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denumine@gmail.com
- following the guidelines on the back page.**



EDITORIAL

Tentative signs of spiritual resurgence

One of the many casualties of the pandemic appears to be planning of any kind. Whatever we think will be the prevailing conditions in six months' time eventually turns out to be wildly inaccurate. By now I had hoped that more of us in the UK would be able to meet freely (in groups of 6 only so far), travel to see relatives (only under certain limited conditions) or even sit inside a café (maybe next month).

With the coming of spring we can sometimes sense the sap rising as the first bright green leaves appear and blossom graces our gardens. Rebirth, regeneration, resurgence is around us in the northern hemisphere, though we may not feel much of the joys of spring. Many are still in mourning or feeling exhausted by the effects of Covid, and anxious about what lies ahead. Many have lost their jobs or are now at risk of doing so. The uncertainty will continue for some time; change is the only constant.

Yet behind the miserable headlines we can discern stirrings of positive change. People are choosing different ways to live, working without commuting, and reducing their carbon footprint. Online conferences are bringing many more people together than was ever possible before. Spiritual matters are coming to the forefront of people's minds as they try to make sense of what is going on. Subtle changes can have long lasting effects, altering the direction of the planet. Our thoughts and actions can all contribute to a healthier life for everyone.

In this issue we have more astounding, moving and prophetic personal experiences shared by AHT members around the world, as well as examinations of the evidence for spiritual phenomena. Along with some lovely images we have poetry to inspire you, and over a dozen book reviews. Many thanks to all contributors for sharing your perspectives, experiences and creativity.

This is my third issue as Editor and I know that managing *De Numine* on my own is not wise.

There are aspects to editing a magazine which are better shared, and details too easily missed. We have a vacancy for an Assistant Editor – please see page 47 for details if you are interested or know someone else who might be.

So many farewells

That strange mixture of growth and grief runs throughout this spring issue. In addition to the obituaries for Lord Sacks, Don Mason and Marigold Hutton, we are very sad to mark the sudden passing of Mark Pitchford, the Alister Hardy Archive Librarian. Our thoughts go out to Heather, his widow, and all who knew and worked with Tom. An obituary for Tom will appear in the next issue.

As we go to press, the UK is in a week of official mourning to mark the death of HRH Prince Philip, the Queen's Consort. Many are reflecting on his long life of service and dedication to a host of charities, and his steady focus on the future, as exemplified by his patronage of the World Wildlife Fund and his own youth awards programme, Duke of Edinburgh's Awards, now operating in 144 countries. Prince Philip's strong sense of purpose and determination to keep improving the world around him will live on, not least in the causes he supported and especially in the people who followed his lead.

Requiescant in pace.

Rhonda Riachi



ARTICLES

Evidential After-Death Communications

An after-death communication (ADC) is a spontaneous experience of communication with a deceased friend or family member. Of the 1,667 cases on the After-death Communication Research Foundation website 336 (20.1%) were found to be evidential. I will outline the three main categories of evidential ADCs and discuss previous research.

After-death communications have been reported throughout recorded history. If one includes religious visions, Jesus appearing to his disciples after death is the most famous example (I Cor. 15:5-8). ADCs have been estimated to occur in 35-40% of the population (Streit-Horn, 2011, 60). ADCs occur in people of all ages, races, and religions. They are very comforting and helpful to the people who have them and helpful in the resolution of grief (Streit-Horn, 2011, p 73). Most ADCs are private experiences and do not provide evidence of an afterlife. My present study deals only with evidential cases.

The cases were drawn from the After-death Communication Research Foundation website (www.adcrf.org) which is owned by Jeff and Jody Long. Jody Long, webmaster, kindly gave me permission to do this study, and I am grateful for all her help in making this possible.

The ADCRF website asks experiencers to submit their account and answer a brief questionnaire. Cases submitted that are not in English are translated by volunteers. While some researchers (Vincent, 2019, 49-65) include divine beings and others include strangers, i.e. ghosts (Haraldsson, 2012, 145-152), the ADCRF website uses this definition:

An after-death communication (ADC) is a spontaneous experience of communication with a deceased friend or family member. The use of mediums, psychomanteums, hypnosis, drugs, and other forms of necromancy are excluded.

Additionally, evidential cases selected are limited to visual, auditory, significant tactile contact, and

sense of presence. "Signs" used by some researchers (Guggenheim & Guggenheim, 1995) such as smells, orbs, butterflies out of season, double-rainbows, clocks starting and stopping, lamps flickering, lights flashing are excluded. Finally, this study includes persons who are awake, asleep, or in-between, in contrast to those researchers who limit their studies to those who are awake (Stevenson, 1982, 349).



I will begin with a non-evidential case of my own. It was a wonderful experience and as real today as when I experienced it, but it offers no proof to anyone but me:

About two weeks after my father died, he appeared to me in a vivid dream and said, *"Son, being dead takes some getting used to, but you'll like it"*. This vivid dream was comforting to me, although before the dream I had no doubt that my father was in a good place.

Of the 1667 cases examined, 336 (20.1%) were considered evidential. These cases fall into three commonly researched categories:

1) Apparitions appearing prior to the experiencer's knowledge of their death (APD) numbered 180 (10.8%) of the sample. Here is a very common example:

Case 29. Her aunt came to her in a dream and told her goodbye and that she had died. She woke up screaming and her phone was ringing. It was her sister telling her that her aunt had just died.

2) Apparitions appearing to multiple witnesses (AMW) numbered 57 (3.4%) of the sample. Here is an example:

Case 630. A young woman and her fiancé had an early morning appearance of her dead grandfather. Though her grandfather did not speak both she and her fiancé heard, "*call you mother and tell her I love her*". When she called her mom, her mother was highly emotional, but began calming down when she learned about her daughter and her fiancé's experience.

3) Apparitions that convey knowledge unknown to the experiencer that is later proven to be true (AKU) numbered 99 (5.9%) of the sample. Here are 2 examples:

Case 667. A man goes with his girlfriend to clear her dead father's things. While there he felt a presence in the bathroom and there was a brightness in the room. When he left the bathroom: "*I felt a hand on the back of my neck pushing my head down and my attention was instantly riveted to a small and what would normally be an unnoticeable drawer near the floor.*" When he opened it he found a bank passbook with his girlfriend as the co-signatory!

Here is another of my own examples:

My grandfather died at the age of 90, the year I was born. My father, who was Executor of his estate, told me that on many occasions after his own father's death, he had recurring dreams of his father telling him that there was an error on the inheritance. The property stayed in common, and we leased it out to my uncle Logan for ranching and oil companies for exploring until 1978. When we sold the ranch, the lawyer of the buyer found a minor error in the way my father had divided up the property - just as my grandfather had tried to communicate to my father.

Recently Streit-Horn (2011, 27) reviewed 50,682 published ADC cases from 24 countries but did not examine evidential cases. In a study of evidential cases, Stevenson (1982, 349), using the 1894 *Census of Hallucinations*, found 95 cases of apparitions appearing to multiple witnesses while awake. Bill and Judy Guggenheim's 1995 book *Hello From Heaven* is based on 3,300 first-hand ADCs. Of the 353 cases presented in their book, I identified 65 evidential cases. To date, the Guggenheims have not published a new book, but they continue to collect cases on their website (www.after-death.com).

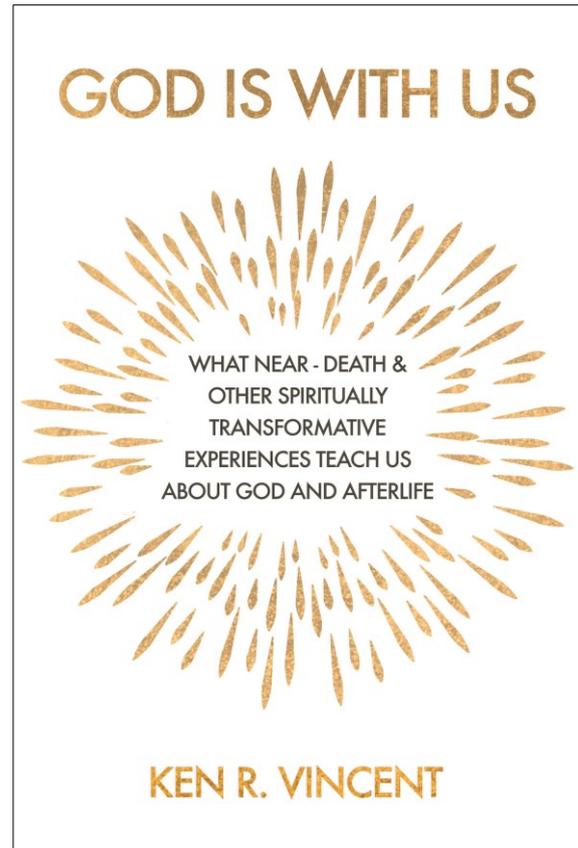
In *The Departed Among the Living*, Erlendur Haraldsson used 449 cases from two studies: one study in 1975 used a random sample of 128 cases while the second study in 1980 used a self-selected sample of 321 cases. He found little difference between the two samples. Haraldsson had 41 cases of multiple witnesses in his sample but was able to locate only 29 to verify the incident. Another large study is that of Evelyn Elsaesser, Chris A. Roe, Callum E. Cooper, and David Lorimer. The team used an extensive questionnaire of 194 items that was available online in English, French, and Spanish. Of the 1004 completed questionnaires, crisis ADCs accounted for 20.7%. (This is similar to my own study's APD category.) Shared ADCs accounted for 20.9%, and experiencers receiving information previously unknown to them accounted for 24.3% of the cases. The above-mentioned studies vary in the percentage of cases having evidential ADCs. Most of this can be explained by sampling techniques, subject's questionnaires, and the definition of what the researchers consider evidential. Nevertheless, these studies provide support for an afterlife. The often-touted "Super Psi" theory has lately been discredited by David Rousseau (2012) in his analysis of NDEs versus "Super Psi." It stands to reason that the same case can be made for the related phenomena of ADCs.

Near-Death Experiences will always be the "show horse" of research into the afterlife, but After-Death Communications are the "workhorse" with many more evidential cases.

Dr Ken R Vincent

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An unexpected bestseller: I Met Jesus - Confessions of a Reluctant Believer

Why? The simple three-letter word is the one I have heard the most these last 12 years. But I have learned that neither I nor anyone else holds the answers. I have learned to live with that and live well even though I have been taught to always find the answers, no matter the trouble I have to go through to get them.

Struggling to find the answers is not the answer to the meaning of our lives; living with the questions is the answer. Acknowledging we do not possess the answer to everything important, life and death, is for me the only tranquil way to breathe.

A lot of people ask me why, because a lot has happened in my life, that I have found important to share.

Why were you and not I, they ask, as a non-believer slain to the ground by light one December morning in 2008, after which you woke up filled with love lying on a field behind your farmhouse?

Why did you afterwards have not only one, but two encounters with Jesus in 2009 and 2010 in a sacristy in Úbeda, Spain, where he spoke to you at length in a language you did not understand standing on a gravel road in an Israeli valley in the year circa 30AD wearing a blue tunic? Why did you go through a year and a half of a multitude of spiritual experiences, which in the Tantra religion is called a kundalini awakening?

Why did you in the month of May 2009 see auras and had light coming from your fingertips? Why were you fainting, losing weight, having tears run from your eyes, feeling blessed, loved, held by God...

Why you, they ask, and I will never know the answer. No one will.

But I have been a journalist since 1987 and therefore immediately after my first spiritual experience started looking for answers. I studied literature and history, I interviewed experts in psychiatry and epilepsy and read international research, old and new, on spiritual experiences. I met Protestant and Catholic priests in Denmark



and Spain and read the works of some of the world's wisest and most literate spiritual practitioners, among them the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, the Spanish writer and nun Teresa of Avila, the Swedish bishop Martin Lind and the American priest Cynthia Bourgeault. I talked to my family. None had the answer, but they all had wise questions for me to ponder.

What shall I do, I wondered? The only thing I know how to do is to be a journalist, so I wrote a book on how my experiences threw me into a turmoil questioning the science-based world view of my upbringing and my country, Denmark.

In January 2015 "I Met Jesus - Confessions of a Reluctant Believer" was published.

