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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



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

Editorial

It gives me great pleasure to present an issue of *De Numine* in which there are three reminiscences of Sir Alister. These were delivered at Open Day 2009, the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Alister Hardy Society. There are also some great pictures of this occasion in the centrefold, of Professor Ursula King and Peggy Morgan delivering their talks, and also of some very jolly members enjoying lunchtime wine, which was kindly supplied by Professor Badham to mark the occasion. We have another reminiscence to come; Jane Winship, Sir Alister's great-niece, also shared her personal memories with us, and in order to print these in full we have saved them for the Autumn issue. She is, however, included in the centrefold. Open Day 2009 was the first at which our new Chair, Jonathan Robinson, presided. As I had hoped, Jonathan now has a regular slot at the beginning of *De Numine*, which I think is a very good way to start ... he does seem to pick themes that resonate through the whole issue, and this time his theme of being true to ourselves and the spirit that moves us is also echoed in the elegant writings of Raimon Panikkar on the very last page.

There has been a very promising start for the new Welsh AHS. One can hardly call it a local group; Wales is not just the size of a small country, it *is* a small country. Roger Coward, the new Chair of AHS Wales, has written about the Mandala Project, now happening in seven different regions of Wales (page 10). I will be reporting on 'Thoughtpower', the mandala group in SW Wales, at the September meeting for delegates from all the groups at LLantarnam Abbey, and I look forward to hearing how the other groups have fared. We will produce a special report on the whole project in the Autumn issue of *De Numine*, as well as the local group report which will cover the all-Wales programme of lectures and events. Local groups in England continue to hold a number of their meetings jointly, also some with other like-minded organisations, and this seems in every case to be very successful formula.

It is just after International Women's Day (March 8th) as I write this, and it feels appropriate to draw readers' attention to the letter from Anne Watkins on page 30. She takes to task Dr Howell and the Reverend Hopkins for sexist language. I hope my comment on her letter (page 31) deals with the latter criticism, but I would also like to draw Anne's attention to the reminiscences of Professor Ursula King (page 12) and Peggy Morgan (page 16) both of whom have taken pains to redress the balance in different ways. It is not always possible to do this in historical/traditional contexts, but I do agree with Anne that we must keep trying in the contemporary world. Statistics on the inequality of women, especially in the developing world, make depressing reading, and this in spite of the widespread, and statistically supported, acceptance that it is through the education and economic viability of women that whole countries can progress. Gendered language, especially in religious and spiritual contexts must impact on society, overtly secular or not, as surely it is in these areas that we meet the ultimate role models. Because of this, I hope that Anne, like me, will take delight in Raimon's last line on the last page ...

Please forgive the free-ranging centrefold. I know this is not popular, but as usual we have so many excellent submissions that we decided we couldn't afford to lose four pages of text in order to staple the centrefold in ... I hope readers think the minor inconvenience of this is worth it. Anyway, members and officers of AHS featured in the Open Day photos may well want to put the centrefold up on the wall ...

Patricia Murphy

Whatever Happened to God?

Recent surveys indicate that many people have a problem with belief in a personal God. Of course, this is a bald statement, which doesn't actually say very much. I guess most of us would be cautious about accepting someone else's definition of God, because all of us have a different understanding of what this word means. It is not surprising that many people, especially in our own time, hesitate to use the word.

It seems to me that the problem is particularly acute for us today because so many people, especially the media, are only happy when they can define, categorise and describe some objective reality 'out there'. For me, a hopeful sign is that we are increasingly coming to realise that nothing, absolutely nothing, exists in isolation. Everything, and indeed all life, is interconnected. Separation is ultimately an illusion, as the Buddhists emphasise and indeed all the great mystical traditions assert.

In a sense, this takes us back to experience, and the need for people of integrity to be true to their own experiences of life, which is about being true to what the heart tells us. Most of us have a problem with accepting doctrines or scriptural statements, from whatever the religious tradition, unless they resonate with our own experience, with our own empirically gained knowledge, insights and intuitions. 'To thine own self be true, and then thou canst not be false to any man' (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*) is good advice. Unless we can recognise and respect this, religion indeed runs the risk of division, and defeating its prime aim, which is to unite. It may be interesting to note that John Saxbee, Bishop of Lincoln, and President of the Modern Churchpeople's Union, in his new book *No Faith In Religion*, quotes from an opinion poll in the Sunday Times (2 September 2007) claiming that religion does more harm than good. Maybe this is because religion is increasingly perceived as *not* helping us to be true to ourselves.

Yes, I do believe that we have a problem with the word 'God' today, and I often find myself with a feeling of embarrassment in the use of the word. I believe it *should* be an indication of that point at which we meet each other at the deepest level of being of which we are capable, where we meet the transcendent reality which is the very ground of our being, where we encounter the inner mystery which gives our lives joy, meaning and support. Meister Eckhart says: 'Thou shalt know Him without image, without semblance, and without means – 'But for me to know God thus, with nothing between, I must be all but He, He all but me' – I say that God must be very I, I very God, so consummately one that He and I are one 'is', and this is-ness working one work eternally ...' [Eckhart, 1924: 247; Sermon XCIX].

Our understanding of words undoubtedly changes. All of us can be selective in our use of biblical quotations, and it is probably true that we can select verses to give credence to almost anything we please. (That is why discernment has always been recognised as a most important gift of the Spirit.) We also often labour under the weight of theological reflection and interpretation which has accumulated over the years.

What does seem to me to be of significance is that the use of the word 'religion' has changed, even in my lifetime. In our pilot studies of religious experience in Tamilnadu, South India, it was apparent that the understanding of the expression 'religious experience' covered a wide range, from experiences which were the result of following a particular faith tradition, to experiences which were 'spiritual', but not dependent on a faith tradition, to experiences which might be better labelled as 'psychic'. In that society, most people are comfortable to describe all such experiences under the umbrella of 'religious experience'.

This is manifestly not so in our society and culture in Britain and Western Europe. People's understanding of religious experience is much narrower. It seems to me that it is perceived as experience arising out of acceptance of a particular faith tradition, and people do not wish to describe their experiences of the 'more than' as religious experiences when they do not subscribe to that tradition. They prefer to describe them as 'spiritual'. (By 'more than' I mean that of which we are aware which appears to be mediated other than, or in addition to, that which comes to us through our physical senses.) If that is true of our use of the words 'religious' and 'spiritual' today, then it is also surely true that many, indeed I suspect the majority, of the experiences that are recorded in our archives should not be described as 'religious', but rather as 'spiritual'.

I do not believe we should attempt to define the word 'spiritual'. (My understanding is that the word 'define' comes from the Latin words 'de fine', which means 'to come to the end of'.) Practically every person will give a different description of what they feel the word 'spiritual' means. I think this is fine, because every one of us will want to describe the ineffable, the reality of our own special experiences, the gift of consciousness, the mystery of being, our very 'isness', in the way which is most real for us at the present time.

By taking this distinction on board, by distinguishing between spiritual experiences and those experiences more particularly mediated and defined by particular traditions and cultures, we may be doing a great service, both for recognising the wonder and significance of the interests we share in our Society and for the evolution of the larger society and consciousness of which we are all part.

Jonathan Robinson, Chair, AHS

A Dying Blackbird and Participation in Cosmic Prayer

On a beautiful sunny day on the Isle of Wight, the Gregorian-sung Eucharist just being finished at Quarr Abbey, I went into the surrounding woods and saw ahead of me a blackbird on the path. I was surprised that as I approached it did not trip from the path to hide under the bushes or fly up, but instead remained in the middle of the path. As I slowly drew nearer, the creature made efforts to get away from this tall black-robed monk. It was obviously near its end, either because it had completed its life or was wounded. As I stopped a few steps away, it slowly moved under a bush beside the path. I wondered whether God was noticing this little bird, one of the million upon millions that are in the world, and what would become of it. Arguably, Jesus Himself asserted that 'not one of them falls to the ground without the Father [knowing]' (Matt. 10:29 – the original Greek has no further verb). Or, as Luke has written: '[N]ot one of them has been forgotten in the presence of God' (Luke 12:6). For surely, if God is with it, not only at its end but during its entire life of flying, chirping, searching for food (Ps. 147:9 and Luke 12:24), building nests and rearing fledglings, then:

Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at thy altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God. (Ps. 84:3)

If I could feel tenderness and compassion, then certainly God would not fail to notice and be compassionate towards His creature.

Would it have existed for our purpose only? (The teaching, ultimately, of Thomas Aquinas and even of Teilhard would have us believe so.) Nay! God loves it. How arrogant to even entertain such presumption! Would it not rather have lived to the greater glory of God and for its own well-being and that of others? God is the ground of its being and is present to it, even when we, the human creatures, are absent.

It seems incredible to assume that likewise the entire Amazon-delta, forest and river, with its teeming multitude of creatures, the variety and number of which but few people are aware, a world which is still being discovered even while humanity is extinguishing many more species at a higher rate, that all this only exists for us. What about the many beautiful wild flowers that grow everywhere, display their magnificence and delicateness, and disappear, without a human eye ever having been set upon them? Or again, would all that exists on earth and even in the entire universe, only exist for the sake of educating the human, as 'a vast schoolhouse'? For certain, without the universe and the processes that have taken place therein, and without the natural processes on the earth throughout its five billion year history, and without the climate and environment and nourishment provided by the multitude and variety of living creatures, past and present, we would not have emerged or be able to live. Moreover, the mental stimulation evoked by natural phenomena has been significant for the humanoid species coming to a conscious awareness of a mysterious realm, of the divine, which laid the foundation for receptivity of the particular revelations to certain human individuals in the last few thousand years, with which the widespread religious systems were introduced. Also for the contemporary human being, wonderment before the gift of life and the various created realities is an integral element of the usual way to enter upon a relationship with God and a life of faith.

We conventionally believe that we are the only self-aware species, and therefore the only species that can consciously enter into a relationship, the more so with a transcendent divinity not directly observable to the senses. It is to be acknowledged that the blackbird's mental abilities are much restricted compared to our own, yet it was during its life not devoid of desires – even though they are instinctively instilled – which it tried to fulfil with all its efforts amidst various circumstances. It constantly strived to keep alive; it experienced pain or elation; it has used its memory for places, fellow birds, various foods, etc.; it has displayed its very own abilities and character, and it has been instilled with an alertness to various life-threats. When its forces are depleted, when it is quiet and, presumably, aware of its imminent end, it simply exists and waits, as we do ourselves before the ground of our being, whom we Christians know as 'I Am', and before whom it bows its head and succumbs. Of course, I do not rashly assume that a bird has any conceptual knowledge of the divinity; that it flies around for the sake of giving pleasure to God. Yet, it can be seen as an integrated part of a seamless created totality; of an all-inclusive story that extends back in time for about 13.7 billion years; of an interaction or dialogue between God and His creation whereby the latter is continuously being drawn and transformed towards and into God.

Some years earlier, I had walked up a small mountain near another Benedictine abbey, found an altar on top of it (stood and looked to see whether anybody was around) raised my arms to heaven and prayed to God for all that I was worth, with praising, singing and crying. Was it only my mind that was involved? My lungs, voice, arms, all the cells of my body were involved and participating in a certain unconscious manner – as also the bird is actively part of a cosmic totality – and we could say that even the altar, the mountain and the sky were part of it. I later found that a similar impression is evoked by Philip Zaleski and Carol Zaleski in their book *Prayer: A History* as regards an experience of Tibet:

[W]e saw prayer wheels spinning in the sun, bees looping and swirling around those wheels, the sun melting into night as the monks' voices faded into the mountains, all seemingly one motion, one symphony, one grand universal gesture of prayer.

Faith in a personal God who is continuously present to His creation, and some knowledge of the astounding combination of physical conditions and series of succeeding events required for our emergence, has let me assume that the multi-billion year preparation and cooperation of the natural order to put us on the earth was not for nothing, but so that we would fulfil a cosmic function by these capacities that are specifically human: namely, a prayerful living whereby a universal and harmonious existence within God's embrace may be fostered. It occurred to me that when we stand on a mountaintop or kneel in our room with our hands raised towards heaven, and that when the bird flies and dies, we are part of this one overall dynamic towards God and that it leads us to a single destiny in God (see also Ps. 36:5v.).

It is a pity that such cosmic vision of promise and hope has been marginalized within Christianity. However, there are in fact several texts within the Hebrew and Christian traditions wherein the various created entities are allowed their own place and voice in the relationship with and movement towards God. There are for example the Psalms 19 (verses 1-6), 93 (vv. 3-4), 96, 98, 103 (vv. 19-22), 148 and 150. Famous also is the *Song of the Three Young Men in the Furnace* as found at Daniel 3:52-90 in the Greek translation (or listed among the Deutero-canonical books as part of the addition inserted after Dan. 3:23), which includes the *Hymn of all Creation* that draws heavily upon the Psalms. It was sung by Christians of the early Church, especially on feast days, and it still has a prominent place in the Roman Catholic Divine Office for morning prayer. But many will see it only as a backdrop in metaphorical language of the human prayer. Also in the Hebrew prophets we can find several passages wherein voice is given to various creatures, while early Christian writers included the idea of praying with the angels and birds. For example, Tertullian (c. 160-220) concludes his treatise *De Oratione* with the assertion that all angels pray, as well as every creature, whether wild beast, beasts of the field, or birds. Basil (c. 329-79) in his turn wrote a *Prayer for a Deeper Sense of Fellowship with All Living Things*. Its content could not be more fitting for our times: '... the voice of the earth which should have risen to you in song has turned into a groan of travail ...'. We hear here, of course, a reverberation of Paul's Romans 8:19-22, which was itself inspired by Hebrew texts such as Genesis 3:17-18, Isaiah 35:1-7, Hosea 4:1-3 and Jeremiah 12:4 and 11. Basil's friend Gregory of Nazianzen (c. 330-90) also has inspiring texts for us on this theme, among which is a hymn that has been taken up in the French version of the Divine Office (*La Liturgie des Heures*, vol. 4). I provide here a translation of some verses:

All beings,
those that speak and those that are dumb,
they proclaim You.
All beings,
those that think and those without thought,
they render You homage.
The universal desire,
the universal groaning tends towards You.
All that is prays You,
and every being that contemplates Your universe,
lets a hymn of silence ascend towards You.
All that dwells, dwells through You;
through You the universal movement subsists.

Numerous other examples both ancient and modern can be cited. Years ago, the present Pope (Benedict XVI) wrote as follows:

Creation exists for the sake of worship ... Ultimately every people has known this. The creation accounts of all civilizations point to the fact that the universe exists for worship and for the glorification of God ... The danger that confronts us today in our technological civilization is that we have cut ourselves off from this primordial knowledge.

More than 20 years have passed since I studied physics, about 15 years since I stood on that overgrown outdoor altar and 10 since that bird died. Some time afterwards it was necessary to leave the monastery behind. Since then I have been pursuing the traditional and ever new vision of universal creation's longing for a personal and loving communion with and within God. It is perhaps a peculiar thing that in the meantime I am uninterested in much of the human world and am left standing along the sidelines as a useless tramp. Woe is me.

Robert Govaerts

About those Thin Moments

I much appreciated David Weale's article 'Thin Moments' in the Newsletter of the Alister Hardy Society [Spring 2009, issue 46, page 13]. I have no difficulty in accepting that moments of richer awareness, of an order of Reality beyond everyday consciousness, are common enough in the lives of those who have not firmly closed the door on them, but consider them 'natural' in the sense of a normal element of human experience.

Two questions quickly came to mind, followed by a third: how do these experiences relate to 'religious' experience, or are comparable with it in the sense of experience linked with the culture of a particular religion, with its rites, dogmas, traditions, etc? And how do they compare with genuine 'faith' experience, where an experience is inseparable from previously held conviction about God's existence and styles of interaction with us? Finally, in the light of my reflections on these questions, what is the purpose, the function, of these 'thin moments'?

The experiences available to individuals or to groups through rites of passage or worship seldom have the same incisive simplicity in their grasp of the transcendent as those quoted by David Weale, though sometimes they do. But they do have an important social dimension which solitary, largely interior experiences usually lack. They link us much more concretely to other people, to and through the world of symbolic sense and action, which in turn assists our efforts to link the sense of transcendence, of wholeness and unity, with the small specifics of everyday life. Certain isolated 'thin moments' may indeed have a transformative effect in the lives of some individuals, but far more often they fall like seeds by the wayside, largely forgotten, mistrusted, even deliberately suppressed. I once asked an atheist fellow-student if she had never experienced such moments. 'Oh yes', she replied, 'When I was in my early teens there were several. I waited for something to come of them but nothing did, so I assumed they were illusions, just part of growing up.' All I could do was urge her never to suppress or deny experience, however uncomfortably it might lie alongside later experience apparently inconsistent with it.

This young woman's rejection of her experiences may not be entirely her responsibility. A materialistic culture without religious faith tends to discourage whatever may create such faith. One of my role models is Julian of Norwich, who in her youth was granted experiences of divine love which she could not easily reconcile with a contemporary catechetical mode which presented God as judge, and divided everything into 'good' and 'evil'. Should she say, 'I have experienced otherwise, so I know they have got it wrong'? Or should she suppress her experiences as some form of delirium, because the Church always has it right? In fact she did neither. She sat with the incongruity for twenty years, until at last the questions subsided, because she had found an angle of congruity. Are we too impatient today to be in command

of clear answers to wait for the angle of congruity to emerge? But there is no other road to the ultimate unity that our experiences of wholeness offer.

As for the 'faith'-moments – when, often in the teeth of the most drastic contradiction, we experience a renewed conviction that in spite of so much evidence to the contrary, God does exist and is benevolent – these can easily be described as the 'thin' moments of religious believers. They are most likely to be transformative in their effect when they are linked with a cultural experience of the same truths. Moreover, where religious faith is deliberately and constantly activated alongside a contemplative approach to life, such moments may be so frequent, and varied in their associations with both religious belief and practice and the mundanities of daily life, that they attract little attention, although each of such moments may be quietly transformative in its effects. We say of such persons that they are 'special', transparent to the Beyond, that they radiate to others something of God, of a universal love, and so on.

Recently a wide array of people visited a casket containing the bones of St Thérèse of Lisieux, a slip of a girl who learned – and practiced – a good deal more about loving, believing in Love, and solidarity with others, than the rest of us learn in a lifetime [she died aged 24], and who seems to have been given an extraordinary charism of mediating to others something of the very Source of her own wisdom. The more articulate of her visitors describe not only being drawn into communion with a very present and very alive Thérèse herself, but an experience of the essential unity between this world and a blissful existence beyond it, with a ready sharing of knowledge and gifts between the two. Nor are the 'thin moment' experiences that have been associated with St Thérèse ever since her death over a century ago confined to the stimulating atmosphere of large gatherings of fellow-believers. I personally did not visit the relics, but was impressed enough by what I heard to ask myself 'Did I miss something?' Immediately I became aware of the saint as fully present to me, and a reply was communicated: 'I am always with you, whenever and however you want me to be'.

