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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL		3
IMPRESSIONS OF A GLOBAL CRISIS	Contributions from AHT members	4
ARTICLES		
Orbs: A Preliminary Search in the RERC Archives	Mara Steenhuisen	9
Reincarnation in the Family	Ian Fordyce	12
Thoughts on Oneness	Eleonore Bruyere	15
Looking Forward and Looking Back	Don Mason	19
Orb Experiences and Seeing Energy: Interview	recorded by Tanya Garland	22
REPORTS		
Tribute to Patricia Murphy, former Editor of the Journal	Andrew Burns	23
Report from the Director of Communications	Marianne Rankin	24
Report from the RERC Director	Professor Bettina Schmidt	27
Reports from the Local Groups		28
AHT ACCOUNTS for the year ended 31st July 2019		32
POETRY		
Perfectly Achievable Utopia	Marta Helena de Freitas	33
A Visit to the Research Centre during Lockdown	Professor Bettina Schmidt	33
BOOK REVIEWS		34
NOTICES		
Members' Day 2020		41
IONS survey: Your Noetic Signature?		41
ONLINE EVENTS		42
INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS		43



Please send all contributions to the Editor:

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Information for contributors, and contact details, are shown on page 43



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EDITORIAL

When I took on the role of Editor of *De Numine*, I knew it would not be easy. After many years of dedicated editorial service from Patricia Murphy, her role was going to be a hard act to follow. However, nothing – absolutely nothing – could have prepared me for what was about to happen to all of us, and how difficult it would be to simply concentrate on the task at hand, let alone introduce a few modifications to the layout to aid legibility. A global pandemic to add to our environmental crisis: what was the spirit saying and how could we honour that in our publication?

One consequence of the pandemic is that your spring 2020 issue is later than planned, and we have had to find a new printer. As with most university campuses across the UK, the Lampeter site and its print room were closed as the UK lockdown began, and staff have been working from home or have been furloughed. We are grateful to Marianne Rankin for helping us find a new printer for this issue.

Along with many events being cancelled or transformed into webinars once the lockdown began, it may be that the ‘new normal’ will mean that online publication is the way forward for the Alister Hardy Trust and *De Numine*, as it is now for many associations and learned societies, but that is a decision for another day.

Further obstacles have contributed to the delay of your spring issue. Not long after the lockdown my 96-year-old father died (although not from COVID) and I needed to take some time off. Jean Matthews, our loyal typesetter, also had to handle numerous complications due to the lockdown. All this made a hard time even more difficult.

It seemed fitting that in this issue we should lead with members’ reflections on the global COVID-19 pandemic, some very moving and creative responses to a fast-changing crisis. We welcome more of your thoughts on the pandemic for our next issue in the autumn.

Note that the word limits for articles have changed; please adhere closely to these limits. Please see page 43 for details.

Delving a little into the AHT archive, Mara Steenhuisen gives a flavour of the varied experiences of orbs that she is studying for her PhD with RERC. See also the intriguing orb experiences described by Jane Skinner in her recent interview with Tanya Garland on page 22. Ian Fordyce has treated us to some of his forthcoming book on reincarnation and family connections, and Don Mason revisits some veridical experiences from his excellent but sadly out of print book. Picking up from our bumper issue in autumn 2019 (which seems an age ago now), we have the full article by Eleonore Bruyere on Oneness, an excerpt from which appeared last time.

To echo the tribute to Patricia by AHT Chair, Andy Burns, I am very grateful for the hard work she has done to produce *De Numine* over the years and for her kind and encouraging handover to me. Many thanks also to Jean Matthews who has stayed on to assist with typesetting from her new home in Spain.

I hope you like the new two-column style and, as always, your comments are warmly welcome – by email to denumine@gmail.com

Rhonda Riachi



Living online
in Lockdown

IMPRESSIONS OF A GLOBAL CRISIS

Contributions from AHT members

Thoughts on the Coronavirus Crisis

The planet is fighting back – against our heedless profligacy. It's wartime but without the threat of invasion. We have attacked the earth and it has retaliated with a virus that has brought humanity to a halt. Normal life has been stopped in its tracks, suddenly and universally. The human race must learn to pull together to survive. As we stay home, eschew gatherings, entertainment and travel, we will be tackling climate change. Already the air is purer, worldwide, as there are fewer cars on the roads and hardly any planes in the sky.

People are aware of their neighbours in a new way – recognising the vulnerability of the frail and elderly. Offers of help abound – at least here in our little village. We have a WhatsApp Group keeping us all supplied and in touch, and the bus shelter has been transformed into a community hub with



rainbows painted by the children and a quiz for adults.

Of course, as ever, the opposite is evident as some people rush to grab and hoard supermarket produce, and criminals await their opportunities. Personal hardship is daunting, as bills can't be paid and businesses face ruin. There is also real sorrow, lonely death and painful bereavement. The isolated face lengthy, empty, unbearably lonely days. The threat of the disease is levelling. Those already at risk become more so and the fit have to limit their activities to protect them.

Children can't go to school, so are having to spend time at home – with their parents, with whom in many cases they are forging deeper bonds. Grandparents, leaned on in unprecedented ways in recent times, are not able to step in. They have become the ones who need care.

But we are not completely isolated - we can all connect online – and grandparents can help with home schooling. We can meet up virtually with old friends who are far away – suddenly they are no further than anyone else. People are checking on others and urging them to keep safe, as we realise the value of human contact – physical (at a safe distance) and virtual. It's important to keep in contact during these strange times.

Yet to a great extent, we will fall back on our own company and it's a time for reading or painting, a time for silence and solitude, which introverts will enjoy. We can meditate and enjoy nature; watch the birds and walk in the countryside. Let's accept the need to take time out. As we can't plan, it's a chance to live in the now. So, let's stop for a while and try to enjoy this new, more peaceful reality.

Then when the crisis has eased, may we all emerge stronger and wiser and truly treasure each other and our planet.

Marianne Rankin



COVID - Surviving

I have been seriously unwell over the past three weeks, and am recovering bit by bit, almost certainly from Covid19. At times we must look death straight in the face, and I wrote my hope that my funeral might include June Boyce-Tillman's great hymn 'We shall go out with hope of resurrection', and a wonderful glimpse of Heaven vouchsafed to a child of eleven and recorded in our archives.

My prayers then turned to the increasing number of hospital patients gasping their last breath, surrounded only by faceless masks; that angels of light, as witnessed by so many in near-death experiences, may accompany and uplift their lonely passage.

This, in our Christian calendar, is the poignant time of Jesus' resurrection appearances to his beleaguered disciples, self-isolating in fear behind locked doors ... and the Truth breaks upon us that Christ defies every lockdown and keeps no social distance; and the message is, 'We never walk alone'.

Meditating on the flowers and birds in our garden, with my wife's loving care around me, and in new deeper conversations with family and friends, I feel timeless, and place more value on each moment. I think gratefully of all the spiritual explorations honoured in our Trust, which transcend physical constrictions and narrow dogma, and lead us, as Rupert Sheldrake might say, into Ways to Go Beyond.

Tristram Jenkins

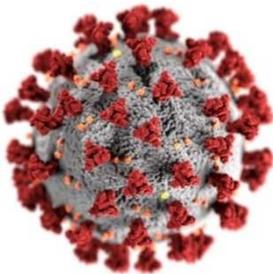
The effects of Covid 19

The virus crept up on us like a thief in the night. We had booked a long weekend in Amsterdam in the middle of March. The day after we arrived all the museums and art galleries closed. Two days later the coffee shops and restaurants followed. Back home these exceptions became the norm. Pleasant at first while the sun shone and then the novelty begins to wear off.

This microscopic body not only causes the deaths of so many of us but threatens to wreck the economy. How can this be so? Our technological hubris is challenged and undermined. We increasingly believe that we are masters of the world. Maybe now we will start to realise that we are not above and outside nature but part of it, and that we must work with nature and not try to dominate it.

Neil Hancox

Dear Rhonda, I am emailing this for Mum who can't come to my house to check her email. - *Celia, Mary Cook's daughter*



The Crown of Despair

The AHTSEW group are forced to cancel the outing planned for May 8th. But we are hoping for it to be merely a postponement to a day when we will be freed from this dark cloud we are currently overshadowed by. Outings are always special because, having longer together than for our other meetings we have an opportunity to share some deep insights from our own perspective! In other words, we get to know each other more. Try doing that at the spacing of 2 metres!

I shared a poem with a neighbour last week. She phoned me with a wonderful comment which showed how touched she'd been (we are both self-isolating). She brought tears to my eyes. I wanted to hug her. I couldn't!

Mary Cook

A shift in priorities

Facebook has assumed more importance, suddenly become useful – a way of keeping contact with friends we used to see locally.

Instead of frivolous there's funny and uplifting – and the serious is more relevant:

'Do not change your behaviour to avoid being infected.

Assume you are infected and change your behaviour to avoid transmitting.'

Then among the jokes there's a nurse who cannot hug her kids when she gets home, must sit six feet away from them, assure the youngest that she'll stay safe, lie to her husband about how bad her day has been, sleep in a room that nobody else can enter: every day, until she doesn't know when.

Our animals are now the only friends we can touch and breathe on.

We are very lucky to have a garden – but also grateful not be prevented from going out to work to survive.

Spanish law regarding lockdown is clear-cut, enforced by police and military – with huge fines. We cannot go out walking except with a dog.

We can only shop in small local shops with very limited stock that runs out anyway.

But doing without our favourite things isn't too bad: 'comfort food', 'doing without' and 'treats' have acquired new meanings.

Our relatively isolated village has been 'clean' for several weeks; we can think we're safe – but what if ... not fearful but fearful. Strange, unreal, situation.

And in a strange, unforeseen way, I'm at last learning to be happy with what I do have.

Jean Matthews (in Spain)



Plenty of Vitamin C in the garden!

Thoughts on the COVID 19 Pandemic

We all find ourselves living through this unprecedented time and hoping that the infection rates, together with shockingly high fatalities can be brought under control very soon. This invisible virus is changing our every-day lives and affecting people in almost every part of the world.

We think constantly of the wonderful NHS front line doctors, nurses and carers who are doing so much to care for those infected. There are many others playing their part too, from the many thousands of volunteers, to the lesser known friends and neighbours supporting each other day by day.

The pandemic is reminding us that we all inhabit this one planet and can all be affected when dangers arise. It is also showing us the best of humanity and how we can unite to overcome those dangers. My hope is that the kindness, generosity and goodwill shown now will become the new 'normal' once the crisis is over.

Andy Burns, Hon Secretary, Alister Hardy Trust



In 1947 Albert Camus published a novel titled *La Peste* – ‘The Plague’ – about the consequences of an epidemic on the coast of Algeria. I read this novel in the mid 60’s and even after all this time I can still vividly remember this particular line:

Ils ne mouraient pas tous mais tous étaient frappés.
‘Not all of them died, but all were touched’.

These words come flooding back to me as coronavirus makes its way around the world. We are all touched in so many ways by this pandemic.

Historically, pandemics have inevitably transformed the way societies governed themselves politically, economically and socially. And so it was in Camus’ novel. What he wanted to see were more healers, political leaders and visionaries capable of creating a different and more equitable world order. Just what we need in 2020 as we embark on another week of social distancing.

Eleonore Bruyere

Business as Usual

Calming down and listening to the planet
We are changed in ways we couldn't have imagined

'Business as usual' not a promise but a threat
from our leaders. How many of us will understand?

(Must find a new way
To say
'Lions led by donkeys'
Pity G K Chesterton can't oblige)

I am in luxury: my obliging house, my sunny garden
and no need to earn a living any more

So I have time to wonder how many of us can learn enough
From this time out of Time
To save ourselves, our world, from 'Business as Usual'

Patricia Murphy
(Written on Palm Sunday, when a donkey carried Jesus
into Jerusalem)



Bereft

On the 29 January this year I met a friend who works in public health education for a relaxed dinner at a local restaurant. We had lots of news to catch up on, so it was only as we were departing that the new topic of coronavirus came up. Sarah had just recovered from a serious respiratory infection, and told me that she would not be travelling anywhere near China in the foreseeable future. You have to stop people from travelling, she said, and be very strict about enforcement (as we were witnessing in China) because there will always be people who do not follow the rules. We wondered how long it would be until the World Health Organisation declared the outbreak a pandemic (which was to come around six weeks later on 11 March).

Four strange, amazing and horrifying months later and the world is a changed place. Those countries that went early into lockdown and maintained their testing, tracing and isolation activities throughout have fared much better than Britain. The UK death toll is the worst in Europe (see the Euro MOMO graphs for the comparisons: <https://www.euromomo.eu/graphs-and-maps/#z-scores-by-country>) and the number of deaths of health and care workers in the UK is shocking by any standard.

The country that was a pioneer of public health development in the nineteenth century now looks like it has forgotten how to care for its own population. Words fail me.

Rhonda Riachi



ARTICLES

Orbs: A Preliminary Search in the RERC Archives

Orbs can be generally described as luminous opaque or translucent spheres that are visible in still digital photographs and video footage. However, this description can be extended to orbs that are noticed with the naked eye, and may interact with the observer, then acquiring a meaning on a personal level, or in the much wider context of humankind, the planet or the universe. This paper focuses on accounts of spiritual experiences with orbs, and examines whether precursors to orbs photographed in digital imaging may be found in the RERC archives, and whether they resemble contemporary accounts of experiences with orbs.

History

Orbs as photographic effects flooded pictures literally by the millions with the introduction of digital imaging in the mid-1990s and were mostly generated by the relatively cheap compact cameras, as these had been made readily available for mass distribution. However, also in expensive high-end cameras used by professional photographers such as DSLRs (Digital Single Lens Reflex cameras), orbs surfaced as 'circles of confusion', their initial name provided by camera manufacturers. The puzzling 'thing' however, about the orbs was – and still is – their persistence. Considered to be a solely photographic error or effect (such as bokeh, lens flare, chromatic aberration, the cat's eye effect etc.) caused by out-of-focus particles and reflections bouncing off of the lens, orbs should have been over and done with once the camera manufacturer had added electronic and mechanic filters to get rid of the problem of these unwanted spheres. But here it is: despite the eradication of the possibility of 'circles of confusion' and the endeavours to make the public aware that orbs can be created as photographic effects, there is something just very peculiar about these orbs.