It apparently struck a chord in the modern world, giving many people – believers as well as non-believers – an opportunity to air their thoughts, beliefs and spiritual experiences. They suddenly realized they were not alone.

The autobiography topped the bestseller list for 18 months, and has sold more than 100,000 copies, 50,000 in tiny Denmark and the six countries where it was published: Norway, Sweden, Finland, The Netherlands, Germany and Spain. I have given 300 talks and conferences, hosted several radio series as well as a tv-series on the national public TV, DR, Danmarks Radio and continue to appear in all the major media in

Denmark and other countries including Germany's Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung and Dagens Nyheter in Sweden.

Spiritual experiences are being accepted as a force and a reality among the secular as well as Christians and other believers and the Secretary General for the Danish Bible Society, Birgitte Stoklund Larsen, says my books and talks are "beyond any doubt the wildest thing to have happened in the world of faith and religion in many years."

When the book was published I received hundreds of letters, some appearing in "We Met Jesus - And Why Should It Matter to You" (2017). It contains solid documentation that 50-75% of us have spiritual experiences, and discusses what types, based on international sources, among them The Alister Hardy Trust. I also interviewed others with experiences like mine and wrote in-depth discursive interviews with established Scandinavian professors of religion like Jan-Olav Henriksen, Olav Hammer and Anton Geels, as well as theologians and social scientists on how to live with spiritual experiences in a modern-day society so that they matter to others.

I try to do so myself and described how in my third book "Oh, My God, you're right here - Living with an Everyday Faith" (2019) because people kept on asking me why?



Why, they ask, did your son commit suicide? Tell me why, they demand, so I can prevent my children from ending their lives. I answer them by telling them I can't answer. No one can. We can't control life or death.

Our youngest son died in Miami two days before my first book was to be printed. He attended a semester at the university and had not bought his return ticket. We did not know and yes, we have relived every second of our lives with and without him. No answer. We have to live with the most heartbreaking of the whys.

He was a believer like I am. Did he have experiences that taught him that where he is now there is a brighter light than here?

His older brother felt the presence of a soft, protective, white matter around him after our traffic accident. In his classic NDE he also saw himself from above, lying with his skull broken by the side of the road under a glass globe. Exactly as he actually did. But he also saw his little brother there, standing in peace, watching over him. In reality, our youngest sat with his leg broken beside the car some meters away. The youngest never wanted to talk about the accident. He never answered our questions about what he remembered.

We will never get the answers. We have to live with the questions.

Living with my spiritual experiences reminds me of all the questions I have to live with. The experiences help me trust the good in not having the right to know everything. I have learned to trust the love that is left inside me by the experiences.

Maybe that is the answer to the why. Maybe the experiences are all about reminding us we are loved?

*Charlotte Rørth,
Journalist and writer, Denmark
www.charlotteroerth.dk*

A translated extract from one of Charlotte's books is in the Experiences section.

Spiritual Resurgence

Heidegger argues that words carry their history with them, so that to understand terms we should be aware of that past. It's easy to be led to conclusions by features of words we aren't even aware of. It is as if words have an unconscious.

'Spiritual' comes from the Latin 'spiritus', which means 'breath'. That origin is in our word 'respiration' which is simply breathing. It is also in 'expire', though the 's' has got lost in the sound of the 'x'. To expire is to die; the 'ex' means 'out', so the original sense is of the breath leaving the body.

It becomes a commonplace in the Ancient World, as transcribed by Aristotle, that light substances have the natural motion of rising, whereas heavier material will sink downwards. So the escaped breath of life, the spirit, will rise towards its natural destination above. Thus the spirit becomes associated with a direction: upwards. Upwards becomes the direction of life, and downwards the place of death where corpses go. Up is good, down is bad. So to feel uplifted is fine; while to feel down or just a bit low is not so good. In some circumstances people wish to get 'high'. Heaven is up there, Hell is down below.

This gets linked into the nuances of the words. So, to wish to go up and become more 'spiritual' is to 'aspire'. While if something of the heavenly should reach the mind, a person might be 'inspired'. Even the architectural feature which points upwards is a 'spire'.

It is often said that back in the Middle Ages there was a prevailing attitude of cosmological arrogance as they believed that the Earth was the centre of the universe. Not exactly; rather the universe became more and more breath-like, more immaterial, more heavenly as you went up. The Earth wasn't at the centre of the universe, it was at the bottom. Our planet is the rubbish tip in the middle of the whole. Here is where the heavy matter, the dross of reality, naturally sank and coagulated. And our bodies were made of this unheavenly stuff. We were all pulled down by the dregs of matter while our immaterial spirit strove in frustration to rise to heaven above.

Furthermore, the cosmos was not the singular place of universal physical law of subsequent science. Things were different up there; down here, literally soiled by matter, the body held us in thrall. Up above, the very physics of things changed, became more ethereal, more celestial. The first boundary of change was the orbit of the moon. So if a person felt "over the moon" they were more in tune with the heavenly.

It could seem sensible that, as the body might contaminate the spirit with its physicality, it would be fitting to try to diminish the influence of our body. Some took this to asceticism, or even further, to punishing the body with whippings, hair-shirts and the like. The body functioned through the senses, so maybe, to become more spiritual, we should reduce the impact of the senses. For example, paintings of people in Puritan England usually show them dressed entirely in black and white. This is because it was thought that pleasure in the experience of colour encouraged sensuous pleasure to the detriment of the spirit. Similarly, at that time, spices and sauces were often rejected as they pandered to the body and its sense of taste. Food should be bland. This attitude has been surprisingly long lasting in some quarters. In the 1890s two brothers called Kellogg worked to invent a nourishing food which was close to tasteless, as they thought that tasty food encouraged the senses, especially sexual desire, especially masturbation. The result was corn flakes.

Some have concluded that sex, especially, is intrinsically unspiritual and should be avoided and maybe priests shouldn't do it at all.

What are we to make of all this? Some appears rather bizarre nowadays. Imagine a couple posing in their black and white garb in 1650 thinking they were being spiritual just by dressing like that. What else might have been included in their spirituality?

What I conclude is that the background culture of the time, any time, is a powerful component in such matters. We have no particular justification to think that we are immune to temporary

factors of the time and place. Just to drop in a rather different note, it is quite common in the local background culture where I live that seeing a robin in the garden is interpreted as the spirit of a dead loved one popping down to visit. It is hard, but I suggest that we need to find the universal, not the fashionable.

'Resurgence' is also interesting. The prefix 're-' looks backwards; what has been might be again. However, the rest of the word looks forward. What will be, come to be could be of a desired kind. The word thus spans time, forward and backward.

Furthermore, there is a core element derived from the word 'surge' which is not only an additional energy, but gains meaning from the underlying metaphor of increased flow. Crowds may 'surge', but especially liquids, fluids; a river, a tide may surge, may flood. Notions of a greater flow of energy go deep, if you see what I mean.

But when and how is the flow to occur? Social resurgence, a return of some previous state of society, with greater energy, depends on complex factors which appear to rely on pretty arbitrary changes of fashion and emphasis which, it seems, are poorly understood and difficult to influence. And what might surge again? Would we approve of a return of asceticism, say?

Whatever happened, for example, to the Victorian emphasis on Duty as a dominant factor in individual thought and behaviour, and in the functioning of society? And how did Duty get displaced and replaced by Rights, despite the logical fact that rights and duties are parallel concepts? You can't have one without the other.

So I suggest that it is better to look at the matter from an individual perspective rather than the social. Not how can we change the world, but how can I contribute by changing myself. That's where I have the power, though it would be necessary to stand back from the tides of social change. They are not always for the best though it is hard to judge because the means of judging is part of the change, and it becomes difficult to resist the pressure. You see, I'm trying to keep hold of the fluid metaphor.

There are plenty of instances of a surging personal spiritual energy reported in the writings of the mystics. It is often linked to the imagery of natural forces; especially a strong inflow of light, or fire, or water. It can be overwhelming.

If I may be allowed a little personal experience here, I can report a number of events of a swift reduction in ego-boundaries and consequent Openings to a wider consciousness: a loss of self to a greater world. On one occasion this influx was accompanied by a vivid inner vision. Around me people were walking down the street, cars were passing, ordinary life went on. But in my mind I saw a tremendous wave approaching like an express train. A tsunami. Some surge. I just had time to look up as it soared above me. I couldn't see the top. Hasty glances to left and right showed no end that way. No escape. I let it hit.

It wiped me out. I found myself a speck of awareness in a vast ocean of pure Goodness. I consider that spiritual.

Michael Shearer

EXPERIENCES

Thanks for spring

All is not what it seems: I give thanks to spiritual, healing nature, allowing us once again to witness life awakening and for keeping us going through the darkness and despair of winter. My thanks to sacred life itself, to my friends and family always near even when out of sight. If we listen to the messages of the natural world and build new relationships within it, it will be possible to heal and grow at this delightful time.

Below is my spring day surprise:-

On a walk along from Puriton Hill I followed the 10 mile ridge of the Polden Hills in Somerset, where once the Roman Road from Ilchester to the port of Combech had run. It was on a fresh spring Sunday morning, when views stretched towards the mystical Glastonbury Tor, across Brent Knoll and to South Wales, that I encountered a family group of a man, woman and youth, merrily and briskly walking along in their short bright coats of red, blue or green, which billowed out behind them.

They followed a path up and across the ridge in front of me. I waved and was a little surprised when they hurried on across the ridge descending into the valley and did not return my greeting. The church bells tolled about 15 minutes later making it apparent that they were on their way to the church in the village called Bawdrip.

On reflection it became apparent that their short coats were not coats at all but capes. Checking out the path they followed was quite amazing: they had walked above a stream bed which linked to the tarmac road down into Bawdrip, and it was no longer used or passable.

They were so full of the joy of spring and appeared to be living and savouring the moment, but a different moment to the one I was in. Hard to call them ghosts but I suppose they were, there was no way for them to move as quickly as they did through that terrain. The oddest thing about the occurrence was that they rushed on in surprise when they saw me dressed in warm gear!

*Trudy Porter,
Member of S.E. Wales group*

*The hills will be here after us
The silent strength that lent us aid
The little shrines of words or deed
On ways our fathers made*

by Melfin Jones



Glastonbury Abbey ruins viewed from the Abbey House Garden. Photo by R Riachi

A mystical vision of the future

Following a near-death experience in 1980, the result of a cardiac arrest during major surgery, and the profoundly clear understanding that it wasn't my time to go 'home' as I had 'my life's work yet to complete', I became aware of just what this was to entail. I believe that the Alister Hardy Trust's Religious Experience Centre holds within its library archives an account of my NDE and the subsequent changes that this wrought.

As a happily married woman living in Sydney, Australia with my husband, Edwin and our two children, my experience resulting from my NDE brought immense change into our lives. In 1982 we sold our home and business in Sydney to move to the Goobarragandra Valley, near Tumut in the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales. This is a most beautiful place with two pristine rivers flowing through it. There we founded the Elm Grove Sanctuary, a place of rest, solace, spiritual renewal and retreat and over many years we welcomed people who came from all over the world to spend time in this healing environment.



Elm Grove Sanctuary

On Easter Day 1991 the community of The Little Followers of Saint Francis (LFSF) was born at Elm Grove Sanctuary. It was the first ecumenical Franciscan community in Australia, with both single and married members. LFSF became a member of the Franciscan Federation of Australia, and people of other faiths or none were welcome to spend time with us in the community. Members take vows of obedience to God, simplicity of lifestyle and fidelity within their marriage commitment. The impact of Elm Grove Sanctuary and LFSF remains with many today.

The well-known author, Ian Wilson, documented my NDE in his book, *Life After Death – the evidence*, and his comment:

For completely ordinary people to change their lives in this way bespeaks a true contact with that inconceivable dimension in which ultimately the thought-forms of all, through all time, meet as one

- expresses so well what I was given through my near-death encounter and the subsequent clear prayer guidance which has directed my life ever since. That 'inconceivable dimension', which has many names, draws us to the awareness of the essential unity and oneness of all life, which is linked through the divinity of Love.

