A metadata schema is the system a library uses to record information about its material. The AHS library used an in-house schema developed by its librarians. The system included both a

hand-written card catalogue system and a computerised record stored on a spreadsheet. Printed copies of the catalogue were produced and given to members, but no online searchable catalogue existed.

The 'Subject' field was not used in the RERC cataloguing records. The closest field to this is 'where shelved if not under author'. Broadly speaking this filed things under subject, although it shelved other items under author, or specific collection. Some keywords on the RERC catalogue were unique to us, and were practically quite useful. For instance, we recorded where donations came from and sometimes shelved collections together. This would allow users who were interested in a particular academic or organisation to follow their studies by looking at what books they owned. This was especially important for the Deirdre Green Collection, as it was shelved with our collection but was not owned by us.

Most of the collection was classified alphabetically by author. Some of the sections we used are relatively easy to replicate in other systems, but others are more obscure. Religious groups, personalities and types of experience which are too obscure to be noted in other systems had relatively extensive sections in the RERC library.

How it was used:

During my time in the library, I did not get the impression that it was widely used as a lending library by university staff, students or members of the society; There was a postal service for borrowing books, but they were usually chosen in person. The library was seen as a friendly, interesting place that was well liked by those who knew about it; it was available as a resource just for browsing, and for research and as a study space, and was also used to hold small meetings. Through the years that it operated it was certainly one of the hidden gems of Lampeter University.



Joseph Norwood



AHS Events March to November 2011

Tuesday 12th April 2011

- 2.00 pm [Alister Hardy All Wales Group](#): Meeting in the Reading Room of the Roderic Bowen Library, Lampeter
- 4.00 pm [Spring Lecture](#), Old Hall, Lampeter. *God is a Feel not a Think – what is Spiritual Experience?* by James Roose-Evans, distinguished theatre director, author and Anglican priest
- Venue: University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter. (Contact & for Wales Sub-Groups Roger Coward, e-mail: roger.coward@smartemail.co.uk)

Friday 6th May 2011

- 7.30 pm [AHS Chesterfield Group](#): Theme: *Glimpses Of God* (video & discussion)
- Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield
(Contact: Mike Rush, e-mail: mike@mikerush.mail1.co.uk)

Tuesday 17th May 2011

6.00 pm AHS London Group: Talk: *Building Community: a Baha'i perspective on the role of spiritual and religious experience in individual and collective transformation in the 21st century*, by Barney Leith
 for
 6.30 pm
 Venue: Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London W1T 6AQ
 (Contact: John Franklin, e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com)

Friday 20th May 2011

7.30 pm AHS Midlands Group: Topic and speaker to be announced
 Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
 (Contact: Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Friday 3rd June 2011

7.30 pm AHS Chesterfield Group: Theme: *Learning from Past Lives*: presentation by Christopher Gilmore
 Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield
 (Contact: Mike Rush, e-mail: mike@mikerush.mail1.co.uk)

Saturday 11th June 2011

10.00 am Alister Hardy Society/World Congress of Faiths joint conference:
 to
 4.30 pm Theme: *Spirituality: How might Spiritual/Religious Experience Help towards Understanding and Compassion?*
 Speakers: Revd Dr Marcus Braybooke: *Fellowship of Faiths: A Communion of Spirit*;
 Dr Greg Barker: *Faith and No Faith: The Contribution of Atheism to the Spiritual Quest*;
 Eley McAinsh: *From Contemplation to Compassion*. Followed by discussion
 Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, Kensington, London W8
 [Cost: £20 Members of AHS/WCF – £25.00 non-members – £12 students.
 Booking/further details, contact: John Franklin, 21 Park Vista, Greenwich, London, SE10 9LZ. e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com]

Friday 17th June 2011

7.30 pm AHS Midlands Group: Topic: *Mandalas; Inner and Outer*:
 PowerPoint presentation and talk by Roger Coward
 Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
 (Contact Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Friday 1st July 2011

7.30 pm AHS Chesterfield Group: Theme: *Oracle-X*: presentation by David Croft
 Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield
 (Contact: Mike Rush, e-mail: mike@mikerush.mail1.co.uk)