First, however, a distinction needs to be made between the 'orb phenomenon' as such, which refers solely to the occurrence of having orbs in photographs and/or video footage and is regarded as a conventional occurrence; and (the focus of my current research) this occurrence

combined with the interaction that occurs or can occur during the process of capturing orbs in digital imaging and continues beyond that occurrence, resulting in and considered as a spiritual experience. In fact, the first is regarded as a registering of spherical shapes only. Not coincidentally, the orb shape ('lightball') was already equated in its early stages within paranormal popular culture as the confirmation of ghostly activity and even the pre-cursor to a full-blown apparition, and especially when being captured at a certain venue such as a cemetery, an abandoned hospital or theatre or other places that were reputedly haunted.

Background

The impetus for my current PhD research came from interviews during 2014 and 2015 with so-called orb enthusiasts, for my master's thesis (2016). Orb enthusiasts are people who not only claim that they are firm believers of the floating light spheres but also tend to be in contact with them. This contact occurs telepathically with examples of orb enthusiasts who conducted experimental research to direct an orb into a certain position by asking 'it' to press the shutter of the camera so the orb enthusiast may take a picture to prove that, indeed, that orb is positioned in that particular corner the orb enthusiast had in mind. It has to be stressed that conventional optic explanations and the considerations as mentioned previously account for a good deal of the orbs in photographs and video footage. It gets very interesting though when cases present themselves which indeed account for the presence of orbs in someone's life over a longer period of time. This presence could be in the form of a single orb that becomes of personal importance to the perceiver. This particular orb could be there alone or be amidst yet standing out of a flock of other orbs or orb-like manifestations. It may suddenly appear, stay for a while and disappear. It may return repeatedly or just once or twice over a lifetime, and with no exception the effect on the experienter is profound. It should be pointed out that orbs have been reported frequently in other conscious and non-conscious states such as dreams, during the near-death

experience (or NDE), out-of-body experiences (or OBE), mystical experiences, clairvoyantly as part of the auric field, UFO encounters and paranormal experiences. These examples fall within anomalous experiences as 'believed to deviate from ordinary experience or from the usually accepted explanation of reality according to Western mainstream science' (Cardeña, Lynn, Krippner, 2014, p.4).

A Preliminary Search of the RERC Archive for contemporary orbs

As the RERC archive aims to collect accounts of religious and spiritual experiences, according to Alister Hardy's call for experiences described as 'Have you ever had a spiritual or religious experience or felt a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from, or more than, your everyday self?', it comes perhaps as no surprise that orbs could be included. Similar accounts to contemporary photographs and their narratives might be found here, although it should be stressed that the archive contains accounts only and not photographs, the latter being an intricate feature of the orb phenomenon. However, as the term 'orbs' is a recent term, categorisation and therefore comparison should be approached with caution, as Mark Fox also explained about his research in the RERC archive on *Spiritual Encounters with Unusual Light Phenomena: Light Forms* (Fox, 2008). Should orbs be equated to floating spheres, globes, lights, stars and circles? As their outer and inner shape, density, colour, size, and patterning may vary as well as their appearance and mode of interaction from a sole presence to a group, determining what serves as an example and what isn't depends also on the context in which people describe their single brush or repeated and ongoing interaction with orbs.

The search term 'orb' entered in the RERC database yields thirteen results (retrieved on 3 January 2020); of these thirteen 'hits', three accounts do in fact refer to orbs in the contemporary designation, being account numbers 005509, submitted to the archive in 2011, and 005479, submitted in 2009. The third account, number 400032 has the date of writing of 1999. The subject is 'Orbs of Light' and recounts an experience in 1947. One of these accounts is presented first to give an example of contemporary use of the term 'orb'.

The account is given by a father who lost his son and is aware of 'an energy following him' and he consults two mediums of which one points out that the son has provided directions to indicate proof of his presence on a photograph:

RERC Account no. 005479, date of writing 2009
[...] I recontacted the first medium some time in our readings. He provided information about our son which only we were privy to. *Suddenly, he went quiet. 'Go into your garden as far as your greenhouse then turn to your left. Your son is going to surprise you take photos at this place said the medium. I did as he asked taking my digital camera with me. I fired five shots at this spot discovering that one had captured a beautiful ORB. I'd never seen one before. We had the image enlarged and printed. Maybe I was lucky to have photographed an ORB but how did the medium know that I should go left at the green house? how did he know that I had a greenhouse. He'd never seen my garden nor the layout. Again, only one of five shots (all taken within a split second,) had captured the ORB. Will someone explain!*

As this paper concerns only a preliminary search into the archive, other search terms were employed loosely in order to see what the results from the archive would provide for descriptions closely resembling orbs and in the search field 'subject' (and not the similar entry in the second field 'text') as a 'ball of light' (1 result), 'floating ball' (0 results), 'luminous' (3 results) 'disc' (22 results), the combination of 'luminous disc' yielded no results; 'circle of light' (0 results), 'circle' (34 results), 'sphere' (62 results, including 'atmosphere'), 'globe' (0 results), and finally 'star' (86 results) to see what accounts would be generated from the database. Other search terms can be used in a later stage of the study. The use of distinctive designations employed by contemporary orb enthusiasts such as 'soul sphere', 'ghost orb' or 'spirit orb' already include assumptions about the nature/origin of the orb and were not employed at this time. Yet, to illustrate what kind of accounts from the RERC archive may describe orbs before the term was coined, some examples provide a sometimes striking witness of the following situations: after bereavement with continuous presence (000031) and spontaneous and repeated occurrences (000264), during sleep in a dream and a religious crisis during a vision (000252), during the experience of physical trauma (003123), and after physical trauma (300318). Due to the

limited publishing space, I have chosen to present only two complete accounts and highlighted the parts that may refer to orbs (in italics). The first account, no. 000264, was found using the search term 'ball of light' and 'circle'. The latter also yielded account no. 003123, as did 'disc' in the subject field of the database. In the full version of this article you will find the other accounts.

RERC Account no. 000264, date of writing 1969)

About 3 years ago as I lay in bed and was about to pass from waking to sleeping I saw before my eyes an extremely [sic] *brilliant ball of light - a very intense light in a black background*. The room was dark and I think my eyes were open; I saw the light for between 5 and 10 seconds. It was not caused by any physical condition of myself - I have very good health, nor light from outside, it was far too intense. About 3 or 4 weeks later I had the same experience under just the same conditions but this time *the ball of light was surrounded by an equally intense line of light round the circumference*, just a short distance from it. That is all my experience but it seemed and still does seem of significance.

-1978 Alone, after 40 years of joint decision making, I found that *a ball of light, or part of one*, has unexpectedly appeared a few yards away as soon as I had made a decision, lasting a second or two.

-Sept 1978 *My ball appeared again, bright, but less intense in the garden*, through the N. window as I sat alone thinking of what a friend had told me that afternoon, of her having been once aware of a presence. (SAME RERC ACCOUNT NO. 000264 including multiple experiences, DATE OF WRITING 1980)

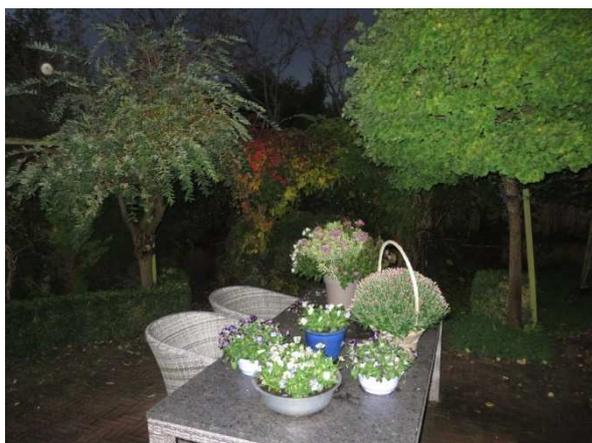


Figure 1: Single orb taken early evening at dusk (19.00 hrs CET) of 13 October 2019. It was not raining although it had been predicted for the evening.

RERC Account no. 003123, date of writing 1974

THE HEALING DISC Earlier in the evening I had a fall which had left me with two wounded knees. The next day I was due to take a journey I emphatically did not want to fulfil; so apart from cleaning the knees, I applied no curative ointment or fluid. That night as I lay in bed, out of the depths of the darkened room, *I saw a disc the size of a small plate and shimmering with light-colours. Grooved rings circled towards the centre and between each, a space, which formed a raised band. The darkness around the disc seemed to have greater depth than I felt to be normal and I sensed a distinct feeling of intensive movement, although I could see no objects. The disc began to move straight towards my face and then dissolved between my eyes.* The next day I woke expecting to find the usual re-action to my knees, i.e. bruises and stiffness but this time there was little trace of scarring or ache. I undertook the journey.

Preliminary findings and Conclusion

Early accounts found in the RERC archive may demonstrate the occurrence of balls of light long before any mentioning of the term 'orb' in their contemporary sense, comparable to the term near-death experience which is also a relatively recent term. In particular, the description in RERC accounts numbers 000264 and 003123 describe the 'classic' orb: the round shape, often with concentric circles and mostly white, notably no. 003123 which the experiencer calls 'the healing disc' is especially precise in describing the orb (see *Figure 1*). Contemporary interaction with the orb is demonstrated in account no. 005479 during bereavement.



Figure 2: The cropped, non-enhanced version of the orb shows the features of the orbs with the particular concentric rings.

What my literature research revealed and my interviews are suggesting is an emerging pattern that has yet to be closely examined. Somehow bereavement may serve as a trigger or an invitation to orb companionship. Other triggers may be personal or religious crisis, serious illness or inflicted physical and mental trauma as RERC accounts demonstrate as well. Case number 000264 stands out as the experiencer mentions that the brilliant balls of light turn up spontaneously and for none of the abovementioned triggers, however, she also notices in a second occurrence that they seem to pop up whenever she has made a decision and refers to it as 'my ball', thus personalising the orb.

From the above examples from the RERC archive it may be suggested that this preliminary search yields results from touching lightly upon the vast wealth of accounts presented in the RERC archive. Many more may stem from it for future research to elucidate the spiritual experiences with orbs, past and present.

Mara Steenhuisen

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Reincarnation in the Family

I have believed strongly in my immortality since I was a small child. The trigger was a fear of the dark and a dread of enclosed spaces. Fairly normal, you might say, but for me these fears led me into vivid experiences of past life recall, trapped in enclosed, dark spaces, which haunt my dreams to this day.

I spent much of my childhood helping on a nearby farm, and that too triggered memories of pastoral life lived previously. Digging my bare hands into the Yorkshire soil at 'spud picking' time, and driving cows to milking at dusk, readily summoned primordial 'half memories'.

At school I got good marks for a story about a soldier advancing across 'no-man's-land' hearing an enemy shell screaming towards him. I was

reliving a death that in much later life I recalled in detail with the help of regression hypnotherapy.

As my family developed in adult life, I became aware that some relationships within my extended family were not totally new, that some blood ties undoubtedly transcended generations and lifetimes, and had intertwined repeatedly down the ages. I sensed a pattern in family relationships.

I began to look at not only my own family, but friend's families also, in terms of family likenesses. I found that it was normally very obvious if you had to make a choice, whether a child was from its mother's bloodline, or its father's. Family traits are often very strong indeed. Most children, I believe, are either from their father's or their mother's bloodline. These

souls represent the return of a particular person from the antecedents of one of their parents, including not just personality, but physical similarity too, sometimes even birthmarks which reflect how they died last time!

As family comes and goes, I am very fortunate to experience departure dreams and arrival dreams. Close family appear reassuringly to me in my dreams after their death, perhaps because I have been open to such things from an early age. These are messages of reassurance that my relative is still existent, happy, and are no longer old and infirm in heaven, but restored to their youthful vigour, and fully alive in spirit. I also have experienced vivid, technicolour dreams of long dead relatives, shortly before the birth of a grandchild, or other family birth. These are called 'announcing dreams'.

I have read many books on the subject, including Lobsang Rampa, Lord Dowding, Ian Stevenson, and Carol Bowman. I recently spent a day with Brian Weiss, perhaps the most distinguished exponent of reincarnation still touring the world today.

So I have had a truly fortunate life, blessed with a deep understanding of my own – and everybody's – immortality. Not only do I not fear death, but I also see a rich timelessness in everybody's lives, which transcends the petty, everyday nature of things – why are we always so busy? – and can see a bigger picture of blessing and growth in each one of us.

Spontaneous Past Life Memory

Past life memories occur for many in early childhood. Ian Stevenson's research suggests that most children begin to lose (or suppress) these memories by about 6 or 7 years old, as the realities of this life 'drive out' the greater realities of previous lives.

By 'spontaneous', I mean that it's 'just there'. Young children particularly will just suddenly open up about experiences from previous lives. Many others are given in the book *Memories of Heaven* by Dr Wayne W. Dyer and Dee Garnes.

Carol Bowman, following publication of her book *Children's Past Lives* in 1997, began to receive hundreds of letters and emails from concerned parents from around the world, glad to relate their stories, and relieved that listening to their children's 'bizarre' stories had often been

instrumental in lifting sometimes severe symptoms from their children. Following her increased publicity, as TV, radio and lecturing tours began, more and more cases poured in.

My most effective memory of previous lives in early childhood was being shut into my darkened bedroom as a small child, staring at the chink of light under my bedroom door, saying to myself: 'You are safe, in this life.' Nightmares of premature burial continue to haunt my dreams to this day – waking up in a coffin six feet down in the ground – crying out 'Oh no, not again!' and waking up in a cold sweat. I have never had therapy for this, as I feel grateful that it has proved a catalyst in my exploration, and theorising, about the pattern of everybody's immortality.

The Scottish Soldiers

As I got older I realised that my preoccupation with war was not only a natural effect of my environment, having been born in 1946, the year after the end of World War Two, but also related to memories of my immediately previous lives. I felt that I had been a soldier who died in the First World War, was promptly reborn, and died again in the Second World War.