In 1982, just prior to our departure from our former life in Sydney and while I was in prayer, I was astounded to experience a deeply profound and mystical vision which I knew was showing me the future for our planet. Unfolding before me, in the form of short vignettes that faded as each new scene appeared, were a series of challenging images. I had a deep emotional response to each of these despite not fully understanding the impact of what I was being shown at that time.

The first scene showed a devastated earth, cracked and dry, with huge fires sweeping the terrain, and I felt such pain and anguish knowing that this was being caused by extreme weather events. (Back in 1982 scant attention was being paid to climate change.)

The next scene opened onto a harvested field where people dressed in poor attire were gleaning the field as though they had been hugely challenged and left impoverished. There was a sense of unity and shared purpose between these people, who had been reduced back to the most basic of needs due to their situation.

Another scene revealed a sparkling laboratory with clean, modern technology. Rows of test tubes were shown, and the interior knowledge communicated to me was that this represented breakthroughs in medical science and technology bringing forth hope for the future of humanity.

Then a new vista opened upon a springtime scene beside a country road with blossoms bursting forth from fruit trees that lined the road. As though in time-lapse photography, these blossoms changed and formed into fruit. There was abundance shown with joyous hope restored and an overwhelming feeling of renewal. It was a time of plenty, of deep peacefulness.

The final scene opened up in which I was traversing a long formal avenue of tall majestic trees in full leaf. As I came to the end they formed a cul-de-sac and, deeply confused, I asked to see what was beyond these trees. I found myself being lifted up over the top of the trees and before me was a huge, solid golden cross. This was firmly planted in the ground and in the centre of the cross I saw the face of Jesus. Then this face moved out from the centre and passed by my right shoulder being replaced by other faces that I didn't recognise. Some of these faces actually looked stern and forbidding and I felt uncertain and somewhat fearful of what they represented. I felt that they represented the faces of religious leaders from other faiths. They also passed out from the centre to my right.

When this procession of faces ended all the faces concertinaed back into the one face in the centre of the cross, which then transformed into a loving grandparent type of face. A face that was full of wisdom and supreme love: I knew with all certainty that this face represented the infinite Godhead.

With this my vision ended and yet so many years later it is something that remains overwhelming fresh and clear to me. I know that I was given a supreme gift and insight into what lay ahead for humanity and the importance that hope and love plays in all of this. So much has already unfolded that was foretold.

Just last year in Australia we suffered the worst bushfires ever recorded. They destroyed human lives, immense tracts of bushland, animals both native and domestic, and many homes and properties. It was the direct result of long-term drought intensified by climate change. Over the years I have felt an intense commitment to raise the consciousness of us all to the importance of caring for our earth and all its inhabitants.

The struggling workers gleaning the already harvested fields resonates today with the greed that prevails with the wealthy and powerful who leave little for poorer countries, the struggling workers, the sick and infirm.

At this time with our current immense challenge and loss of human life due to the Covid-19 pandemic I realise how significant the laboratory scene from my vision was. We now place such great hope upon the vaccines, the result of medical science, to bring an end to this tragic situation, which has brought so much loss of life and suffering on our planet.

From this challenge we can only hope that open hearts and compassion will bring us through this to the promise of renewal and rebirth in the abundance shown in the blossoming and fruiting trees.

The final scene offers us such promise. The symbolic formal avenue of trees and the cul-de-sac, suggest that which is too often found in the confines of dogma and religion, and blocks the essential oneness of humanity. It limits human understanding and experiential knowledge of the Godhead and powerfully prevents humanity reaching its full potential. We need to rise above the trees that block our vista in search of that absolute truth of unity and the ultimate and consummate relationship that we seek with each other and with our loving Creator who is beyond all labels and names.

As I continue to process what was shown to me I have also reflected upon the many historic accounts from the mystics who also experienced such visions. I believe that God will still speak to us if we are open to hearing the message being conveyed and are willing to take action in our lives to bring to fruition the promised outcomes. If we able to trust sufficiently to allow ourselves to move beyond the restraints of our rational mind, opening ourselves and inviting a loving Higher Consciousness to permeate our hearts and minds, it can leave us amazed and in absolute awe-filled wonderment - should we dare.

*Sr. Laurel Clare Lloyd-Jones LFSF , Exec. Director,
Elm Grove Sanctuary Trust, NSW, Australia.*

One door closes...

Recently the editor asked us to write a little about how the pandemic has affected us personally. I wrote a short piece mostly concentrating on the practical benefits rather than the spiritual. But that bit of writing got me thinking more about the spiritual effects I have found.

The situation is complicated because I had a lockdown within the lockdown. We went into self-isolation in March and found ways and means to more or less cope. Then, in June, my right leg collapsed beneath me as I descended the steps to the back garden. A muscle in the right thigh went twang and I found myself helplessly sprawling, bouncing off the shed wall and then in much pain and unable to get up. We decided not to call an ambulance, so eventually I literally crawled into the house and went upstairs, backwards, on my bottom, crying with pain on each of the fourteen steps. It took 45 minutes.

Then there were two weeks in bed and two months confined to the upstairs, slowly learning how to stand, then move with two sticks, then one, before finally getting downstairs again.

I quickly discovered that leg muscles are involved in far more movements than you would suppose. Some simple stretching, reaching or bending would produce a sharp, intense shooting pain. Learning is swift with such a teacher.

The slightest effort required a constant and careful monitoring of exactly what was going on with the body from moment to moment, with the readiness to instantly abandon the action if the muscles said so.

Normally, if we do a straight-forward action we don't focus on it very much. While in the process of reaching for a cup of tea, we can carry on the conversation; while walking along, we don't often concentrate on the walking, but on what might happen when we get there, or even what to have for dinner much later. A great deal of our activity is habitual; we let the body get on with it while we think of something else. I found this impossible. My physical movements were

exercises in mindfulness. Reaching and bending to begin with, then sitting, then standing, then all the complexity of trying to walk in an unfamiliar way required a high level of focused attention.

I've practised mindfulness for many years, but this added another dimension and was much more like a meditation exercise than just getting around in the world; like that walking meditation in Zen where you move slowly and co-ordinate steps and breathing and awareness.

Now comes the interesting bit. If the mind finds a technique to do something that appears to work, it often employs a generalised version of that little success elsewhere. It is usually automatic. This fact lies at the root of the Tea Ceremony (among many other practices); learn to focus purely on exactly what is going on during the ceremony and a similar degree of attention may very well appear while doing other things. What we do in one area is applied elsewhere (this is why you can't trust an unfaithful politician).

And this is what I found happened to me (not the unfaithfulness bit). I had to just stand up, if that was what I was trying to do, or just walk and not something else as well, like worrying about the slugs in the garden. Now, when I sat down, that's all I did. A similar level of singular attention spontaneously appeared elsewhere. Eventually, when I got to the stage of doing other things, I did those things alone. I used to do chores with accompaniment; but no longer. For example, if I did the washing-up, I also put on the radio or some music. Not any more. If I washed up, then I washed up. If I listened to music, then I did that. I couldn't do both at once any more.

I've meditated since the sixties (that's date, not age). It's a common experience among meditators that if the meditation goes well, you can watch thoughts (and even feelings) as they arise. My recent greater habit of attention spread to the meditating, so that this observation of some of the functioning of the mind happened more frequently. Then it seems obvious that thoughts are something that happens to us, not something we do. I mean the appearance of a thought rather than, say, adding up a column of figures.

This is reflected in the vocabulary we use. No-one says, "Oh, I just did a thought," but rather, "Oh, I just had a thought." The thought is received, not done; passive, not active.

As I write this, every now and then I pause, and wait, and then the next thought arises as to what to write next.

One interesting question (it's just arisen) is where on earth such thoughts come from. Slowly, over the years, I've found myself coming to the conclusion that if I, as a separate individual, try to keep out of this process, then the thoughts don't seem to be a consequence of my own personal perspective, my own opinions, but from something much wider and less biased. Many years ago, the thought arose to name this source 'The Watcher'. Something accessed within me that isn't me, but much bigger and wiser than I.

Imagine my delight when I came across a fourteenth century Japanese monk, called Bassui, who wrote little, but recommends that we should try to allow a presence in consciousness which he calls 'The Witness' to influence our life so as to weaken the selfishness of mere personal opinion. The Watcher, The Witness - surely this is just the same experience given a different name.

During lockdown my awareness of the Watcher has become more present and liberating. Liberating, because initially it felt that first Covid, and then my leg injury, had produced a double and accentuated confinement. So, paradoxically, the narrowing of experience resulted in a wider sense of Being beyond my limited self.

Funny old world.

Michael Shearer



Rydal Cave reflection, Lake District. Photo by Rhonda Rlachi

In November 2008 Charlotte Rørth visited a church in southern Spain and emerged from the sacristy apparently radiating light. The following month, as she was walking the dog back in Denmark, a ray of light struck her from above. Dreams followed – and she returned to the sacristy.

Excerpt from chapter “There Was a Man”

Translated by Liz Jensen, author, www.lizjensen.com

It’s just past mid-day on Wednesday 25th February and I’m standing before the door to the sacristy of La Sacra Capilla del Salvador. It’s three months since I was last here. The door - solid oak, with a cast-iron knob - dates back to 1536, making it nearly 500 years old. It’s the same door I see in my recurring dream, except that in the dream, spring leaves are beginning to appear on the plane trees outside. Now it’s cold outside, and winter: perhaps a couple of weeks earlier in the season than in the dream. The branches are bare.

The hyper-activity I succumbed to during the weeks since my last visit has taken charge again, hustling me through a five-day work schedule of travel-related articles built around the two newly-opened flight routes that link my newspaper’s city, Aalborg, with Malaga in southern Spain.

But I’m not on my own here. And there’s no avoiding what I’m here to do. Andrea Pezzini, the guide who saw me radiating light back in November, and to whom I wrote when the dreams took hold, is standing next to me. I contacted him when I got home from that last trip, excusing my behaviour. He wrote back with an apology for intruding.

He’s a little younger than me, and softer around the edges, with a dark tonsure and the classic dark stubble of self-respecting Italian manhood. He grew up in the tiny northern Italian town of Castell Goffredo, and spent time in London, Paris and Seville before moving to Ubeda in 1994, where he lives with his wife Carmen and their four children, running his own guide business for journalists and tourists, as well as representing several churches and cultural venues such as museums. Among them, La Sacra Capilla del Salvador.

He is not a believer. That much he knows. “But you shone that day in November,” he

averred in one of the many reassuring mails I received from him at the beginning of the new year. “I was raised a Catholic, and my mother goes to church every day. I turned against religion a good many years ago. But when I saw you there radiating light... I can’t explain it. I’ve visited that sacristy every day for 14 years and I never experienced anything spiritual in there, until you stood there with that light coming off you.”

When I asked him if he would join me when I next visited, to open the door I’d been dreaming of, he said yes.

“I’m scared,” I wrote. Scared that I might not be the same afterwards. “I’m not used to dreaming about men who summon me from chapels,” I added, trying to apply some distance and maintain a cool front by making light of it. He didn’t let me off the hook then. And he doesn’t now.

“Sit down here,” he says, and leaves me on the solid wood bench that stands in the centre of the amazingly high-ceilinged sacristy. There I am all alone.

It’s all just as it was before: the same stuttering sounds from the small fluorescent lights that illuminate the three white ceiling-arches, the same vaguely sickly odour of perfume and aftershave, washing-powder and everyday life left by previous visitors, the same white-washed sandstone walls, the same huge chests of dark wood stuffed with ecclesiastical papers colonizing the alcove- space on both sides. Five centuries’ worth of work, all stacked in order. Between the three alcoves, every wall and corner boasts a bust or a statue. There are eight of them, four men and four women, looking down on me. In the Hercules figure, the lion’s mane represents masculine courage, while Hebe’s fertile womanhood represents love. These pagan symbols bear testimony to the nobleman

Francisco de los Cobos de Molinas' acceptance of other belief systems being part of the story: for several years around 1550 he and his contemporaries manifested a humanist openness and curiosity. Part of this inclusiveness involved the celebration of all things Greek, philosophy among them. Which explains why here, in this Catholic church, you will see evidence of a provocative expression of Renaissance ideas.