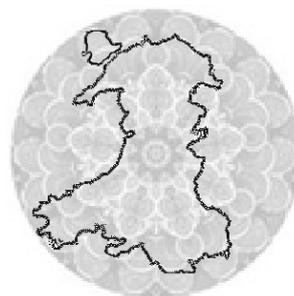
What can one conclude from the above? I would suggest that the more occasional, more unexpected 'thin moments' are invitations to interact more fully, more frequently, more confidently with – and out of – this domain of wholeness and unity, which is also experienced as both 'other' and 'new'. They are like the hand of an adult reaching out towards a child, inviting further exploration of life. Unfortunately our culture takes a sceptical view which we need to resist by affirming, recalling and sharing these experiences wherever doing so may sow the seeds of livelier faith in the Beyond.

At the same time, however, we need to acknowledge their limitations. They are normally too individualistic and just too 'different' to effect a fully transformed approach to life on earth, unless accompanied by a sturdy religious faith. And today especially we need to resist the temptation to pit personal religious experience against the role of the rites, dogmas and traditions of organized religion. However corrupted and out of touch in many regards the latter may be (or may seem to be), they have an irreplaceable capacity to make coordinated and integrative associations between individual experience of the transcendent and human society in all its dimensions.

Margaret Davidson OCD (Order of Carmelites, Discalced; or 'Barefoot Carmelites')

See centrefold for pictures of the relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux when they visited the Metropolitan Cathedral of St David, Cardiff on 22nd and 23rd September 2009 as part of their visit to England and Wales. Ed.)

The AHS Wales Mandala Project



I realised on re-reading the responses to Pat Craig's questionnaire, sent to AHS members in Wales and published in the Autumn 2008 *De Numine*, that this Mandala Project just happens to reflect the ideas that the membership had already come to. Kim Eames wrote, 'Local meetings with group members bringing their interests to share seems to be the way forward'. Gareth Davies; 'Informal meetings without speakers are less intimidating, encouraging participation from people who might not usually speak up'. Jonathan Robinson spotted the possibility of spending a longer time together at a residential, 'maybe a couple of days with accommodation'. Tim Chilton got to the heart of it when he wrote, 'All members must, simply by choosing to be members, have a contribution – their own experiences, study or thoughts. That must be a rich reservoir'.

Although the project was conceived as a solution to the geographical problems of an All Wales Group, once the name 'Mandala Project' was attached the potential significance took on a deeper meaning. Whatever else it is, a mandala has a centre and a periphery, with the various elements within it working together to create a whole – and unite with ultimate reality, whatever we might conceive that to be. In part, the mandala is the external form for the project we are undertaking in Wales, where our periphery is widely spread amongst the hills and mountains, and the centre is at Lampeter, along winding roads and often difficult to get to. Like a mandala we are made up of sub-sections in the various regions of the **Principality** of Wales.

The symbolism of the mandala is very rich. Besides its centre and circumference, it has been described as 'a concentric diagram having spiritual and ritual significance, a means for focusing the attention of aspirants and adepts and as a spiritual teaching tool'. Also 'for establishing a sacred space and as an aid to the unification of variety, the external and the internal, the diffuse and the concentrated'.

Hopefully each group will show some awareness of the latest research and do their own, so that we can offer an understanding of our material as well as sharing experiences. However, instead of a proliferation of interest, the project proposes that we concentrate on one subject for a year. A mandala is centripetal – directing us to a single centre. The precise centre may be unknown – but the direction is towards it. In this way we deepen our explorations and we concentrate, at the same time keeping an open and objective mind towards the periphery of vision. Local groups will come together and describe their experiences at the September Retreat, when we will have to make that difficult decision for next year. 'Mandala' is such a good symbol for this relationship between diversity and oneness. I hope that when we come together in the Mandala Project we can carry some of the atmosphere of sacredness for each other and for the Whole. Being in a group with a common goal can be a special experience, even a religious experience. As the knights sitting around the Round Table discovered – the Grail may appear.

I have been studying the Cistercians and their organization for a book about the village of Abbeycwmhir, the site of the Abbey of Cwmhir. The reason they were so successful (with thirteen abbeys just in Wales, over one hundred in England, and a total of 650 in Europe) was

that there was a strong connection to the centre in Citeaux. Local Abbots visited every year to attend the General Chapter at Citeaux and to renew themselves, and in the outward direction every Abbot visited every daughter house founded directly from his own monastery. Centre and periphery again.

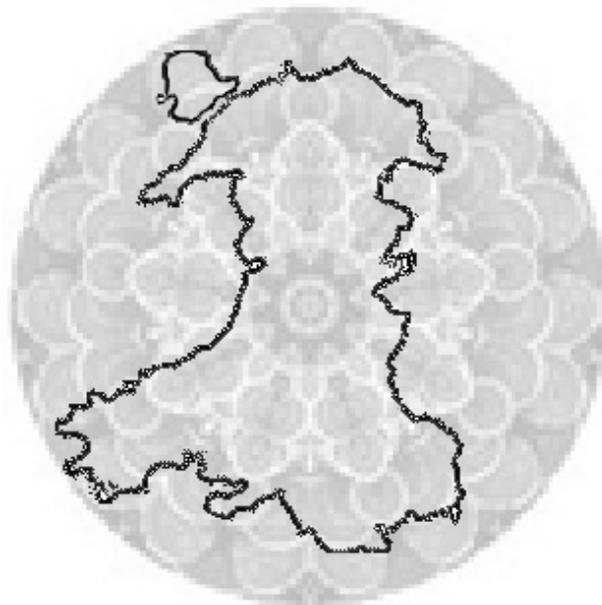
We will also learn what it is to do research. Thus we keep to the spirit of the Religious Experience Research Centre. The main focus of the Alister Hardy Society is spiritual and religious experience. A mandala has been described as an aid to the unification of the external and the internal and for establishing a sacred space. 'Where one or two are gathered together'? What better way to 'do' spiritual experience research than as a participant observer? More hermeneutic than clinical. Not the proliferation of data but a concentration on the essential core experience. *Have you ever felt a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?*

You might say there are two broad categories of spiritual experience – *the spontaneous and unexpected* on the one hand and *the sought* by meditation, prayer, ritual and artistic creativity on the other. Our Wales mini-groups could be mandala containers where we create the conditions for a sought spiritual experience – but of course it may come when we least expect it – or not. Why do we need the AHS for this when we can go to church, chapel, meditation group or silent retreat for it? The answer is that most other groups adhere to particular practices, doctrines and symbols. The AHS seeks universality through its unique brand of objectivity and experience. The RERC researches religious experience – and in our mandala groups, participant observers will be seeking to do just this.

However, it may not always be a Rose Window.

Roger Coward, Chair, AHS Wales

See report from the AHS Wales local group, page 27



Reminiscences of Sir Alister Hardy, from Open Day 2009

Looking Back – Looking Ahead: Some Personal Reflections in connection with Sir Alister Hardy

Celebrating the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Religious Experience Research Centre has made me look more closely at the life and work of Sir Alister Hardy, his extraordinary personality and his inspiring inheritance. We are all eagerly awaiting the publication of David Hay's biography of Alister Hardy, but given the unusual richness of Hardy's life and achievements, I think there is room for more than just one book. Several short monographs and essays directed at young people in schools and colleges could do much to make this great 'zoologist and religious thinker' (as *The Times* obituary described him in 1985) far better known, as he certainly deserves to be. Even Harris Manchester College, with which he was closely associated in his later years, could perhaps commemorate him more than with a plaque in its Chapel and his name associated with one of its constituent houses. One of the students told me that he had no idea who this man was after whom the Alister Hardy house was named, and I was surprised not to find an appropriate mention of this famous man on the College website.

By contrast I came across much factual information and insightful comment on the website of the National Archives with its catalogue of Sir Alister's papers held among the special collections of the Bodleian Library. These fall into several categories of which the first three are the most relevant in the present context. These three are 1. biographical and autobiographical material; 2. zoology and marine biology; 3. religion and the paranormal, followed by several other items. The first category includes the draft of an autobiography up to 1925 which includes the crucial 'vow' Hardy made in 1914 that should he survive the war, he would 'try to bring about a reconciliation between evolutionary theory and the spiritual awareness of man'.

It took him a lifetime to do this, for he first made his mark in science by following a brilliant scientific career and achieving international eminence in his field. But as is commented upon on the site of the National Archives, the material presented under 'Religion and the Paranormal' suggests that 'rather than being a scientist with a secondary interest in religious matters, Hardy was a religious or mystic personality who saw his scientific career as an essential platform from which he could pursue a primary spiritual aim'. It also refers to 'a tantalising mixture of complexity and simplicity in Hardy's personality', something also evident from the fact that Hardy was known by several different names among friends and family members.

It was especially with his Gifford Lectures, given at the University of Aberdeen from 1963-1965, that Hardy's career moved strongly towards the study of evolutionary theory, natural theology and the biological basis of religious behaviour. This led eventually, in 1969, to the setting up of the Religious Experience Research Unit (RERU) at Manchester College, Oxford – an idea first mentioned at the end of the last chapter of his book *The Divine Flame*, composed of the Gifford Lectures:

Yes, a world religion is what is needed, one founded upon a flame of faith within the heart and reason in the mind, a reasoning based upon the findings of scientific studies in both natural theology and psychical research. (p. 244)

The Divine Flame, published in 1966, provides so many inspiring ideas for moving forward, for pressing ahead with developing further research. John Taylor, the former Bishop of Winchester, referred to Hardy's book as 'these magnificent lectures', and magnificent they are, although relatively little known and rarely referred to in our time. What strikes me in

Hardy's reflections is the strong combination of scientific realism and experimentalism with prophetic insight and a large spiritual vision. In some ways he seems to anticipate several contemporary debates, urging us to move further ahead and be more daring. For example he writes that consciousness is not simply an epiphenomenon, not just the superficial by-product of the material process, but that there is strong evidence 'for the existence in man of an element which, while linked to the material system, would not ... appear to be explained by it ... a number of scientists with a greater vision are now realizing that the problem of the nature of consciousness, embracing that of the mind-body relationship, is one of the most important facing mankind today' (p. 222). Are we not right there today with so many scientists from different disciplines being involved in consciousness studies? Hardy had a great respect for and love of science, but for a science that was not reductionist and oversimplified but had room for a 'scientific theology', as he called it, a 'science of man's religious behaviour'. These ideas are only briefly sketched out in the last chapter of his book, entitled 'A Science of Theology and an Experimental Faith' (see his Lecture X, pp. 219-244). It is up to us to flesh out these ideas and carry them into the future.

Hardy's vision is one of hope and optimism, but can we share it in the twenty-first century? His search for a 'true science of theology' (p. 238), 'a progressive theology' that is 'ablaze with religious spirit' but linked to a 'scientific outlook' and a faith 'based upon spiritual experience' (p. 245) resonates with many of us. But our contemporary awareness of possible planetary disasters, our ecological sensitivities and vast global problems make us perhaps more hesitant and critical in following his strong belief in a further evolution of humanity. Hardy refers to 'the continually increasing rate of man's scientific and technological skill and achievements. The progress in the [twentieth] century is staggering ... the whole of man's civilization is but a few thousand years compared to the two thousand million years' span of organic evolution. Provided we have no cosmic or man-made disaster, we should, on this earth alone, still have more than a thousand million years of evolution in front of us'. (p. 240).

With our knowledge and experience of today we may react to such a staggering prognosis with critical doubt, if not fear, but the realistic sifting of such strong words can also help us to face new challenges and take up new tasks. For me, some of Hardy's remarks remind me of another visionary scientist and mystic of the twentieth century, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the fervently believing geologist and palaeontologist who shared many similar attitudes. Like Hardy, he possessed a great scientific passion and mystic temper; he was deeply devoted to evolutionary theory and its relation to what he called the human phenomenon. Teilhard also, like Hardy, used metaphors of fire and flame to refer to the energies of life and the dynamism of the Spirit. It therefore comes as no surprise that Hardy, towards the end of his book, makes a fleeting reference to Teilhard. Hardy writes:

Given sufficient time and a sufficient increase in information – stored mechanically for reference far beyond the memories of individual men – it seems possible that there must logically come a point when Man has indeed asked every possible question ... and has in time ... recorded every possible answer. He will know all the secrets of the Universe. He may in addition have developed a new collective consciousness ... and a greatly increased spirituality. I am, perhaps, in my imaginary answer getting near the Omega point of Teilhard de Chardin, but by a different road.

Hardy implies some inherent purpose to the process of evolution here, and continues:

Perhaps indeed we really *are* the children of God and that evolution must, with its psychic, spiritual element operating within the material matrix, eventually lead to a collective omniscient consciousness knowing just how and where universe life may and *will* be started again! We are perhaps part of a great system for generating love, joy and beauty in the universe ... from what the mystics, poets and artists tell us, the real meaning of the cosmic process is something far more wonderful than anything we can possibly imagine in our present state of being. (241f.).

I read these words as an invitation as well as a challenge addressed to the ongoing efforts to undertake research into religious experience. Taking into account what has been achieved so far, we may now be at an important juncture where we also need to examine more closely the understanding of the complexities of evolutionary theory and the implications of evolution for the life of the mind and the spirit, especially for the further evolution of spirituality and mysticism within the larger process of humanity's evolution around the globe.

In other words, in looking back at Sir Alister's work, writings and achievements, I believe there is still a greater, more challenging scientific task to be undertaken, adumbrated in his own words and vision. To develop our research further, beyond what has been completed, it is worth looking more closely at evolution itself and at the impact of this dynamic, ongoing process on the further development of the human community and consciousness, and of the human spirit and its religiousness.

This requires going beyond the collection of descriptive data on religious experience toward a more nuanced and differentiated articulation of what the spiritual awareness of the human being is all about, of how the cultivation of spiritual sensitivity and spiritual literacy can be further developed and how, at the deepest level, scientific and religious awareness are intimately interconnected, since both contribute to the growth and transformation of human beings, and to the self-understanding and increasing collaboration of the human community.

Let Sir Alister Hardy have the last word. The final chapter of *The Divine Flame* ends with the words (translated into the inclusive language we take for granted today):

As the making of physical fire was one of the great milestones in the rise of human beings, so also I believe was the discovery of prayer as a means of kindling and fanning a flame found within them: a flame which, like a spiritual engine, has brought them to higher and higher things. Let them not throw it away (p. 244).

And in his brief Postscript he adds: 'We believe that religion exists that we may have life, and have it more abundantly' (p. 246). May we all add to this life and kindle its flame.

Professor Ursula King, AHT Trustee

The following books by Sir Alister Hardy are available in the Alister Hardy Library:

<i>The Biology of God</i>	Jonathan Cape, 1975
<i>A Cotswold Sketchbook</i>	Alan Sutton, 1984/88
<i>Darwin and the Spirit of Man</i>	Collins, 1984
<i>The Divine Flame</i>	Collins, 1966; RERU, 1966/78
<i>The Living Stream</i>	Collins, 1965
<i>The Spiritual Nature of Man</i>	Clarendon Press, Oxf., 1979 RERC, 1997

Memory of Sir Alister: a Student Encounter

I was a young learner, an undergraduate at university and then after that a trainee teacher when I listened to Alister Hardy and felt his presence. In these few moments of reminiscence, I want to describe that encounter and the impact it made on me.

I need to give you the context. My father had a wide-open mind and heart, and was a spiritual explorer. He took a small party of young people with him to a gathering called the

Centre for Spiritual and Psychological Studies, organized by a redoubtable character called Alison Barnard. Some of you on our circuit now may remember that – and Alison; you are on its records! In my flashback, we are in the early and mid-sixties, a time of great tension and excitement as I recall – of infinite possibility and pressing urgency. Was the Age of Aquarius about to dawn, or would we be burnt to a crisp in a nuclear holocaust? Would we be swallowed up in earthquakes or redeemed by a new wave of universal love?

The CSPS held conferences in Brighton and Hove, Aix-en-Provence and Talloires, attracting all sorts: sociologists, social workers, secretaries of religious societies; psychologists, psychotherapists and counsellors; artists and sculptors; teachers, teacher-trainers, college and school principals; art-marshals, brigadiers and colonels; professors and lecturers in Religious Studies, Oriental Studies, Logic, Architecture, English, Liberal Studies, Physics, History, Botany (to name but a few) and, yes, the list included Marine Biology and Zoology. Topics drew on (or included) philosophy, religious traditions, meditation, yoga, mysticism, spiritualism, astrology, neurology, psychology, telepathy, psychokinesis, radiaesthesia, dowsing, medicine and healing ... well, that's just a flavour of the range. There were doom-laden prophets of Armageddon and passionate optimists (I recall a visionary with wild hair and a light in his eyes called George Trevelyan).

Into the arena stepped Alister Hardy. 'The Part Consciousness plays in the Evolutionary Process', my notes tell me. At this symposium there had been a lot on noble and etheric concepts, some of it (to me at least) tedious and waffly, and I had watched an increasing number of participants slip into a state of *reduced* consciousness during the sessions! But this was different! *This* speaker was full of specific examples across species of animals, and full of anecdotes. *No-one* nodded off. This speaker had a quiet excitement about him, and seemed to point to properties in living species which were new; to inter-relationships between animals and animals, animals and humans, creation and the Divine ... unfolding ... 'dog is to man as man is to God', he said, and it all held for me the fascination of Lyall Watson's *Supernature*.

While some speakers got carried away, Alister Hardy was impressively measured in his delivery. Some of the speakers were dogmatic and brooked no argument, but this man seemed open-minded and took other people's questions and comments seriously, even mine. Some speakers behaved like gurus, but this man seemed to have humility alongside his evident expertise. Some speakers were totally earnest, but this man combined seriousness with touches of humour ... and with this man there was the confluence of science and things spiritual, the 'two streams of evolution' ; were they parallel or (yes please) do they meet?

Anyway, I was moved to think of the possible harmony between the rigour of scientific exploration and the mysterious exploration of the transcendent. As a schoolboy and a teenager, I had been taught subjects within closed boxes; links between the disciplines were seldom made, and not encouraged. At my secondary school, classics reigned supreme, and though it was a Christian foundation, the Trinity had to wait until our essays on the Peloponnesian War were written and our Latin hexameter verses composed. Modern Languages were an upstart Faculty, and a cop-out. Maths was for geeks and batty swots, and as for Science – well it was called 'Stinks' and the lowliest of the offers on the curriculum!

I prospered within my prestige academic box, but felt increasingly uneasy about this snobbish hierarchy. Even my classical studies – Aristotle, Pythagoras, Lucretius *et al.* – ironically pointed powerfully to an encyclopaedic cross-disciplinary approach to learning. Alister Hardy confirmed me in this on that very day, and it has been with me ever since in my educational career.

One further thing to say about his talk: he was clearly an eminent academic, but he was *accessible*. Some other speakers from academia were esoteric, talking in codes known to few. Others assembled abstract concepts in strato-cumulative banks and we spun hazily in their clouds. Sir Alister reinforced me strongly in my desire to keep the treasures of knowledge and learning accessible to the widest possible participation. I enlisted in the comprehensive school movement, and it has been my professional life.