Recently I sought out my local hypnotherapist, and after some hard work and numerous sessions of hypnotherapy, he enabled me to access these previous lives. My first visit was to a Scottish lad named Charlie, who was the youngest of a numerous family in a mining village in southern Scotland, born in the late 19th century. There were memories of cuddling up to several older sisters, and a happy family group. My brothers were all destined to work down the coal mine, but I knew that my claustrophobia, present in that life also, precluded that as a life option; so I had opted to join the Regular Army.

This would have been just before the outbreak of the 1st World War, so I was one of the first to ship out to northern France. By June 1915 I had become a seasoned soldier, but at the battle of Messines I was advancing with my unit when a direct hit from a German shell ended that life with great finality.

My next, and most recent, previous life proved harder to access. I had a vivid impression of being a Scottish child in the 1920s, with women in cloche hats and summer dresses caring for

me, but later memories were hard to come by. Eventually, I deduced that I became a corporal in the Scots Guards, became proficient with the Thompson Sub-machine gun, or 'tommy gun', and died fighting in northern Italy in 1945, not long before the end of the 2nd World War.

On the way to this life during hypnotherapy, I also had a regression further back to the early 19th century, taking an exciting stage coach ride from the English West Country to Manchester, and the employment opportunities of the industrial revolution.

My Anglican Ministry

With that confirmation of my lifetime suspicion that reincarnation was the pattern of not only my life, but of all human life, I began my studies with the Oxford Diocese of the Church of England, to become a Licensed Lay Minister, often known as a Lay Preacher. Part of my motivation for this commitment, apart from other more laudable aims, like public service and gaining a captive audience for my sermons, was a wish to investigate thoroughly what the Anglican Church had to say about life beyond life. Many lectures followed, and much essay writing.

I received my license in Oxford's Christchurch Cathedral in November 2015. One of the many things I had discovered by then was that my church had virtually nothing to say about life after life, or indeed life before life. Any attempt to talk about these things was not generally welcomed by the authorities. Towards the end of the course I did once float the idea of reincarnation in a seminar session. Interest was expressed, but I also gave the opinion then that it was a red herring in the study of Anglican theology, and would not prove a profitable train of thought in our progress towards being licensed. In other words, I did not want, having come so far, to be thrown off the course!

The Guildford Hypnotherapist

Thirty years earlier, when my children were young, ten years before I ended my marriage, I had moved with my family to Guildford for work, in the early 1980s. Shortly after arriving there I sought out a regression hypnotherapist from the local phone book. I went to interview him about his work, purely for my own benefit. He was very hospitable, and made no charge.

Not all hypnotherapists will admit that they can regress people to previous lives – for fear of being thought weird, when all their client wants is to stop smoking or lose weight – but when asked directly, this therapist readily admitted it. He personally had regressed many times; his favourite life was as a Jewish Rabbi in early medieval Europe. The most significant thing he told me was that he had an English translation of the 2,000-year-old *Tibetan Book of the Dead* with which he was studying Tibetan Buddhism. In it he had found references to their Saint Issa, a young man who arrived from the Middle East. He had astonished Lhasa with his understanding and his questions, and then mysteriously disappeared back to the Middle East. The hypnotherapist was convinced that this person was Jesus Christ – during his 20s when nothing is known of him.

Jesus Christ!

Today you can Google 'Christ in Tibet' and instantly gain a lot of information. There is even a line drawing of him, preaching to an assembly of Lamas, said to be authentic to the time. There are other legends of him travelling in India, experiencing the Hindu religion, but his time in Tibet is the most authenticated. One legend from northern India is that his questions so outraged several Hindu holy men, that they exhorted the gathered crowd to kill him, for so questioning their teaching, but as the crowd went to seize him, he just walked through them without being touched, and went on his way.

Carol Bowman only wrote two books, and then concentrated on running her website, *childrenspastlives.org*. But in both her books, Jesus makes appearances. As children talk spontaneously about the time immediately before their recent birth, several have talked about being blessed by a wonderfully encouraging visit from Jesus, who sat them on his knee and told them not to be afraid, for all would be well.

So I am left holding two threads, which do not converge, but are actually highly compatible. One is my belief in Jesus Christ as God who came to earth. One is reincarnation – repeated lives down the ages in which our souls slowly improve, with intervening times in heaven where we also have the opportunity to improve; and have the ability to analyse deeply what went

right, and what went wrong, in our immediately previous life, and others.

Why we must Embrace Personal Immortality

My personal exploration of reincarnation has taken on a certain urgency since I have begun to write this book. I recently attended a day with Brian Weiss at the Quaker Meeting Hall in London, and his talk confirmed for me the imminence of the spirits he calls 'The Masters'; these are intermediary spirits who control for God the detailed interplay between the living, the dead, and the not yet (re)born. I feel that one of these has been encouraging me to write this book, soon. Not long before I attended Brian Weiss' seminar, I awoke with a powerful message to get on with the writing, as mankind 'might' have only 40 more years, before Nuclear War succeeded, or came close, to obliterating us. This chimes with previous insights that I have received over the years. At the time of the millennium I was asked by work colleagues who

knew I was religious if the world would end in 2000. On reflection I said no, we had a bit longer.

By 'immortality' I mean our soul, which inhabits our physical body during our lifetimes, but is greater than that. Our soul does not wear out over time, or get dementia, or become incapable. Physical death is only the point at which our bodies reach their moment of obsolescence, can no longer function, and must be discarded by our souls. Our souls contain all our character, our ideas, the essence of 'us'. They are immortal, and have continued to develop and mature through many lifetimes.

Ian Fordyce

This is an extract from a draft chapter of Ian's book entitled *Your Immortal Soul Family*.



Thoughts on Oneness

An excerpt from this article was printed in Autumn 2019 issue (p.9) – here is the full version.

The following are some 'thoughts on Oneness'. This subject is so vast that I could never do it the justice it deserves. So to begin with ...

What is Oneness?

In around 500 BCE the Greek philosopher Heraclitus was quoted as saying, 'for those who are awake the cosmos is one'. He criticized his predecessors and contemporaries for their failure to see the unity in all experiences. He also coined the word 'Logos', according to which all things are one.

In 1652 Gian Lorenzo Bernini created his iconic sculpture 'The Ecstasy of Saint Theresa', a work that transferred into marble the spiritual oneness (her words) she felt toward her great love of God. In her forties she had settled down to her new spiritual life and while praying and

singing the hymn 'Veni Creator Spiritus' she experienced the first of her ecstatic episodes that would accompany her for the rest of her life. Bernini was inspired by her writings to create his 'total work of art' for which he designed a special room incorporating sculpture, painting, and lighting effects to showcase his iconic work in a dramatic way. Multimedia was born with Bernini! As we view his work even today it is hard not to feel the spiritual, or some will say the erotic oneness, Saint Theresa felt toward the Divine.

Fast forward now to 1927. In a letter to Sigmund Freud Romain Rolland, a French writer who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1910, coined the phrase 'oceanic feeling' to refer to the sensation of being one with the universe. According to Rolland this feeling is the source of all the



The Ecstasy of Saint Theresa

Image credit:

<https://sites.google.com/site/adairarthistory/>

religious energy that permeates various religious systems, and one may justifiably call oneself religious on the basis of this oceanic feeling alone even if one renounces every belief and every illusion. Freud discusses the 'oceanic feeling' in his *Future of an Illusion* in 1927 and in his *Civilization and Its Discontents* in 1929. Freud contends that this feeling is a fragmentary vestige of a kind of consciousness possessed by an infant who has not yet differentiated himself or herself from other people and things but experiences oneness with all that surrounds her or him.

Fast forward again to 2010

When Dr Deepak Chopra was asked to take part in the group Humanity's Team to petition for a Day of Oneness at the United Nations, he began to think deeply about the concept of oneness. Amongst other things, he became acutely aware that people's feelings affect us greatly. Just as laughter is contagious so are negative emotions. We sense people's vibrations whether we acknowledge them or not. He adds that we are individual expressions of life, demonstrating qualities that are aspects of the One. We are separate waves in a vast ocean.

What brought me to explore this vast question of oneness in the first place?

It all started with the book *The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben that I had casually picked up at Waterstone's. Before reading this book, trees were passive greenery around me. I had admired them, felt grateful for their beauty but walked on without another thought. I had forever felt disconnected from things somehow and that something crucial was passing me by. This book stopped me in my tracks. As I read that trees communicated with one another through scent, as we do with language, a whole world opened up before me. I learned about the family life of our trees, of their care for one another, how they welcome hundreds of friendly species while repelling those which harm them through hastily-fabricated chemical substances.

Trees inhabited our planet before we came along and they have been our neighbours, helping us to breathe, read, sit at our tables, and admire art inspired by them. They have also inspired countless authors, such as a gem of a book entitled *Sixteen Trees of the Somme* by the Norwegian author Lars Mytting. It is spellbinding, a truly great read. See also *Forest Therapy* by Sarah Ivens.

Art by Gustav Klimt at the Belvedere Museum in Vienna depicts our close relationship with the trees and flora that surround us. I was especially taken by Klimt's *The Kiss* while viewing this painting in situ. The couple seemed to be propelled upwards through a garden in full bloom, like two golden tree trunks frozen in an immortal embrace.

The Wood Wide Web became alive for me as I became alive to it in a profound sense of oneness with these beautiful, generous, ingenious species that share this planet with us all.

I became conscious of what was around me in a way that I had not experienced before. This feeling was reinforced after reading an excerpt from D.E. Harding's book on meditation titled *On Having No Head*, which offers the possibility of experiencing the world in a new way. As you look around you, you picture the world as your head. A different kind of awareness jumps at you when you surrender your head to the world. As you forget about your head you open up to the world and the world joins you, *becomes you*.

You are still aware of individual objects, like trees and flowers and of people and dogs around you, but each are somehow connected to you, for the world is no longer blocked off from you by your head. I tried looking at the trees along the Green leaving my head behind and I was overwhelmed by a feeling of oneness with those trees. It was pure magic! I sort of became the particular tree I was looking at, and the tree became me. I then felt a bit sad for not having been able to see beyond my 'me' barrier for all those years now gone by. I had the most marvellous feeling of finally being deeply connected and in oneness with my world. Now I greet my tall silent friends with smiles and thank you-s just for being there. They are not always silent, as they transform themselves into marvellous musical instruments when the wind plays soothing symphonies among their leaves.

I think we tend to perceive ourselves as separate from the world, as if it was out there somewhere out of reach. We can easily feel alienated or alone not knowing how to move on, as we sit there on the side-lines as a spectator in a great cosmic musical. But when you experience yourself as having no head, or having the world as your head, all of this changes.

This experience of having no head was cataclysmic as it moved me on to tentatively explore what lay there unseen inside of me.

I find it amazing that when you really need to move forward in your life, the tools to do so just happen to be there waiting for you. This happened when I became aware of a book titled *Awakening Your Psychic Powers* by Henry Reed, Ph.D. The word psychic implies going beyond what is seen ... stretching your mind's abilities. This book then analyses the work and sayings of Edgar Cayce, the most documented psychic of the 20th Century and the father of holistic medicine.

Edgar Cayce repeatedly expressed his concept of Oneness in his readings by saying over and over again that 'All and everything is as One'. When he emphasized the law of Oneness he was reiterating what is known as the 'Perennial Philosophy' a term coined by Gottfried Leibniz, the inventor of calculus, and made popular by Aldous Huxley in his book of the same title. The Perennial Philosophy is the core message of all religions that states that behind all the diverse,

visible manifestations of the world there lies a unitary Supreme Being in the 'That art Thou' principle. We are all part of the 'Thou'. According to the Perennial Philosophy all creation is interconnected although everything appears to be separate. In fact there are no separate entities as each is an inherent part of the 'That art Thou'.

Leibniz explains that each ocean wave appears to be a separate 'thing' but waves are in fact passing expressions of the ocean. Each wave is one with the ocean. The Perennial Philosophy advocates that consciousness and the material world, the 'inner' and 'outer', are one and the same and that the Supreme Being, Divine Presence, or the Kingdom of God is within us as well as outside of us all; and that there is more to us that we might suspect based solely on our sensory impressions.

What took centre stage for me at this point was trying to become 'One' within myself, how to cooperate with my oneness instead of fighting it every inch of the way.

Step 1 was meditation, concentrating on my breathing in a generic meditation practice as instructed by Dr Patricia Carrington of Princeton University. This type of meditation is based on common elements of the various schools of meditation. I was focusing on the breath, relaxing as my breath went out, and as I breathed in I let the word 'oneness' take precedence. It incorporates the focus on the breath as in Zen meditation, and the repetitive mental focus with the word 'oneness' as used in Transcendental Meditation, but is less fussy and to my mind more user friendly.

Through this process I was led to think of a very different type of trinity as opposed to the male-oriented Christian model, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; one composed with the three levels of consciousness, which are the conscious, the subconscious and the superconscious.

That was Step 2.

I went back to Dr Reed's book that I mentioned earlier to try to simplify things as much as possible and to figure out how I could come to grips with all of this. The words that came up researching consciousness are awareness of what is around us, perception, alertness,

sensitivity, cognizance, responsiveness to vibrations, best described to me the process of consciousness that I was trying to figure out. Realising that *Everything* is out there in our vibrating cosmic universe is a first step toward expressing our unique identity and all that this identity actually contains. What I found fascinating reading about vibration frequencies was to think that in some way we are all a form of 'radio station'. We tune ourselves to a great variety of different vibration frequencies as we interconnect with different people, with nature, and material things during any given day, and we do this without ever really thinking about it. I like the idea that we can switch to various vibrating frequencies or stations effortlessly.

Edgar Cayce has described the subconscious as the mediator between consciousness and the superconsciousness or universal consciousness. It concerns that part of our minds of which we are not fully aware, but which influences our actions and feelings all through our lives. It has a seemingly infinite reach capable of responding from the interconnectedness of all life. The genius of the subconscious seems infinite perhaps because it is in contact with every subconscious mind. It is also subjective as it is a biased perceiver and as such its perceptions are coloured and shaped by the accumulation of suggestions, thought patterns and memories planted in it ad infinitum by ourselves and others.