Pointing both backward and forward in time, there's an angel in the sky, and Jesus on a simple cross that hangs on the end wall. It's wood-covered, with little doors and drawers and a shelf that functions as an altar. At the top, high up, a small lone window faces east.

The bench is almost soft with age, striped by the passing of the centuries, its arm-rest smooth against my wrist. It is set high, but if I stretch my feet down my toes can trace the huge square stone tiles laid diagonally like a skewed chessboard. The light, soft sandstone squares are worn in layers and in places they are sunk lower than the harder squares of dark gray granite.

I close my eyes.
And meet a man.

I've never seen him before. But I recognize him when he appears a metre and a half in front of me and a little to the left. He's like a life-size hologram. My first thought is that the apparition is straight out of a sci-fi movie, the kind I almost never watch. Perhaps seeing it in film terms is my way of shaking off the idea that the image could be pure invention.

But it isn't. He is right here in the sacristy, behind my closed eyelids – inside a dome that comes complete with landscape and sky. The scene is three-dimensional and life-size. He's on a sandy road: I see the tiles of the sacristy beneath his feet. He is not transparent, but real – just as real as the tourists who have come in and now stand talking behind me. It seems hot where he is, as if it's the middle of the day: his shadow is short, the sun is white against a soft baby-blue sky. He's stopped on the road that leads along a dry hillside, topped by a village. To his right there's a valley with rows of trees.

I dare not look at his face. I'll wait to do that.

Sitting with my head bowed, what I take in first is the bright gold dust on his worn leather sandals. They have thin straps attached around the ankles. They're similar to mine. They're Jesus sandals. The absurdity of it comes as a relief.

The gaps between his toes are grubby with earth but it's reddish, rather than the pale dust on the road. Odd, I think - but I find a fitting homeliness in the way the hairs on the upper side of his feet are completely bleached just like the hairs on my sons' tanned legs in summer. His tunic reaches to his knees. It's a soft medium blue and it's slung over his shoulder where the sun has bleached it in faint stripes. His hair is shoulder-length, reddish, slightly wavy, and his beard – not thick - is the same colour or perhaps a touch lighter. It reaches down to his Adam's apple. He carries himself upright. He's slim, with some wrinkles around the neck, a straight back, long muscles on his arms. His hands are sinewy, clean, slim and dry, with pronounced veins on the back. With his right hand he hitches his robe into a better position over his shoulder while keeping the fabric against his hip with his left. He is about thirty, maybe a little older. He gives the impression of being tall, as he stops there on the stony path, which twists down a gentle slope from a hilltop village where I can make out canvas window-slits in the pale, low houses with their almost flat tiled roofs. Five men in tunics are coming up the road towards him, talking. Behind them are two more men, and further up in the direction of the village I see more figures, a couple of which might be women bearing water-jars. Closer to the village there are children, and sheep - or are they goats?

The five men approaching him seem happy; they're gesturing energetically as they walk, as if planning to share something they have just experienced. They're not carrying anything, but I get the impression they are en route from one place to the next. To the left I look out across the valley where, beneath the cliff that runs alongside the road, there are rows of trees set a little apart from one another. Lemons, seemingly. Perhaps there are some olive trees in there too, but they don't look like the ones you see around Úbeda. The earth beneath them is bare apart from some thin, yellow-flowered weeds. By the roadside, tufts of grass nod in the wind that

blows his hair a little. Is this Israel? I have never been there, never seen the landscape before. But yes.

He has stopped walking. He stands there waiting for me. I can see that he's looking at me but I wait to look him in the eye. Slowly, I take in his face. He is classically good-looking, like a Greek god, the auburn of his hair an extension of his tan. When I dare to meet his gaze, I look into his eyes which are green and grey with a hint of blue and both welcoming and full of kindness. His gaze gives me the same feeling as that morning in the woods, the morning the light struck me. It's stronger than being in love. The closest comparison is with the first eye contact I had with my newborn sons. But it's more intense. Only when I have finished taking in the sight of him does he speak.

Welcome. It's good to see you.

I don't understand his words, but my mind grasps their meaning instantly. He knows me. Every gram of me. Every second of me. He can see everything and he cares about me anyway. In spite of all my lies, both big and small, my bitterness, my pettiness. He has seen me shouting at my sons, heard me say things I've forgotten I said. A tumult of small scenes from my life flits between us so fast and so cinematically accurate that there's no need for me to explain them: he has seen it all. I have not a shred of doubt in me. It's wiped away. Gone. My mental defenses dissolved, I register only that my reason has bowed to a deeper knowledge. He speaks with a musicality that sounds a little Spanish, so I try to understand, but I can't recognize the words. I think it must be Aramaic. He speaks in a low voice, as if we're standing close to one another.

There we are in the sacristy. The two of us. It's as if I'm seeing myself through a telescope – and there's reassurance in this: in my clothes, my yellow cardigan from Banana Republic on Newbury Street in Boston and the black pants from Ivan Grundahl that scratch my thighs, in the pink lacquered handbag on the bench, in the everyday things from home: my great-grandmother's pearl necklace around my neck, my wedding band, the silver sectioned ring from

my mother and my siblings. I can also hear the chatter of other tourists. They're Italian.

He keeps talking quietly in the knowledge that I can both hear and understand him. It's as if he just wants to be sure that I know he's there. He doesn't require anything, doesn't ask me anything, just talks. By now the tears are pouring down my cheeks, down my throat, and into my shirt: my skin senses them but I don't have the strength to wipe them away. Others can see me crying, but I don't care.

Andrea comes in and rests a hand on my shoulder, from behind. "Are you OK?"

I nod. He gives my shoulder a squeeze, removes his hand and leaves the sacristy. It's then that my reporter's instinct awakens.

I must ask the man what he's saying. I can't just leave it like that. I have to go back. Reach him. I close my eyes, sure that I have missed my chance, but he's still there, with a twinkle in his eye, as if to say, *Not what you were expecting*. I don't understand what you're saying, I think at him.

It doesn't matter that you don't understand.
Relief washes over me.

It was the meeting that mattered.
His gaze suffusing my body. From the neck, down over the shoulders, stomach, loins, legs, feet.

He is such a man. So masculine, so seductive and irresistible. His presence is more than erotic. He touches me deeper inside than any man ever has. His smile is not the smile a man gives a woman during the kind of to-and-fro that leads to orgasms or children. It's a smile that makes me feel loved in a whole new way, one I have never known before.

His kindness. His sheer, simple acceptance that it's a good thing I am here.

If he can see all that I am and still accept me, then the least I can do is trust his judgement. This isn't something I think. It's a feeling, because the words to describe it seem either way off the mark or absurdly precious. I settle for cherishing that feeling before we part. It's as if we have

always known each other and always will. He nods at me, smiles again, and disappears. I'm not sad that he's left. No-one will believe this, I know, but I also know that I met him. How can I convey what happened, this thing that can't be told in words? I haven't the strength to complete the thought. My knees are shaking, fresh tears prick at my eyes. My mascara's running, my nose too. My shirt-collar is limp and wet.

I say thank you without thinking it first: it just comes. I get up and leave the sacristy. Andrea comes to meet me. He looks at me questioningly, as if uncertain, then begins talking about the church in his usual way, but looking at me intensely as I wipe at the mascara on my cheeks. "It's OK, you've cleaned it off."

"There was a man."

"Come."

We leave via the chapel, turn left and halfway down the nave and open the heavy little door in the panelled wall to the ticket office entrance. It feels so prosaic here, so contemporary, so appropriate to me and the times I live in. But what about what I saw? It clashes. Yet it doesn't.

There's space for many eras. Inside me, there's endless space.

When we have crossed the high threshold and find ourselves out in the sunshine, I begin to describe him. I struggle to find the words. I should feel embarrassed talking about something so outrageously unlikely but I'm happy and confident and I dare tell it all to Andrea, because he saw it happen. My words aren't sufficient. My English is good, my Danish is better, my Spanish is so-so, but the story defies words in any language.

We walk through the narrow streets though sunshine and shade, from Calle Baja del Salvador out to Plaza Vazquez de Molin, up to Plaza del Primero de Mayo, along Cuesta del Losal, towards past Calle del O(p)bispo Cobos. We walk and walk amid the daily lives of others but for us this day is outside of time and space, knowledge and belief. We know the story so well, but we haven't been a part of it, and it hasn't been a part of our reality - until now.

Neither of us utters his name.

Charlotte Rørth



La Sacra Capilla del Salvador.
Photo by Charlotte Rørth

LETTERS

From the previous Editor...

Congratulations on a brilliant first issue for 2020. I even like the 2 column layout, which I didn't think I would. The whole journal is an interesting read, and there is a professional gloss which I never did quite achieve, in spite of Jean's peerless work on presentation.

I really appreciate the nice things you, Marianne and Andy say about me in this issue. I had a challenging but hugely enjoyable time as editor, and was lucky to have the anniversary editions to finish up with, an excuse for lovely gold covers, a final flourish!

I have found waiting for your first issue of *De Numine* a luxury, anticipation but no deadlines. Of course the pandemic made everything more difficult and uncertain, sorry you had that to contend with, but you seem to have come through with flying colours.

I look forward to the next issue, enjoyable anticipation and absolutely no stress!

Love and lots of luck for the future,
Patricia

PS January 2021: ... Great second issue in 2020, visually stunning as well as an interesting read. So much more from AHS members about their own experiences during the Pandemic, a great follow-on both from the Spring 2020 edition and from reminiscences about Sir Alister Hardy in 2019.

Just a footnote to your editorial in the second issue (69) where you say: -
'Jean supported several editors before me, quietly and unobtrusively working in the background, and no doubt putting up with various Editorial foibles and pet hates along the way'.

During my own tenure Jean was assistant editor as well as dream page designer, and certainly didn't have to bear my foibles in silence... All in all I felt we had an equal relationship throughout, but maybe we should hear how it was for her...

...And from the previous Assistant Editor

Congratulations on a beautifully presented Autumn issue of *De Numine*; and thank you very much for your kind words in the last paragraph of your Editorial.

Apart from a couple of issues when Verena Tschudin was Editor, I worked with Paddy for 16 enjoyable years, and I did not have to put up with editorial foibles or pet hates from either Editor! And I certainly wasn't always quiet or unobtrusive; Paddy and I didn't always agree, of course, but the partnership would have been far less fruitful, and a lot less fun, if we had.

Very best wishes,
Jean Matthews

Reviewing the Alister Hardy Question

I write in reply to Jonathan Robinson's recent article in *De Numine*, and welcome replies...

For myself, I have increasingly adopted the assumption that we are one with the universe, and the universe is the same as God because All is One – there is no distinction between anything. I now interpret the Bible and Christian faith according to that assumption. One Christian mystic talks of using it as an alternative "operating system". I find it so, not only with regard to prayer and worship, but for understanding daily life.

So I am sympathetic to Jonathan's suggestion. The original wording sets out to catch a multitude of experiences. The question is the basis for the ongoing research of the society, and perhaps we should open it to welcome more experiences of all being one. Many have already answered it including versions of that view, notably Hardy himself. I would not like the question changed into a way that precludes answers including God, or ghosts, or any of the many other answers. I think some people have already experimented with different versions of the question, and it would be good to hear their insights.

Philip Tyers Email: ptyers@outlook.com

OBITUARIES

Lord Sacks (1948–2020)

The death of Lord Sacks, former Chief Rabbi, was reported in the Autumn 2020 issue of *De Numine*, the news arriving too late for the journal to contain an obituary. As Chief Rabbi he accepted to become a Patron of the then Alister Hardy Research Centre in 1991 and remained so until his death from cancer, age 72, on 7th November 2020.



A scholar and author, Johnathan Sacks gained a first-class degree in Philosophy at Cambridge and, later, a doctorate. He served as Chief Rabbi from 1991 to 2013 and was the author of 25 books on religion and the role it plays in society. Writing for a non-technical audience, many of his books were on fundamental issues of our time. He mostly avoided theological issues, concentrating mainly on fundamental values. He also made regular contributions to the *Thought for the Day* programme on BBC Radio 4. He was knighted in 2009 becoming Sir Jonathan Sacks and later, in 2009, was made a crossbench life peer. In 2016 he was awarded the prestigious Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, the same Prize that Sir Alister Hardy had been awarded in 1985.