Alister Hardy: well, I thought, this is a special man pursuing a deeply valuable enquiry. I didn't have the closeness of contact with him that, for example, David Hay did at a younger age, or Ben Korgen on a long sea-voyage. But this small exposure made a lasting impression on me. Here I am today!

Tristram Jenkins, Former Vice-Chair, AHT

Some Reflections on Sir Alister Hardy and the Beginnings of the Research

Alister was a scientist with imagination and enthusiasm. This included taking great trouble when setting up the department of zoology in Hull, collecting specimens of animal skeletons from a variety of sources (e.g. from both museums and a local furrier) to show his students during lectures. He also illustrated what he was talking about very skilfully on the board, designing a plankton recorder for the ocean, the design of which is still in use, and trying with a kite tied to the back of a Morris car to collect aerial plankton. He enjoyed meeting the Durham miners in his cycle battalion and kept in touch with many of them throughout their lives. He relaxed by taking his bicycle on the train to the Cotswolds and with his paintings gave us delightful profiles of scenes from those trips and from his holidays. He enjoyed cutting the front hedge, but left the clippings for someone else to clear up. He also used to put a flower in his button hole and enjoy every ride at St Giles' fair each September. And he was planning a last book on puddles – because a lot of things happen in puddles.

As I say in my introduction to John Keeble's little book about perspectives on Alister's life, when I became Director the Alister Hardy Research Unit, many people shared their memories of Alister with me. And Edward Robinson notes the number of letters the Unit received when he died, noting his personal kindness to them, and the opening up of the possibility to them of talking about religious experiences. This reminds us that we have some perspectives on the founder and the beginnings of the RERC already in writing, and I commend them to you. Copies of all these are in the AH library and some are for sale under our own imprint. We also have recordings and videos, e.g. of Alister's choices on *Desert Island Discs*; of an Open University programme and of lectures with introductions by David Hay and Edward Robinson, as well as all the lectures John Franklin has taped over the years:

In writing are:

The Royal Society's *Biographical Memoir* (1985)

John Keeble's *This Unnamed Something* (2000)

David Hay's Occasional Paper (1998), 'Alister Hardy: Biologist of the Spirit'. David Hay is also working on a biography of Sir Alister.

Edward Robinson's Occasional Paper (1997), 'Religious Experience: Beginning The Research'

John Franklin's *Exploration into Spirit* (2006)

Alister's enthusiasm was persuasive and swept people along. He came to lecture at Ninian Smart's new Department of Religious Studies in Lancaster in 1969, and as a result of hearing him as a student, Brian Carter came to Oxford to work with him after he had graduated. But

as well as being enthusiastic, Hardy was also, like many top academics, quite autocratic. He was sure he was right in the way he wanted religious experience to be studied, with scientific classification and removing any paradoxes. This method overrode the approaches of the anthropologists whom he knew and read in Oxford, for Alister wanted to explore the spirituality of ordinary people in his own culture, about which we knew less than about that of the indigenous peoples on whom they worked.

The collection of archival evidence made in those early days of the Unit has been the seed from which so much diverse and rich research has come. Alister's *Spiritual Nature of Man* (1979) brought the term 'spirituality' into the foreground. Edward Robinson's work on the archival accounts of children's experiences, *The Original Vision*, is foundational for all the later work in this area, notably the interview analyses by David Hay and Rebecca Nye in *Spirit of the Child*.

What Alister started was addressed and extended in the analysis across religious traditions in the Oxford doctorate prepared by philosopher of religion Caroline Franks Davis, published as *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience* (1989). There was a Penguin anthology of material from the archives edited by Meg Maxwell and Verena Tschudin, *Seeing The Invisible* (1990); the work was pursued by feminist theologian Lene Sjørup with a theology of women's religious experience, *Oneness*, which used the archive extensively in 1998. The bi-polar Professor of Psychiatry, Kay Redfield Jamison, comments in her autobiography *The Unquiet Mind* on how stimulating and interesting Alister was when she met him in Merton College while she was on sabbatical in Oxford. The sociologist Professor Eileen Barker told me of a visit to Alister in the early days; she said how kind he had been and that 'he was a sweetie'. I know Joan Crewdson felt that Alister and Edward provided her with enormous opportunities for research too.

I have focused particularly in this last section on some of the work of women scholars because the majority of contributions to the archives are from women, and yet it might look at first as if it has been mainly men who have done the research. So Alister, and the Unit, were pioneering in this respect. He had been advised by his father-in-law in his youth not to let people know he was interested in religion because he would not be taken seriously as a scientist. Perhaps one can understand that, but by the time he was in Oxford he was successful, at the very top of his profession, but even so one of his tutees, Richard Dawkins, did not know he was at all interested in religion and spirituality. David Hay found this out when interviewing Dawkins in his research for the biography.

There is always ambiguity with larger-than-life figures, but the important thing is Sir Alister's energy and enthusiasm which began a significant enterprise which continues.

Peggy Morgan, Director, AHT, 1996-2002

We also have a delightful personal reminiscence from Jane Winship, Sir Alister's great-niece, which we have saved for the Autumn issue. (Ed.)



Experiences

An experience of synchronicity

I was always a bit sceptical about Jungian synchronicity; in his book *Synchronicity: an acausal connecting principle* (1955), the first example he gave was this: finding that the number on his tram ticket was the same as the number on a theatre ticket that he buys straight afterwards, and then identical to a telephone number given to him the same evening. It made me wonder, 'how trivial can you get?' Then something happened to me that was not trivial and made me think again.

In the mid-1990s I thought it would be interesting to do some research on the spirituality of children and I put forward the idea to the Research Committee of what was then called the Alistair Hardy Research Centre. I was somewhat nervous because the committee was chaired by Arthur Peacocke and included the head of the Psychology Department in Oxford, Michael Argyle, i.e. it was pretty high-powered. Fortunately, the committee decided they liked my proposal, but felt I needed an adviser to help with the psychological aspects of the research. After some discussion, the consensus was that the very best person to advise me would be Professor Margaret Donaldson, who was in the Psychology Department in Edinburgh University and a world famous authority on cognitive development in children. The problem was that nobody on the committee had ever met her, nor had they any reason to suppose she would have either an interest in, or sympathy with the sort of investigation we had in mind. We set the suggestion to one side and went on to other matters.

I drove home to Nottingham from Oxford feeling pleased that the research had got the go-ahead, but troubled about the question of getting the right project adviser on children's psychology. As I eventually turned into our drive at home, I saw that Jane, my wife, had come to the front door to greet me. 'Quick', she said, 'there's someone on the phone for you'. I dashed into my study, picked up the phone, and heard a voice saying

You won't know me. My name is Margaret Donaldson. I am writing a book about the human mind and I have got to the point where I need to consider religious experience. I have been advised that you are a scientist with an interest in this area and I would like to have a chat with you.

I could feel the hair standing up on the back of my neck as I replied, 'Margaret, a group of us were talking about you this afternoon'. I explained what it was all about, and the upshot was that she did become an extremely helpful adviser to the project. Anyone can check this by reading my acknowledgement to Margaret in the preface of *The Spirit of the Child*, the book that I published with Rebecca Nye about the research in 1998.

A couple of nights before I wrote this note, I rang Margaret to check my facts. 'That did happen, didn't it Margaret? I didn't dream it, did I?' She assured me that it was not a fantasy, for she of course had experienced the same astonishment when I answered the phone and told her about the Oxford meeting. These events are so strange, so inexplicable according to the ordinary laws of causality, that their reality only becomes convincing when one encounters them personally. Even then, I had to make that second phone call, just to be sure I hadn't invented the whole story.

Dr David Hay, Director, AHT 1985-89

And synchronicity continues; the day after we received the Experience above from David Hay, we had a message from Marianne Rankin:

'Dear all, Some time ago I found an interesting article in The Tablet on spiritual experience in children, which has led to correspondence with Dr Kate Adams, whose paper was quoted in the magazine. She sent me a flier of her book *The Spiritual Dimension of Childhood* and I have asked the publisher to send the RERC a copy for review in *De Numine*. David Hay's work with Rebecca Nye is quoted in the book.'

We have not yet received a review copy, but hope that we will have one in time for a review in the Autumn. (Ed.)

A Celebration

I had known Mrs Olive Priest for nearly 30 years. I first met her in the late 1970s, when I became a member of a meditation group that included Olive and met at her house. I kept in intermittent touch after I left the group in the mid 1980s, until she died.

On Saturday 1st November 2008, Sylvia Priest, daughter-in-law of Olive Priest, rang to say that Olive had died earlier that day. My wife and I were going away on holiday for a fortnight very early next morning. I asked Sylvia to leave a message to let me know when the funeral would be, even though it would be unlikely that I could attend it.

On Thursday 13th November 2008 we were on our holiday in Petra in Jordan. That morning at about 9.30 am I was waiting at the entrance to the site while my wife bought some presents. I walked over to an earthen bank where there were some small trees and shrubs which were being watered, and got into conversation with the Jordanian gardener, Taha. He explained about the different plants and picked sprigs of a red magnolia, three types of winter jasmine and a small blue flowered plant I did not recognise, and gave them to me. I thanked him, and my wife and I walked on down into the gorge leading to Petra.

It was a hot day and I knew that the flowers would soon wilt, so I found a shady spot and laid them down there with a prayer for the repose of the soul of Olive.

When we returned home, on 17th November 2008 there was a phone message from Sylvia to say that her mother-in-law's cremation had been held at 11.00am on Thursday 13th November 2008. The exact times do not match but I am sure that I was given the flowers in memory of Olive.

Neil Hancox, AHS member, 20th November 2008



Open Day 2009

The Society's annual Open Day this year was held at Harris Manchester College, Mansfield Road, Oxford, on Saturday 7th November. This was a special occasion, being the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Centre (Religious Experience Research Unit) at Manchester College in 1969. The 2009 Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture, *Religious Experience in Contemporary Turkey*, held in the morning, was attended by some 50 members and friends. 35 members stayed on for the Society's AGM (reported elsewhere). This was followed by a celebration luncheon in the College's Arlosh Hall, with wine kindly furnished by Professor Paul Badham, and much appreciated. The afternoon was devoted to remembrances of Sir Alister Hardy and the early days of the Research Centre. [See pages 12 – 17]

Religious Experience in Contemporary Turkey

This year's Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture was given by Professor Dr. Cafer Sadik Yaran, Professor of Philosophy of Religion at Istanbul University, who talked on the findings of the major research project he had conducted into religious and spiritual experience amongst Muslims in Turkey. Whilst Turkey is a secular, democratic republic most of the population of over seventy million is Muslim, and religious experience there has deep historical roots. In 2006-2007 Professor Yaran carried out a national random-sample survey of Muslim religious experience, interviewing people from various backgrounds.

Professor Yaran said the analysis of the response showed that the physical and psychological health of the respondents was good, with most having a good or average level of knowledge concerning religious matters, and 67.3 % considering themselves as 'religious'. In response to an equivalent of the Hardy Question concerning whether they had ever had a spiritual/religious experience, 63.7% answered 'yes', with 36.3% saying 'no', showing that religious experience is a living fact and widespread – these figures interestingly corresponding with those from a recent random sample of people in London. Professor Yaran described in detail further results of the survey, including a breakdown of basic varieties of religious experience. Interestingly, NDEs (near-death experiences) drew a response of only 4.1%, but sufficient, Professor Yaran said, to convince some people to study it seriously from the Islamic perspective. Also, 'Experiencing that all things are one' only attracted a response of 0.5 % showing, he said, that such deep mystical and philosophical views are not widespread anymore among Muslims in Turkey. Other findings of the survey were that, generally, spiritual experiences contributed to good health and a strengthening of faith, and were considered to be important to the experiencer – as might be expected from the findings of other surveys, where, indeed, many parallels are to be found. Importantly, questions revealed that in Turkey respondents were most influenced by the beliefs of their religion, but did not think it was necessary to have a religious belief to have a religious experience, nearly half considering it a 'a free gift of God'. 75% of respondents thought it to be a reliable source of divine knowledge.

The conclusions that Professor Yaran drew were that the concerns that religious experience would damage mainstream orthodoxy are unfounded and the criticism of such experiences on religious grounds is completely wrong; and that the view that religious experience is related to lack of education or psychological illnesses is wrong (this paralleling David Hay's findings in his surveys of religious experience in England). The claim that religious experiences in one religion must signify that claims of religious experiences in other religions must be false, delusion or deception etc, has also been shown to be wrong. The results of the survey strengthen the understanding of religious pluralism and counter claims of religious exclusivism. They also confirm the value of genuine religious experience for study and for the encouragement of others. Professor Yaran was warmly thanked for his talk.

In the afternoon, under the title, 'Reminiscences of Sir Alister and the early beginning of the Society', Jane Winship (Sir Alister's great-niece), Tristram Jenkins (former Vice-Chair of the Alister Hardy Society), Professor Ursula King (Trustee), and Peggy Morgan (Director of the AHRERC, 1996 – 2002) spoke to us of their own memories of Sir Alister Hardy, in what was a very moving occasion. [See pp. 12-17]. All in all, this was a great day to remember.

John Franklin

[CDs of the A.H. Memorial Lectures (£5.00, including p&p) are available from Anne Watkins, Librarian, RERC, The Library, University of Wales, Lampeter. SA48 7ED. Cheques payable to 'The Alister Hardy Trust'. Overseas members may pay by credit card.]

Advance Notice

Our **Open Day** this year will be on Saturday 6th November at the Friend's Meeting House in Oxford. The Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture will be given by Professor David Voas of the Institute for Social Change in the University of Manchester. He is particularly interested in religious change in modern societies. The title and timing of his talk will be announced later together with the rest of the programme for the Open Day.

Paul Badham, Director

AHS Annual General Meeting 2009

The Annual General Meeting, held this year at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, at the earlier date of 7th 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.

The Minutes of the 2008 AGM were agreed and signed, and thanks given to John Franklin for his work as Hon. Secretary during the past year. Under Matters Arising, it was reported that a publicity statement had been prepared for members interested in promoting the Centre and Society locally: an amendment was suggested and agreed. (This has now been done, and copies are available and can be sent to members on request.) The idea of having the Open Day and the AGM earlier in the year has been agreed, and was endorsed subject to agreement by the Trustees. Finally, it was reported that links with the Wrekin Trust have now been established.

Jonathan Robinson, delivering his first report as Chair of the Society, first mentioning the current membership standing at 340 with a further 47 subscribing to our mailing list, went on to outline current activities of the Society and Local Groups. There was no conference this year, and that planned for next year was having to be reassessed due to reorganisation at Lampeter. (Two one-day conferences, however, will be held, one with the British Teilhard Association in April in London and the other with the Wrekin Trust in June in Oxford. See AHS Events, pp. 55, 56 for details.) Looking to the future, much hinged on the outcome of the Templeton Bid for funding for the Global Project and on organisational changes at Lampeter.¹ Officers, staff at Lampeter and members were thanked for their help and support, and an

invitation extended to all to contribute to the AHS by giving views and suggestions for the running and future direction of the Society.

The Chair of Trustees' Report was read by Professor Ursula King in the absence of Professor Leslie Francis, who was unable to be with us for family reasons. It was reported that the amendments to the AHT Constitution had been agreed and submitted to the Charity Commissioners. A revised bid had been submitted to the Templeton Foundation for the Global Project, and appreciation was expressed for the work which had been carried out by Paul Badham and Wendy Dossett, for the continuing research by Peter and Elizabeth Fenwick into near-death experiences and the publication of Marianne's new book, *An Introduction to Religious Experience* [reviewed on page 41], and Ursula King's *The Search for Spirituality* [reviewed in Issue 47].

Professor Paul Badham, Director, congratulated Professor Andrew Prescott, Co-Director, on being appointed Pro Vice-Chancellor at the University of Wales Lampeter. He reported on the work of Dr. Wendy Dossett; his own work during the year on the study of religious experience in Turkey, the subject of Professor Cafer Yaran's AH Memorial Lecture, reported elsewhere in the newsletter; and on new publications by Professor Xinzhong Yao in connection with the China Study.

Paul Badham went on to present a Financial Report prepared by David Greenwood, the Administrator, in the absence of Ruth Russell-Jones, this omitting the full accounts for the year as these had not yet been seen by the Trustees. He reported that Oliver Knowles had left a legacy of £20,000 to the Centre, this being given priority following grant of probate; and the Centre had recorded, and the meeting endorsed, its grateful thanks to Oliver and his wife, June. Also, Peter Fenwick had secured a grant of £7,000 for publicity of advice on care for the dying arising from his research. Current assets stand at £154,670: regular income was lower, with membership subscriptions giving just £5,972 this year, and interest on capital just £2,075, reflecting the current recession. Economies will have to be made, and more work done by volunteers. (We are delighted that, following the meeting, Ruth Brinkman agreed that from 1st April she will take over the duties of Membership Secretary.) The position of the Hardy Archive and Library, however, is secure, as is the MA course in Religious Experience, and the Trustees will be looking at economies which should ensure the future of the Trust, Society and RERC.

Anne Watkins, presenting her Librarian's report, noted that Jean Matthews is typing into the database the 300 accounts of NDEs donated by Peter Fenwick; that the RERC has been given another room in the University Library for the storage of both the archive of accounts of experiences and history archive together; and gave information on book donations, volunteer activity and recent publications.

AHS Committee elections: the following had been nominated, and were elected unopposed:
John Franklin: (Hon. Committee Secretary) for a further period of three years; Proposer Andy Burns, Secunder Tristram Jenkins;
Tristram Jenkins: for one year; Proposer, Andy Burns, Secunder, John Franklin;
Michael Rush: re-elected for a further period of three years, Proposer, Andy Burns, Secunder, Tristram Jenkins;
Roger Coward: (in place of Sam Jarman) for three years; Proposer, Jonathan Robinson, Secunder, John Franklin;

Under Any Other Business, it was reported that David Hay's biography of Sir Alister Hardy, *God's Biologist: Work of Sir Alister Hardy*, was now nearly complete, a publisher had been found, and a synopsis was available. A suggestion that the publicity statement should include

a plea for accounts of religious experience was answered that whilst the Centre welcomed accounts, it did not have resources to undertake an appeal for these. Finally, Charlie Heriot-Maitland was appealing for accounts of 'out-of-the-ordinary' experiences for his doctoral thesis.

The next Annual General Meeting will be held in Oxford, on Saturday 6th November.

John Franklin, Hon. Secretary

¹ Unfortunately this bid was unsuccessful.

(Copies of the full Minutes of the AGM and written reports presented at the meeting can be obtained from: Anne V. Watkins, Librarian, The Alister Hardy Society, The Library, University of Wales, Lampeter, Ceredigion, SA48 7ED – please send stamped and addressed C5 (162 x 229mm) size, or similar, envelope.)