Jung called the superconscious the area of the mind that contains the pure archetypes of the collective unconscious. The subconscious is subjective and the superconscious is objective. Whereas the subconscious mind is affected by memories, and patterns and feelings, the superconscious holds the impersonal record of all these experiences.

The superconscious mind, realm of the soul's immortality, and the Divine, is only active as a guide or an influence when we lay aside our conscious mind to make room for the subconscious. Then when our subconscious mind takes over and becomes in turn our conscious mind the superconscious can break through in the same way that the subconscious can break through to the conscious mind when it is awake. A sort of shutting of one door and the opening of another and then another is one way to explain this process. To access or experience

our superconscious level, again according to Cayce, we must do more than set aside our conscious and subconscious minds. It is important to be fully aware that we are forever creating the thoughts and the mind patterns that we need to realise our aspirations, our goals and ideals because the superconscious mind is the domain of these aspirations, goals and ideals and that they are all there waiting to be activated on our behalf. The struggle to make our aspirations and ideals into practical reality activates the energy of the superconscious mind. In this way the superconscious mind forms a level of being in which Oneness and individuality are integrated and synonymous.

Another way of looking at this is through the formula of H₂O, which encompasses water, steam, ice; these three elements have their own specificity and their own purpose but they all share the one formula. So one formula, three different functions. How would we identify our own formula I wonder? 1=3 perhaps. Which leads me to Step 3.

Step 3 was to try to make sense of it all on a daily basis. How do we expand our minds to welcome our own trinity within our physical selves? How do we live the life of Oneness? I have the feeling that I will spend the rest of my life trying to figure these things out. So Step 3 is definitely a work in progress.

You may well ask why is it so important to be aware of our three levels of Oneness? Why should we strive to expand every facet of our minds?

A few years ago Professor Harari at the University of Jerusalem wrote a seminal book titled *Homo Deus – A brief History of Tomorrow*. He has various answers to why we should bother. Harari contends that 70,000 years ago a Cognitive Revolution transformed the Sapiens mind, turning an insignificant African ape into the ruler of the world. The improved Sapiens minds suddenly had access to a vast intersubjective realm, which enabled them to create gods and corporations, build cities and empires, invent writing and money, and eventually reach the moon and land a probe on Mars. As far as science knows, this earth-shattering revolution resulted from a few small changes in the Sapiens DNA and a slight rewiring of the Sapiens brain. If so, say the techno-

humanists of today, maybe a few additional changes to our genome and another rewiring of our brain will suffice to launch a second improved cognitive revolution where Silicon Valley techno-geeks and others will take over our three levels of consciousness completely if we let them.

The disruptions that techno-revolutions have already brought to the world we live in are on the one hand incredibly positive, but on the other have changed the landscape of our lives in a dark and often sinister way. A staggering number of addictive and mindless apps have stunted young minds and destroyed their attention spans and much more. The cruel bullying rampant on social media has led to the deaths of too many vulnerable teenagers. No wonder the techno billionaires refuse to let their children use mobiles or tablets. They of all people know the harm inherent in these devices when not managed safely. We need all of our three levels of consciousness to keep the integrity of our own holy trinity intact so that we may still flourish within such complex and dangerous parameters.

Coda

In summer 2018 I attended the Spring Concert of the Oxford High School musical ensemble at the Oxford Town Hall. My granddaughter, who plays the piano and various percussion instruments, took part in this concert. And as a proud grandmother I sat down on a rather uncomfortable chair and looked forward to the evening. As soon as the music started, I completely forgot about the uncomfortable chair as I was transported to other worlds by the sounds of Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 23*, by the *Concierto de Aranjuez* – second movement, by Rodrigo, by Schumann's *Piano Concerto in A minor*. I looked at these dedicated students and older musicians that accompanied them and marvelled at them all, from so many different backgrounds, so many different ages, quite a few of them playing more than one instrument in complete harmony with each other and the works they were interpreting. All I could think of was how much I wanted to be part of this orchestra. But failing that, I became aware through these beautiful vibrations that we are all participants in the oneness of life's tremendous orchestra. And that is just great.

Eleonore Bruyere



Looking Forward and Looking Back

I am now 85 years of age and am becoming ever more aware that I am actually quite old. This being the case, it seems appropriate to make some attempt at setting out what I think I have learned in these past years.

I have been very fortunate in the many wonderful people whom I have encountered on the way. These have in a variety of ways shaped my views on the answers to the most important questions that we ask ourselves. My parents were very remarkable people. I should say 'are', because I recognise that the end of our physical life is not the end of our spiritual being. The reader may need evidence of the validity of that statement and it is a testament to the strength

of the current materialistic paradigm that such evidence is asked for. What I am about to write is not a scientific proof but the most compelling reasons for what we believe are our own personal experiences. Consequently, the credence that you give to what I say will depend very much on the degree to which it accords with what you have found in your own life.

My mother was very psychic. I shall not expand on this statement but just give a few examples. On one occasion my parents were having a sitting, at which my mother 'saw' a gentleman who, by his clothing, she judged to be a Victorian. She attempted to get his name by the laborious process of using the rocking of a table

to spell out the relevant letters: one rock for 'A', two rocks for 'B' and so on. This rocking was almost certainly produced by the involuntary movement of my mother's hands which were resting lightly on the surface of the table. She obtained the letters T, H and E. She described the Victorian gentleman to my father and told him that he says his name is 'The'. Attempts to obtain 'The *What?*' were unsuccessful and this left my mother puzzled. However, both my father and the old gentleman started to laugh at my mother's perplexity. Whereupon my father explained that the old gentleman my mother had just described was my father's deceased uncle, whose name was Theophilus. His family all called him 'The'.

My mother then received a biblical reference: The Acts of the Apostles. Chapter 1, verse 1: *The former treatise I have made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach* (King James Version). I should say that my mother was not a biblical scholar and when she told me, years later, of this event she could not at first remember the details of the biblical reference.

As a second example: this time the communication was from someone who was not known to either of my parents. Although my mother never advertised her paranormal gifts it was inevitable that people become aware of them. On one occasion my parents were visited by a middle-aged couple who asked for a sitting. At this sitting my mother was controlled by a young man who it transpired was the deceased son of the visitors. He was verbally very aggressive to his father, so much so that my own father was about to intervene and bring the sitting to an end. However, the visitors earnestly requested that it should continue and that the reason for the son's aggressive behaviour would become apparent.

After the sitting the visitors explained that the male visitor was considering leaving his wife for another woman and this had made the deceased son very angry with his father. The outcome was a positive one, in that the husband gave up his mistress and was reconciled with his wife.

As the preceding accounts seem to show, those who leave this life do not cease to be engaged with it. Instead they behave as though their 'deaths' were no impediment to the

continuation of their emotional involvement with those they leave behind. That is not to say that communication is easy or even possible in some circumstances.

With regards to those who are on this side of life one may ask whether they too can communicate with us where normal physical contact is prevented by the force of circumstances. The following are two examples that answer this question in the affirmative. Towards the end of WWII my mother was consulted by a middle-aged woman who said very little but who gave her a small brown paper parcel. The use of such an item seems to focus the attention of the psychic on the person most closely associated with the article in question. During the séance that followed my mother said that the brown paper parcel contained a football jersey and that it belonged to a young man who was very keen on sports. She went on to say that the young man had been Christened 'John' but that everyone called him Jack. My mother then said she was experiencing a sensation of flying 'but not in an aeroplane'. This feeling puzzled her but she could give no explanation of it. Finally, she remarked that she felt very cold and she interpreted this to mean that the young man was dead. Happily it transpired that this interpretation was erroneous but all the facts that my mother gave at the time were correct.

Although several of these facts were known to my mother's visitor, who introduced herself after the sitting as Jack's mother, those relating to her son's immediate military deployment were not. These became known to my mother's visitor only after her son returned from the war. The sensation of flying, but not in an aeroplane, arose because the young man was a paratrooper who had taken part on the raid on Arnhem in September 1944. This raid involved the use of gliders towed behind aeroplanes to transport the paratroopers to the target area. The football jersey was a silk one and it had been wrapped up very tightly so as to give no clue as to its nature. Also, as was learned afterwards, the sensation of cold was entirely accurate. At the time Jack was in a ditch, taking cover from the German attack and he was physically cold.

If telepathy were the sole explanation here, then it would have to involve the acquisition of information from both the paratrooper's mother and her son. Alternatively, seeing-at-a distance

could account for my mother learning of the contents of the brown paper parcel but would not account for the sensation of cold that my mother associated with it.

Finally let me finish with what is a rare example of paranormal communication between the living.

My brother Jack was a bomber pilot in WWII and in early 1943 he was shot down while returning from a raid on Stuttgart. Uncertainty about the fate of my brother was a strong incentive for my mother to attempt to use her paranormal gifts to obtain news about him. Accordingly, on the night of the receipt of the telegram reporting Jack missing, my parents had a séance. They could hardly have anticipated its outcome. There were just the two of them. Suddenly my mother got to her feet, stepped over to my father and grasped his hands in hers. 'Dad it's me. I can see you,' said my mother in an excited voice. My father recognised that this was Jack. 'So, you've passed over,' said my father expecting that his son was now dead. 'No, I'm not' was the reply. 'I'm all right. They haven't caught me yet.' When my father asked for confirmation that it really was Jack who was communicating with him, he said, 'I changed my will before I was briefed,' then 'I must go now. Tell Mum her table is all right.' He laughed and that was the end of the link.

My father was doubtful about Jack changing his will as he was keeping it in his own strongbox. However, very shortly after Jack's communication a letter came from the tail gunner of Jack's old crew (Jack had not flown with his usual crew on the raid on which he was shot down but with a composite one made up from a number of different nationals). The letter expressed the sympathy of Jack's old crew member and said how popular Jack had been with his crew. He also said that the last thing

Jack had done before he was briefed for the raid on Germany was to change his will. This document was now in the hands of the Padre on Jack's bomber station.

There is a very informative sequel to these events. After over two years as a POW, latterly in Stalag Luft 3, Jack returned home. When father asked him what he knew about the night that they had communicated, Jack said he knew nothing. It was true that he had not been captured at that time and he thought that he might have been sleeping, but he was not sure.

Conclusion

The accounts that I have given are a record of my own personal experiences and those of my family, However there is a large literature on the topics related here. The reason that it is not better known is simply due to the resistance which science offers to ideas that run counter to its established beliefs.

Don Mason

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Orb Experiences and Seeing Energy

An interview with Jane Skinner, recorded by Tanya Garland on 7th September 2019

It started after my husband Charles died on 13th December 2005. After the funeral I had a few weeks in Bangladesh and then returned to my empty house in Oxfordshire. I had never been alone at night before. I sat down in the sitting room by the fire to write thank you letters and then went to bed about 3am. When I turned out the light, I could still see all the furniture and in front of the bed there was a very tall pillar, shining, a bit like a pyramid. I thought I must have left a light on in the passage, so I got up to check, but there wasn't a light left on. When I got back to my room, there was still light in the room and when I looked up, all around the edge of the ceiling were lovely twinkling lights – twinkling at me – lovely comforting lights. I pinched myself to see if I was awake and then just lay back to watch them. I thought it must be Charles or some angels sent to comfort me and eventually I fell asleep. That was my first experience.

A year or so later, when I had come out of hospital and was sleeping in the spare room, I saw on the ceiling that there were lights making patterns, but there was nothing there that could have caused them such as reflected light. The lovely patterns kept changing. It was more of a golden warm light which made me happy until I fell asleep.

While I was still living in the rectory and lying on my bed, I saw light coming down onto me from the ceiling like a solid shaft of white light which seemed to be made up of visible atoms, like little circles joined together. I saw this at least a dozen times before I moved house.

Three and a half years ago now, I moved to Woodstock and nothing more happened until the beginning of this year, when I saw orbs floating around the room. In the meantime, I was diagnosed with called Stargardt macular dystrophy and they asked me if I saw strange things as other people had reported seeing things that were not there. At the time I said 'No' but on my last visit, after seeing the orbs, I told them about them and they said it was my imagination. But I had taken a lot of

photos of the orbs which showed them very clearly, but the medical staff still didn't want to know. I think the Stargardt has made me a little bit clairvoyant and opened me up to seeing things like lights and auras as they had told me other people had had this experience as well.

Now I see energy coming out of people – from the top of their head when they are concentrating on something or from their hands when they are working. This happened at a concert recently while I was listening to a pianist and I could see the energy from her hands and from her head. It was like a mist or haze similar to a heat haze.

At the beginning of this year, I began to see spheres floating around my room which worried me at first. They were different sizes, usually whitish though transparent, sometimes pink or red or blue. Other people can't see them and are not interested or think I am a bit mad or something but when they are interested and have taken photos where I say the orbs are, like on the table now, they then see them in the photo. Although others have not seen them directly, they have seen a golden light in my hands when I was holding an orb.

Quite soon I realized that one of the spheres was following me everywhere I went, in and out of the house and even abroad, and I have got to know it very well. It has become a permanent part of my life.

In fact I have given it a name. I call it Hemi, short for Hemi-sphere. It is incredibly flexible. It is white or transparent with a golden light inside it – so it gives the sphere a golden hue and texture. It is very alive too. The transparent bit is a vehicle for the 'entity' inside and there is a golden door on the side of the sphere and the entity comes out through this door. The 'door' is a round circle – usually gold, and the entity sends out a golden light and the light comes out when the entity comes out. It can be tiny and sit in my hand or it can be very big and cover the whole ceiling. It is there every morning. We have become very close and we trust each other now. Other orbs may float about as well. I see

a lot of them in nature – in the forest in France there were very many and here in the woods at Blenheim Palace too.

Hemi is always with me and if I put my hands out and say, 'Come Hemi' it always comes and sits in my hands. It is very beneficial. Sometimes when I wake in the morning or in the night, I see a lot around me but when I turn on the light, they go away but Hemi is always there.