Friday 15th July 2011

7.30 pm AHS Midlands Group: Topic: *Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela*:
 presentation by Revd Theresa Jones and Revd Colin Jones
 Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
 (Contact Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Friday 5th August 2011

7.30 pm AHS Chesterfield Group: Theme: To be confirmed
 Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield
 (Contact: Mike Rush, e-mail: mike@mikerush.mail1.co.uk)

Friday 2nd September 2011

7.30 pm AHS Chesterfield Group: Theme: *Know Thyself!* presentation by Mike Rush
Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield
(Contact: Mike Rush, e-mail: mike@mikerush.mail1.co.uk)

Friday 16th September 2011

7.30 pm AHS Midlands Group: Theme: to be announced
Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
(Contact Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Tuesday 20th September 2011

2.00 pm AHS Wales Group: Meeting in the Founders Library, Lampeter
4.00 pm Autumn Lecture, Old Hall, Lampeter. *Spirituality and Sacred Place in Wales*
by Prof Densil Morgan
Venue: University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter. (Contact & for Wales Sub-
Groups Roger Coward, e-mail: roger.coward@smartemail.co.uk)

Friday 7th October 2011

7.30 pm AHS Chesterfield Group: Theme: *The Crucible* (film)
Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield
(Contact: Mike Rush, e-mail: mike@mikerush.mail1.co.uk)

Friday 21st October 2011

7.30 pm AHS Midlands Group: Theme: to be announced
Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
(Contact Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Friday 28th to Sunday 30th October 2011

4.30 pm Fri. – AHS Wales Group: Centre Point Residential Retreat:
3.00 pm Sun. *Spirituality and Sacred Place in Wales*
Venue: Llantarnam Abbey, Nr. Cwmbran [Cost: single rooms & 1 twin bedded room
£84 per person; en suite £94. Deposit of £20 required by April 30th, balance to be
paid by 15th August.]
Contact: Mary Cook, Tel: 07794 294432 e-mail: maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk

Friday 4th November 2011

7.30 pm AHS Chesterfield Group: Theme to be confirmed: presentation by Joe Revill
Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield
(Contact: Mike Rush, e-mail: mike@mikerush.mail1.co.uk)

Friday 18th November 2011

7.30 pm AHS Midlands Group: Theme: to be announced
Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
(Contact: Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Tuesday 22nd November 2011

3.00 pm AHS London Group: Talk: *Spirituality in the Counselling Room*
by Revd Amanda Keighley
5.00 pm Shared supper (please bring finger food, tea/coffee provided)
5.45 pm Evening discussion
Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, London, W8
(Contact, John Franklin, e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com)

Sunday 11th December 2011

1.00 - 6.00 pm AHS Midlands Group: Christmas social and planning get together
Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA
(Contact Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

OTHER EVENTS

Friday 15th April to Sunday 17th April 2011

4.00 pm Fri. Scientific & Medical Network Mystics & Scientists Conference:
to *The Nature of Dreams: On the Threshold of Other Realities*
4.00 pm Sun. Speakers: Dr Larry Dossey, Prof Mark Blagrove, Prof Charles Laughlin,
Paul Devereaux, Dr Cedrus Monte and Dr Morton Schatzman
Venue: University College, Sparkeford Road, Winchester
[Cost, £255 residential – £220 non-res. (£240 – £205 SMN members). For
further information/booking contact Conference Administrator, Scientific &
Medical Network, PO Box 11, Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos., GL56 0ZF.
Tel: 01608 652001 e-mail: info@scimednet.org]

Saturday 16th April 2011

10.00 am to Society for Psychical Research: Study Day:
5.00 pm Theme: *Automatic Art, Music and Literature*. Speakers to be announced
Venue: St Philip's Church, Earls Court Road, London, W8 6QH
[Cost, £38 – £35 SPR members, £5 reduction for concessions. Booking/details:
SPR, 49 Marloes Road, London, W8 6LA. e-mail: secretary@spr.ac.uk]

Saturday 7th May 2011

7.30 pm Book launch of *Paper in the Wind*, a collection of poetry by Dennis Evans
Venue: Church Hall of Mary Immaculate & St Gregory the Great, 82 Union Street,
Barnet EN5 4HZ. Admission £10 which includes a copy of *Paper in the Wind*.
50% of proceeds go directly to Cherry Lodge Cancer Care