AHS Membership Secretary

From 1st April our new volunteer Membership Secretary will be Ruth Brinkman, one of our members who lives in Gloucestershire, and recently completed the MA in Religious Experience at Lampeter. She will be responsible for collecting the membership subscriptions. So from 1st April all members who pay their subscriptions annually, and any who may wish to change their category of membership, should contact Ruth. If you do not remember when your subscription is due, don't worry because the annual reminder will continue to be sent out, but by Ruth. We are very grateful to her for undertaking this important task - one that is vital for the continuing success of the A.H. Society.

Ruth's e-mail address is: ruth_brinkman@yahoo.co.uk

David Greenwood, Administrator

Reports from the Local Groups

The **AHS Chesterfield Group** continues to be an informal, small group forum for the discussion of various topics related to religious and spiritual experience. Using a mixture of documentaries on video and DVD and talks by group members we have looked at various, sometimes controversial, issues. Last October we watched a documentary on Anton LaVey's *Church of Satan* founded in San Francisco in 1966. The documentary was made by an independent film-maker with unprecedented access to the Church and the performance of one of its rituals. Despite its name and reliance on occult imagery we found that the Church does not accurately reflect stereotypes of Dennis Wheatley-style Devil worship.

We retained our controversial theme in November with another talk by group member Joe Revill entitled 'Jesus: A Witch's View'. Joe described his own understanding of the historical Jesus from a Pagan point of view and emphasised the difference between the 'Jesus of faith' and the 'Jesus of history'. The claim that Christianity originated with a religious experience of its founder was also questioned with the suggestion that such stories are reconstructions or mythologizing of events. We began in January with a quest for the Holy Grail, or at least, watching a video about various Grail myths and their possible origins. Various hiding places have been suggested for the relic including Glastonbury, Templar ruins and Strata Florida in Wales.

This year's programme includes a talk by the Reverend Geoff Usher of Upper Chapel in Sheffield entitled 'Rediscovering the Great Libertarian Project'. The talk is based upon Geoff's M.Phil thesis and describes the history of Unitarianism and Upper Chapel. Other up-coming events include an experiential path-working session by Joe Reville and a talk by Christopher Gilmore called 'Sacred Secrets, Healing Sounds'.

The new programme is currently available online at:
<http://beehive.thisisderbyshire.co.uk/religiousexperience>

Mike Rush

London Group

On 2nd October, Dr. Ben Knighton, Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute and member of the Faculty of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, gave us an illustrated talk on *Magic Mountains and Experiences of East African Rituals and their Specialists*. He traced the intricacies of tribal beliefs and their links with the mountains in the area of Karamojo, north-east Uganda. These are considered sacred places, the abode of the Karamojong God and presiding spirit, Akuju, whose deeds were handed down through the elders of the tribe by word of mouth and whose wishes were made known through certain people with particular gifts or through vivid dreams. Dr. Knighton mentioned a local tribesman who gave him an insight into Karamojong rituals. Ordinarily a cattle-herder, he had received divine gifts and had been made an 'emuron' or witch-doctor, or 'technical specialist to reveal God's will for the elders'. The idea of a spiritual state separate from the world was alien to the Karamojong, who considered that the spiritual was connected to earth and closely related to will – everything that is has a will to live, this not unique to humans but shared by all things, spirits, animals, trees, plants and even rocks. Religion was necessary in shedding light on the competition of the various wills and showing a way towards spiritual harmony. Dr. Knighton ended by showing slides illustrating the countryside, mountains and people of the area.

In the evening, John Franklin introduced Tim Mansfield who led a discussion on ecstatic experience of the divine, sharing his understanding of the development in the 21st century of a new spiritual human potential arising whereby this might arise as a *shared* experience. Tim outlined the teaching of Andrew Cohen, the founder of the Evolutionary Enlightenment Centre, and referred to a lecture for 300 people furthering the idea of an enlightened shared mind. Whilst accepting that only a small number might actually have *shared* in this, it had resulted, he said, in the emergence of a sense of unity and common purpose to develop personal consciousness of the enlightened condition. The practicalities of reaching such a state were questioned, and techniques were discussed. The thoughts of Teilhard de Chardin were mentioned regarding spiritual emergence and a growth toward convergence in which the sharing of spiritual experience could form an important part.

In November, Dr. Mahendra Perera (Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Psychiatrists and Australasia College of Physicians), kindly stepping in at short notice¹, gave an illustrated talk on *Mental Illness and Health: Biological, Psychosocial and Spiritual Aspects*. Dr. Perera defined mental illness as a state of psychological ill-health which related to brain activity through the neurones, rejecting a reductionist view of this being simply to do with biochemistry. He discussed some of the common conditions in mental illness, looked at some particular conditions and cultural anomalies, and went on to mention past and present treatments, the development of medicines, and alternative approaches and beliefs. He also touched on aspects of mental and spiritual health. Asked how he might see the future in terms of science

and religion, he thought that the answer might lie in quantum physics – and, questioned about healing through prayer, said he did not have enough data on this, saying that whilst it might help some people, there should be caution in applying this generally.

The topic of spiritual/religious experiences and links to possible mental illness and to mental health was discussed at the evening meeting, with members relating accounts of personal and other spiritual/religious experiences. Asked about the format and timing of the evening meetings, and whether they thought such discussions were useful, members said they did feel the evening meetings to be valuable, and the opportunity to share religious experiences particularly so – and it was agreed to try starting the evening meetings at 5.45 pm and finishing at 7.00 pm, rather than 6.00 pm to 8.00 pm as at present.

Our January meeting was held at the Indian WMCA, Fitzroy Square. Revd. Jonathan Robinson, the Society's Chair, spoke on *Contemporary Religious Experiences in Tamilnadu, South India: A Pilot Project*. Jonathan, who runs a home for disadvantaged children there², said the survey used a short form of questionnaire, based on that of the China Study adapted for the local situation – and that it had invoked an interested response, with interviewees often expressing eagerness to participate. Conducted in the main by four higher degree social studies students with the help of Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, the survey recorded 206 cases, 141 (68%) reporting some form of valid religious experience. Interviewees included 77 Hindus, 79 Christians, 34 Muslims, 12 not associated with any religion and 4 Buddhist or other persuasions. 53 Hindus, 60 Christians and 24 Muslims reported positive religious experiences. Much useful information was gathered about the types of religious experiences, social and religious backgrounds, and personal factors of age, sex, education, health etc, and much was learnt for possible further studies. Example accounts were read out, the most common being expressions of the experience of 'power', with 'light' also a recurring theme, but interestingly the 'unitive' feeling of being one with everything was rare; comparison with the China Study revealed similarities and differences. Despite enormous variations in culture and religious traditions, Jonathan said, the evidence is that at the experiential level religions converge and 'the message seems to be that life only makes real sense when we connect with and live in relationship with the greater whole and a more primordial reality, the nature of which will always be a mystery...'

After a short break for refreshments, Jonathan showed slides of the countryside and people of Tamilnadu and of the Grail Trust Home and the children there. The meeting discussed points arising from the talk, and explored personal understandings of the terms 'spiritual' and 'religious' in the context of spiritual/religious experiences.

John Franklin

¹ Dr Ornella Corazza was unable to attend, but has agreed to give her talk, *What Near-Death Experiences can Teach us about the Everyday Life*, in early 2011.

² The Grail Trust Home and School, which takes orphans and the children of impoverished parents through school, and on to higher education or college, has been featured in previous issues of *De Numine*, and the AHS library holds copies of the School newsletter.

(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) – and a full transcript of Jonathan Robinson's talk (£2.00) – can be obtained from: John Franklin, 21 Park Vista, Greenwich, London, SE10 9LZ – cheques payable to 'AHS London Group'.)

Midlands Group:

We look forward to a report from Sheila James on this group's activities in the Autumn issue. See Events, pages 55 - 57, for the forthcoming programme. (Ed.)

Oxford and Cotswold Group

Since taking over the chair of the group I can honestly say that time has flown by. I'm delighted that we have had well-attended, thought-provoking meetings over the past year, covering our costs without difficulty, and Members from as far away as Bournemouth and Hereford have joined us on occasion ('Cotswold' is loosely defined here ...).

We began in February 2009 with a meeting on the Modern Hospice Movement; there are lessons to be learnt in medicine and the spiritual care of the dying. Our speakers were Dr. Robert Twycross (Emeritus Clinical Reader in Palliative Medicine, Oxford University, and former Clinical Director of Sir Michael Sobell House Hospice), the Revd. Bob Whorton and Bob Heath (Music Therapist), both current staff of Sir Michael Sobell House in Oxford. Thirty members and non-members gathered to be inspired by the special work that goes on in end-of-life care. We were treated to stories, images and music that expressed the need for holistic care at the end of life, recognising the dignity of each person and the uniqueness of each personal journey.

In April we met as a smaller study group hosted by Tanya Garland on the topic of Consciousness. This meeting was a 'primer' for our joint meeting with the London Group in June. Tanya spoke movingly of her near-death experience and how it changed her whole perspective on life. Don Mason and Eric Gladwin shared their own extraordinary spiritual experiences, which prompted some searching discussion, and I tried (in vain) to describe what consciousness means to me.* There was broad agreement in the group that consciousness is beyond the material and is not generated by our brains. At least a dozen of the Oxford and Cotswold Group later attended the highly successful joint meeting in London in June [see Issue 47, page 25 for a report on this meeting by John Franklin].

Our last meeting of the year, on 24 October, focussed on Spiritual Healing, with AHS member Helen Jameson as our speaker. Helen, a complementary therapist, is a Trance Healer and Metamorphic Technique Practitioner (read more at <http://www.helen4health.co.uk/>). Helen clearly explained her role in the healing process through a slide presentation and gave a demonstration of Trance healing on three participants. In the afternoon participants offered accounts of their own healing experiences and we were led by Helen in a healing meditation, a practice I would heartily recommend for all likeminded groups. The atmosphere in the Meeting House was palpably calmer afterwards, and participants who received healing reported positive changes in their health.

Many thanks to all the speakers and to all who have helped with organisation at the meetings, especially Sue Barrance and Marianne Rankin. I hope Members will continue to send more ideas for future meetings to me by email (rhonda@riachi.free-online.co.uk) which will be the main way I stay in contact with this 'geographically challenged' group. Onward and upward!

Rhonda Riachi

**Rhonda's talk, 'A Sideways Look at Consciousness', will be printed in the Autumn issue. (Ed.)*

AHS Wales

Our deepest thanks go to Anne Watkins and Patricia Murphy who have held the Lampeter/Carmarthen Group since Pat Craig retired from the Chair at the end of 2007. In 2009 that group breathed its last and it became the Alister Hardy Society Wales.

On 26th October 2009 fifteen members of the Wales Group met at Lampeter for an afternoon meeting. This was chaired by Jonathan Robinson, AHS Chair, and luckily also a Wales member. After a meditation we proceeded to the election of Officers: Roger Coward as Chair and Mary Cook as Secretary. (Before the end of the year, Tim Chilton was co-opted as Treasurer. Roger's election was later ratified by the AHS Committee and at the AGM.)

Pat Craig's final act as Chair had been to send out questionnaires to members in Wales, from which we realised that people found travelling all the way to Lampeter for regular meetings too much. It was suggested that we might try having mini-groups throughout Wales exploring the same theme for a year, and which would then meet occasionally to share their findings, possibly over a couple of days. The question of choosing a Subject for the Year was discussed. Roger proposed 'Mandalas' but this was modified by the meeting to 'Oneness & Mandalas' so as to include a topic with more entries on the RERC database. After much discussion, this idea became the Mandala Project, which will culminate at 'The Centre Point' residential retreat at Llantarnam Abbey in September 2010.

Finally came the formation of mini or local groups. Wonderfully, Pat Craig immediately came out of retirement and offered to initiate a group in Haverfordwest, Patricia Murphy one in Newcastle Emlyn, and Tim Chilton one in Mid-Wales. Subsequently, Keith Beasley has offered to form one in Bangor, North Wales, and Bob Murrin has sent out a letter inviting members in Hereford and the Marches to a meeting in Peterchurch in March. At the time of writing, we are still hoping groups will form in Swansea, and in Lampeter. Then we will be seven – a number worth working for! Roger Coward would especially like to thank Pat Craig for her personal advice, telephone calls and letters in support of the project.

After our meeting on 26th October we enjoyed an excellent dinner in the new refectory at Lampeter, followed by an interesting lecture by member Joan Howells on the subject of *Judge Thomas Troward* and his philosophy of *Metaphysical Healing* [See her article in Issue 47, page 5]. This was arranged by Hazel Thomas who also introduced Dr Howell, giving us a short synopsis of her life as a children's ophthalmic surgeon, and her discovery of Judge Troward's system of metaphysical healing when she was searching for 'something more' to offer her patients, and their parents, than surgery alone.

For our **forthcoming events** please see the list of AHS Events on page 55. We are fortunate that our Autumn Lecture will be given by that remarkable Welshman James Roose-Evans – a very inspiring speaker.

Mandala Project Report:

Bangor went off with a bang on 1st December. The meeting's focus was *The Experience of Mandalas* and, following a short introductory PowerPoint presentation, provided an opportunity for everybody to create their own mandala. Not only were the results impressive, but subsequent discussion enhanced understanding of the experience of creating mandalas – an important ritual in many cultures. The combination of an experiential exercise together with the chance to share perceptions and understanding of that experience was considered a valuable mode of operation which will be followed in future meetings.

Mid-Wales was next on 17th December, held at Roger's Barn in Abbeycwmhir. After a meditation, Tim Chilton spoke of the entry point of a mandala as being the equivalent to the first spiritual experience which may become an entry point into the inner spiritual from the secular world. He also compared the pattern of a mandala to a Persian carpet. As you lived, it was like the back of the carpet which only revealed its beautiful pattern when it was turned over later. The group went on to share their personal 'entry points'. The next meeting is scheduled for 24th March at Abbeycwmhir.

Newcastle Emlyn held a meeting on 11th February to discuss the way forward for 'Thought power', a version of the Mandala Project which will focus on positive visualisation for the good of the local community. This is what the group will place in the centre of the mandala. The idea grew out of concern for the town, where people are polarized by more than one protest group, feeling that powerful forces are moving in on the town with no thought for the welfare of the inhabitants, but with an eye to profit. This is at a time when there are virtually no community facilities for art, culture, young people etc., or proper access to welfare services. The Mandala Project seemed to offer a positive corollary to protest, and has struck a chord with those we have approached. We are starting with a core group of people who understand the principles of meditation and visualisation, including the few AHS members among us of course. We have held two further meetings, and hope to offer a presentation to the town now that we have established a modus operandi.

(Synchronicity is in operation in Newcastle Emlyn: there will be an art project called 'The Mandala', entirely independently organised, running for 6 weeks in the town from the end of February.)

Haverfordwest: Meeting scheduled for March.

Please join a local **Mandala Group** – contact details below:

Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire: Dr. Pat Craig, Tel. 01437 781053

Newcastle Emlyn, Carmarthenshire: Patricia Murphy, otpaddy@yahoo.co.uk & Dr Graham Wilson, Tel. 01239 614556. graham@gorwel.teg.co.uk

North Wales: Keith Beasley, Tel. 0776 0305 636; keith.beasley@bangor.ac.uk

Mid-Wales: Tim Chilton (Treasurer AHS Wales), Tel. 01686 688144; timchil@googlemail.com

Hereford & Welsh Marches: Bob Murrin, Tel. 01981 550656; Kmurrin@tiscali.co.uk

General Co-Ordinator (Chair AHS Wales): Roger Coward, Cwm Bedw, Abbeycwmhir, Llandrindod Wells, Powys. LD1 6PH. Tel. 01597 851929; roger.coward@smartemail.co.uk

Membership & Residential Convenor (Secretary AHS Wales) Mary Cook, Tel. 07794 294432; maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk Would members living in Wales, Herefordshire & Shropshire please let Mary have their email addresses and telephone numbers.

Report compiled by Roger Coward, Chair, AHS Wales



Letters to the Editor

Anne Watkins has passed on to us this charming letter from John Randall, written in the course of requesting information on the RERC and AHS:

Dear Anne,

I had never heard of *De Numine* before (not quite sure what it means!) but it seems a very interesting publication. I'm also enclosing an account of my visit to Sir Alister's unit; I wish I could remember more about it, but, alas, old age takes its toll. Feel free to use, or not use, what I've written in any way you wish.

My encounter with Sir Alister Hardy:

I have always been a bit of a heretic when it comes to evolution. I never doubted that the process of natural selection can explain minor changes in cells (such as the development of antibiotic resistance in bacteria), but I was not convinced that the same process can account for the much larger changes apparent in the fossil record. In 1970 I spent several months as a Visiting Research Fellow at Rhine's Institute for Parapsychology in North Carolina, and there I watched various ingenious animal and plant experiments in progress. I began to wonder if some sort of psi effect could be the missing factor behind evolution, and in September 1971 the SPR published a paper by me to that effect. I think it was that paper which brought me to the notice of Sir Alister Hardy.

I think it must have been sometime in 1972 that Sir Alister invited me to talk about animal psi experiments to his little group at Manchester College, Oxford. Unfortunately I do not seem to have kept any record of that occasion, and my memory is now getting rather sparse. I think the College had allotted him about two rooms for his research work into religious experiences. I do remember that we talked extensively about evolution. Sir Alister was a fully convinced Darwinian, but he believed that the process of natural selection could be supplemented by ESP-type exchanges between organisms, particularly birds. I remember him as a delightful, grey-haired old man, upright and dignified, very patient and always willing to listen to alternative points of view. Perhaps the best description of him would be 'an English gentleman of the old school'. I am glad that the organisation he created continues to exist, albeit under a slightly different name and in a different place.

John L. Randall

Dear Patricia,

Thank you very much for sending the copy of *De Numine* which I read with keen interest. I'm most flattered and surprised you saw fit to include my piece on 'Station 106' in such a learned and elegant publication.

It is a sad fact that as the Law of Probabilities states that such an experience will never come my way again, there's virtually no chance I'll be contacting you in the future. Actually, I would dearly like to attend one of your events but as my almost total deafness now precludes attendance at any function where an induction loop isn't installed, I fear that it would be impractical to consider taking part.

However, my very best wishes to the Alister Hardy Society and I'll be taking my copy of *De Numine* to church at Llangors. Neither the vicar nor his congregation know of my experience,

but I feel emboldened to tell them, now. Please pass on my best wishes to David, Anne and Jean for their help.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Parry-Williams (by e-mail)

Hi, Anne;

A poetical riposte to Jonathan's poem in *De Numine*: [Issue no. 47, p. 32]

It is a bit of a response to the growing esotericism of the magazine. I think I'm saying something about rejoicing in creation as it is. I liked the magazine articles and reviews that discussed dualism v. materialism v. monism or 'heightened naturalism'. I think there's something inherently holy about matter itself. Richard Dawkins' books of scientific research/reflection are beautiful. They are spiritual by their very observation of the real (i.e. material) world. They reflect on that all is good, as does Genesis: 'And God saw that it was good'. I felt that Jonathan is yearning to be free from the bounds of the material, but can't, [whereas] I live in my head and need to get more into the material, which is the primary mental world of our society, of which the spiritual is an integral aspect. Something like that is being strained for by several of the books reviewed.