For about 3 months I have seen a black shadow which forms a tent around which I don't like. It is transparent like lace, patterned, but I can see through it. Sometimes it seems I am inside the tent shape but I can put my fingers out and break it. I have seen two red entities inside the tent shape too which I don't like and they do frighten me. If I let

them, they start to form into shapes like humans. They form into a face and shoulders but I always say the Lord's Prayer and cross myself and Hemi tries to drive it away. He pushes the black tent into the corner and it gets smaller. I feel it is malevolent and I would like to be exorcised but I don't want to lose Hemi as he is comforting and healing.

I am not on any drugs though I have had cancer and some has returned recently. I am going through a strange stage of my life and I wonder if these peaceful orbs and comforting lights are coming because I am living alone and maybe nearing the end of my life. I don't feel I have long to live now. I am 82 years old now and have got a lot of health problems.

Recorded by Tanya Garland



REPORTS

Tribute to Patricia Murphy, former Editor of the Journal

Paddy stepped down as editor of *De Numine* in December last year after almost 15 years in the role.

I want to pay tribute to her long service as editor which has seen the journal go from strength to strength. In practical terms *De Numine* increased in physical size with the inclusion of more pages allowing additional space for articles, letters, reviews and poems. More recently colour photographs were introduced which - together with coloured front covers - enhanced the overall appearance and feel of the journal which brought favourable comments from readers.

Alongside these practical changes the content was carefully managed to create twice yearly issues which were always interesting, stimulating and a well-balanced mixture of articles, book reviews and letters. I always enjoyed Paddy's own editorials in which she summarised the contents and highlighted the links between various submissions. I recall her

saying how 'threads' and 'themes' would emerge as the journal was put together and this was a most fascinating side to Paddy and Jean's editorial work. The two 2019 celebratory issues commemorating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the RERU in Oxford were excellent and a fitting end to Paddy's time as editor.

On a personal level it was always a pleasure to collaborate with Paddy over the years and it is interesting to recall that we first met whilst studying at Lampeter for the MA in Religious Experience. This was almost twenty years ago and we both later also became involved with the Alister Hardy Society (later Trust) with Paddy becoming journal editor in 2005.

I would like to wish Paddy all the very best in retirement, and also to welcome Rhonda Riachi as the new editor. I look forward to the next evolution of the journal.

*Andrew Burns
Hon Secretary, Alister Hardy Trust*

Report from the Director of Communications

Events

2020 is proving challenging. Planned meetings, including that of the Alister Hardy Trust, have had to be cancelled – or indefinitely postponed due to the coronavirus crisis. Andy Burns, Rhonda Riachi and I had arranged a joint AHT/Oxford & Cotswold Group meeting to be held in June in Oxford, but we took the decision to cancel – before sending out any publicity.

I am relieved that we were able to celebrate our Golden Anniversary in style last year long before any of us had heard of coronavirus, which has now taken over our lives.

In 2019, AHT Honorary Secretary Andy Burns and I worked together on the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of Sir Alister Hardy's founding of the Religious Experience Research Unit in Manchester College, Oxford. This involved assisting in collecting reminiscences and articles for *De Numine* and organising a special Anniversary Celebration in Oxford.

The Members and Activities Group is no longer a formal group, just a co-operation between Andy and me, bouncing ideas off each other and then arranging AHT events. We also work with Margaret West to ensure that members are kept informed and receive communications where required.

De Numine

Two Golden Anniversary issues of *De Numine* were produced last year to focus on Sir Alister Hardy and his research. Patricia Murphy (Paddy) and her assistant Jean Matthews are to be congratulated on putting together these memorable editions of the journal. Members truly have keepsakes to treasure, and spare copies are still for sale.

Both issues were lavishly illustrated, with wide-ranging contributions from family, friends and others closely involved with the AHT. These two issues brought together stories written by those of us who have been involved with the Hardy project over the years and biographical details and often photographs were included. It was absolutely fascinating to read how people had been inspired by Sir Alister. Each person's

contribution gave a unique view of the impact of Hardy's work and its legacy in their lives.

We are particularly grateful to Paddy for continuing to work so hard, despite bouts of illness and sojourns in hospital, while also caring for her husband. Sadly, she has decided that the time has come to step down and to hand over the editorship after fifteen years. She will be an immensely hard act to follow, but Rhonda Riachi, who has recently taken over running the AHT Oxford Group for the second time, has stepped forward and will begin with this online Spring issue.

Paddy has been a marvellous editor and I am constantly told by AHT members, just how much they appreciate the range of articles and variety of content offered by *De Numine*. We shall miss her very much indeed and wish her a happy retirement.

RERC Anniversary Conference

Professor Bettina Schmidt organised a wonderful conference in Lampeter in July 2019, with three eminent keynote speakers and a wide range of papers on fascinating aspects of Religious and Spiritual Experience research. I was invited to contribute and spoke on my PhD research into *The Fruits of Experience in the RERC Archive*.

Sadly, Bettina has had to postpone the 2020 RERC conference in Lampeter in July until 2021.

Anniversary Celebration

The special Anniversary Celebration was held in Oxford on 19th October 2019 in the Quaker Meeting House and was a huge success with the highest turn-out I can remember. A buffet lunch was served to speakers and helpers and the afternoon concluded with a celebratory reception.

Dr Rupert Sheldrake, who gave the first Annual Memorial Lecture in 1987, gave the 50th Anniversary Lecture. His title encompassed those of his latest two books, *Ways to Go Beyond and Why They Work: Science and Spiritual Practices*. Like Sir Alister, Rupert Sheldrake is a biologist with a deep understanding of the spiritual.

He remembered meeting Sir Alister and being aware of the controversial nature of his change of direction on retirement from the Linacre Chair of Zoology at the University of Oxford. Rupert spoke of his own life and research and looked to the future of spirituality and science as one of more co-operation than the confrontation of the past.

In the afternoon, Dr Mark Fox spoke on his research in the RERC Archive, which has resulted in three major books – on NDEs, Light and Love. He was one of the first researchers in Lampeter and shared the wonder of reading original hand-written experiences which had meant so much to people. He alluded to the unique nature of the Archive and looked forward to future explorations of the database.

Both papers will appear in the online *Journal for the Study of Religious Experience*.

We were then treated to an insight into Sir Alister Hardy as a family man from his great-niece Jane Winship. This was followed by an illustrated presentation of the life of Sir Alister given by his grandson Tom Farley. What an ebullient character Sir Alister was! Tom traced the life of his grandfather and his adventures on bicycles, in balloons, planes and ships and his love of nature and painting.

Present and past Directors of RERC then recounted their experiences. Professor Bettina Schmidt began by reading a contribution from former director Dr Wendy Dossett, who sadly was unable to attend. After Bettina had told of her studies, research and present work as Director, Peggy Morgan spoke, warning of the negative side of RSEs. She was followed by Professor Ursula King, who has a long association with the AHT and has written extensively on many different aspects of religion and spirituality.

The bookstall did a lively trade in the speakers' works and AHT publications as well as offering free books bequeathed to the AHT

by the late Rodney Reeves. The Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies was also represented with a display of their literature.

The afternoon concluded with an informal celebratory reception. It was a convivial occasion, a fitting tribute to Sir Alister and his research – an event which I feel sure he would have enjoyed.

We are hoping to hold Members' Day in Oxford on Saturday 10th October at the Friends' Meeting House in Oxford, but cannot confirm at this stage.

DoC Activities

Much of my time last year was taken up arranging the Anniversary Celebration. There was much to do, especially as numbers attending soared – which was most encouraging – even if logistically challenging. We were over 80 people in the Quaker Meeting House, far more than usual, but the helpers rose to the occasion and everything ran smoothly. Many thanks to everyone involved for making it a memorable day.

Talks

Last year I spoke at the Annual Conference of the Churches Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies in Bournemouth on *Unexpected Experiences of Light*, giving numerous examples from the RERC Archive. In March this year, I led a Quiet Day at Stanton Guildhouse, which triggered interest in the AHT. Since then all my other events have been cancelled.

Reflection

We are keeping in touch with each other in new ways as we stay home, and Zoom is now a familiar environment. None of us knows what the future holds but I extend every good wish to all in the AHT for a successful new decade.

Marianne Rankin, Director of Communications

Report from the Director of the Religious Experience Research Centre

When I was asked to write a report in January 2020 the focus of our work was the preparation of the 2020 conference. It was supposed to be a one-day conference on the 6th of July 2020 followed by the Interfaith Conference. Professor Jane Shaw, the principal of Harris Manchester College, Oxford, accepted the invitation to give the Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture 2020. We also planned another panel with three speakers, among them Dr David Greenwood and Professor Marta de Freitas, a current visiting professor from Brazil, as well as the launch of our new publication *Spirituality and Wellbeing: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Religious Experience and Health*, edited by Jeff Leonardi and Bettina Schmidt.

However, at the end of March we had to cancel the conference as the University closed the campus and all activities were put on hold due to the coronavirus. Professor Shaw has agreed to speak at the 2021 conference though it is still unclear when it will take place.

The coronavirus and the closure of the campus has also impacted on other work. The RERC office is also closed and Tim Pitchford works from home. In the original report (written in January) I noted that Tom continues with his work on the Badham Collection as well as answering any enquiries of members. Tom has also prepared the Index for the book and volume 5 of the Journal which came out shortly after the last report was sent to *De Numine*. As we had to say goodbye to Jonathan Andrew, the archivist, Tom is now the only member of staff in the office. Please keep in mind that he is in the office only part-time, so it can take longer to

get an answer. He will continue, of course, looking after members and help with any enquiry.

However, due to the coronavirus his work had been adjusted. While he is unable to incorporate books into the catalogue from home, he works on the accounts, answers emails and works on the Journal, as well as any other items that he can do at home.

Work continues on the Journal. A range of papers of the anniversary conference 2019 will be published in the online Journal for the Study of Religious Experience. Guest editor is Dr Jack Hunter, an honorary research fellow of the research centre. Jack has also proposed to organise a special issue of the Journal about Ecology and Spirituality. In addition, we are preparing another special issue edited by Andy Burns, Wendy Dossett and Bettina Schmidt (for the end of 2020).

With regard to teaching I can report that one more student on the Master by Research in Religious Experience has successfully graduated (Richard Cesar, with a dissertation on music and religious experience). Two other students have passed with minor corrections and will graduate soon. Another student will submit in a few weeks and three others are working on the dissertation. Two students will transfer in February to part 2 of the degree and start their dissertations with two new students at the beginning of part 1. Two students on the MA Study of Religions have written their dissertation on topics related to spiritual and religious experience and have also passed (one with distinction and the other with merit).

Professor Bettina Schmidt, Director, RERC



Reports from the Local Groups

AHT Oxford & Cotswold Group

Some highlights from our Meetings

Since May 2018 the Oxford branch of the AHS has held 22 meetings. Between ten and twenty of us meet in Kidlington, Oxfordshire, for a couple of hours each month, for a presentation and discussion (with coffee and cake!). The sessions are always thought-provoking and stimulating. This is a brief account of the meetings I have attended.

In May 2018 Beth Crutch gave an account of the Rosicrucians. By following the teachings and precepts of this Order, available by subscription, one can undertake a process of inner discovery and greater understanding of the world.

Guest presenter Karl Gunter gave an account and practical demonstration of Singing Bowls in November 2018. These brass or bronze vessels range in size from several inches in diameter to two or more feet across. The bowl is excited into resonance by stroking the inside with a rod covered with soft leather or cloth. The frequency of the note emitted depends on the size of the bowl, and will last for a minute or more before fading away. The effect is soothing and can be an aid to meditation.

Ian Fordyce, a licensed lay minister in the Church of England, gave two talks on Reincarnation in November 2018 and February 2019. Ian has been exploring ideas around reincarnation and hypnotherapeutic regression for many years. His second talk concentrated on reincarnation stories of famous people. Ian is currently writing a book on the topic.

In May 2019 Rhonda Riachi gave a presentation on Mapping the Afterlife, based on accounts of near-death experiences and reincarnation research. Rhonda explored how NDE case histories, reincarnation evidence and other accounts of survival might align with Theosophical 'maps', which position each individual soul within a connected, multi-

dimensional universe. There was an extensive bibliography and many references from well-known authors, and some excellent Power-Point slides.

Anne le Marinel talked about Healing Intention circles in June 2019, based on the 'Power of Eight' model popularised by Lynne McTaggart. These international circle groups meet regularly, and collectively send healing intentions to individuals who have requested this.

Rikky Rooksby used his guitar and recorded examples to help us understand Spirituality in Music. The musical effects were excellent, although some of the musical technicalities (about keys, etc.) were a bit beyond me. (This is no reflection on Rikky but on my ear!)

The final two meetings of 2019 were presented by Paul Trafford and Eleonore Bruyere. Paul described his mother, Fuengsin Trafford, who was deeply involved in Buddhist spirituality in Thailand and how this influenced her life. (Paul's book, *Thursday's Lotus*, is available at <http://fuengsin.org/thursdays-lotus-is-published/>)

Eleonore's presentation concerned 'Art, Spirituality and Intention', especially as experienced through the paintings of the American artist Mark Rothko, who produced massive (6ft x 10ft) paintings, consisting of one or two colours. The effect of these can be quite overwhelming; the effect of a roomful even more so.

Beth Crutch gave our first talk of 2020, about her grandfather and how his life was spared in WW1 by German soldiers on the battlefield. Beth outlined some remarkable synchronicities and threads of family history she has uncovered surrounding these events, suggesting deep underlying connections between them.

Neil Hancox

AHT South East Wales Group

Llantarnam Abbey Gathering, 4th-6th October 2019

Our theme, **Discovering Connections**, was approached in many interesting ways by our members as I hope what follows will confirm.