Wednesday 18th May 2011

10.45 am to University of Wales Trinity Saint David Seminar Series: Islamic Life & Culture
3.15 pm *The Oppression of Women in Islam: Myth or Reality?*
Speakers: Dr Chris Allen, Dr Laura Zahra McDonald
Venue: Halliwell Centre (Carmarthen Campus). Admission free, no booking required.
Further details: Dr. Abdulrahman Alzaagy, r.alzaagy@tsd.ac.uk,
01570 424552, or Dr. Martin O'Kane, m.okane@tsd.ac.uk, 01570 424866

Saturday 4th to Sunday 5th June 2011

Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture Conference:
Sky and Symbol: the role, nature and function of celestial symbolism
Details: n.campion@tsd.ac.uk <http://www.tsd.ac.uk/en/sophia/>

Friday 26th August to Sunday 28th August 2011

Scientific & Medical Network Conference: *Beyond the Brain IX:*
The Science of Sympathy and the Spirit of Compassion. Speakers:
Karen Armstrong, Dr Valeria Gazzola, Prof Paul Gilbert, Dr Iain McGilchrist
Venue: University College, Sparkeford Road, Winchester
[Cost, £270 res. en suite, £230 standard – £205 non-res. (SMN members, £255
en suite, £215 standard – £185 non-res. Contact: Conference Administrator,
SMN, PO Box 11, Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos., GL56 0ZF. Tel: 01608 652001.
e-mail: info@scimednet.org]

Friday 9th September to Monday 12th September 2011

Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies

SPECIAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE Theme: *Healing and the Paranormal*

Speakers: Professor Brian Thorne, Dr Santha Bhattacharji, Canon George Mitchell,
Dr Peter Fenwick, Marianne Rankin

This will be interspersed with papers on Christian Parapsychology

Venue: St Luke's Campus, Exeter University

[Standard accommodation £209: Ensuite accommodation £249

Further information from: Julian Drewett, CFPSS, The Rural Workshop,
South Road, North Somercotes, Lincs LN11 7PT. Tel/fax: 01507 358845

e-mail: gensec@churchesfellowship.co.uk]



Religious Experience MA Residentials at Lampeter 2011 – 2012:

dates to be arranged

Congratulations

Many congratulations to Nao Eredics who graduated in July 2010 with an MA in Religious Experience, but who did not appear in the Autumn 2010 list



Black and white photographs, and those on the first colour page supplied by Marianne Rankin, Peggy Morgan and Andy Burns

Photographs of the AHS Wales retreat at Llantarnam Abbey taken by Nancy Lawing and Roger Coward

Flower and tree photographs and black and white graphics by Jean Matthews

Colour graphics by Kevin Evans. Owls by Juliet Greenwood

**For Libya and Egypt, and all the countries struggling towards the Arab Spring
April 2011 C.E. Rabi Al Thani – Jumada Al Awaal 1432 A.H.**

The Old Revolution

I finally broke into the prison
I found my place in the chain
Even damnation is poisoned with rainbows
All the brave young men
They're waiting now to see a signal
which some killer will be lighting for pay

Into this furnace I ask you now to venture
you whom I cannot betray

I fought in the old revolution
On the side of the ghost and the King
Of course I was very young
And I thought we were winning
I can't pretend I feel very much like singing
As they carry the bodies away

Into this furnace I ask you now to venture
you whom I cannot betray

Lately you've started to stutter
As though you had nothing to say
To all of my architects let me be traitor
Now let me say I myself gave the order
to sweep and to search and to destroy

Into this furnace I ask you now to venture
you whom I cannot betray

You who are broken by power
You who are absent all day
You who are kings for the sake of your children's story
The hand of your beggar is burdened down by money
The hand of your lover is clay

Into this furnace I ask you now to venture
you whom I cannot betray

Leonard Cohen, 1969

The New Dawn

You shall go out with joy,
and be led forth with peace.
The mountains and the hills
shall break before you into singing,
and all the trees of the fields
shall clap their hands.

Isaiah 55:12