However Dr. Joan Howell's article on Judge Troward's opinions pushed too far beyond the critical credulity barrier. It contained no critique of his work. What was an article like this doing in the house journal of an academic society? If all critical interaction was removed in the interests of brevity, I can to some extent understand it, but I do not consider it correct to simply repeat his views as though they were to be accepted as true.

Philip Tyers (AHS member), by e-mail

See Philip's poetical reposte to Jonathan Robinson on page 32.

The Editor wishes to point out that while the RERC is a Research Centre of the University of Wales, Lampeter and publishes academic peer-reviewed papers, the AHS, formed to support the work of the RERC, is not itself an academic society. While taking pleasure in the high opinion Mr Tyers has of the AHS and De Numine, she wishes to point out that there are advantages to the broader brief, and more flexible parameters available to a sub-academic journal. De Numine started out as a simple AHS newsletter, and has grown and expanded its brief thanks to the wide variety of contributions, and high level of interest shown by AHS members.

Dear Editor,

Once again I thoroughly enjoyed reading *De Numine*, however I cannot help but notice and object to the use of exclusive language that is permitted. Having frequently argued this point with my father, I know that traditionally 'man' meant 'everyone' but language develops and changes and this terminology is no longer acceptable, particularly in academic circles.

I am sometimes forced to accept that perhaps men (that is males) cannot understand the damage this linguistic denial of half of the population causes and so perhaps I should make allowances for Gareth Hopkins p.10, issue 47. Or perhaps Jewish women do not make wills and are not visited by relatives at death.

But I am always amazed when women perpetuate this denial of the species. I believe that Dr Joan Howell is a practitioner of spiritual mind-healing and yet talks of such people in the masculine form. Editor, it frustrates me that I am forced to listen to this sort of exclusive language in our patriarchal church system but please don't impose it on me in my leisure reading too.

Yours sincerely

Anne Veronica Watkins AHS Librarian

I'm so glad to hear that De Numine is enough fun to be considered as leisure reading! Seriously though, I do hope readers will take up the issue of gender bias in language on future letters pages. It is a complex issue; one cannot for example take the Reverend Hopkins to task for sexism when he is describing rituals that do indeed have a traditional gender bias/exclusion of women. (Ed.)

Dear Paddy,

Mea maxima culpa! I should have annotated the report of my experience of my mother's illness and death with some footnotes. [See Issue 47, Autumn 2009, pages 14-15.]

The John Harris I referred to is very much alive and is Professor of Bioethics at the University of Manchester. His approach to issues in bioethics is consequentialist, and he is in favour of voluntary euthanasia.

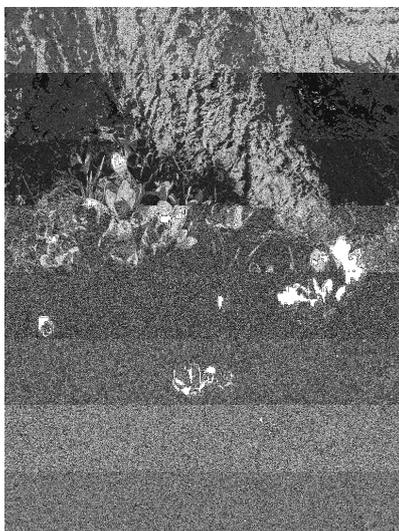
James Rachels (1941-2003) was an American philosopher whose best known work was *Elements of Moral Philosophy*. He argued that active euthanasia is more humane than passive euthanasia; and killing versus letting die makes no moral difference in itself.

I should have mentioned this to prevent any confusion.

Best wishes,

Dyana

* * * * *



We are very pleased to hear that **Edward Robinson** is recovering well after a stroke. We would like to wish Edward and Wendy all the very best for the weeks ahead during Edward's rehabilitation, and assure them that they will be in our hearts and minds for as long as it takes.
(Ed.)

**A poetical riposte to Jonathan Robinson's
'Give me the Wings'**

Give me the weight to stay
within this vale of things, this pure clarity, this animal completion
that enables us to see and feel
through gentlest touch
the unity of you and I,
enjoying the world beyond ourself,
a world familiar,
where all things link within
that web of wholeness,
smile at the interconnection,
laugh at those subtle differences,
where all that is enjoys its skin
in narrow bands of space
and petty chunks of time,
these benign realities
which hold
but do not bind.

Philip Tyers.

You never enjoy the world aright
until the sea itself floweth in your veins
till you are clothed with the heavens
and crowned with the stars:
and percieve yourself to be
the sole heir to the whole wide world:
and the more so,
because men are in it
who are ev'ry one sole heirs
as well as you.
Till you can sing and rejoyce
and delight in God,
as misers do in gold
and kings in sceptres,
You never enjoy the world.

Thomas Traherne 1636 – 1674

Mud

The smell of it thrills our blood.
Then it's the feel of it. After the flood,
children love mud,
with some ancestral memory of melting ice,
beginning a new age of rye or rice.

But a grown man likes the tilth
— the soft, loose soil running along his hand.
Townsmen's idea of filth,
but a farmer's miracle of the land.
The infinite variety of birth
springing incomprehensibly from earth.

Earned by his sweat, the harvest field will rise;
the sacred bread of God will be his prize.
And, as it grows, he savours the surprise.

Susan Glyn, FRSA

(from Susan Glyn's collection, Completion, Feather Books, 2009)

Mud

'I'll be shot at dawn', my father said.
He had volunteered, but not been taken.

Four of his brothers died at the Somme.
Tight-lipped, he rarely spoke of them.

And did they shoot the padres, gone mad,
who ripped off their vestments
running into no-man's land?
Did enemy fire oblige?

Our priest knew the horror
of the First World War.
He prayed for us all, foe and friend.

'What was it like?', we asked.
He turned away.
'People drowned', he said.
Drowned?', we asked.
'In mud', he said.

Denis Evans

(from Denis Evans' collection The right time, Celebration Press, 1996)

WebNews

In De Numine issue no 46 (Spring 2009) we started a section inviting definitions of religion, called 'the Politics of Religious Experience', a definition offered by Brian 'Smudger' Smith of the Mulberry Bush Restaurant in Lampeter, which I personally love for it's brevity and elegance, and very slightly tongue-in-cheek slant ...

The section did not survive beyond this one issue, but the discussion continued on the website created by Gareth Davies. For those readers who missed this/do not have internet access, I am printing the contributions from this website below, all posted in March and April 2009. (Ed.)

Gareth Davies

Isn't a 'religion' a way of making sense of things, making sense of reality? And then doesn't this kind of spiral around itself, perhaps in agreement with other people in a group, to become something we call a 'world-view'? And then doesn't this world-view create a reality all of its own?

Wittgenstein said that people of differing world-views or faiths or 'forms of life' occupy different worlds. Perhaps this is in a way actually and materially true; perhaps the reality we occupy is chosen by us.

But then how do we communicate? There must be some common ground. Reality does have a common substance about it; we know this naturally and live in it. But what of the nature of religious and spiritual experience – these things which make the world so different for many of us?

Is religion the same for everyone, or unique to everyone? Is how I see the world really up to me? What is given and what is chosen?

Patricia Murphy

It seems to me when you say 'what is given and what is chosen', you are distinguishing between revelation (on which many religions are based) and personal spiritual experience, although I'm not sure the latter can be described as (consciously) chosen, even if it comes with meditation etc.

Mike Rush

I think the 'politics' of religious experience is an interesting concept but what did Brian mean by it? How is the title 'The Politics of Religious Experience' a definition?

Gareth

Good questions. I don't think it really is a definition. Is the person who said this a Sociologist by any chance? It sounds like he might be. Isn't it a kind of reductive comment?

Rhonda Riachi

For me religion is a framework for interpreting spiritual experience and a means of promoting spiritual growth in individuals and society.

Any body of knowledge has political implications at some time or other, so it is not surprising that the quote above homes in on politics as the core issue – it should not be. Whenever a religion becomes too entangled in the politics of its culture, it loses its spiritual power.

Patricia Murphy

I think Brian meant politics in a general (generic?) sense, organisation applied to things spiritual – not secular politics like government of a country. He's a musician, not a sociologist by the way.

Jonathan Robinson reminded me that the root of the word religion in Latin means 'to bind', so I guess Rhonda's idea of a framework for spiritual experience comes close. Anyway, religion-as-institution has to involve politics in the general sense, and are there any religions that aren't embedded in specific cultural contexts?

Mike Rush

Hmm ... isn't the definition of 'religion' as 'the politics of religious experience' a meaningless tautology?

Patricia

No I don't think so, as religion and spiritual experience are different things, if you explain it as religion being a means to systematise religious experience, and develop a party line, I think it works. That is certainly what the good Bishop Irenaeus was trying to do with early Christianity, in the face of the 'hydra heads' of Christian Gnosticism ... one can sympathise with him as an administrator, he was much alarmed by the way Gnostics seemed to make up new stories about creation and stuff as the fancy took them.

Of course you may not agree that religious experience should be subject to systems and regulation etc, in which case you probably aren't a bishop ...

Gareth

A spiritual/religious experience is an experience of 'some-thing other', something 'more than ...'; that lifts one out of one's ordinary self – that gives another perspective, and even can transform one's life.

And here's one from the 'real' world, where I hope De Numine readers will be inspired by the contributions above to continue the discussion ...

Definitions scare me a little. They suggest a full stop, from the Latin *de fine* to come to the end of. Surely nothing that pertains to the inner life can 'come to an end' – otherwise we fall into the trap of thinking we are right and others are wrong. (*Jonathan Robinson*)

Review of Rolling Wave Insights

This is a website at www.rollingwaveinsights.com created by Ben and Judy Korgen. Ben is a retired oceanographer of many years experience, having worked in a number of well respected institutions,* and Judy has worked for thirty-five years at a high level in business administration, budget analysis and cost management.

The website is basically a clarion call to all those who care about the future of humankind and the planet to contribute as volunteers to its success (or constructive failure in that it may provoke other better alternatives). It is divided into three areas: racism, war and the world. It is devoted to ending all the human behaviours that are leading to potentially fatal outcomes for us as individuals and the planet itself.

The over-riding theme is that we have to believe this is possible in order to bring it about, and that we have to have a reasonable and workable timeframe, with an end date for each piece of destructive behaviour, if we are to achieve the final goal. They suggest 200 years as not so far away that we lose momentum (although they admit that this could happen temporarily at various points) and close enough to be manageable. They suggest that the targets could be flexible and must be monitored fairly closely so that changes can be made along the way. Belief here would be absolutely essential because we have seen how many 'flexible' end dates for behavioural changes related to climate change alone have been agreed so many times that many of us now feel they will never actually be achieved.

They make suggestions as to how this could be done and the most radical of these is that we create brainstorming groups for each individual problem. These groups would be made up of those who have expertise in the area under discussion, together with a few people whose expertise lies in other areas, on the basis that they often come up with surprising and potentially workable ideas. These brainstorming groups would start at a local level, work up to world groups and would be inter-related.

This seems like a sensible plan but I do wonder if, by the time it reaches the world level or perhaps even before, we might be in the same situation as we are currently with the numerous conferences on climate change. Everyone talks (or perhaps brainstorms) and we are still more or less where we were when we started. Their idea of gradually squeezing out those leaders of countries who do not share their people's aspirations for improving the world through the end of war, meaningful concessions on climate change, ending poverty and many other issues, would go some way to making a difference. Helping people to vote for their government more effectively by being trained in spotting candidates who are economical with the truth, and whose body language backs this up, is a great idea but I wonder how many people would sign up for the training!

A sobering thought on this website is that 'it took 50 generations of people working over an interval of 1,500 years to build the ancient English monument [of] Stonehenge. It would take the efforts of only 7 generations if we could permanently end war in 200 years.' This and many other comments give pause for thought, making you feel pessimistic and optimistic in turns, as you would expect when dealing with the type of subject matter on the website.

The object of the website is to get as many people as possible to read it by asking volunteer readers to pass on the link to others and encourage them to pass it further down the line, and preferably to groups. In this way they hope that networks will be formed and allow individuals to become familiar with the ideas put forward. It is a wonderful idea and, whilst reading the essays, you really want it to work because it allows ordinary individuals to make a contribution to resolving some of the major issues that face us and that will become even greater factors in our lives as time goes on. Ben and Judy's unwillingness to focus on the downside of these issues is refreshing and very encouraging.

The character of this website should reassure people that almost anyone living anywhere can contribute to ending racism, war, history-recycling leadership or all three within 200 years. To succeed, all three plans would need contributions from ideas people, planners, leaders, brainstormers, network builders and others. It should be possible for almost anyone to find a niche for themselves within such an array of possible roles. If they cannot find a role in planning strategy for creating new ideas, they can find a role of equal value in spreading information about the ideas in the website.

I look forward to the completion of the website, when full books will be available for download expanding on the current content. I would urge anyone reading this review to look at the website and do exactly what they ask. The more people who think in this way, the more chance there is of change, and I sincerely hope that there will be many networks of volunteers over the next few months and years.

Howard A. Jones, author of The Thoughtful Guide to God (2006) and The Tao of Holism (2008)

*Ben Korgen's account of sailing as a student with Sir Alister on a scientific expedition to the Pacific was serialised in *De Numine* from 2006 to 2009. (Ed.)

The following article by Ben Korgen, joint creator of the 'Rolling Wave' website, was previously published on the web as an Amazon book review of The Tao of Holism by Howard Jones:

A Mother Lode for Deep Thinkers:

Today, we face many problems which ignorance and neglect have allowed to grow big enough to demand plans of action for finding solutions spread over several different timescales. Some of them may take centuries to solve. These problems include global warming, rising sea levels, storm intensification, coastal erosion, acid rain, ocean acidification, declines in genetic diversity, extinction of plant and animal species and losses of upper ocean biomass. They include difficulties in economically extracting energy from ocean movements, high costs of desalination, build-up of trash trapped inside mid-ocean gyres, and the need to sort out planet-friendly roles for sport and commercial fishing. They include human overpopulation, deforestation, desertification, air and water pollution, shortages of clean freshwater, the need to replace fossil fuels and decaying buildings, roads and bridges. They also include political corruption, persistent racism, war and history-recycling leadership, poverty, slavery, easy availability of street drugs, piracy and kidnapping of children for sale and exploitation.

Many other examples exist. If we can define them as problems, we can solve them. For those we must define as disasters, it may be too late. If we try to explain why we let so many problems build up over so many years, we find it is not enough to blame our failings on ignorance and neglect. If we try to find solutions to these big problems, we find it is not enough to blame our failings on the shortage of scientists and lack of funds. If we go into deep thought on these topics, we see the long build-up of big problems and the inadequacy of solutions as having something in common. The build up and the inadequacy both come from the 'breakdown' view of the world humans have been perpetuating for centuries. In the breakdown view, we carve up knowledge into compartments such as physics, chemistry, geology and biology. This view depends on specialization.

The breakdown view has served us well in the past. Scientists remaining in compartments free themselves from the need to develop horizontal breadth, thus allowing them to rise vertically to great heights of achievement. Compartmented scientists have brought us many breakthroughs and have allowed science, engineering and technology to race forward at almost unbelievable speed. They have been less successful at dealing with problems that do not fit in the same compartments where the scientists working on them remain.

In other words, the breakdown view allows scientists in compartments to study a world that does not divide itself into compartments. This explains why progress in science is so explosive for compartmented problems and so stagnant for big un-compartmented problems that affect the entire world. To make up for lost time and solve our biggest problems, we need to go beyond the breakdown view to create a more holistic view of the world. This new view must see the world that is more than the sum of its parts. In a holistic view, the whole earth includes the sum of the earth's parts, plus the functional relationships between the parts interacting with each other and with the whole earth.

The Tao of Holism could have been called 'The Path Leading to a Holistic View of the World.' This is a book that would give a deep thinker a sound foundation for understanding why our big problems rose to prominence and what we need to do to solve them. It reveals a seemingly endless collection of examples showing how a holistic view is superior to the breakdown view in almost every facet of life. The author reveals an exceptional talent for moving horizontally toward breadth without sacrificing scholarship. Everything he suggests comes from a full career of reading, writing, thinking and dealing with people.

The Tao of Holism can serve as a stand-alone manual to prepare a deep-thinking person for life in the future. It can serve as a reference book in which it is easy to link needs for information by topic with the 404 references that nourish the book. It can serve as a mother lode of knowledge and insight that connects with peripheral sources that feed it and the practical applications it nurtures.

Book Reviews

Dorothy Rowe, *What Should I Believe?: Why our Beliefs about the nature of Death and the Purpose of Life Dominate our Lives*

London, Routledge, 2008. 320 pp. ISBN: 978 0 41546679 0 (pbk.)

This review was sketched out during an Anglican service on Christmas morning in 2009. Having recently read Dorothy Rowe's book, I asked myself if I could subscribe to the beliefs which are required of the churchgoer. Did I believe that I am a miserable sinner in thought and word and deed, and such an unacceptable person that I am not worthy to pick up the crumbs under His table? Did I believe that the Son of God is about to return to earth and to judge the quick and the dead? Did I believe that being a Christian I would be given eternal life, but that those who worship God in a non-Christian way are denied the redemption offered to me, and probably are doomed to spend eternity in the flames of hell? Did I believe that God wishes me on at least a weekly basis to eat the flesh of His Son and to drink His blood, whether symbolically or in reality? Thinking of Dorothy Rowe, I thought, 'Probably not.'

For those readers who are more interested in spirituality than psychology, I would recommend starting this book at Chapter 7. I would then predict that you would be so impressed with the author's argument, and the lucid way she expresses it, that you will start again at chapter 1. If you visit her website (<http://www.dorothyrowe.com.au>) you will learn that she is a clinical psychologist who has published 15 books, the best known being *Depression: the Way Out of your Prison*. You can also read the many articles she has written, many for the magazine produced by the mental health charity Mind. And you will find that she has been voted one of the five most intelligent people in the UK. So what she writes is worth reading.