Friday:

Building Bridges Between Consciousnesses; talk and report by Ken Price

Doing background research for his talk, Ken came across a description of the Kalahari Bushmen's ability of 'tapping in', being quiet to hear 'that which is thinking through us'. This viewpoint is not new, that we do not live Life, it lives through us; it's all a matter of perspective. From the author whose book writes itself to the musician whose music plays through her, there is a theme of the individual connecting with something much greater to allow life/creativity to flow through them to create itself. So, the sculptor chisels away at the uncarved block of marble to allow the angel to emerge, becoming, as a Welsh druid described, Awen* – 'life singing in praise of itself'.

Using the metaphor of droplets from a bowl of water, Ken described life-forms (including us of course) emerging from the Ocean of Consciousness, yet still retaining a connection to the Ocean to which all would one day return. The connection between the droplet and the water – between the life-form and the Ocean of Consciousness – being the bridge.

As an example of synchronicity in action perhaps, and maybe even morphic resonance, Ken was then introduced to Dr Rupert Sheldrake's recently published book *Ways to Go Beyond and Why They Work*. This work, together with his earlier publication *Science and Spiritual Practices*, described several such 'bridges'; meditation, rituals, fasting, psychedelics and spiritual openings amongst others. Although Dr Sheldrake's ideas have had a mixed reception, his idea of the Morphic Field resonates strongly with the Ocean of Consciousness. Within this Field, similar forms (morphs, or 'fields of information') reverberate and exchange information within a universal life force; sounding very much like information flow – communication – across a spiritual or psychic bridge.

So why would we want to build bridges between 'consciousnesses'? They are our connection, between the outer world we perceive and our inner landscape, by which we can engage in dialogue and communicate with our inner Self. Building, or re-building, bridges can connect to and re-integrate aspects of Self, what Jung called 'individuation', re-unifying the various parts of the psyche into a balanced and harmonious whole ... healing, in short.

In conclusion, Building Bridges between Consciousnesses can strengthen the link, the bridge between inner and outer, fine tuning our ability to hear *that which is thinking through us*, whether we see it as the Tao, the collective unconscious, God, the Morphic Field or Ocean of Consciousness – they all seem very much connected.

Minefields and Stepping Stones; presented by Mary Cook

I designed this short talk to develop into a workshop. I took two quotes from F. C. Happold's *Mysticism* each of which recognised a conflict between the experiences of the 'mystic' and the religious mainstream:

This is the faith of the mystic. It springs from his particular experience and his reflection on that experience. It implies particular view of the nature of the Universe and of man, *and it seems to conflict with other conceptions.* (p21).

And he quotes the medieval mystic, Boethius:

This discord in the pact of things,
This endless war 'twixt truth and truth ... (p21)

How had we experienced this in our own lives? Does it ring true with us? How do we find souls with whom we can share? We seem to need to, when there are sacred things within our experience which cannot be shared except perhaps with others with similar, though of necessity different, experiences. We were eventually fortunate – or guided (*stepping stones*) – to find the Society initiated

*the inspiration of the poet bards; or, in its personification, Awen is the inspirational muse of creative artists in general (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Awen>)

by Alister Hardy where we may in safety share our experiences and our reflections upon them.

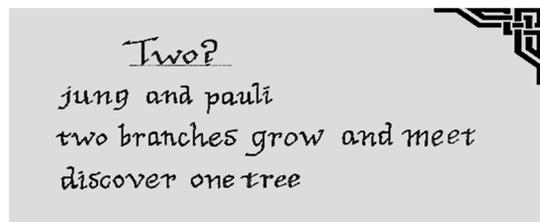
Shamanic Science and the Cell

That science and things spiritual have drifted apart seems to be symptomatic of a general fragmentation of scholarship. W Ken Davies examined the work of two scientists whose findings bring science and spirituality face-to-face. The cell biologist Bruce Lipton shows how the structure and function of individual cells and their interactions force a reassessment of the relationship between belief, thought and health. The work of the anthropologist Jeremy Narby shows how the science of shamanic cultures can be considered a parallel version of the modern science of DNA, differing only in the language used. The conclusion was drawn that spiritual systems have much to offer western science if a spirit of mutual respect can be nurtured.

Saturday:

Jung and Pauli – two branches, one tree.

Alan Underwood gave a presentation which revealed the extraordinary and surprising relationship between Carl Jung (1875-1961)



and Wolfgang Pauli (1900-1958). These two outstanding minds plumbed the depths of reality from radically different starting points.

Jung experienced his 'confrontation with the unconscious' in 1913. Assailed by elaborate visions and dreams this period led him to produce *The Red Book* and was central to his development of analytical psychology, his theories of the archetypes, the collective unconscious and individuation. His was an exploration of the inner world.

Pauli was recognised as prodigy from an early age. He produced a book reviewing Einstein's Theories of Relativity at the age of 21 which was praised by Einstein himself and amazed all who read it. He became one of the early

pioneers of quantum mechanics, elucidating the mysteries of the behaviour of electrons in the atom. In 1930 he predicted the existence of the neutrino, a sub-atomic particle whose existence was not confirmed until 1956. He was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1945. His was an in-depth penetration of the material world.

In 1932 Pauli and Jung both lived in the environs of Zurich. Pauli's life had often been a somewhat chaotic one and 1932 was a particularly troubling year for him. He turned to Jung for help. The meeting was to develop into an extraordinary collaboration of not only a physicist and a psychologist, but of physics and psychology. Jung reviewed hundreds of Pauli's dreams and Pauli became adept at self-analysis. Over many evenings of conversation and nearly thirty years of correspondence they jointly came to recognise common concepts that had relevance in both fields of knowledge. In 1952 they jointly authored a book, *The Interpretation of Nature and Psyche*. Space prohibits further elaboration of their wide-ranging collaboration but to summarise; in their own words:

Jung: Sooner or later nuclear physics and the psychology of the unconscious will draw closer together as both of them, independently of one another and from opposite directions push forward into a transcendental territory, the one with the concept of the atom the other with concept of the archetype'.

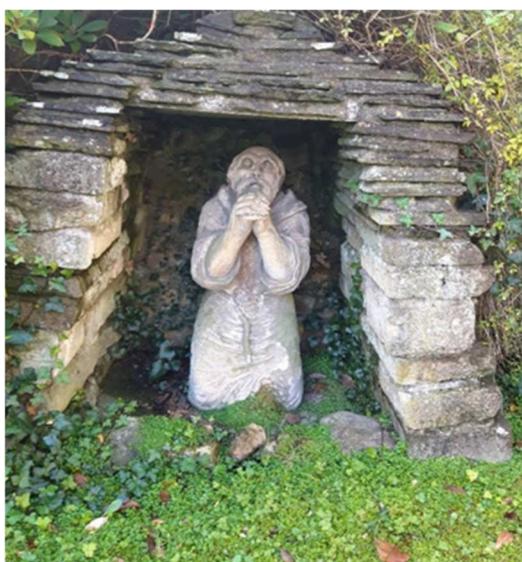
Pauli: We have to acknowledge the rational scientific approach as but one way of seeing and interpreting the world. A complementary approach implies that our investigations of reality must not any more deal with matter and psyche separately but that we have to take both sides into one common account.

The Labyrinth, a talk and a walk; presented by Trudy Porter

A labyrinth was often considered to be a spiritual centre in many villages and towns in the country, a place where people congregated and to meet, socialise, walk and share their religious calibrations. Most of the ancient Labyrinths are of 7 circles and probably originate from the 7 stars of the constellation Ursa Minor (Little Bear) as they circle the pole star. When walking the labyrinth you move towards the centre and then away, inwards towards the soul's journey

homewards and outwards towards life and the lessons offered to the soul. Many labyrinths are found in Churches and Cathedrals, connections of the Heavens and Earth. Possibly places where the spirit would be freed and released into Heaven.

This Harvest time, think of the world we live in and how wonderful nature is to provide us with life as we enter the Labyrinth. Still your mind and be aware of the 'Cycle of Time' as a tidal river flowing in, out and ever onwards. Follow the path as it curves inwardly to its destination or salvation, seeing vibrant colour, beauty and plentiful life, then move outwardly along the path we take within this life.



Hopefully this will be a mystical experience. With the disappearance of the self and an awareness of being a part of all, a connection with Annwn, the Celtic word for the 'otherworld', or even Avalon where Arthur went to be healed, will reach you. Or the Mabinogion with its Welsh stories can be felt to unfold.

Towards Connections and Wholeness

Saturday evening's title took the form of a workshop/discussion led by Jonathan Robinson. We were invited to review how our spiritual/religious experiences had influenced our own inner lives, and also our connecting with the wider world. Each of us contributed from our own perspectives through a thought-provoking session.

Sunday

This morning session was devoted to a three-in-one creative workshop. Beginning with the thought of summing up our time together, I remembered a booklet we had put together following a Quaker retreat weekend many years ago where Anne Cluysenaar, a poet, introduced us to the discipline of the *haiku*. Now, we were led to write a few *haikus* inspired by our time at Llantarnam, then to choose one, to copy it out, then to illustrate it.

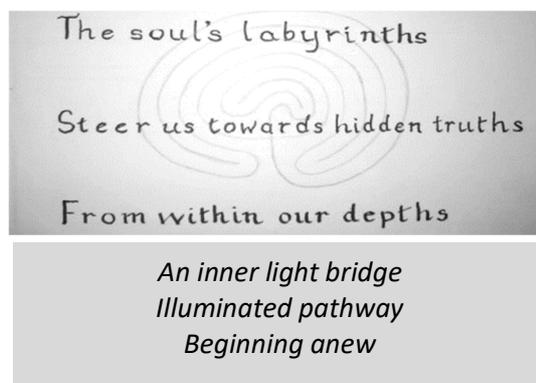
Janis, a member of our group, was interested in calligraphy, and was pleased to introduce us to this art-form. We attempted the calligraphy as complete novices, and it really caught on. We felt it to be therapeutic, and meditative, and also evocative of the 14th century scribe-monks in this self-same place, whose manuscripts still exist in the archives of Aberystwyth! Time ran out so the illustration aspect of the challenge did not materialise. We took our work home to complete the task as we saw fit.

In summary, many expressed the feeling that this 'Gathering' had been the best we had experienced. The mixture of talks and workshops was ideal, and we hope to take our calligraphy to new heights next time!

Many thanks were offered to Janis Waterhouse for her inspiring instruction.

Thanks are also due to Celia Cook whose very fluent demonstration of a classical labyrinth design was much admired.

*Report compiled by Mary Cook
Photographs by Trudy Porter*



Haikus: revealing how much wisdom can be packed into so few words!

Meeting at Llantarnam Abbey, 14th March

Eight of us met at our lovely location to hear about 'The Kalahari Bushman's Spiritual Nature'. I had collected excerpts from Laurens van der Post's books over the years, so was delighted to be able to share something of the Bushmen with our group. Yet initially I put van der Post's books to one side because I had a piece that I wanted to share first.

Some years ago – out of the blue – I was sent by internet a passage from the work of psychotherapist, scholar and teacher, Bradford Keeney. It was entitled 'Dancing with the Kalahari Bushmen'; and I read it to the group in its entirety. In this excerpt Keeney showed how a profound spiritual experience which he vividly described had resulted in his being guided towards learning about the spiritual nature of the Kalahari Bushmen. His experience gained through living with Bushmen eventually led him to being initiated as a Bushman doctor.

Most of my extracts from Laurens van der Post's books were from *The World of the Kalahari* and *The Heart of the Hunter*. The books are written from his life's experience, his family home being a massive ranch in territory which would historically have been Bushman territory, and demonstrate his intimate knowledge of a people whose presence still belonged to that land. He was deeply conscious of their near-extinction, and was passionate that something must be told of their profound spiritual knowledge and how it permeated their everyday life. But the encroachment of foreign cultures was, and is still, a great threat. He writes, 'It is as if an instinct warns one of the capacity of the familiar world to kill an experience it has not shared'; and also '... because what the world lacks today is not so much knowledge of these first things as experience of them.'

I had allowed a short pause following each quote, to assist us to assimilate the offering, and the ensuing lively discussion showed that what had been heard had individually found a deep resonance. Van der Post's writings demonstrate the intrinsic religious and spiritual world quite unique to the Bushmen. I cannot begin to elucidate its enormity here, so

will recommend that those not already acquainted with *The Heart of the Hunter* especially, search it out.



Our 'umbrella' title for the year is 'Connections' and I believe that we had felt a connection with this immensely spiritual people. While in South Africa, my daughter and I, really out of the blue, made a very meaningful connection with a passing Bushman. But that's another story!

Mary Cook

Meeting at Llantarnam Abbey, 5th December

This afternoon's talk by Lynne-Ann Thomas was very well researched, taking in quantum physics, relativity, and referring to NDEs and OBEs among other aspects. From the spiritual to Quantum computers (q-bits) my mind was in a whirl. Where would future developments take us?

Lynne's presentation fitted neatly into our theme for the year, 'Connections'. Though she is new to the group, she was uncannily aware of which subjects had been our themes in past meetings, and she certainly enlarged on these, especially on the scientific. She showed us the books she had visited in preparation, and made it clear we could borrow them.

Mary Cook

Accounts for the Alister Hardy Trust for the year ended 31st July 2019

As is usual for the Spring edition of *De Numine*, I write a brief summary of the financial situation of the Trust for the financial year which ended last July – this is particularly for those who were unable to attend our AGM.

This has been another year of much activity, largely owing to the generous bequests received over the past few years. We are, of course, very grateful for legacies as they do in fact provide our main source of income: it is of course sad that we were unable to thank these generous donors when they were alive. Whilst we are showing a significant deficit, this is in line with my 5-year forecast, a forecast which is kept under review and revised in time for the May Trustees' meeting.

Our investments, under the guidance of our stockbroker, have provided us with our main

income, and with uncertainty over Brexit which continues until the end of the transition period in December 2020, and the world tariff situation, there is no suggestion at this juncture that we make any changes.

Unfortunately, unless we receive a significant increase in our funds, we shall have to start drawing on our invested reserves before the end of this academic year.

I set out below a short summary of the accounts – a full set of accounts is available on request for those who wish to receive them. Just let me have your name and address and I'll send you a copy. I would particularly highlight the most significant payments of £25,194 in respect of supporting the RERC, Lampeter, which of course funds the two members of staff who look after the archive and the AHT books.