We shall miss him.

John Franklin

Marigold Hutton (1931–2020)



Marigold Hutton has sadly passed away at the age of 89. For many years she played an active role in the Oxfordshire spiritual community, first with "The Jupiter Trust" and then with "Mayflower".

The first half of her life was spent very much in the art world with her husband the artist John Hutton, but in the 1990s she started to pursue her other interests more and took a course in counselling. This led to her helping to set up, and become the first centre manager of, The Listening Centre, a low-cost counselling service that has gone from strength to strength.

She had an enduring interest in philosophical, religious and spiritual matters and helped the author and philosopher Jeremy Naydler with the organisational side of The Jupiter Trust, which put on lectures in Oxford from 1995 to 2009. After this, she and Jane May set up Mayflower, to run lecture days and study tours to Britain and France which she greatly enjoyed, despite the odd memorable hiccup. She made a great many friends in the community over the years and kept her curiosity about life right up to the end.

Katie Glasby, Marigold's daughter

Don Mason (1934–2020)

The Oxford and Cotswold Alister Hardy Group is very sad to report the death of Don Mason. Don was an active and much loved member of the group. He gave a memorable presentation in Oxford on research into telepathy in 2016, and in 2019 presented on telepathic experiences with his family, taken from his book *Science, Mystical Experience and Religious Belief*.

Don was also a member of the Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies (QFAS) for many years. As he was unable to attend the QFAS conference in 2018, I travelled to Witney to record Don delivering his talk on the renowned Psychic Researcher FW Myers.

Don was a warm, gentle and wonderful person, much missed by all of us in the Oxford Group. To give a flavour of Don's many great achievements there follows an extract from the obituary published by his former colleagues at the University of Oxford – *Ed*.

Extract from the obituary published by Dunn School of Pathology, Oxford

Don Mason, who has died at the age of 86, was a leading immunologist in the UK, making seminal contributions to regulation of immune responses, and particularly to mechanisms of organ transplantation rejection and to theory and concepts of affinity in immune recognition. He trained initially as a physicist (BSc University College, London, 1958) and for ten years worked on the stability of plasma in controlled thermonuclear fusion, first at ZETA at Harwell, then at Culham. He had a major shift in career after his firstborn son died of leukaemia in childhood. He returned to University to study medicine (Oxford at St John's College). In 1973 he went directly into research at the MRC Cellular Immunology Unit, in the Sir William Dunn School of Pathology, Oxford University, under the direction of Jim Gowans. His ability was recognised immediately and he became a tenured staff member in record time despite a lack of immunology research experience. He remained there firstly under Gowans, then with Alan Williams and finally as Director himself. He retired in 1999. His work, ahead of its time,

focussed on centrally important questions establishing new concepts in the field. His physics background was of help when the Cellular Immunology Unit first acquired a Becton-Dickinson FACS-II fluorescence-activated cell sorter in 1974, an approach which subsequently transformed cell immunology.

Don's work represented some of the foundational studies in the regulatory T cell field, a large and active area of current immunological research. Don ran a small but effective research group training students and post-docs over many years. Many have gone on to be successful immunologists across the world benefiting from the unique training environment Don created. He was made an honorary Life Member of the British Society for Immunology in 2017...

He had strong principles and concern for societal issues. For instance he demonstrated against CRUISE missiles in the 1970's and against the appalling conditions at Campsfield immigration centre. Until recently he volunteered as a prison visitor and corresponded with individual prisoners. In retirement he published his personal philosophical monograph: "Science, Mystical Experience and Religious Belief". He was a vegan and a Quaker with a very strong family life, living in Witney for many years. He is survived by his wife Mahalla, their 4 children and 3 grandchildren.

Don's QFAS talk in 2018 can be ordered on DVD from <https://quakerafterlifestudies.wordpress.com/talks-on-cd/>

Science, Mystical Experience and Religious Belief is out of print, but the text is available here: <https://quakerafterlifestudies.wordpress.com/books-and-literature/>



Don and Mahalla at home in 2017. Photo by R Riachi

REPORTS

Report from the Director of Communications

Last year during the lockdowns we assumed that 2021 would see an easing of restrictions and a return to a more normal way of life. However, as life continues to be dominated and limited by Covid-19, Andy Burns and I are still unable to organise real meetings. So we have arranged a few online events, using Zoom, and the skills of our IT guru Mike Rush. Any requests for attendance, which require a Zoom link must be sent to Mike please:
mikerush@virginmedia.com

The great benefit of virtual events is that we are able to include far-flung members and others who support our aims wherever they live. Although we can't chat over a cup of coffee, we can see each other, share the event and catch up via email, phone or text afterwards.

On January 6th we celebrated the launch of John Franklin's book, *Exploration into Spirit: A Power Greater than ... The History of the first fifty years of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centres and Trust: origins, development and vision*. This is the third and final edition of John's History, an invaluable record of the Trust and RERCs from the early days in Oxford right up to the Golden Anniversary in 2019. People joined us from the Netherlands, Northern Ireland and Wales. It was so good to see familiar faces who are not usually able to join us for meetings in Oxford or Lampeter.

Copies are still available at £13 including postage from:
Dr David Greenwood
Field Cottage
Lower Welson
Eardisley
Herefordshire
HR3 6NB

Email: D.Greenwood@uwtsd.ac.uk

On March 6th from 11.00am to 1.00pm we hosted another online book launch, this time for *Spirituality and Wellbeing: Interdisciplinary*

Approaches to the Study of Religious Experience and Health edited by our RERC Director of Research, Professor Bettina Schmidt and Honorary Research Fellow at the RERC, Dr Jeff Leonardi. The launch was well attended and featured short presentations from the many chapter authors, delivered from their home locations around the world.

On May 1st from 11.00am to 12.30pm (waiting room open from 10.45) Melinda Powell will speak on *Spiritual Presence in Dreams and Lucid Surrender*. Melinda wrote a fascinating article in the 2020 Autumn issue of *De Numine* and I review her book *The Hidden Lives of Dreams: What They Can Tell Us and How They can Change Our World* in this issue.

Melinda has a Master's in Psychology of Religion and is a psychotherapist. She ran the Help Counselling Centre charity in London for ten years and is the co-founder of the Dream Research Institute (DRI) at the Centre for Counselling and Psychotherapy Education. Her new book, *Lucid Surrender: A Guide to Spiritual Lucid Dreaming* will be published this year.

Members' Day this year will also be a Zoom event on October 16th 11.00am to 3.00pm with a break for lunch.

Dr Steve Taylor, a senior lecturer in psychology at Leeds Beckett University and a prolific author on psychology and spirituality, will give the annual Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture in the morning on *Extraordinary Awakenings - Spiritual Transformation in the Midst of Suffering*. In view of recent Covid-dominated restricted lives, the title certainly seems apposite.

Steve's work has been reviewed in previous issues of *De Numine* and I review Steve's volume of spiritual reflections and meditations in this issue. After delivering his lecture, Steve will read a few poems lead us in a short meditation before taking questions.

We plan to make the Members' Day afternoon more interactive, with reports of ongoing research projects linked to the AHT.

I would like to thank Rhonda for producing another wonderful issue of *De Numine* for members to enjoy. Her work as editor is very much appreciated, as it enables us to share our thoughts and experiences with each other in

one of the few ways possible in the current circumstances. The other connection is through our online events and I very much welcome you all to join in.

Marianne Rankin
AHT Director of Communications

Report from the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre Lampeter

The last couple of months continued to be unusual. While we had hoped to move back to the campus and prepared to open the library (including the RERC office) last autumn, the University has been in full lockdown again. Tom Pitchford continued to work from home and keep the RERC office virtually open.

In addition to transcribing accounts of spiritual and religious experience for the archive and looking after email enquiries from members, Tom worked on the publication of the *Journal for the Study of Religions*. The first issue for 2020 was published in December and contained an article by Rupert Sheldrake, his Alister Hardy Oxford lecture from 2019. Other articles are by two AHT members, one by Mark Fox in which he outlines his more recent research on the accounts, and one by Mara Steenhuisen, on her research on orb phenomena. These articles are – like all issues of the journal - open access and can be downloaded from the website. Another issue of the journal will follow very soon. It is a special issue which contains the *Festschrift in Honour of Peggy Morgan*, former Director of the Religious Experience Research Centre. We are also working on two more issues to be published in 2021, one with papers from the 2019 conference and one is a special issue, guest edited by Jack Hunter, honorary research fellow of the RERC.

In addition we have been preparing for the RERC conference 2021. Last year we decided to cancel the conference, hoping to just postpone it for a year. However, the ongoing pandemic makes it unrealistic to hold a campus event in July. Instead of postponing the conference

further, we decided to move the conference online. Fortunately, the Alister Hardy Trust has offered to host it on Zoom. It will be free of charge and everyone who is interested in joining can email Mike Rush who will circulate the link a day before the conference. Prof Jane Shaw, Principal of the Harris Manchester College, Oxford, will give the keynote lecture, and Dr Jack Hunter and Prof Marta de Freitas will present papers on their researches (see programme in this issue of *De Numine*).

Teaching also continued online. Two new students started on the MRes Religious Experience in October, two students on the MRes finished part 1 and moved to the dissertation in October, and one of the four students writing the dissertation is preparing to submit in January. In addition to the MA module on Religious Experience which starts in February, religious experience was also taught on undergraduate level in October/November. Hence, religious and spiritual experience continues to attract new students.

Prof Bettina Schmidt
Director of the Alister Hardy Religious
Experience Research Centre, Lampeter

An obituary to Tom Pitchford will appear in the next issue of De Numine – Ed.

Report from the Chair of the Alister Hardy Trust

Chair's Report for the AGM - November 2020

Setting the context

Covid-19 has had an enormous impact on the world since we held the last AGM on Thursday 21 November 2019. University campuses have been closed. Academic conferences and public gatherings have been off limits. As a Trust we were obliged to cancel the mid-year Trustees' meeting. The 2020 AGM is maintaining social distance and taking place virtually by Zoom; and so is the November meeting of the Trustees. In spite of such disruption there is still much for the Trust to celebrate, due to the commitment of members, Trustees, and staff.

Charitable intentions

Throughout the year the Trust has continued to fulfil its core charitable intentions:

- to promote research into religious and spiritual experience and to publish useful results of such research for public benefit;
- to advance the education of the public in religious and spiritual experience, its nature, function, frequency, and purpose.

Causes for celebration

During the year:

- John Franklin has brought to fruition his authoritative account to the first 50 years of the Alister Hardy venture, and publication is in hand;
- Rhonda Riachi has overseen her first issue of *De Numine* and achieved high standards of content and presentation;
- Bettina Schmidt and Jeff Leonardi have published *Spirituality and wellbeing: Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of religious experience and health*;
- Jeff Astley has published *SCM study guide to religion to religious and spiritual experience*;

- Bettina Schmidt has kept the Centre at Lampeter going during the lockdown with Tom Pitchford working from home;
- Jeff Astley has kept the Centre at Bishop Grosseteste University Lincoln alive during lockdown and prepared two discussion papers for the Trustees on 'Shaping our vision for the future';
- In the absence of conferences and meetings, Marianne Rankin has kept us well informed of emerging publications and virtual presentations;
- Sue White and David Greenwood have been keeping a close watch on our investments and sustained sound management of resources during a time of volatility;
- The Archive is being maintained in good order in Lampeter and has remained accessible to scholars;
- Jeff Astley, Wesley Wildman and colleagues in Boston University have made good progress on concluding the planning phase of the Templeton project, exploring the inspiring question: if Sir Alister were beginning his venture now (given what we know about religious and spiritual experiences and given the state of the art computer technology) how would he have designed his Archive? Currently there is no news to report on how this project may proceed beyond the planning phase.

The Revd Canon Professor Leslie J. Francis,
Chair of the Alister Hardy Trust
(September 2020)

Report from the Hon Treasurer

The Accounts for the Alister Hardy Trust for the year ended 31st July 2020

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, naturally, 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, together with the income from our members. 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. To ensure that our funds are not exhausted too quickly we are not making any significant new commitments. It should be noted that our deficit is roughly half of that of the previous year.