She is more specific about beliefs she disapproves of than those she approves, but she makes it clear that she does not approve of a religion which encourages the believer to feel either inferior or superior. Most religions accept that there is an asymmetry of power between God and man, (although some do not, and propose a symmetrical union between God and Man – e.g. the 'I am in you and you are in me' of devotional *Bhaktia* Yoga). But surely we can say that God is great and that man is appreciably less great, without saying that man is sinful and unworthy (regardless of what his life is really like). Dorothy Rowe has quite a lot to say about this, to which I will return. Also she disapproves even more of a religion which makes the believer feel superior, and surely one cannot help feeling a little one-up if one believes that one is going to enjoy everlasting joy in heaven, whereas one's non-Christian neighbour is doomed to forego this blessing, and perhaps have a very nasty time for the rest of eternity. She does not approve of gurus who claim to have the answer for everyone (and she rejects for

herself the role of guru). She takes a swipe at the Pope and the Catholic Church for its teaching on birth control, which dooms a lot of women to disease and death by back-street abortionists, and others to die of AIDS. She takes the Archbishop of Sydney to task for being more concerned about homosexuality than about cruelty. She also chides George Bush for his warmongering and for his approval of water-boarding as not being torture. She might well have added that, since he is said to be a born-again Christian, he might have adopted a strategy akin to 'turning the other cheek' after the Twin Towers tragedy, and ask more 'Why is it that so many people hate us?' rather than declaring a 'war on terror'. Also, regarding his making war on Iraq and Afghanistan, he might have remembered Benjamin Franklin's observation that 'there is no good war and no bad peace'.

Let me return to the question of why man must be a sinner. The quick answer to this seems to be that God is seen to be as unjust as Job perceived Him, but this is an unacceptable position for the worshipper, and so by some mental sleight of hand the God becomes perfect and man takes on the role of sinner. She makes clear that this switching of blame from God to man uses the same mental device which she has seen in her patients who switch blame from the parent to themselves, so that they can maintain the image of the Good Parent at the expense of being bad themselves. Why are parents seen as bad? Sometimes unreasonably, as when they do not give in to the child's unreasonable demands, sometimes because they are cruel or neglectful. Why is God seen as bad? Sometimes unreasonably, because He has not created the world in exactly the way we would like it, or because he has not made us more beautiful or intelligent; sometimes reasonably, when he is seen as allowing children to be born deformed in mind and body, or to reward the unjust and punish the just. This mechanism for switching blame from the idealized parent or god to the self has been observed not only by the author but by many other psychotherapists, so we must accept that it is part of our universal mental toolkit. What about other religions which do not propose that man is a sinner? The god of the Muslim and the Hindu must seem as imperfect as the Christian god. Why do they not employ the same mechanism? I do not know.

The author's positive advice is much more fragile. It is essentially that each person must create their own belief system with all the knowledge that is available to them. She does not prescribe. Her approach is similar to that of another modern writer, who says,

With the death of what Sydney Smith described as rational religion and the proponents of what remains sending out such confusing and uncertain messages, all civilized people have to be ethicists. We must work out our own salvation with diligence based on what we believe. (P. D. James, *The Private Patient*. London: Faber & Faber, 2008, p. 370)

She is interested in and approves of the numinous experiences which are the main subject matter of the Alister Hardy Society. However, her own had a more secular flavour than most, and confirmed her in her self-image as a writer. It enabled her to believe in herself, whereas it seems that most such experiences tend to lower the threshold for belief in the supernatural.

Reviewed by Dr John Price, AHS Member

Richard Rohr and Friends, *Contemplation in Action*

New York, Crossroad Publishing, 2006. 157 pp. 987 0 8245 2388 6 (pbk). \$14.95

Anyone concerned with how we can live with a sense of hope in a complex world will find this book uplifting. It is a collection of 23 essays, all previously published in *Radical Grace*, the quarterly publication of the Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC) in Albuquerque,

New Mexico. Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest, founded the CAC in 1986 to serve as a radical voice for peaceful social change, and as a centre for renewal and encouragement for individuals seeking God's direction in their lives. Rohr and his fellow writers describe the radical implications of grace for their own lives – and hence the world, and aim to give an idea of what Christianity might look like without the baggage of 'Churcheanity'.

The book is divided into three parts. The theme of each part is based on the Old Testament quote: 'This is what Yahweh asks of you; only this: to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God'. In Part One, 'To Act Justly', Richard Rohr introduces what he means by the 'contemplative mind' without which we cannot get very far: 'Contemplation happens to everyone. It happens in moments when we are open, undefended, and immediately present' he writes. But most of the time we respond to life with reactions of judgement, control and defensiveness. We calculate rather than contemplate. So this first 'gaze' is seldom compassionate. It is too busy asking 'How will this affect me? How does my self-image demand that I react to this situation?' The preoccupied self cannot enter into communion with the other or the present moment. Rohr admits it has taken most of his life to get to the 'second gaze'. It is an hour by hour battle to de-throne the 'false' self of the ego (concerned with self-interest) and it is why most spiritual traditions insist on daily prayer or meditation. Rohr currently lives in a hermitage behind his Franciscan community in Albuquerque and divides his time between local work and teaching around the world. Spending part of his time in silence and solitude keeps him grounded in the second gaze. 'The gaze of compassion, looking out at life from the place of the Divine Intimacy is really all I have, and all I have to give, even though I don't always do it'. His insight and wisdom, nevertheless, have made him a popular writer on spirituality.

This more open and compassionate approach leads to what the CAC call the 'third way', the subject of Rohr's second essay. In the field of social action and politics this means 'holding the opposites together' long enough to discover that, in many situations, neither are true. 'It is waiting and thinking and praying until something more refined emerges, until God has a chance to speak, and until we have truly heard the other position'. Contemplation is not about avoiding problems, Rohr insists, but merging with the problem. 'God leads by compassion toward the soul, never by condemnation', he adds. But if that sounds too lofty, the rest of the essays in this section ground these ideas in the grit of human experience. In 'Tell Somebody', Esther Armstrong shows how healing can come from being honest with oneself and others about being sexually abused in childhood. Another essay explores how restorative justice (bringing criminal and victim together) can bring healing to both parties when a justice system based on 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' only perpetuates the cycle of violence in a country with a 67% recidivism rate after imprisonment.

In Part Two, 'To Love Tenderly', M. Basil Pennington explores how we all acquire a false self simply by adapting to the reality around us, but with centering prayer we discover a larger, more whole self. The essays that follow show how living from that whole self challenges us in new ways. Thomas Keating explores the duty of confrontation: sometimes we need to speak out, but how do we do it with an enlightened mind and heart, rather than anger?

In Part Three, 'To walk Humbly with your God', Wayne Teasdale calls for a simplicity that is about 'being' rather than 'having' in a culture dominated by materialism. John Carroll's essay on 'Sustainability and Spirituality' argues that monastics of all stripes – Christian, Hindu and Buddhist, are counter-cultural in their earth-centred reverence for creation. An important thread running through the book is the importance of a true synthesis between 'medium and message'. Contemplation may be 'in' within many religious and even secular circles, says Rohr, but unless it leads to action in the world, we are simply enthroning the ego. We

meditate in the privacy of our home, go to conferences we think worthy and feel serene above the fray of messy reality.

The other important thread is that action without wisdom is ineffective. Without a core experience of the divine – a life lived in depth, ‘we will try to solve all our institutional issues from a smaller and smaller inner experience, and with a too often narrow and churchy vocabulary’, says Rohr. Because this inner transformation demands the death of the ‘small self’, he says those born of such a death will be ‘the deepest agents of peace and justice as opposed to the good folks who are current with the recent spin on things’. But if individual transformation necessitates following this narrow path, ‘how will we ever make that attractive or popular?’ he asks.

For Thomas Aquinas the true synthesis of action and contemplation is still ‘the greatest vocation’, says Rohr, and for him personally, ‘it is the ultimate art and discipline’. It is costly. But perhaps what most characterises these essays is liberty of spirit. Here is just one example to entice you to read this thought-provoking book:

‘South African archbishop Desmond Tutu walked by a construction site on a temporary sidewalk the width of one person. A white man appeared at the other end, recognized Tutu, and said, ‘I don’t make way for gorillas’. At which Tutu stepped aside, made a deep sweeping gesture, and said, ‘Ah yes, but I do.’

Reviewed by Shirley Lancaster, AHS member

**Marianne Rankin, *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience*
London, Continuum, 2008. 288 pp. 978 0 82649821 2 (pbk.) £24.99**

This book introduces the general reader to the types and characteristics of both religious and spiritual experience found in the English speaking world and beyond. The experiences of founders and significant figures in a substantial number of the world’s religions (including several that are not often included, such as Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Daoism, Mormons, Baha’i, Unitarians and ‘Alternative paradigms’) are explored and analysed, as are experiences reported by ordinary people today.

Rankin makes a significant contribution to discussions about authority and freedom in religious understanding, and pluralism and religious truth by drawing on the long tradition of the study of the phenomenon from William James, through Alister Hardy to the contemporary work of the Religious Experience Research Centre. This research shows conclusively that individuals have these experiences regardless of their institutional affiliations or contexts. Rankin’s work elegantly exemplifies this in a way that is accessible to the general reader of whatever tradition (or none).

Her work demonstrates that these experiences, though undoubtedly diverse in nature and characteristics, help to assure people of a hope that the material world is not all that there is, as well as leading to a decreased fear of evil and death. Furthermore, the fruits of these experiences tend in general to comprise an increase in a sense of social responsibility and compassion, and a greater sense of meaning and purpose to life itself.

In my view one of the most important features of this book is that it allows the experiences to speak for themselves, and imposes no theory-driven analytical framework on the accounts. Without doubt, theory-informed analyses make an important contribution to scholarship, and

Rankin's work cannot of course stand alone. However, there are few studies since James and Hardy, and as vast in scope as this, which accord the experiences themselves the respect of an empathetic hearing.

That said, Rankin does not shy away from the critical questions, from a range of sceptical viewpoints. In an important chapter, 'The Interpretation of Spiritual, Religious and Mystical Experience' she explores the contributions of a number of scholars in the field, and gives a characteristically fair hearing to scholars such as Stephen Katz and Robert Sharf who argue respectively that there is no such thing as unmediated experience, and that there are no experiences, only conditioned narratives. Rankin does not engage with these interpretations, but gives them a clear presentation, often lending them far more clarity, cogency and accessibility than that of their original presentations. The reader is left both thoroughly informed and free to draw her own conclusions.

This work is based on meticulous research, with an ambitious eye to scope, whilst at the same time significant consideration has been given to balance. The grand narratives of the major world religions do not dominate over more diffuse spiritual traditions, or even over the experiences of individuals. The voices of both women and children are heard within its pages.

The book provides contemporary scholars of religious experience with an unparalleled resource bank to quarry, and the general reader with an up to date survey of scholarship in this important field. Students of the MA in Religious Experience owe Marianne a debt of gratitude for the resource she has given them. The Alister Hardy Society and Trust, of which she was for several years Chair, also owes her a debt for her elegant and accessible promotion of the serious scholarship of the phenomenon of religious and spiritual experience. And the general reader owes her a debt for the wonderful rich resource she has provided, which will open many eyes to the variety, frequency and diversity of this significant feature of the human experience.

Dr Wendy Dossett, Lecturer in Religious Studies and Director: MA in the Study of Religious Experience, UWL; Director RERC

**Tom Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision*
London, SPCK, 2009. xii 244 pp. ISBN 978 0 281 06090 0. £10.99**

Despite his demanding office as Anglican Bishop of Durham, Rt. Revd Nicholas Thomas Wright manages to write and publish a great many scholarly books and articles, of which an overview is provided at the end of the book that we consider here. Particularly relevant are a series of commentaries called *Paul for Everyone*, and another recent work dealing with the topic of salvation, for people and the wider creation: *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, Resurrection and the Mission of the Church* (2007). These books are addressed to a wider readership, whereas the present book on *Justification* is part of a debate among various camps of Protestant pastors and scholars on Paul's letters. The book is written as an initial response to John Piper's book, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (2007). For a proper evaluation of Wright's book and for insight into the differing readings of Paul's letters, it would be necessary to read Piper's book, and ideally some of the other protagonists in the debate. Though I myself have read quite a bit of material on Paul, I am not really part of the debate between the Protestant traditional and new perspectives on Paul, and I have not read Piper (yet). Ideally, I would have started with another of Wright's books, perhaps *Paul: Fresh Perspectives* (2005). Yet I could admire Wright's sustained and clear argument throughout the

present book and his fluent style; I enjoyed reading it from cover to cover without too much effort. But this is only the beginning of the real work, namely forming one's personal, well-informed opinion about what Paul envisaged.

Wright's book consists of two parts: Part 1 provides an introduction to the debate, indicating the key-principles of his approach to reading Paul, and formulating what would have been Paul's understanding when he spoke of justification. I do not find that this section of the book really succeeded. The author sets out clearly and convincingly his approach to Paul, but the thought of his opponents is, at least for me, and despite the helpful preface, too piecemeal and even has an element of caricature. However it may be successful for those who already have insight into the recent debate among Reformists, and it probably helps to read the book at least twice. The Catholic notion of infused righteousness is mentioned once in passing, though a little elaboration on this would have helped me to situate myself in all this. In fact I agree with the position that he presents as the new perspective and it seems most valuable to me, but I also share points of agreement with others among the contemporary Reformist biblical scholars that he would regard as his opponents. Part 2, which takes two thirds of the book, is an exegesis of Paul's letters, which I found excellent, though I have not yet been entirely convinced that every turn is correct.

What is all this about? The new perspective is upheld by a group of biblical scholars who, though they are divided amongst themselves, aim to read Paul in the context of first century Judaism; they recognize that Luther, Calvin and their successors have been reading Paul too much in light of the problems they faced in their own times (namely the debate with Catholicism). As Wright explains: '[M]any first-century Jews thought of the period they were living in as the continuation of a great scriptural narrative, and of the moment they themselves were in as late on within the continuing exile of Daniel 9.'

According to Wright, Piper and many like him downplay the significance of the story of Israel and accuse Wright of inventing the idea of the continuing exile, the idea that the Jews in Paul's days were still awaiting the end of the exile. Wright further explains that Paul would have envisaged that 'God's single plan to put the world to rights is his plan to do so through Israel.' According to Wright, Paul's doctrine of justification is not so much focused upon the individual's status before God, as has been suggested by the traditional perspective, but about a universal transformation, a liberation of the whole creation from slavery to decay, a redemption of the whole world through Israel, so that salvation is attained as a unified life in God's presence. Wright claims, as do others, that the covenant with Abraham is central in Paul's theology of justification. Accordingly, Paul envisaged that as Israel failed in its crucial role, the single plan of God came to be focused upon the single representative of Israel, the Messiah. Wright further claims that justification is not about the making of virtue, an action that transforms someone; not as Luther and the traditional Protestants claim, an imputed righteousness – Christ took our sins and we took his righteousness – but the declaration that a person is in the right, as a status which is given in the present and in advance by and to faith and to nothing but faith. It is then through a life lived in the Spirit that we live in accordance with this faith and with this status of being declared right, and thus attain eternal salvation.

In his exegesis Wright shows that Paul's vision incorporates aspects of both the old and new perspectives. It is perhaps in the willingness to reach for a reading that can incorporate what is valuable in both perspectives, and an openness to what Catholicism and other traditions have to offer, that Paul's vision can shine forth and contribute to the attainment of God's Plan in Christ. Wright is a gifted writer and worthy to be studied.

Reviewed by Robert Govaerts

Three Short Reviews: Books that cross the Disciplines:

**Graham Dunstan Martin, *Does It Matter: The Unsustainable World of the Materialists*.
Edinburgh, Floris Books, 2005, 282 pp. ISBN 978 0 863155338 (pbk). £20.00**

There have been a number of books published recently which endeavour to interlink a number of disciplines that were once considered to be separate. This particular book by Graham Martin who lectured in French poetry, literature and philosophy at the University of Edinburgh is one which covers the disciplines of computer science, consciousness studies, neuroscience, quantum physics and theology.

Martin begins by arguing convincingly that computers cannot be conscious, after which he discusses the possibility of consciousness being explained in purely physical terms. In discussing this subject he draws on the work completed by David John Chalmers in his major work, *The Conscious Mind* (1996). There then follows a major section dealing with the brain and mind, including an excellent analysis of Cartesian Dualism. Next is a journey into quantum mechanics with an examination of the work of the physicist Nils Bohr from which it follows that there is a 'basic ontological necessity for consciousness' but that it is not possible 'to locate it within what is normally thought of as the physical universe' (page 159). The four main theories of consciousness location are examined, after which Martin deals with the design of the Universe, concluding with a venture into the philosophy of religion.

Overall, whilst the author is unable to examine each of his subjects in great depth, he certainly demonstrates the limitations of the conclusions that can be reached by the reductionist scientists. He acknowledges the excellence of the use of materialism in science but emphasises that this approach can only be applied to some but not all aspects of the Universe.

This book is very readable and has glimpses of humour, but most importantly it is very well argued, and I am content to agree with the author's conclusion that 'the balance of evidence supports the reality of the Soul and its participating in the existence of a Divine Spirit which created and sustains the Universe' (page 250). The book concludes with useful endnotes, a very extensive bibliography and an index.

**Chris Nunn, *From Neurons to Notions: Brains, Mind and Meaning*
Edinburgh, Floris Books, 2007. 206pp. ISBN 978 0 86315617 5. £16.99**

Adopting an entirely different approach from Martin, this book is firmly rooted in consciousness studies with forays into mysticism, aesthetics and physics. Written by a consultant psychiatrist, lecturer at Southampton University and associate editor of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, this book presents an account of the landscape of the mind. It follows an earlier book, *De la Mettrie's Ghost* (2005), in which he argued that the mind should be considered as a story rather than as a machine. He emphasises that the reader does not need to have read his earlier book in order to appreciate this one. The book follows a broadly historical approach looking at the ways in which the mind has been viewed over the last 150 years, dealing with the measurement of brain activity under many situations – sleep and waking rest at one end of the scale to great activity and seizure at the other. He also examines the reaction to beauty and mysticism, creativity and time. Various problems are considered, for example, why should successful novelists be prone to depression and alcoholism? It is all related to the progress of evolution, where the faculties of speech and writing came later than the other faculties and therefore had less time for full integration with them. Why should this cause depression? Far be it for me to give too many answers – you will have to read the book to find the possible explanations for this phenomenon.

My only real criticism of this book is that it does not include any detailed discussion of the mind/brain duality – but perhaps that was in the author’s previous book on this subject. Overall this book offers a fascinating insight into the working of the brain and mind and although the author deals with such matters as chaos theory and quantum theory you do not need an advanced level of mathematics to follow the argument. The book closes with detailed endnotes, a chapter by chapter bibliography and an index.

**Peter Russell, *The Global Brain: The Awakening Earth in a New Century*
Edinburgh, Floris Books, 2007. 262pp. ISBN: 978 0 863156168 £16.99**
(first published by Routledge and Kegan Paul in 1982).

Do you think that it is possible that we as individuals are rather like the cells of a global brain rather than isolated individuals living on a planet? This is the question that underlies the study, undertaken over many years, of one-time computer scientist, Peter Russell. He begins this stimulating book with a description of the Gaia Theory of James Lovelock and develops it by considering the extent to which humanity contributes to Gaia – can such a recent addition to a planet which has existed for hundreds of millions of years really make a contribution which is relevant to the survival of that planet when much that we have done so far is just to consume its resources?