Income (including investment income £10,125 and subscriptions £3867)	£15,654
Expenditure (including donation to UWTSD of £25,194, various honoraria, and additional expenses associated with increased activity on the part of volunteers and trustees)	£48,397
Net deficit	<u>£32,753</u>
Fixed Assets: Tangible assets (mainly books and works of art)	£50,547
Current assets: Bank accounts and invested funds	£353,396
Total assets less current liabilities:	<u>£401,455</u>

The accounts were unanimously approved by the Trustees at the AGM held on 21st November 2019

Dr David Greenwood, Honorary Treasurer



POEM

Perfectly Achievable Utopia

I'm going to get star dust
To spread around here.

I will rise above myself, go beyond myself
Go to the other side, beside me.
I want to come to you.

Much more than being human,
I want to be love.
Though wanting them both to be one.

If being human
Is not the same
As being love,
What can I do?
How can I stay?
What kind of being am I?

I'll get moondust
To shed light here.

Oh... It'd be better to spread the moonlight
And allow the stars to shine.

Once again I haven't risen above myself.

But I'm still going to get
Rays of powdered sunshine
To shed light inside me.

Marta Helena de Freitas

(From *Eroslogia: A tese de amor*. Brasília: Thesaurus, 2004. Translated from Portuguese)

A Visit to the Religious Experience Research Centre during lockdown

The Religious Experience Research Centre in Lampeter is currently hosting Professor Marta Helena de Freitas from Brazil. Marta is professor of psychology of religion at the Catholic University of Brasilia and co-ordinates the Working Group 'Psychology & Religion' of the Brazilian National Association for Research and Postgraduate Studies in Psychology. She is a psychologist, with a Masters in Social Psychology and Personality and a PhD in Psychology from the University of Brasilia; Post-Doctoral in Psychology of Religion, University of Kent at Canterbury, UK; and in Culture Psychology, University of Oporto, Portugal. Currently she is also the Coordinator of the Psychology & Religion Working Group of the National Association of Post-Graduation and Research in Psychology – ANPEPP, and a member of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion – IAPR. As such, she is now organizing the next IAPR International Conference. This event will be held at UCB, in Brasília, Brazil, under her coordination and it will be the first time that it will take place outside the European circuit.

She also contributed with a chapter titled 'Religiosity, Spirituality and Wellbeing in the



Perception of Brazilian Health and Mental Health Professionals' in the book *Spirituality and Wellbeing*, recently published by Equinox, and co-edited by Prof. Professor Bettina E Schmidt and Dr Jeff Leonardi. An abstract of her chapter can be found at: <https://www.equinoxpub.com/home/view-chapter/?id=35871>

At the RERC, Marta is conducting a research on 'Religiosity and Spirituality in Psychotherapy: an intercultural study based on the perception of clinical psychologists', in collaboration with Professor Bettina Schmidt, the Director of the research centre. Marta is also working on an article about Sir Alister Hardy for a Brazilian journal as well as other

publications that will promote the work of the research centre in Brazil and beyond. Living in Lampeter allows her to conduct research directly at RERC and access historical documents about Alister Hardy, his life, and his work.

While her activities are currently restricted due to the Coronavirus, Marta contributes actively to research seminars, held now



*Professor Marta Helena de Freitas
with Professor Bettina Schmidt*

online. Meanwhile she focuses on her research. But she also uses the time for creative work and writes poems to reflect her time in Wales. Recently, for instance, she wrote some short verses about Lampeter and the RERC which she is happy to share with *De Numine*:

Lampeter

At the confluence of two rivers
This city was found by my heart.
While the Afon Dulas waters depart
River Teifi waters me as caregivers.

RERC

In the Alister Hardy Religious Experience
Research Centre
I've found more than prestigious books,
papers and documents.

What I found there is prodigious! And inspires
me to present these inter-faith contributions.
To Bettina, with my compliments!

Professor Bettina Schmidt

BOOK REVIEWS

**Henry Corbin, *Jung, Buddhism and the Incarnation of Sophia: Unpublished writings from the Philosopher of the Soul*. Ed. Michel Cazenave with Daniel Proulx
English Translation: USA, Inner Traditions, 2019. 199 pp. ISBN 978-1-62055-739-6**

'The sages of whom he wrote with such learning, and with such inspiring insight, were not for him mere subjects for research. They were teachers from whom he—and, through him, we—could learn; guides back into a kingdom to which we have lost the key.'¹

I first encountered the work of French philosopher Henry Corbin in an essay by the British academic and literary critic John Carey, from which the above accolade is taken. This recent English translation of a collection of Corbin's writing on Carl Jung's interpretations of Eastern religion, Sufi mysticism, the wisdom teachings of Sophia and visionary spirituality

both illuminates the primary material and reveals the spiritual values underlying Jungian psychoanalytic theories. The collection is particularly helpful in unfolding the mystical dimension of Jung's work and setting this within Western and Eastern religious traditions.

Henry Corbin (1903-1978) is regarded as a key 20th century French philosopher and orientalist as well as one of the most influential scholars of Islamic mysticism. An official website dedicated to his scholarship also highlights a wider interest in the three major monotheistic religions.² This volume is

a selection of largely unpublished works posthumously entrusted by Corbin's wife Stella to his friend the late Michel Cazenave, an expert on Carl Jung, and edited in the form she requested during the early 1980s. The French version of the present book, which includes additional material, was published in 2014 with the assistance of Daniel Proulx and translated into English by Jack Cain for the 2019 Inner Traditions edition.

Cazenave's aim for Corbin's writings in this collection is wider than the title suggests, for the book explores not only Jung's relationship with Eastern and Western mysticism but also intermediary forms of these in Islamic and central Asian cultures. A key purpose is to reflect the importance of mystical traditions in the underlying structure of Jungian thinking and psychoanalytic processes and to add a 'philosophy of the soul' discourse to these.

Structure and main themes

The book is divided into two main sections. Part I is entitled 'Carl Gustav Jung and Buddhism' and includes the following chapters:

1. Zen (on *The Book of Great Deliverance*)
2. Pure Land (on *La Psychologie de la méditation orientale*)
3. The Tibetan Book of the Dead (on the Bardo Thödol)
4. Taoist Alchemy (on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*)
5. Conclusion: The Self and Sophia

Part II covers Jung's 'Answer to Job' and is divided into two chapters entitled 'Eternal Sophia' and 'Postscript to Answer to Job'. In addition there are three appendices containing correspondence and text that cover, amongst other matters, Jung's relationship with the historian of religion Mircea Eliade. Finally, there is a short end note by Michel Cazenave from 1984 on 'Angel Logic'.

Strengths of approach

The book provides a highly enlightening concise philosophical and spiritual commentary on its subjects: Jungian psychology, the mystical traditions of East and West and their relationships. It might usefully

be read as an introduction to these topics, although consideration to the caveats provided below is recommended. For those with a serious interest in Jung's writings, I would suggest this short Corbin volume might be essential.

The book has many important and subtle messages to convey to the reader; it needs to be read carefully and, like the texts which it explores, encourages repeated reading. In this respect, Corbin's writing looks forward to Karen Armstrong's message in her recent book on *The Lost Art of Scripture: Rescuing the Sacred Texts*.³

Corbin's encouragement of personal exegesis is at the heart of his aim to promote a lifelong quest for 'individual religion' which also places mystical experience at its centre. In his mission, he draws significantly on the German Romantic theology of which Jung was also something of a disciple. However, this heritage has been significantly occulted in the latter's work, so Corbin's unveiling is another important contribution to understanding the religious dimension of Jungian psychology whether in psychotherapy or through self-revelation.

Difficulties and weaknesses

This is probably not a work for the general reader. As a collection of partly unpublished and unfinished work, some sections have the quality of a notebook. The style of composition is also idiosyncratic at times, and readers used to more packaged or finished contemporary publications may find it somewhat disorientating.

Another difficulty and weakness for some modern readers of both Jung's writing and Corbin's commentary may be predominance of the male point of view, which albeit not patriarchal – this shortcoming is tackled directly by the philosopher – could nevertheless be interpreted as paternalistic. In defence of Jung and the feminine, Vivianne Crowley's work on feminist spirituality and the psychology of religion might usefully be consulted.⁴

Concluding thoughts

I would recommend reading another short book in conjunction with *Jung, Buddhism and the Wisdom of Sophia: Jung's Psychology and Religion*.⁵ An extensive version of Jung's collected works on *Psychology and Religion: East and West* is also freely available online for those who want to go deeper into this subject.⁶ In addition, for readers who know relatively little about Henry Corbyn's opus, his book on Sufi mysticism entitled *Alone with the Alone* in the Mythos edition with a preface by the American literary critic Harold Bloom may be a useful starting point.⁷

Reviewed by Janet McKinnon

References and Bibliography

- ¹ Carey, John 2011. Henry Corbin and the Secret of the Grail. *Temenos Academy Review* 14 <https://www.temenosacademy.org/>
- ² Official Henry Corbin website <https://www.amiscorbin.com/en/>

³ Armstrong, Karen 2019, *The Lost Art of Scripture: Rescuing the Sacred Texts*. Bodley Head. There is a helpful review of this book by A N Wilson in *The New Statesman* magazine <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/books/>

⁴ Crowley, Vivianne 2014. *Carl Gustav Jung and Feminism in the Encyclopaedia of Psychology and Religion* (Ed. Leeming, David A) 961-964. New York, Springer.

⁵ Jung, Carl Gustaf 1938. *Psychology and Religion* (Based on the Terry Lectures delivered at Yale University). Yale University Press

⁶ Jung Carl Gustaf. *Psychology and Religion: East and West* (Second Edition); *The Collected Works of C G Jung* (Volume II - Digital Version) edited and translated by Adler, Gerald and Hull R F C. 1969/73. Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press. <https://www.jungiananalysts.org.uk/>

⁷ Corbin, Henry 1969/1997. *Alone with the Alone - Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*. Mythos edition, Princeton University Press

Marcus Braybrooke, *Faiths Together for the Future*.

Oxford: Braybrooke Press, 2018. 292 pp. ISBN 978-0-244-073770. £12.00.

Faiths Together for the Future is the story of the World Congress of Faiths (WCF) as well as of the evolution and history of the worldwide interfaith movement. The author rightly believes the Chicago meet (1893) of the World Parliament of Religions to be the initiator of the interfaith movement aimed at 'eco-human welfare'. The author traces the roots of the WCF, with which he has remained associated in various capacities, to the Chicago meet (1893) of the World Parliament of Religions, the London conclave (1924) of the Religions of Empire, and the spiritual experiences of Francis Younghusband (1863-1942) who is generally believed to be the main spirit behind the WCF.

Francis Younghusband was the 'central figure' and 'moving spirit of the Congress' and the establishment of an interfaith forum was 'the ultimate mission' for him. The author traces the spiritual roots of the WCF to the mystical experiences of Younghusband who, as he says an entry in his diary (1894), early in his life

realised that 'I think I have had from time to time the feeling that I was born to recognize the divine spark within me ... I shall through my life be carrying out God's Divine message to humankind.' He felt determined that in the future he would take nothing on authority and he dismissed ritual and dogma as unimportant.

He refused to believe that 'one religion alone could be true and all others false'. He was a widely travelled person who spent many years in India: he was British Resident in Kashmir in 1906. He wrote several books which highlight his religious views (*The Inherent Impulse*, 1912), his empathy for the entire humankind (*Mutual Influence*, 1914), his love for Nature (*Mother World*), and so on. He was ever keen to promote knowledge of world religions and a keen and active supporter of the Religions of Empire, Society of Religions and then of the World Fellowship of Faiths, but he devoted the later part of his life to the WCF.

Youngusband believed that 'every single man is bound up with every other man and with all living creatures, and with the entire physical universe in one mighty whole' and this is what the WCF stands for and what it wants to propagate. He hoped to intensify, through the WCF, the 'sense of community which is latent in all men'. The aim was also to generate an understanding and a sense of unity between religions of the world. The WCF is against the myth of any one religion having monopoly over truth; rather it assumes different religions of the world to have an affinity despite their differences. It is for the appreciation of the beliefs and practices of 'others' without putting our own beliefs into parenthesis: the aim is to exhort people of different religions to work together to soften antagonisms, to work for cooperation through mutual dialogue rather than confrontation. The search for fellowship which was the spirit behind the establishment of WCF becomes, at the deeper level, a search for truth and flows

from communion with the Divine. It also assumes that 'truth is greater than the understanding of any individual or any one religion and that by sharing together with members of other faiths each individual will be deepened in his knowledge of truth.'

Dr Braybrooke brings the story of the interfaith movement to the present time although he retains his primary focus on the WCF. He discusses its annual gatherings, prominent persons who attended these and the important issues discussed. He briefly refers to his own efforts to coordinate with other interfaith organizations and thus help the interfaith movement move forward. He also makes a reference to some of the institutions and journals through which interfaith activists/pluralists can remain in touch with each other and with the latest developments in the field.

Reviewed by Dharam Singh

World Congress of Faiths, Sikhism, Braybrooke and Me

I owe my introduction to the field of interfaith studies both to the author of his book *Faiths Together for the Future* (Braybrooke Press, 2018) and the World Congress of Faiths (WCF). Dr Braybrooke has a deep commitment to the cause of interfaith understanding to make human life happier and more meaningful, and has always held that our study of and participation in the religions of others deepen understanding of our own religion and also enrich our life – spiritually as well as morally. To my mind, it begins with Dr Braybrooke's first encounter with Indian religions which goes back to 1963 when he came to study Indian religions at the Madras Christian College. Early in his academic career during his study of Indian religions he saw that all religions were different but genuine paths towards the realisation of God/Truth.