One significant item that we have supported this year is the production of the latest and 3rd edition of *Exploration into Spirit*, the history of the first 50 years of the Alister Hardy Organisation. This book has been written by John Franklin who has been involved in many ways with the Society and Trust over a period of nearly 35 years. Even if you have an earlier edition, this much enlarged book which includes the authors concluding reflection is well worth purchasing at just £13 including postage.

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 payment of £15,470 in respect of supporting the RERC, Lampeter, which of course funds the member of staff who looks after the archive and the AHT books.

Income

(including investment income £10,044 and subscriptions £4,055) £14,099

Expenditure

(including donation to UWTSd of £15,470, various honoraria, and additional expenses associated with increased activity on the part of volunteers and trustees) £33,165

Net deficit £16,288

Fixed Assets:

Tangible assets (mainly books and works of art) £50,535

Current assets:

Bank accounts and invested funds £317,763

Total assets less current liabilities: £364,600

The accounts were unanimously approved by the Trustees at the Virtual AGM (Zoom) held on the 17th November, 2020.

Dr David Greenwood,
Honorary Treasurer, January 2021.
d.greenwood@uwtsd.ac.uk

Oxford & Cotswold Group Report

Children and reincarnation

Our meeting in November on Zoom was joined by 17 members. Ian Fordyce led a discussion of 'Children who remember past lives'. Much literature exists on this subject; books by Jim Tucker, Carol Bowman, Arthur Guirdham and many others were referenced.

Ian read from his selection of most memorable stories from Jim Tucker. The first was of an Alaskan eskimo, who selected his niece to be his next mother, before his death, as was the custom of his tribe. He pointed out to her the scars he bore which would be visible in his next life with her as birthmarks. The boy duly born carried many traits of his uncle, and convinced his family of the return. (This seems like a very good idea to me, I have already selected which of my granddaughters I would like to be my

next mother, but I don't think I'd better tell her in this life!)

Ian is fortunate / unfortunate to remember his two immediate previous lives; as a Scottish soldier who died in WW1, then another Scottish soldier, who died in WW2.

Ian told another story of a golf prodigy who recognised his previous life as a star of the 1920s who appeared on a film on the TV golf channel in the USA. This might be the first case of a child prodigy who identified on TV the previous life in which they had perfected their skills. Much discussion followed, with positive and negative opinions being expressed.

Ian Fordyce

Spiritual experiences: joining the mainstream?

For our December meeting we listened to a guided meditation by Anita Moorjani (it is slightly awkward to set up audio/video playback correctly on Zoom, but we got the gist of the meditation). In the session Anita encourages the listeners to travel back in their minds to the time before they were born.

The purpose of this meditation is to make peace with the choices made for our current incarnation. The meditation prompted emotional responses in some of us, and some startling experiences were shared in the discussion.

Our February meeting was a general discussion of our spiritual experiences as well as the programmes we had been watching and listening to. We discussed the recent series on

Netflix, *Surviving Death*, which we agreed could help to bring spiritual experiences more into the mainstream, although the tone of the programmes might be sensationalist at times.

Some members have been impressed with the Shift Network online symposia, which are generally structured as a series of interviews with well-known writers and spiritual teachers. There is no fee unless you want to maintain access to the recordings.

More info here:

<https://theshiftnetwork.com/frontpage>

Rhonda Riachi

AHT South Wales Group Report

With great regret the Llantarnam Abbey Residential, 2- 4 October 2020, on “The Visual Arts, inspiration and spirituality” and scheduled to have included talks and workshops:

- ‘A Light touch on Rembrandt’;
- Blake, ‘Imagination Unbounded’;
- ‘Photography as Spiritual Practice’;
- Icons – the revered ones;
- The (illuminated) Llandeilo Fawr Gospels and St Teilo;

- did not materialise.

The Abbey was in isolation, and the Ty Croeso nuns sadly redundant; so I sought a way for us to meet together as a group for two hours on the Saturday, where the five subjects planned might be presented in curtailed form.

Plan B: At home I have a massive basement large enough for us to be seated in the approved distanced manner. This room is known to most of our members, so after discussion we tentatively planned to go ahead. I had a large computer screen without which the visual arts material would be useless, and it was beginning to feel viable.

Then the Welsh government tightened the Covid restrictions and we were stumped.

Plan C: The planned material was made available and was emailed round the group in an endeavour to create a feeling of sharing.

We are now looking forward to the day we might be able to present the talks in the full, as much work has been prepared, and it is sure to be much more inspiring in person and in full.

Mary Cook



Red candles and reflection.
Photo by R Riachi

POETRY

Awaiting Our Return

When I walk with my mind
in the soles of my feet
I feel her loving me
rising to meet me.

She lifts the mountains
out of her womb
nourishes every eye
that rests on her
snow drenched peaks.

Her valleys are for lying in
the tall grass home to
the elk, the fox,
the struggling beetle.

Sky follows her
kissing every curve
yet her rhythms are for her children.
Awaiting the one who walks out
to find her.

Better still the one who lays
fully on her.
As a newborn rests
on its mother's belly
remembering.

Elle Hughes

Written after walking with a view of San Francisco Peaks.

*The San Francisco Peaks north of Flagstaff, Arizona,
are sacred to thirteen Native American tribes.
The peaks form the Navajo sacred mountain of the
west. They are gendered female.*



San Francisco Peaks. Photo
by US Geological Survey

BOOK REVIEWS

John Franklin, *Exploration into Spirit: A Power Greater than... The History of the first 50 years of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centres and Trust: origins, development and vision*. 3rd Edition, Lampeter (Wales) AHT, 2020, 192pp. ISBN 978 0 906165 775

This is the third edition of the book and continues the story of the RERC and Trust until the end of 2019, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the original Religious Experience Research Unit in 1969.

In my review of the previous edition of the book I made reference to John's long involvement with both the Trust and Society. He was the secretary to the former Alister Hardy Society and also the London Group leader for almost 30 years and is therefore best placed to act as the official historian. John was party to, and influenced many of the decisions over those years and communicates this through the history.

The book has eleven chapters with additional appendices recording information about the committees, Patrons, Trustees and Chairs. John is to be commended for his attention to detail. Events and decisions are documented with great precision, including areas of research, committee meetings and Members' Day conferences. The text is well illustrated throughout which helps to enhance the story and personalise the people and events. The book concludes with a postscriptum in which John reflects upon the last fifty years and notes that, 'Much is known about the nature, function and frequency of spiritual and religious experiences, but what of their purpose? What is the meaning behind these experiences?' (p156)

This is a question which was discussed by the Trust and also through the pages of the Journal, and it is hoped will be addressed by current and future research projects.

The book is a very thorough history of the RERC, Trust and Society and is invaluable for those seeking to gain an understanding of the subject. I know that many members and officers of the

Trust (myself included) have called upon previous editions in order to clarify a date or refresh a memory of an important decision. It is, and will, remain a constant work of reference.

This will be John's final edition of the book and it is appropriate that the story concludes by celebrating the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the RERU in 1969. The story will of continue, and new horizons will open up, but it is a fitting tribute to the ongoing work of the RERC and Trust as it looks towards the next fifty years.

*Andrew Burns,
Hon Secretary, Alister Hardy Trust*

Copies of the book can be ordered from:
Dr David Greenwood, Field Cottage, Lower Welson, Eardisley, Herefordshire, HR3 6NB

Readers' comments on the 3rd edition

On re-reading John's book what impresses me most is his coverage of the vast range of research projects, publications, lectures and conferences undertaken by or inspired by the work of the centre. It is really useful to have an historical record of these manifold activities.

Professor Paul Badham

I am one of those people who needs John's 'History' to jog my memory - often about things I have myself been involved in, as I'm hazy on dates. It has been good to edit the book - as I learned a lot about the years before I joined the Alister Hardy Society. The AHT and RERCs have a remarkable history, and John's book ensures that we have a comprehensive record of everything. This third edition is particularly useful as it encompasses half a century of research and activities.

Marianne Rankin

Jon Robinson, *New Horizons: The Celebration of Oneness based on the Eucharist*

This 26-page document consists of a few pages of introductory material followed by a modern (some might say ultra-modern) form of Eucharistic liturgy. There is a foreword by a former Bishop of Oxford and there are a number of commendations, including those of Rowan Williams and Sir Mark Tully. The aim of this liturgy is to 'push the boundaries' and 'to bridge the divide that is so apparent between inherited traditional religious expressions and where so many people now find themselves today'. The author believes that there is 'an urgent need to rediscover the inner spiritual meaning of the Eucharist in ways that connect with us and the world in which we live'.

As a retired parish priest and now a cathedral worshipper, I admire and support the intentions behind this document; but I have doubts about whether this kind of liturgy will succeed in bridging the undoubted chasm just described. My own view is that, whilst the parish system is in a downward spiral from which it may never recover, cathedral worship, with its inspiring music, excellent preaching and determined outreach (as exemplified by the recent use of many cathedrals as Covid vaccination centres) will keep the Church of England alive for many decades, or even centuries, to come, notwithstanding the fact that their liturgical language may remain relatively traditional. I should point out that 'New Horizons' is intended for use in all branches of the Church, both Catholic and Protestant. A flavour of this document is given in the opening responses: -

Celebrant *The Light of the world is here,
(A candle may be raised)*

All **Eternal Light, life giving Spirit,**

Celebrant *The Light within us,*

All **True Life of us all.**

There is also a suggested use of 'symbols' such as earth, air, fire and water. And (says the rubric) the cross, and maybe other symbols, may be used with words and gestures ... as appropriate. For example, there may be 'a flame' in a 'receptacle': the rubric here says

'The Celebrant may elevate the flame and present it to the four cardinal directions, as an expression of the fire of the Spirit which is offered to all the world. During this time bells, gongs etc. may be sounded'.

In spite of its modernistic content, this liturgy follows a conventional pattern, moving from Confession (here headed Reconciliation) and Absolution, through a Ministry of the Word (which may or may not include readings from the Bible) with various suggested alternatives to a sermon, then a statement of 'Commitment' (to my mind a very welcome alternative to the Nicene Creed!) through Intercession and 'Celebrating Peace' to the 'Offering'. Bread and wine **are** used, and there are two forms of the Eucharistic Prayer, the second of which is far more radical than the first, including these statements by the celebrant: -

We take this bread, praying that by the power of the Holy Spirit, it may be for us the Body of Christ given for us all, the Presence that unites us with our True Selves, and the sacredness of all life.

We take this cup, praying that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, it may be for us the life of Christ for the life of us all, that the life of us all [sic] may be the life of Christ, the Life Eternal.

'Form B' of the Eucharistic Prayer contains a strange mixture of traditional and 'modern' language. After the Lord's Prayer we find: -

Celebrant *We break this bread to share in
the Body of Christ*

All **Though we are many, we are
one body because we all share
in one bread.**

All very familiar, but then the celebrant says, 'We all come from the One, and to the One we shall return, the One, the fullness of us all'. Theologically, I find this perfectly acceptable as a reformulation of traditional language, since we must recognize that all talk of God must be analogical. But then it is suggested that 'The Ohm mantra may be chanted (Ohm is the divine

sound, the sound of the Eternal)' and this is where I feel it verges on the weird.

The parish where I was privileged to minister as vicar (1976-1990) was noted for its forward-looking approach: the 1930s church building had already been converted from the traditional pattern to a beautiful 'in the round' design; a parish breakfast had been introduced in the 1950s; and the 'liturgy coming to life' approach was reflected in the worship and outreach; in 1980 we set up a community project for the unemployed, which used the 'church' itself as well as the ancillary buildings. The forward-looking approach continued, so much so that, when the community funding eventually dried up, the PCC actually voted to close the church permanently in 2019 on the grounds that it was 'the people, not the

building' that really mattered. If 'New Horizons' had been around during my time there, I would undoubtedly have used it (or variations on it), and I think that even the more traditionally minded members of the congregation would have accepted it – they once welcomed a sermon I gave in which I echoed the words of David Jenkins about the Resurrection! – but I still have doubts as to whether it would have halted the inevitable decline, as the congregation got older and it became more and more difficult to attract younger members. Perhaps there will be some small pockets in today's church where this miracle will take effect. I truly hope so.