Russell then takes Teilhard de Chardin’s views on evolution into account and suggests that the end point to human evolution (Teilhard de Chardin’s Omega Point) may come very much sooner than the thousands of years predicted by Teilhard. To this heady mix, Russell adds his own knowledge of and enthusiasm for interconnectivity to derive a positive outcome for the survival of the planet and humanity. This is not all, because of particular interest to readers of *De Numine* is a further ingredient – that of a spiritual awakening. In this particular chapter Russell explains the concept of self-actualisation and examines the work of American sociologists Greeley and McCready who showed that peak experiences are quite common – ‘forty-three per cent of people they interviewed had had an experience of going beyond their normal self, twenty per cent on more than one occasion.’ (page 174). He then highlights the characteristic feelings of joy and happiness common to many of those who had had these experiences – feelings he describes as an ‘awareness of the unity in everything ...’ which he then relates to the work of Professor Walter Stace who, after studying the writings and teachings of the great religious teachers, came to the conclusion that the central core of all the major religions was the experience of oneness with creation’. (page 175). Finally in this section Russell suggests that whilst true enlightenment is still rare, he sees great possibility in the amalgamation of the work of the Eastern mystics and spiritual teachers with the studies into the brain and consciousness being undertaken in the West by biologists and neuroscientists. This, he maintains, may well lead to a higher state of consciousness in a growing number of people, which in turn leads on to a positive and optimistic outlook for both the planet and humanity. Well, that is a grossly oversimplified summary of a thesis which I highly recommend. Perhaps you will see in this work parallels with the ideas of Rupert Sheldrake – morphic resonance and communication at a distance. Perhaps you will disagree with Russell’s rather benign view of human nature and its possibilities. However I am sure that very few could fail to be stimulated by the sometimes well founded, sometimes more speculative ideas set out within the bounds of 250 pages, and I have no hesitation in recommending this fascinating study to the readers of *De Numine*. The book concludes with a useful bibliography which contains a very short description of all the books listed and an index.

Reviewed by David Greenwood, Administrator, RERC

Nick Spencer, *Darwin and God*

London, SPCK, 2009. xiv, 146 pp. ISBN: 978 0 28 106082 5 (pbk)

'For a man who eschewed religious controversy, Darwin has probably had more impact on religious thinking than anyone else born in the last 200 years' – so opens a section of the Introduction that tells us why this book was written. It is not about the biological details of evolution. It explores specifically Darwin's personal relationship with his God and how this changed over his lifetime. It also deals with the emotional anxiety that his scientific discoveries caused him because of the impact he knew these ideas would have on religious belief, especially as his wife was a devout Christian. Many books on Darwin and religion claim that the two world-views are mutually incompatible – you either believe in Darwinian evolution or in a religious account of creation, but you cannot believe both. This book shows how Darwin came to an uneasy compromise that allowed him to continue his belief in God while convinced of the truth of his theory of evolution.

Darwin initially considered a career in medicine (which he rejected as too gruesome!) and then in the Ministry, but did not consider his faith strong enough to guide others. In contrast to William Paley, Archdeacon of Carlisle who, especially in his book *Natural Theology* (1802), saw the world as an essentially happy place designed by a benevolent God, Darwin saw too much predatory activity in nature, and experienced too much anguish in his personal life through the suffering and death of three of his ten children, to support this attitude of Paley's. His own health was far from robust. It was during the voyage of the *Beagle*, which lasted from 1831 to 1836, that Darwin's already shaky Christian faith wavered further. Nature's total indifference to the value of human life was brought home to Darwin spectacularly by seeing first-hand the devastation caused first by a volcanic eruption, and then by an earthquake and tsunami along the Chilean coast. Darwin was also confronted with native people who clearly had no concept of an omnipotent God, or any language to express such an idea. The idea prevalent at the time that there must be a God because humankind universally had such a concept was clearly not always true.

Furthermore, several books that Darwin read from the 1830s on helped to undermine his wavering belief in the veracity of the Bible. On the voyage of the *Beagle* he read Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, which made the Genesis account of creation untenable. Lyell's and James Hutton's principle of uniformitarianism indicated a gradual, continuous and extremely long time-span for geological events, which discredited the biblical account of the cataclysmic Flood as a global creative influence. Lyell viewed the influence of geological forces as totally dispassionate and non-teleological, as Darwin was subsequently to view evolution.

On his return, in September 1838, Darwin began to read Thomas Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population* that claimed that the growth in human population 'is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man'. Would a beneficent God have created humankind in such a parlous state? In 1844, publisher Robert Chambers published, anonymously at first, his book *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* which suggested ongoing evolution of the universe, the earth, plants, animals and man – this was no seven-day event!

So Darwin's *The Origin of Species* was by no means the only or even the first book to raise serious questions about the role of God as related in the Bible. But Darwin, like Galileo and Newton before him and many of his scientist contemporaries, like the geologist Adam Sedgwick and botanist and geologist John Henslow at Cambridge, regarded nature as 'the reflection of the power, wisdom and goodness of God'. An understanding of nature, far from undermining the notion of God, was intended to reinforce the sense of awe for the grandeur of creation. However, many naturalists (more often than not, themselves men of the cloth)

still tried to interpret scientific discoveries in a way that was consistent with the Bible. Of these, the Reverend Doctors John Ray, Thomas Burnet, Ralph Cudworth, William Whiston, and John Woodward are perhaps the most famous, but there were many others.

Darwin believed his evidence showed that species had not been continually created so as to occupy certain God-given environmental niches, but rather were determined by natural selection. He thought the idea of the deist God who had created and planned the whole course of Earth's history from the outset was a much grander vision than that of a continually tinkering deity. In Notebook B Darwin says that 'the elegance of natural laws acting on creation would glorify rather than diminish God'. Darwin saw the concept of God and human morality as evolving along with biological structures. This suggested that a man might change his lot in life, which was a threat to the established social order and another contentious idea. So the perceived dangers in *The Origin of Species* were practical and sociological as well as theological.

Darwin married in 1839 and the family moved to Downe House in Downe, Kent in September 1841. He was glad to have a refuge from the scientific and theological controversies that his publication had engendered. But his home life was far from entirely happy, with the deaths of his children, and his own continual ill-health. He struggled on with his work and with his faith, but '... the last remains of his belief in the good, personal, just, loving God of Christianity died, at Easter 1851, with his dearly beloved daughter [Annie].'

Darwin wrote to Alfred Russel Wallace in December 1855 asking for some data that would help with his research. In 1858 Wallace wrote to Darwin with a paper entitled 'On the tendency of varieties to depart indefinitely from the original type', and this spurred Darwin on to finish his own thesis. Darwin sent Wallace's paper on to the Linnean Society together with one of his own: 'On the Tendency of Species to form Varieties; and on the Perpetuation of Varieties and Species by Natural Means of Selection'. Both were presented at a meeting of the Society on 1 July 1858 but their reception was lukewarm. Apparently, the Fellows completely missed the huge significance of these papers!

To try to offset religious criticism of *The Origin of Species*, the first edition contained two short epigraphs: the first was from the Third Bridgewater Treatise by William Whewell on *Astronomy and General Physics*; the second was from Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*. In the second edition of his book Darwin included a third epigraph from Bishop Joseph Butler's *The Analogy of Religion*. These were intended to show 'how God could be just as present in and through natural, everyday phenomena as through supernatural ones.' Darwin got into the Intelligent Design argument, reluctantly, with his friends and supporters Asa Gray and Charles Lyell. The argument ranged over issues other than God's interference in the day-to-day running of the world, moving into metaphysical subjects like free will and predestination, morality, and the perennial controversy over the existence of evil. Darwin did not believe that God had anything to do with the course of events involved in evolution, his last words on the subject appearing in *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, published in 1869: either God had to control all the minutiae of the natural world or not be involved at all – Darwin chose the latter option.

This excellent book by Nick Spencer gives a rare insight into some of the emotional turmoil this great man so obviously experienced as he contemplated the religious significance of the discoveries he was making and the ideas that held the facts together. Spencer adds his own insights, but the story is told largely through Darwin's own words. This is very readable, fascinating and thoroughly to be recommended.

Reviewed by Dr Howard A. Jones

David Adam, *The Holy Island of Lindisfarne*
London, SPCK, 2009. 119 pp. ISBN 978 0 281 05898 3, £7.99

Reverend Canon David Adam was the vicar of Lindisfarne for 13 years. However, as he describes in the first chapter, his fascination with the island began as early as the 1940s when as a boy he saw it in the distance while travelling on a train. It is apparent from the outset that he has a genuine love for the history, wildlife and spirituality of Lindisfarne.

Each chapter begins with a simple yet beautiful black and white drawing depicting a variety of views and symbols particular to the island; this is followed by a poem or a quotation from Scripture that serves as an introduction to the content of the chapter. This is essentially a history book, starting in the 6th century and concluding in the present day. I would not normally choose to read a history book, and it is a credit to David Adam that I read and enjoyed this little book (although I did at times struggle with the variety of ancient names; I was aided by a glossary at the back with an alphabetical list of almost 100 names of people significant in the history of Lindisfarne).

The chapters begin in the present day, usually with the author out walking on Lindisfarne and contemplating his day ahead, or reminiscing about past experiences of his time as vicar. He reflects on nature and the wildlife and links his thoughts with the main topic of the forthcoming chapter. At the end of the chapter he normally returns to the present day with a short paragraph to conclude. At the end of the first chapter he says 'wherever you walk on Lindisfarne the past impinges on the present'. This explains his choice of structure for each chapter, and I believe that it reflects his own personal journey in faith on Lindisfarne.

Chapter by chapter we journey through the main significant historical and spiritual periods of the island, from the siege of King Urien in the 6th century, continuing through the great figures of Aidan and Cuthbert, the writing of the Lindisfarne Gospels, the invasion of the Vikings and the coming and going of the Benedictines through the centuries. The final chapters give an idea of the island in our own time and how it continues to draw people seeking something of the 'other'.

My favourite chapter was the third of the book and called 'Aidan and the Handing on of the Light'. David Adam begins by recalling his own induction as the vicar of Lindisfarne and the responsibility he felt to see his name at the bottom of a list beginning with Aidan and including the great bishops Colman and Cuthbert. He then continues to recount how Aidan and his monks founded the Lindisfarne monastery and spread Christianity throughout the North of England. He quotes Bede who says of Aidan that 'he was a man of outstanding gentleness, holiness and moderation. He had a zeal in God' (Bede, *A History of the English church and people*). Aidan and his monks spent much time in prayer, and when they travelled they carried a copy of the Psalms and Gospels. It was a personal experience of the love of God that they carried to the people of Lindisfarne and beyond. I believe there is here a lesson to be learned for me personally as well as for organised religion as a whole; for it is only when we ourselves know God through prayer, silence, simplicity and knowledge of the Scriptures that we too can bear witness to the love of God and draw others to him by the example of our lives. Aidan both inspired and encouraged me in regards to this and it was worthwhile reading the book for that chapter alone.

I would recommend this book to someone who like myself has very little or no knowledge of Lindisfarne. It would also be an ideal preparation for anyone planning to visit the island, whether simply to enjoy the beauty of nature and the wildlife, or on pilgrimage and seeking something of the 'other'. The quote at the beginning of the final chapter perhaps describes

David Adams' own experience and that of many others who visit Lindisfarne: 'But most of all here in this valley, I have found the whole world ... You will find everything here, sir. God and the devil both walk in these fields'

Reviewed by Karen Anne Govaerts

R. S. Murrin, *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galilee or Have You Met the Man from Galilee?: A Personal and Spiritual Diary of a Journey of a Lifetime* (with illustrations by the author)

Private, 2008. 67 pp. ISBN 978 0 906165 67 6 (pbk) £6.00

(This is a review of the original manuscript with watercolours, held in the Alister Hardy Library)

Some things are hidden at times – I didn't know when I was given this beautiful book to review that I was in Galilee at the same time as the author and his wife, in May 2008. It was the 60th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. Our paths so nearly crossed several times, as the reader will see.

The book title is an excellent choice and certainly whets the appetite to know more. The description on the cover: 'A Spiritual Journal, with humorous interludes, and watercolour illustrations' whetted my appetite even more. The book truly is a humorous account of Bob and his wife Kate's exciting adventure to Galilee, not knowing what was in store for them. The watercolour illustrations by the author delightfully enhance the reader's experience of this adventure, leading some maybe to hope they too might seek and find 'the Man from Galilee'.

Bob gives a vivid description of his baptism as an adult in the river Wye, when, he says 'God was indeed reaching down and touching my heart ... [and] the seeds were sown deep within me of a desire to visit Galilee'. Then two years later in 1987 he heard the voice of the young gospel singer Juan Lozano:

'Have you met the Man from Galilee' sang Juan 'who claims to be the Living Way?' [and] I was definitely in the business of having my life changed, and my spirit set free ... It was one of those moments that you remember for the rest of your life; one of those moments when goose bumps appear on your arms, the hairs on the back of your neck tingle, and tears begin to well up in your eyes.

But it was twenty years later that Bob and Kate set off. After a humorous, detailed description of the journey from their home to a safe landing in Tel Aviv, the Galilee experience begins. The author describes each experience with great clarity, and brings back vivid memories for me, as we had so many parallel experiences; they stayed at *Beit Bracha* (House of Blessing) a Christian guest house on the lake of Galilee; we stayed in one across the street. We actually went over to visit *Beit Bracha*, and met the gardener Bob mentions. He gave us iced tea which we drank on the veranda, just as Bob describes.

We also went to the Mount of Beatitudes, and were met by the same determined nuns, protecting what Bob describes as 'the most shaded, the most tranquil areas of the scented garden' from visitors, even pilgrims such as we were. We went on a 'worship boat' named 'Faith', captained by Daniel, a messianic Jew with a long black pony tail, just as Bob and Kate did. They joined a group from Texas, and found themselves standing to attention and saluting the American flag! Among our group was a pilgrim from China, and two people from Spain, but we all managed to worship together, in our different languages.

Bob gives excellent portrayals of the people he and Kate met, such as the gardener at *Beit Bracha*, and the captain of the 'Faith' boat, Daniel Carmel.

In conclusion I will quote the author: 'We had discovered a simple gospel truth; that the gift of God's love, in His Son, is for Jew and Gentile, for Messianic believers and Arab Christians alike.' The author leaves no doubt of his faith in God and his love for Jesus.

Reviewed by Jill Whitton

See Bob Murrin's watercolour paintings of the Galilee in the centrefold

Susan Glyn, *Completion*

Shrewsbury, Feather Books, 2009. 50 pp. ISBN 978 1 84175 305 8 (pbk)

I have enjoyed, and been touched by, Susan Glyn's poetry ever since I was first introduced to her work. The poems came with a beautiful book of reproductions of her stained glass, some designed by her daughter Caroline, who died at the tragically young age of 33, and a modest note asking if they were of any interest to me as editor of *De Numine*. I read them with growing delight; they combine that same modesty with an intuitive awareness, and a sharp perception of the world around us which is always tempered by affection for human foibles. While her artwork is majestic, a hymn to the glory of creation, many of her poems are on a human scale, everyday in their preoccupations, rare in their insight and sensitivity. In some however there are glimpses of that same majesty and breadth of vision that is reflected in her stained glass, such as in her poem 'Beyond the Wilderness': 'let all the richness of the earth exult/in glad tumult/and the whole sky be filled,/the stars soft brushed by many-feathered wings'/of all the octaves of dissimilar angels.' But the majesty and vision are tamed by a lightness of touch that reminds me of the 14th Century Sufi poet Hafiz, whose poetry engages me with the same beautiful blend of divine awe and human heartfelt love. Susan's poem 'Joy in Heaven' is a particular example of this facility they both have.

Her latest (and, she says, her last) poetry collection *Completion* is an anthology of a lifetime's work. The themes of death and old age run through the book, managing to be vivid and realistic without being depressing. When Susan writes of these inevitabilities of the human condition, I get a very personal impression of a woman whose strong spirit and courage is tempered by a generous and loving heart, and whose faith shines through all her work.

Susan Glyn FRSA is a woman of great creative talent, whose art and poetry will be a splendid legacy for a long time to come.

Reviewed by Patricia Murphy

A book combining Susan Glyn's poetry and art, The Word and the Image, is available in the AHS library. We have also printed her poetry and reproductions of her artwork in previous issues of De Numine. We hope Susan Glyn and Hafiz will make an appearance together on the poetry pages of the Autumn issue. (Ed).

Emmanuel Elliott, *The Dawning, A Grace Untold* (in the series *The Third Secret of Fatima and the Coming of Subud*)

Gloucester, Dawn Chorus Publishing, 2009. 200 pp. ISBN: 978 0 95628780 9 (pbk).£9.95.

This is a challenging book. The title refers to the author's intriguing adventure of the spirit. The subtitle gives a sense of mystery and the first of the 'Early Responses to This Book' inside the cover makes reference to *The Da Vinci Code*.

At the outset Emmanuel Elliott states that 'Much of what you read in this book may challenge your credulity' – and it does. Even for AHS members, used to spiritual experiences of various types, *The Dawning* is something quite out of the ordinary. The book begins with a tale which is not unfamiliar, that of a spiritual search. However, this does not lead to any of the usual goals but to Subud. This is a movement begun by the Indonesian Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo known as 'Bapak' (which means father or respected older man in Indonesian). Apparently many Subud groups were set up in the UK and around the world following a tour by Bapak in 1957. By the time he died in 1987 there were about 10,000 members. Although Bapak was a Muslim, Subud is not a religion and people are encouraged to remain in their own tradition if they have one, which will be deepened by their practice.

At the age of 24, Bapak experienced a light brighter than the sun which came towards him and then entered him. This caused an intense vibration within him. He thought he might be dying of a heart attack. Instead, he was moved to prayer, again experiencing the state of vibration. This was the first *latihan kejiwaan*, usually simply known as the 'latihan', meaning spiritual exercise. It is the heart of Subud, which means 'right living from within according to the will of God.' Initiates are 'opened' during a short ceremony in the company of others, when they receive transmission of an inner spiritual contact. This latihan is a half hour long group experience when people are led by inner prompting to sing, dance or simply be silent as they surrender to God. These twice-weekly sessions are intended to transform the person as they follow God's will and in most cases Subud is a gentle inner action in accordance with the needs of one's own nature.

Emmanuel Elliott tells the story of his life following his 'opening'. He writes that 'the *reality* of the latihan was what I had been searching for all along ... an awesome dispensation of grace and revelation ... the purest form of worship imaginable.' Yet reading about the effects of latihan on him, one wonders just how difficult it is to follow such a path. His unusual life-story is one of an amazing series of spiritual crises, loss of direction, life-changing events, clear dreams, visions and leaps of faith.

He says, 'Following one's spiritual guidance is not always easy; it is sometimes open to misinterpretation on the ordinary level and does not always bestow instant understanding of its full meaning or purpose.' Indeed, the ways of God do seem most obscure. In latihan Emmanuel is told by Christ that He will write the foreword to the book which Emmanuel feels compelled to write and apparently Christ says, 'And that means that it will be big.' Emmanuel is still reflecting upon this with puzzlement twenty years later.