As far as my understanding goes, his interest in Sikhism (the religious tradition I belong to) goes back to 1969, when the Sikh world was celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak, founder of the faith. Punjabi University, Patiala, had organized an international seminar on Guru Nanak and Dr

Braybrooke, then a young scholar, presented a paper entitled 'I see only a Man', highlighting the essential oneness of humankind, of one human fraternity transcending all religious and racial boundaries. He articulated the idea of oneness of humankind as envisioned by Francis Youngusband and proclaimed by the WCF. He related this to the teachings of Guru Nanak, especially the spiritual unity and ethical equality of all beings, all-pervasiveness of the Divine and importance of holy life vis-à-vis the limitations of ceremony – the themes which have ever remained very close to Braybrooke's heart. Dr Braybrooke visited Patiala again in 2000 and delivered the keynote address at a conference we organized. He spoke on 'Religion and Conflict', highlighting the role religion can play in eradicating conflict from human society.

Sensing my interest to learn more about interfaith studies, he very kindly invited me to attend the Congress' conference at Leicester in 2001 on the theme of 'The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain'. It was my first meeting with several pluralist theologians and activists. In 2002, the WCF collaborated with Punjabi

University to organize at Patiala a conference on Religion and Peace. My brief stay as interfaith visiting scholar at the United College of the Ascension, Birmingham, provided me the much sought opportunity to get acquainted with literature on religious pluralism. This was also the time when I was able to meet Professor John Hick, Dr David Cheetham, Dr Eleanor Nesbitt and Dr Alan Race a couple of times and learn a lot from them. I owe to my association with these individuals and institutions my interest in interfaith studies and the consequent book *Sikhism and Religious Pluralism* and also a few papers on the subject including 'Sikhism and Religious Pluralism' included in *The Myth of Religious Superiority*, edited by Paul Knitter (Orbis, 2005), and 'A Sikh in Dialogue with Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium' included in *Pope Francis and Interreligious Dialogue*, edited by Harold Kasimow and Alan Race (Palgrave, 2018).

One can easily perceive many similarities between the WCF's ideals (especially of spiritual oneness of all beings and all religions being finite manifestation of the infinite One) and the message of the Sikh Gurus as found recorded in their scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib. Referring to the spiritual oneness and ethnic equality of all beings, a hymn in the Sikh scripture says:

God first created light: all else are subject to His might.
 The entire world came off His Light –
 who then is noble and who ignoble?
 O Brethren! Do not be lost in illusion:
 Creator-Lord is in the creation

and

The creation abides in the Creator, the all-pervasive One. (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1349)

Another hymn in the scripture says:

The Creator-Lord pervades everywhere on land and in water:
 Nanak says: the formless Lord is manifest in multiple forms. (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 296)

Explaining further the idea of Divine immanence, *qua* Spirit, in the entire creation including human beings, another hymn says that God, whom none of scriptures and saints and savants have been able to fully comprehend

is present in all (though human physical eye cannot see it) as fire is latent in the entire vegetation and butter is latent in the milk: the Divine Light pervades the high as well as the low. In fact, the Lord abides in each being (GGS, 617).

The supreme Lord is hidden in each body: He is present in the Hindus as well as the Muslims

says another hymn (GGS, 433), implying thereby the essential oneness of people having faith in different religions. Emphasizing the need of moral and ethical values in life, the scripture says that the best of the religions is the one which asks man to remember God alongside performing noble and righteous deeds in this world (GGS, 266).

No scripture – neither the Indian nor the Semitic scripture – is called false and false are said to be the persons who do not reflect on the message contained therein (GGS, 1350). Guru Nanak not only said in his hymns that we should 'first listen to the other's viewpoint and then put forth our own to reach the truth' but he also visited during his preaching odysseys many centres or monasteries belonging to different religious traditions and held a 'constructive and meaningful' dialogue with the holy men there.

Dharam Singh

Ward, Keith, *Religion in the Modern World: Celebrating Pluralism and Diversity* Cambridge, CUP, 2019. 213 pp. ISBN 978-1-108-49249-2 (pbk). £21.99

This is a work which sweeps across the ages and civilisations, exploring what is meant by religion and how the various traditions might – or might not – find a way forward in harmony. Today we live in a world where religious traditions exist side by side, sometimes peacefully but in many cases

judgementally. Was Hume right to suggest that the very fact that there are so many religions argues against the truth of any of them?

Keith Ward addresses those issues in depth, considering aspects of religious doctrine,

practice and experience. In order to survive, religions 'must ally with the best modern science and with textual criticism; they must accept that ancient moral rules must often be adapted to new circumstances and that they should be conducive to universal human flourishing' (p. 5). Religions evolve and need to adapt to changing world-views and cultural and historical developments.

Religious truth-claims, if taken literally, are likely to lead to conflict. However, the admission that many are framed in poetic language, are conceptually indefinite and capable of a variety of interpretations, opens the door to an understanding and acceptance of different conceptions of ultimate reality. Ward suggests that 'Many religious differences are ... matters of insight rather than truth' and that there is no 'one finally accurate picture of the truth' (p. 154) as the human perspective will always inevitably be partial. Hume's critique is answered. In fact, there are differences not only between religious traditions, but also within them.

In this book, Ward's main focus is on post-Enlightenment thinking and includes a range

of liberal Protestants as well as Catholic theologians. Viewpoints from Islam and Buddhism are also included, showing the possibility of convergence.

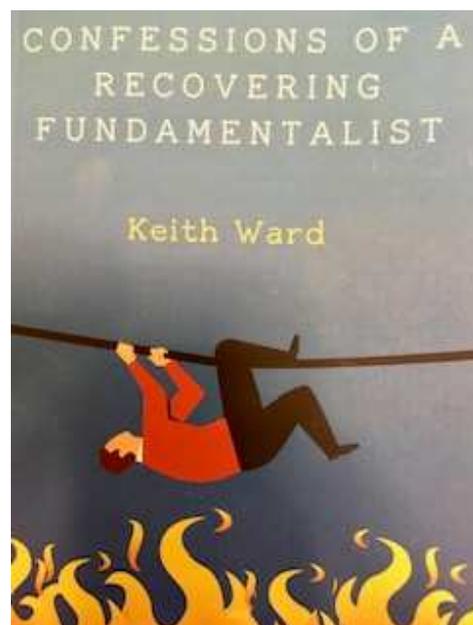
The book is clearly set out in sections, beginning with an overview of 'The Problem of Religious Pluralism'; followed by an appraisal of 'The Perennial Philosophy' (including Huxley, Schuon and Huston Smith) and 'The Critical Turn' (Kant, Schleiermacher and Hegel among others). An evaluation of the thinking of John Hick and 'The Pluralist Hypothesis' includes a case study of Christianity and Islam, as well as Cantwell Smith's suggestion of avoiding the term 'religion' altogether. A consideration of 'Catholicism and Pluralism' includes the thinking of Rahner, Küng, Panikkar, Knitter and Phan. A case study of Buddhist and Christian dialogue precedes the conclusion, followed by an appendix, setting out Ward's own beliefs.

This is a comprehensive and fascinating critique of some of the main movements and thinkers who have influenced theology since the European Enlightenment.

Reviewed by Marianne Rankin

**Ward, Keith, *Confessions of a Recovering Fundamentalist*
Oregon: Cascade Books 2019. 127 pp. ISBN 978-1-5326-9671-8. £ 15.00**

For something completely different, this is an attempt by Keith Ward to expound theology in jokes, and he admits that the result is a bit odd. The book is a light-hearted, tongue in cheek gallop through the story of Christianity and how people across the ages have responded to the life and message of Jesus. The tone is set on the dedication page, where Ward expresses gratitude to his wife Marian and Dr Robin Parry for deleting his worst jokes and modifying some of his greater exaggerations. In the Introduction to the book, Ward explains that, 'It contains quite a lot of what are meant to be jokes. It also has some serious stuff mixed up in it, and I hope you can tell the difference!' Might this project seem slightly blasphemous? Ward explains that God is so far beyond human understanding, that a sense of humour is



needed with regard 'not to God, but to anything we humans presume to say about God' and that religion 'ought to be fun, something life-enhancing and joyful anyway.'

Does it work? Well, I did have a smile on my face as I read through the book and even laughed out loud from time to time, so the answer is that yes, on the whole, it does. Perhaps this jocular tome is exactly what AHT members need during lockdown.

The serious stuff tells the story of how Ward came to Christianity, due to a group of fundamentalists and his own religious experience. While grateful to the charismatics, he nonetheless soon found himself disagreeing with many of their ideas. The book explores his thinking, as he takes issue with their interpretation of scripture as infallible. He considers how we might read the Bible. Rather than taking the text as being the literal word of God, or reporting the exact words used by Jesus, he suggests that the text reflects how God and Jesus were viewed by the writers. Ward explains how the Bible came to be set down, over time and in various languages. He shows how the different points

of view can encourage reflection. There is no single perspective offering an accurate picture of Jesus, but a series of writings by different people who knew or knew of him, recording how he had affected their lives. Ward's faith is not in an inerrant Bible, but that the life and teaching of Jesus show God to be a being of unlimited mercy and love.

As for theology, much of it deemed 'fuzzy', Ward considers the contents of Nicene Creed (printed in an appendix) to explore Christian beliefs and practice – all the while maintaining the lightness of touch. He ends by accepting that joining any society involves compromise and that ultimately he and the fundamentalists, despite their differences, 'can be united in caring for the world that God creates and loves, and in seeking the welfare of all living beings' (p. 125).

This book is a courageous venture – expounding theology with humour. It is a fun read and a pleasant way to learn.

*Reviewed by Marianne Rankin,
Director of Communications, AHT*



Enchanted wood, Shotover, Oxford

NOTICES

Notification about Members' Day (10 October 2020)

It is with regret that we have to announce the cancellation of Members' Day this year.

After careful consideration, and in light of Government advice regarding social distancing measures we do not believe that the event can go ahead, given the likelihood that restrictions on gatherings and travel will continue well into the future. The majority of members will need to travel to Oxford using public transport and this will prove restrictive to many. In addition it will be very difficult to hold the meeting whilst also maintaining the necessary 2m distances given the layout of Oxford Quaker House and the single entrance point, narrow corridors and shared facilities.

Careful consideration of the safety of our members and of our much valued helpers guided our decision to cancel the event this year. We are sorry for the inconvenience but believe that the current coronavirus (COVID 19) makes this necessary. However, we are planning for Members' Day 2021 and will include details in future editions of the journal.

Please stay safe and take care.

Andrew Burns and Marianne Rankin

IONS survey: What Is Your Noetic Signature?

Noetic Signature

There are lots of words to describe it ... clairvoyance, telepathy, psychokinesis, precognition, psi, psychic, channelling, extended human capacities, anomalous information reception ... the list goes on and on. And not many people feel comfortable talking about it. Help us learn more about how people experience the phenomenon that we describe as accessing and/or expressing information and energy not limited by space and time. We are conducting a study to learn more about the diversity of these experiences

To be eligible for the study you need to be:

- An English-speaking adult aged 18 years or older.
- Have had an experience of accessing and/or expressing information or energy not limited by space and time.

The study includes answering four open-ended questions about your experience. We anticipate the survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Tell us your story!

https://www.research.net/r/Noetic_Signature_Q

Assessing your Noetic Signature: A Qualitative Study

Principal Investigator: Helané Wahbeh, ND, MCR 707-779-8230.

Funded by: Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS)

ONLINE EVENTS

Transformation Through Suffering with Steve Taylor

Saturday 6 June 2020 at 19:30

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85326026277>

Steve will explore the powerful connection between spiritual transformation and psychological turmoil. He will describe some of his research into 'post-traumatic transformation,' in situations such as bereavement, serious illness, addiction, imprisonment and intense stress and loss. He

will explain the reasons why suffering can bring about spiritual awakening, and why some people are more open to transformation than others.

Steve Taylor PhD is the author of several best-selling books on psychology and spirituality and is a senior lecturer in psychology at Leeds Beckett University. He is the current chair of the Transpersonal Psychology Section of the British Psychological Society.

The Scientific and Medical Network presents

Breaking Open: Finding a Way Through Spiritual Emergency

Tuesday 9 June 2020 at 18:00

www.mysticsandscientists.org

Join Jules Evans and Dr Tim Read for this evening webinar where they will share first person accounts of spiritual emergencies, explore what they are like, and what self-care practices help people through

A spiritual emergency is a period of intense disturbance to a person's ordinary sense of

self and reality, which can involve psychotic-like symptoms such as mania, ego-dissolution, a heightened sense of meaning, hallucinations and a confusion of inner and outer worlds.

Prices for the evening webinar are:

£12 for standard tickets / £10 for SMN members / £5 for students/concessions (please feel free to use this concessionary rate if you are under financial stress).



Information for Contributors

Members are very much encouraged to submit items for publication. If you would like to send something for consideration, we would be grateful if you would observe the following guidelines:

Priority and time of publication are decided by the Editor, who retains the customary right to edit, if necessary, any material accepted for publication.

Copy deadlines: Spring issue: 31st January;
Autumn issue: 31st July

Please submit contributions by email (as an unformatted Word document) to the Editor:
denumine@gmail.com

Articles must be not more than 2,000 words

book reviews: up to 1,000 words

local group reports: up to 500 words.

Please note that if these limits are exceeded, the contribution may be sent back for editing before it can be accepted.

Letters, accounts of personal experiences, poems, etc., are always welcome.

References should be numbered in the order in which they appear in the text. Please **do not insert endnotes or footnotes**, but simply mark reference numbers in the text, and give a correspondingly numbered list of references after the text.

Please give the author, title, place of publication, publisher, date, and page numbers.

Electronic references: please give the date when the reference was retrieved.

Alternatively, just give a list of publications you have referred to, at the end of your text, and any suggested reading.

Book reviews: please also give the author, title, place of publication, publisher, date, number of pages, ISBN no. and price.

At the end of the text give your full name and contact address and details, any titles or affiliations, and e-mail address if applicable.

Review Copies: please send requests to the Editor: denumine@gmail.com



The illustration on the front cover is taken from the Megalithic Spirals in the Inner chamber of Newgrange, Stone C10.

Newgrange is an ancient site in the Boyne Valley, to the north of Dublin, Ireland.

Three lines form three double spirals, two of them an S-scroll, each centre connected to the other by one path and exiting to either side by the other. The S-scroll is enclosed by a line branching into a third spiral to the left to exit.