Bernard Salter

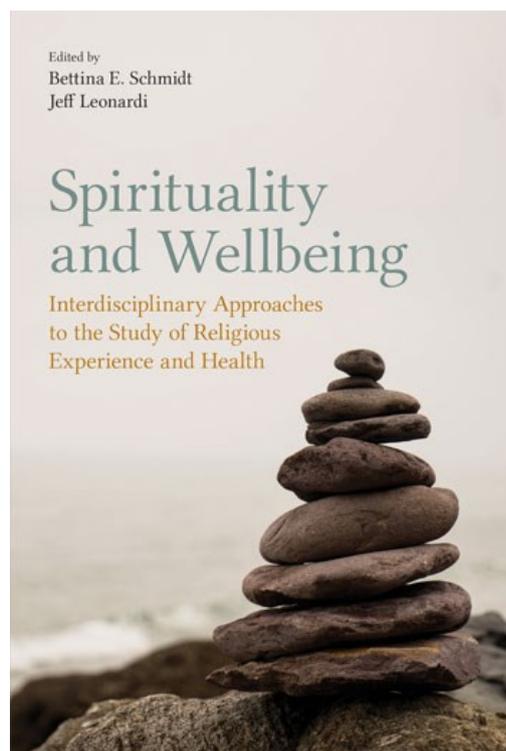
To order *New Horizons*, email Jon at:
murrell.robinson@protonmail.com



River Thames at dawn. Photo by Dave Sherwood

Bettina Schmidt and Jeff Leonardi (Eds.), *Spirituality and Wellbeing: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Religious Experience and Health*. Sheffield, Equinox, 2020. 248pp. ISBN 978-78179-765-5 (Softback).

This volume takes an interdisciplinary approach to religious experience, as advocated by Sir Alister Hardy in *The Divine Flame*, and also has the laudable aim of grounding its discussion and findings in practical, applied therapeutic contexts. Neither is the book limited to a narrow Western or Christian view but takes a cross-cultural approach, including non-theistic, non-religious, and Buddhist perspectives, in the UK, Brazil, and China. The ten chapters report on empirical studies on the relationship between spirituality and wellbeing, including a variety of different therapeutic approaches and research methodologies such as Humanistic Psychology, person-centred counselling, autoethnography, hermeneutics and phenomenology. Some of the diverse topics covered include: clinical parapsychology, attitudes towards the physical body, food in Chinese spiritual practice, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), spirituality in UK and Brazilian health care, epilepsy, and the person-centered approach as a Buddhist spiritual practice. The book is divided into four sections: i) setting the scene, ii) the body in focus, iii) the diversity of perspectives, and iv) applied practice.



At a first, and superficial glance, the topics and chapters may appear to be somewhat diverse and disconnected. However, there are a number of important deeper themes that run through the chapters and tie them all together into a harmonious whole, including the darker side of spiritual experiences, the role of religious or spiritual frameworks, cultural perspectives on spirituality and wellbeing, the lack of training on spirituality in professional health care, the insidious effects of Cartesian mind-body dualism, and the importance of relationships in spirituality and wellbeing.

Beginning with the definitions of “spirituality” and “wellbeing” Schmidt and Leonardi suggest that spirituality is, “that which gives meaning, value, and purpose to a person’s life,” and Leonardi offers twelve characteristics of spirituality. This is followed by Everton de Oliveira Maraldi’s excellent introductory chapter, where he suggests that, “In its very essence, spirituality might be best defined as a quest for self-knowledge, a quest toward finding our place in this world...” (P. 21), whilst Lymarie Rodriguez-Morales says that, “Spirituality generally refers to the meanings, values and practices which enable a greater appreciation of ourselves, our world, and our relationships with both, encompassing our philosophy of life or worldview,” (P. 181). However, whilst Wendy Dossett notes that public health care has come to increasingly recognise the importance of spirituality as instrumentally related to accommodating the spiritual/religious needs of patients, Maraldi and Becky Seale both warn us that spirituality goes beyond the limited function of simply promoting wellbeing, “...mindfulness is in danger of being simply a technique to feel better rather than a spiritual practice,” (Seale, P. 228).

An often-overlooked aspect of spirituality is its negative effects, as opposed to the more frequently researched positive effects, on physical and mental health. Schmidt and Leonardi acknowledge that, “Spiritual

experience can, for some, be a negative experience, either in its nature or in terms of other people's response," (P. 3). This is not just in the context of spiritual experiences of evil as discussed by Jakobsen (1999), but also includes the findings that spiritual experiences can cause concern or distress in and of themselves. This is sometimes triggered by spiritual practices such as mediation, especially when undertaken outside of a religious or spiritual framework. Maraldi states that, "It is of fundamental importance to recognise that there is a 'dark side' of spirituality which needs to be integrated if we want to take full advantage of spirituality's healing potential," (P. 20). In contradiction to many other studies that have found a positive correlation between religion and mental health, Maraldi points to studies that suggest that people with a spiritual understanding of life in the absence of a religious framework may suffer from worse mental health. He therefore advocates the need for spiritual teachers to know about psychotherapy, "Individuals interested in contemplative and spiritual exercises should be informed about the risks involved in their practice, including long-term alterations in their sense of identity," (P. 35). That is, spiritual practices are not merely techniques to make us feel better, but have been developed over millennia for a much more profound purpose.

Conversely, Chris Roe emphasises the use of spiritual models to reframe challenging experiences and make them more amenable to psychological intervention. For Roe, the ontology of such experiences is moot as their psychological effects are experientially real. Thomas Jansen seems to arrive at a similar conclusion saying that, "The value of religious narratives, spiritual biographies of individuals or groups, or stories of gods and deities, lies in their unlimited power to create discursive spaces and practices that constantly challenge what we define as 'wellbeing'," (P. 109).

Many of the contributors to the book acknowledge the exclusion of spirituality from the training and practice of health care professionals. Marta Helena de Freitas reports that, in Brazil, the majority of health care professionals are not conversant with the

relevant literature on spirituality and wellbeing, and Schmidt points out that, despite some localised exceptions (only some Brazilian hospitals offer complementary or alternative medicine), in both the UK and Brazil there is a, "...widespread reluctance to discuss religion with a doctor or nurse," (P. 147). Schmidt argues that this is because both the UK and Brazil share the same biomedically-based training for their health care professionals. Roe highlights the need for the training of therapists on anomalous, i.e. spiritual and psychic, experiences. He also draws attention to the need for anomalous experiences to be "normalized" to avoid stigmatisation and that the outcomes of such experiences for the individual are often influenced by the responses of others. This links to the culture-bound meaning of "spirituality" and the socially constructed nature of experiential categories mentioned above. Spiers provides an insight into the stigmatisation and pathologisation of people who have epileptic experiences (EFEs) and usefully compares them to spiritual experiences, "EFEs are like other spiritual experiences insofar as some involve a non-shared reality, where there exists a mismatch between how it is experienced, and how healthcare professionals view it," (P. 173). In response to this lack of training, Roe offers the discipline of clinical parapsychology, an amalgamation of clinical psychology and parapsychology (Kramer et al, 2012), that provides the basis for a, "...therapeutic practice that is founded on an evidence-based understanding of the nature and causes of the phenomena," (P. 58). Indeed, Seale takes this even further suggesting that the person-centred approach is not just a method in which one can be professionally trained but is *itself* also a spiritual discipline.

Perhaps related to this gap between professional health care and spirituality is the issue of mind-body dualism identified by Leonardi. Seale picks up this theme commenting, "The split between medical science and the soul remains at the heart of many differences in approaching mental health and wellbeing and placing mental health within a scientific, medical model has far-reaching implications" (P. 227). She advocates

approaches to wellbeing that champion embodied experience and likewise Leonardi encourages a move towards holism to close the gap and resolve the issue, "...an approach which respects both body and mind, and also emotion, intuition and intellect, can yield a highly beneficial psychology and spirituality of health and wellbeing..." (P. 84.)

The relationship between self, community, and spirit, is clearly seen as pivotally important by many of the contributors to this volume. Jansen points out that this relationship is reciprocal in reaching outwards to develop community and turning inwards to develop the self, "Spirituality is a key ingredient that enables us to bond with other human beings and thus realize our own true self," (P. 48). Dossett highlights the importance that her research participants gave to supporting each other in AA, "Engagement with other human actors is as much a solution to alcoholism as is a vital spiritual experience," (P. 119), and Rodriguez-Morales talks about the sense of new, compassionate selfhood experienced by AA members in her own work, "The participants' recovery journeys were deeply relational and social in nature, and facilitated by gaining a sense of belongingness, community and identity," (P. 191). Finally, Schmidt discusses how wellbeing, as well as spirituality, is relational and goes beyond mere physical health, albeit depending on its cultural setting, that is perceived as interconnecting individuals, communities, and spiritual entities.

Kelly Arora, *Spirituality and Meaning Making in Chronic Illness*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2020. 272pp. ISBN 9781784509965.

This is a clearly written and accessible book about approaches to supporting and navigating through chronic illness situations. Its sub-title, which identifies caregivers as the primary audience, does the book an injustice, as the book can be read by anyone in a 'traumatic' situation. Kelly Arora shines a light on all the circumstances which someone dealing with systemic medical challenges may face.

The book is structured around the story of the Wizard of Oz, and the journey of Dorothy and her companions towards an eventual healing. I

In summary, this book answers Sir Alister Hardy's call for an interdisciplinary approach to religious experience, building on some of the topics covered by previous RERC occasional papers, and taking the important step from academic studies into applied practice. I found this book a refreshing blend of progressive empirically-based research that, at the same time, permits a welcome return to the more philosophical work of Carl Jung and William James. Maraldi identifies a shortcoming of much modern research on spirituality and wellbeing, "The fact is that the ethical and philosophical implications of research on spirituality are rarely or poorly addressed," (P. 36). This volume, addressing as it does both empirically-based applied practice and deeper philosophical considerations seems to me to be an ethical and necessary step forward, to address this shortcoming.

Mike Rush

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had never considered the story in that light and sometimes had to stop thinking about it. I felt that the heart of the book was so clear that the Oz framework detracted from that. I will need to re-watch the film through Kelly's lenses!

That said, the book does take you on a journey: the [false] calm before the storm of wellness/illness; losses and grief; spiritual struggles and spiritual coping; healers and hope; meaning making and the new normal [re-adjustment]. Kelly herself has a chronic illness and she refers to her own experiences, whilst

having researched studies about illness behaviours and outcomes.

My first wife had a terminal illness and I never had a chance to think about what was going on until later. In brief, I discovered that some people couldn't cope with my wife's illness, that my sense of time was extremely heightened, and that some medical staff lacked practical empathy. So, when I read this book, little lights

kept popping on in my head as I recognised situations I had experienced, and insights and support that I had not.

I also think that if one is facing a complex or demanding life situation of any kind, business or personal, this is a book to tap into to help ground oneself; a book worth reading and having.

Lewis Herlitz

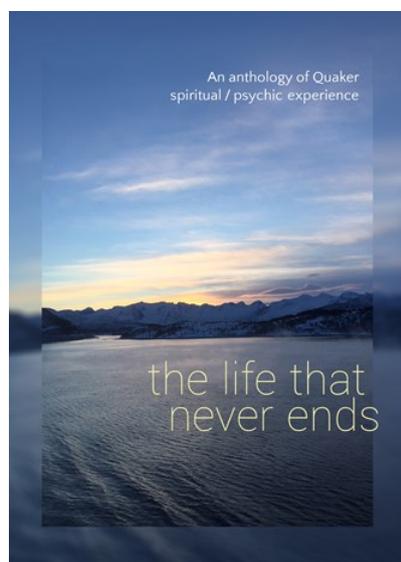
Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies, *The Life That Never Ends: An Anthology of Quaker Spiritual/Psychic Experience*. QFAS, 2019. 134pp. ISBN 978-1-911311-54-6. £7.00

The Life That Never Ends is a very welcome anthology of personal accounts surrounding death, after death, and psychic experiences of current day British Quakers. The title is taken from the writings of William Penn, dating from 1693, who wrote, "The truest end of life is to know the life that never ends" (p120).