Emmanuel then links the latihan with the Secret of Fatima. This refers to the Virgin Mary's revelations to children at Fatima in Portugal. They received a secret four-part prophecy and their visions were officially recognised by the Catholic Church in 1930. Although parts one, two and four were made known, the third part was known only to successive Popes. It was due to have been released in 1960, but was withheld and only released in 2000. This is where the mystery begins.

The book raises questions with which AHS members are often faced. How far can one induce spiritual experiences? Are group activities such as latihan a valid way to find one's path?

How is one to judge? Perhaps William James' criteria of 'fruits' are helpful in evaluating such matters – and also the contents of the book. It is a fascinating read and I am still not sure what to make of it. However, I would recommend the experience.

Marianne Rankin (Former Chair of AHS)

See also Emmanuel Elliott's website, www.thedawning.co.uk

**Ron Farquhar, *A Journey of Awakening: Taking the Other Road*
Hertford, M-Y Books, 2009. 282 pp. ISBN 978 1 9069867 2 8 (pbk). £7.99**

It is said that everyone has a book inside them, and story to tell – and Ron Farquhar has written his, a tale of a hard journey through life and a true 'journey of awakening'. Suffering psychological abuse as a child, the trauma of a broken home and an environment of petty crime, he grew up, alienated, with hatred towards his mother, to a life of crime himself. The book tells of his upbringing, evacuation and return to south-east London during the 2nd World War; of his life of crime, with spells in the Army and Merchant Navy and in jail; of his turn-round: marriage, family, a healing of scars – yet relapses – his work on himself and helping others through voluntary work. This period included a return to prison, but this time as a prison visitor, teaching and leading meditation classes.

The book pulls no punches, recounting his life in honest depth '... warts and all' – relating moments of depravity yet also moments of sudden awareness of beauty in nature and music. The turning point came when he was 26, in Maidstone Jail, convicted of a crime he actually hadn't committed. There, he was led to Unitarianism and, at a moment of total despair, had a mystical experience of light and love, which transformed his life, curing him of the hatred he had of his mother and of fear of death.

Ron is a member of the Alister Hardy Society and has been a supporter of the London Group since its inception in 1987, and a good friend. His association with the Research Centre is mentioned in a chapter under that name. (A small correction is needed, namely that it is the Centre rather than the London Group that holds the archive of accounts of experiences.) The book deserves a place in the RERC Library in bearing witness to a spiritual awakening and journey. At the end, Ron reflects on a seeming pattern of guidance and direction in the happenings of his life, his feelings of higher power, meaningful coincidences and the importance of his mystical experience in Maidstone Jail. This last he has recounted in *De Numine* (Issue No. 33, September 2002), but the context of his whole life gives it the greater weight.

The book is well constructed and a fascinating read. It is brought to a neat conclusion, but one would have liked a little more to have been said about his recent move from being a Unitarian to becoming a Quaker – whilst his move into Unitarianism is explained, the reasons for this change are not given. Also, although written from the perspective of retirement, at the age of 77, one feels that there could still be chapters to come, his life has not ended yet, thank God. Ron is to be congratulated in writing this book, and I can only echo the hope he expresses that 'it may help others struggling with disturbed psyches and perhaps wrongful incarceration ... (and) those seeking help in their spiritual journeys ...'

Reviewed by John Franklin, AHS Secretary

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 David Greenwood, the Administrator, who will arrange for a copy to be sent to you. When we receive your review, the book will become yours.

When visiting the AHS Library, please ask Anne or Jean to show you the books for review. You may find that leafing through the actual books might inspire you to choose one.

Arbachakov, A & L	<i>The Last of the Shor Shamans</i> (2008)
Berman, Michael	<i>Shamanic Journeys through the Caucasus</i> (2009)
Constans, Gabriel	<i>Buddha's Wife (a novel)</i> (2009)
Freedman, Harry	<i>The Gospels' Veiled Agenda: Revolution, Priesthood and the Holy Grail</i> (2009)
Haeri, Shaykh Fadhlalla	<i>Witnessing Perfection</i> (2008)
Haeri, Shaykh Fadhlalla	<i>Happiness in Life and After Death: an Islamic Sufi View</i> (2010)
Hagger, Nicholas	<i>The New Philosophy of Universalism: the Infinite and the Law of Order</i> (2009)
Henderson, Michael	<i>No Enemy to Conquer: forgiveness in an unforgiving world.</i> [grass roots reconciliation efforts can influence international affairs]. (2009)
Holden, Andrew	<i>Religious Cohesion in Times of Conflict: Christian-Muslim Relations in Segregated Towns</i> (2009)
Quenby, J. & MacDonald Smith, John, Ed	<i>Intelligent Faith: a Celebration of 150 years of Darwinian Evolution</i> (2009)
Straughan, Roger	<i>A Study in Survival: Conan Doyle Solves the Final Problem</i> (2009)
Townsend, Mark	<i>The Path of the Blue Raven: from Religion to Re-Enchantment</i> (2009)
Wright, Scott	<i>Oscar Romero and the Communion of Saints</i> (2009)



The Alister Hardy Library

The following are recent **additions** to the Alister Hardy Library:

Ivan Cooke	<i>The Return of Arthur Conan Doyle</i>
Emmanuel Elliott	<i>The Dawning: A Grace Untold</i> [reviewed on page 51]
Angie Fenimore	<i>Beyond the Darkness: My Near Death Journey to the Edge of Hell and Back</i>
Alexander Gorbenko	<i>Where is Heaven?</i>
David Hay	<i>On the Origins of the Spiritual</i> (article)
Quakers	<i>Quaker Faith and Practice</i>
Michael Rush	<i>Negative Spiritual Experiences or Positive Experiential Spirituality</i> (MA Dissertation)
Roger Straughan	<i>A Study in Survival: Conan Doyle Solves the Final Problem</i>
Roger Tagholm	<i>University of Wales: Britain's Most Divine Library</i> (article)
Wayne Teasdale	<i>The Mystical Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the the Worlds Religions</i>

The Alister Hardy Library is most grateful to all those who have made **donations** to the Library. Our first donation since the last edition was from Peggy Coverdale in October 2009. Peggy gave us about 30 books which add to our growing collection of volumes relating to Asia and eastern spirituality, and the works of Teilhard de Chardin, and have given a real boost to our small selection of books about experiences with science. Peggy's move was necessitated by the illness of her husband. We send them our good wishes.

In November we received approximately 50 books from Marian MacPolin who has until recently been giving us valuable assistance in the library, and with the proof-reading of *De Numine*. Marian had said that any books not suitable for the Alister Hardy Library could be shared between my favourite Carmelite Convent and the Parish Library. Unfortunately for them, the books are almost all perfectly appropriate for the Alister Hardy Library. Marian's donation, like Peggy's, was prompted by a move and we wish her well in her temporary home.

Most recently we have received a very generous donation of books from Eric Gladwin's library, for which we are most grateful. [*Anne has a story about this: see next issue. Ed.*]

The Alister Hardy Library benefits greatly from these gifts; our members are so well and widely read, that we can be sure books donated from personal collections will be valued, and are always much appreciated by the Librarian and all the readers for whom she keeps the books in trust.

The report of the Oxford/Cotswold Group in issue 47, page 26 mentions two books and I thought members might like to know that they can borrow them both from the Alister Hardy Library:

Richards, John, *But Deliver us from Evil* is in the Christian Deliverance Study Group collection
Ring, Kenneth, *Lessons from the Light* is on the ordinary shelves.

Members might also like to know that for a fee of £1.50 we can post books to them so that they can benefit from the library facilities without travelling to the Research Centre.
(Contact: Tel. 01570 424821, or e-mail: a.watkins@lamp.ac.uk)

Anne Veronica Watkins BA MA PGCE, Librarian

List of AHS Events, April to November 2010

For further details contact Group organisers – see inside front cover

Friday 2nd April 2010

7.30 pm AHS Chesterfield Group: *An Interview with C. G. Jung* (video and discussion).
Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield. (Contact Mike at mike@mikerush.nadsl.net
or on 07790 757955 for further details)

Saturday 10th April 2010

9.30 am Oxford & Cotswold Group: *The Scole Experiment* (DVD show and discussion)
to 3.30 pm Please bring packed lunch. Tea & coffee provided
Venue: Friends Meeting House, 43 St Giles, Oxford
Cost £3 on the door – all welcome. **RSVP** to AHS@riachi.free-online.co.uk

Saturday 24th April 2010

10.00 am British Teilhard Association/Alister Hardy Society Conference:
to Theme: *Future of Humanity: A Cosmological Vision*
4.00 pm Speakers: Prof. Ursula King, *The Future Evolution of Humanity on Earth: a Gigantic Task, a Dream or a Nightmare?*
Dr. Christopher Knight, *Evolution and Spiritual Experience – an Eastern Christian Perspective*
Prof. Bernard Carr, *Cosmos, Creation and the Culmination of Consciousness*
Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, Kensington, London, W8.
[Cost, £18.00 for members of AHT & BTA – £25 for non-members
Details/booking contact: Peter Cox, Secretary, British Teilhard Association, 12 Falconers Field, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 3ES
e-mail: peterjohncox2@btinternet.com

Tuesday 18th May 2010

6.30 pm AHS London Group: Talk: *Mysticism and the Search for the Authentic*,
by Harvey Gillman
Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, Kensington, London, W8.

Friday 21st May 2010

7.30 pm AHS Midlands Group: Theme: *Soundings for Body and Spirit in the Contemporary World*, presented by Clement Jewitt
Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove. B60 1DA

Tuesday 25th May 2010

2.30 pm AHS Wales Group: Mandala Groups Meeting
Venue: Reading Room, Roderic Bowen Library, University of Wales, Lampeter.
4.30 pm Spring Lecture: *How to become Enlightened with Mandala Practice*
by Dr Tadeusz Skorupski. Director, Centre of Buddhist Studies, School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London
Venue: Old Hall, University of Wales, Lampeter
Details: Roger Coward: Tel. 01597 851929; roger.coward@smartemail.co.uk

Friday 4th June 2010

7.30 pm AHS Chesterfield Group: Group trip – details to be confirmed
(Contact Mike Rush for further details)

Saturday 19th June 2010

10.00 am to Joint Alister Hardy Society/Wrekin Trust Conference
to Theme: *Finding the Spirit in a Secular Age*
4.30 pm Speakers: Martin Palmer, *The Ethos of Spirituality*;
Rt. Revd. Prof. Lord Harries of Pentregarth, *Spirituality in the Arts*;
David Lorimer, *Beyond Secularism – Science, Consciousness and Spirituality*.
Followed by discussion.
Venue: St. Columba's United Reformed Church, Alfred Street, Oxford, OX1 3TD.
[Cost: AHS & Wrekin Trust members £18.00; non-members £25.00.
Details/booking contact: John Franklin, 21 Park Vista, Greenwich,
London SE10 9LZ. e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com]

Wednesday 30th June 2010

10.00 am to AHS Wales Group: *A Day of Meditation: Making a Group Mandala*,
6.00 pm with Swami Nischalananda
Venue: The Mandala Centre, Pantypistyll, Llansadwrn, Llanwrda, Carmarthenshire,
SA19 8NR
[Cost: £35 incl. lunch & tea. Book with Roger Coward, Cwm Bedw,
Abbeycwmhir, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 6PH. Tel: 01597 851929,
e-mail: roger.coward@smartemail.co.uk]

Friday 16th July 2010

7.30 pm AHS Midlands Group: Theme: *Modern Paganism*, by Druid Gary Cousins
Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA

Friday 6th August 2010

7.30 pm AHS Chesterfield Group: Highlights from *Around the World in 80 Faiths*
(video and discussion)
Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield. (Contact Mike Rush for further details)

Friday 3rd September 2010

7.30 pm AHS Chesterfield Group: Theme to be confirmed (presentation or video).
Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield. (Contact Mike Rush for further details)

Friday 17th September 2010

7.30 pm AHS Midlands Group: Theme: to be arranged
(Contact: Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com Tel: 0121 447 7727)
Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA.

Friday 17th to Sunday 19th September 2010

- 4.30 pm AHS Wales Group: 'The Centre Point': Mandala Project Residential
17th Sept to Weekend; theme, *Oneness, and Mandalas*. Meeting of local groups in Wales
3.00pm19th to share their explorations of this theme during the year
Venue: Llantarnam Abbey, Cwmbran, Gwent, Wales
[Cost; £80 (£20 deposit required before 30th April please). Details/booking form from; Mary Cook, 12 Wood Close, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran, NP44 8UR. Tel: 07794 294432. e-mail: maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk]

Thursday 30th September 2010

- 3.00 pm AHS London Group: Talk: *Using Good Psychology for Better Theology and Spirituality* by Dr Joanna Collicut McGrath
5.00 pm Shared supper (please bring finger food, tea/coffee provided)
6.00 pm Evening discussion
Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, Kensington, London, W8

Friday 1st October 2010

- 7.30 pm AHS Chesterfield Group: *The Crucible* (movie).
Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield. (Contact Mike Rush for further details)

Wednesday 27th October 2010

- 2.30 pm AHS Wales Group: Annual Meeting
Venue: Reading Room, Roderic Bowen Library, University of Wales, Lampeter
4.30 pm Autumn Lecture: *God is a Feel, not a Think – What is Spiritual Experience?*
by James Roose-Evans
Venue: Old Hall, University of Wales, Lampeter, Ceredigion, SA49 7ED
(Details: Roger Coward, Tel. 01597 851929; roger.coward@smartemail.co.uk)

Friday 5th November 2010

- 7.30 pm AHS Chesterfield Group: *The Ancient Monuments of Orkney*
(presentation by Joe Revill)
Venue: Whittington Moor, Chesterfield. (Contact Mike Rush for further details)

Friday 19th November 2010

- 7.30 pm AHS Midlands Group: Talk: *Paradigm Lost, Paradigm Regained: An Holistic Approach to Psychical and Spiritual Research* by David Taylor of Parasearch
Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, B60 1DA

Tuesday November 2010

- 3.00 pm AHS London Group: Talk by Professor Wayne Parsons (title, and actual date, to be confirmed)
5.00 pm Shared supper (please bring finger food, tea/coffee provided)
6.00 pm Evening discussion.
Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, Kensington, London, W8.

Friday 12th December 2010

- 12.00 pm for AHS Midlands Group: Pre-Christmas social, and planning (bring-and
12.30 start share vegetarian lunch)
Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove. B60 1DA.

OTHER EVENTS

Friday 9th April to Sunday 11th April 2010

Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies

2010 Annual Conference: Theme: *The Nature of Reality*.

Speakers: Very Revd. Alex Wedderspoon, Dr. Roger Straughan

Venue: The Hotel Royale, Bournemouth

[Further information from: Julian Drewett, Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies, The Rural Workshop, South Road, North Somercotes, Lincs., LN11 7PT. Tel/fax: 01507 358845
e-mail: gensec@churchesfellowship.co.uk]

Friday 16th April to Sunday 18th April 2010

Scientific & Medical Network Mystics & Scientists Conference:

Order out of Chaos: Possibilities for Transformation. Speakers:

Prof. Stuart Kauffman; David Steindl-Rast; Prof. Wolfgang Michalski; Barnaby Brown; Dr. Marie Angelo; Dr Simon Conway Morris

Venue: University College, Sparkeford Road, Winchester.

[Cost, £235 residential – £200 non-res. (£220 – £185 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 17th April 2010

10.00 am Society for Psychical Research: Study Day: Theme: *Healers and Healing*

to Speakers: Dr. Anthony M Scofield, Angie Buxton-King, Dawn Redwood,

5.00 pm Sandy Edwards and Margrit Coates.

Venue: St. Philip's Church, Earls Court Road, London, W8 6QH

[Cost, £38; £33 SPR members, £3 reduction for concessions. Booking/details: SPR, 49 Marloes Road, London, W8 6LA. E-mail: secretary@spr.ac.uk]

Saturday 24 April 2010

9.30 am Inform Seminar XLIV: *Cults and Crime*

to Speakers include Prof. Eileen Barker (former Trustee, AHT, Professor

5.00 pm Emeritus, LSE; Chair & Honorary Director, Inform): *Be it a Crime if I Believe?*

Venue: London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE

Registration & further details: Inform@lse.ac.uk; 020 7955 7654

Thursday 15th to Sunday 18th July 2010

The Bede Griffiths Sangha: Celebration to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Swami Abhishiktananda. with meditation and the Ashram forms of prayer. Speakers will include: Fr. Laurence, Prof. Bettina Bäumer, and Shirley Du Boulay

Venue: Gaunts House, Dorset

Contact: Hilary Knight: e-mail hilaryhones@hotmail.com

Booking forms can be downloaded from:

<http://www.bedegriffithssangha.org.uk/>

Friday 23rd to Sunday 25th July 2010

The Great ReThinking: 2012 Tipping Point – The Prophets Conference

Vancouver: *World views create worlds*

Intensives: 26th–27th July

Venue: Simon Fraser University, Burnaby Campus

Details: www.greatmystery.org

Friday 21st August to Sunday 23rd August 2010

Scientific & Medical Network Conference: *The Body and Beyond II: Mind as*

Healer, Mind as Destroyer. Speakers: Prof. David Spiegel; Prof. Kavita Vedhara;

Michel Odent, MD; Prof. Paul Gilbert; Dr. David Beales

Venue: Latimer Place, Chesham

[Cost, £290 residential – £230 non-res. (£275 – £215 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]

Religious Experience MA Residentials at Lampeter

Summer Term 2010: 24-28 May 2010

Autumn Term 2010: 25-29 Oct 2010

Summer Term 2011: 29 May – 3 June 2011



*Open Day photographs supplied by Anne Watkins;
black & white photographs by Jean Matthews*

The Sermon on the Mount of Intrareligious Dialogue

WHEN YOU ENTER INTO AN INTRARELIGIOUS DIALOGUE,

do not *think* beforehand what you have to believe.

When you *witness* to your faith, do not defend yourself or your vested interests, sacred as they may appear to you. Do like the birds in the skies: they sing and fly and do not defend their music or their beauty.

When you dialogue with somebody, look at your partner as a revelatory experience, as you would—and should—look at the lilies in the fields.

When you engage in intrareligious dialogue, try first to remove the beam in your own eye before removing the speck in the eye of your neighbor.

Blessed are you when you do not feel self-sufficient while being in dialogue.

Blessed are you when you trust the other because you trust in Me.

Blessed are you when you face misunderstandings from your own community or others for the sake of your fidelity to Truth.

Blessed are you when you do not give up your convictions, and yet you do not set them up as absolute norms.

Woe unto you, you theologians and academicians, when you dismiss what others say because you find it embarrassing or not sufficiently learned.

Woe unto you, you practitioners of religions, when you do not listen to the cries of the little ones.

Woe unto you, you religious authorities, because you prevent change and (re)conversion.

Woe unto you, religious people, because you monopolize religion and stifle the Spirit, which blows where and how she wills.

Raimon Panikkar