The book begins with acknowledgements, a foreword, and an introduction, followed by six sections/chapters, and concludes with suggestions for further reading, as well as a listing of organisations of interest. After the initial introduction, you move through the six sections of the book from one account of personal experience to the next with no explanatory writing interrupting the flow. Each section concludes with either poetry, short excerpts from Quaker Faith & Practice (1995), or scripture before moving to the next chapter.

The introduction, written by members of the Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies (QFAS), provides an overview of the organisation's history from its founding in July 2000. Not long after, in 2001, the first anthology of Quaker spiritual/psychic experiences was published followed by a second edition in 2006. The introduction discusses a current cultural context "...shaped by scientific materialism..." (p 3), which has permeated much of modern Quakerism in Britain to the effect that members may hesitate to share their spiritual experiences. Alongside this scientific skepticism however, is a stream of thought that resists materialism and holds to the earliest Quaker teachings of direct experience of the Divine and the possibility of expanded consciousness, especially in the Meeting for Worship. This current anthology gives voice to spiritual and psychic experience not often talked about with the hope of providing discovery and encouragement for readers who may find confirmation of their own experiences in these pages.

As Death Approaches, is the first section and includes stories of words spoken shortly before and on the cusp of death. As noted in the beginning of this section there can be a sense that the individual who is in the process of dying is simultaneously in this world and in the next, moving back and forth between the two. Overwhelmingly these communications are a comfort to those who experience them. These accounts effectively set the spiritual tone and feel of the book.



Following is the second section, *After-Death Communications*, which provides glimpses into experiences of people who are contacted in some way by a deceased loved one. Included are interior contact, which may be through the mind, and exterior contact involving physical effects on mechanical and electrical devices in the home. This section on after-death communications was the area of greatest interest and number of contributions by QFAS members.

Near Death Experiences, comprises the third section with accounts of NDEs and out of body experiences (OBEs), which are very intriguing. As the short introduction points out NDEs and OBEs have increased partly due to medical advances in resuscitation enabling individuals to recount experiences on the brink of death. Further, the publication of books such as Raymond Moody's *Life after Life* in 1975 opened up a pathway for people to talk about their own experiences.

The fourth section, *Animals and Afterlife*, includes a variety of unusual stories of animals before death and after, which taken together supports the spiritual awareness of animals and the continuance of their spirit after death. Most are accounts of companion animals with a strong bond to their human but not all experiences included this bond. These are heartwarming accounts giving one pause to consider the spiritual lives of animals both in life and after death.

A Miscellany of Spiritual Experience and Comment, the fifth section, brings together accounts of psychic experience that lay outside the categories above and as the introduction states may be difficult to classify. Included are unusual synchronous events and confirmation of intimate details by psychics who would have no knowledge of such detail. Some accounts involve orbs, visions, dreams and OBEs. One OBE resulted in a profound sense of oneness with God and a deep love for everything surrounding that person. A line that stood out

from this section, "I have come to realize over the years that we are all made of God..." (p 90).

The final and sixth section *Experiences of Early Quakers*, begins with brief writings about death and afterlife by William Penn. Following are excerpts selected by historian David Britton from the early writings of George Fox, Margaret Fell, and the pamphlet *A Quaker Way of Dying*.

The anthology closes with a helpful booklist for further reading and a list of organisations, which may be of interest to readers.

Reading *The Life That Never Ends* feels like being in the company of family and friends listening to intimate accounts of spiritual phenomena surrounding death and after death. There is reassurance that comes with listening to such stories. In addition to reassurance though, this collection encourages deeper thought about the life of the spirit. The effect of continuous first person narrative facilitates a mode of understanding that does not require explanation, clarification or conjecture. These accounts stand on their own, are grounded in lived experience, and are accessible to the reader. There is both discovery and recognition in the variety of experiences included contributing to a sense that such spiritual phenomena are not unusual. What might be unusual is that we do not have a forum for sharing them. This anthology provides such a forum for Quakers to share their experiences and for readers to benefit. This is a companionable book to keep on your bookshelf and return to as needed. My hope is that more editions will follow from the Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies. The seamless quality between the known world and the unknown apparent in these accounts illustrates the seamless quality of the life of the spirit through and beyond death.

Elle Hughes

The book is available to order from www.quakerfellowshipforafterlifestudies.co.uk

Elizabeth Mills, *In The Stillness Poems, Prayers & Reflections*. Inner Light Books. ISBN 978-1-7328239-1-4 (pbk). £10.

Elizabeth Mills is an active member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and supporter of local groups as a healer and leader. She also writes for church magazines, periodicals and magazines and even teaches children with special needs. As an ecumenical Christian, she leads guided meditation groups and Taize worship evenings.

Her 100 page book begins with a short informal introduction, ending with a quote from the Quaker, Isaac Pennington (1616-1679):

“And the end of words is to bring men to the knowledge of things, beyond which words can utter”.

One may be inspired to delve further into the early history of the Quakers which began in 1647 as a result of the first English Civil War 1642-1651.

The title ‘In The Stillness’ suggests readers will be taken on a poetic exploration of meditative prayer and that our being in a state of stillness will bring a feeling of peace and joy, whilst simultaneously we will have an awareness of the paradox that within our interconnectivity with nature, life is in continuous flux. She offers guidance and solace for those who seek spiritual respite during these challenging times. Although Christianity is mainly the template for her heartfelt spiritual reflections, this little book will offer comfort and resonate with all seekers of truth.

One could question when does a prayer become a poem? Elizabeth Mills articulates her musings in a lyrical way which expresses her deeply felt spiritual experience of what it is to have or seek a divine realisation of God. Her poems are supplications since at the end of the each one, the suffix is Amen, ‘so be it’.

The first part consists of poetic prayers and on page forty eight there is a heartfelt plea which serves to remind us how we manage to sabotage ourselves in times of doubt. The remaining part is in two sections. Here we gain a different perspective from two vantage points, Heaven and Earth. Each reflection is an interpretation of a biblical quotation which follows at the end of each page as a footnote all of which could possibly lead the reader to explore those particular biblical passages in greater depth. Elizabeth Mills is inviting us to explore from a ‘What If’ perspective. She begins with Heaven, where she creates a sense of how it could feel to become more spiritually aware from a Christian angle. This is followed by Earth in which she invites us to imagine how it could be to make more time for ourselves in our everyday lives, by slowing down, taking stock of our actions and by becoming more self-disciplined, less self-absorbed and accepting that if we persist in our efforts to reach the truth from within, we will succeed but only when we make the determined effort.

In The Stillness is an invitation and guide of how to pray, meditate and reflect. It is an ideal companion for anyone who is perhaps new to spiritual studies and can be likened to taking a journey through an exquisite labyrinth culminating in a profound celebration of what is our own special interior journey. However, returning to the question of how a prayer can also be a poem, poetry is very subjective and there is no rhyme or metre throughout. Yet as modern poetry has acquired a very broad definition Elizabeth Mills’ little book does not fail to have the impact she intended and is quite complete as it stands.

Wendy Godber

Steve Taylor, *The Clear Light, Spiritual Reflections and Meditations*, Novato, New World Library, (2020). 117pp. ISBN 978-1-60868-712-1. £11.65

It is not often that I review poetry, but I would like to draw readers' attention to this volume of spiritual reflections and meditations which I feel you would enjoy, particularly in these troubled times. Steve Taylor, an AHT member, is a senior lecturer in psychology at Leeds Beckett University and a prolific author on psychology and spirituality. He will give the annual Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture on our virtual Members' Day on October 16th this year, and his subject is apposite: *Extraordinary Awakenings - Spiritual Transformation in the Midst of Suffering*.

Steve's book *Spiritual Science* was reviewed twice in *De Numine* in 2019, by Dr David Greenwood in Issue Number 66 (Spring), and then by me, along with an earlier volume by Steve, in Issue Number 67 (Autumn). But he also writes books of a very different kind.

The poetic reflections in *The Clear Light* focus on a deep awareness of the present moment and offer insight and solace. But more than that, we are drawn into the "clear light of the present", to a recognition of our inner spiritual nature.

We are led into meditation in *At One with Your Body* and beyond *The Guru* to a deep oneness with nature. *The Teacher* is found to be mistaken and you need to let go of *The Role* you have chosen in life to "become who you always were". There is wisdom in *The Alchemy of Acceptance 1* and *2*, which reflect on the ambiguous nature of *1*: emptiness, a task, pain, trauma and life and *2*: old age, and death. The range is wide, the tone gentle and the message one of comfort.

The poems are introduced in the foreword by Eckhart Tolle, bestselling author of *The Power of Now* and its sequels. As he says, this book is "not only a book of inspiring spiritual and poetic reflections, but also a powerful and invaluable guide to the realization of who or what you are beyond the conditioned mind."

Rather than offer further analysis, I will let Steve speak in the first few verses of his eponymous poem:

*There is nothing that can't be undone –
No past injury that can't be healed
No past mistake that can't be corrected –
In the clear light of the present.*

*Every past action that arose from spite
can be redeemed by kindness
in the clear light of the present.*

*Every action that arose from ignorance
Can be redeemed by wisdom
In the clear light of the present.*

This is a beautifully produced volume, which can become an inspirational spiritual companion, particularly in these days dominated by the restrictions of the pandemic.

Marianne Rankin

Melinda Powell, *The Hidden Lives of Dreams: What They Can Tell Us and How They Can Change Our World*. London, Lagom, an imprint of Bonnier Books, 2020. 269pp. ISBN 978-1788702386. £12.99.

Readers of *De Numine* will be familiar with Melinda Powell from her article in the Autumn 2020 issue in which she recounted her research into dreams, and will have the chance to hear and see her on May 1st on Zoom. In her book *The Hidden Lives of Dreams*, illustrated in the autumn issue, she weaves the personal and the theoretical into a beautiful whole. Black and white photographs enhance the text, which contains many examples of dreams, including a number from the RERC Archive. The most interesting, however, are her own, as Melinda courageously shares her own experiences, telling how she herself learned from her dreams. Scientific facts and dream stories meld seamlessly in Melinda's clear yet lyrical prose as she contextualises dreams within life. Reading this book may well open or reopen the world of dreams for you.

Melinda, who holds a Master's in Psychology of Religion, is a psychotherapist. She ran the Help Counselling Centre charity in London for ten years. She is the co-founder of the Dream Research Institute (DRI) at the Centre for Counselling and Psychotherapy Education, which promotes research into the relationship between dreams and wellbeing. The DRI also collects people's religious and spiritual dream experiences, and www.driccpe.org.uk will take you to an online survey, a research project linked to the RERC. There you can fill in a questionnaire and also volunteer for a further in-depth interview. This research was inspired by that undertaken by the RERC, and contributors who share their personal experiences are anonymised.

In her own research Melinda focuses on the therapeutic and creative value of dreams. She coined the term *Lucid Surrender* for receiving spiritual guidance in lucid dreams. She begins the book with an exploration of the value of getting sufficient sleep, too often neglected in the modern age and frequently leading to mental health problems. She points out that many people suffer from insomnia, that most of us do not sleep long enough and many are

abruptly woken by a noisy alarm, rather than allowing a natural awakening. Melinda explores the stages of sleep from shallow to deep and the patterns of Rapid Eye Movement (REM) and non-REM (NREM) sleep, when dreams occur. She advocates longer deep sleep patterns enabling Dream Health and shows how nocturnal therapy can have a similar effect to psychotherapy, for example helping those suffering from PTSD through re-scripting nightmares to cope with fear. Explorations of the Imaginal Mind, elemental forms, light, colour and shapes in dreams are followed by reflections on the power of a healing presence.

Lucid dreaming, awareness that one is dreaming, has been analysed by neuroscientists, and particularly explored by Buddhists. Melinda explains how she allows herself to be taken into what she calls Black Light in an attitude of *Lucid Surrender*, overcoming her fear and stilling her thoughts. She writes, 'I receive profound spiritual nourishment from the light forms that I encounter on the Black Light' (p. 195). Her book *Lucid Surrender: A Guide to Spiritual Lucid Dreaming* will be published this year.

I learned so much through Melinda's explanations of sleep patterns, dream therapy and lucid dreaming and have been able to apply this deeper understanding to my own dreams since. It has been many years since I recorded my dreams, and this book has led me back to them with knowledge that I didn't have before. Through her exploration of the art and science of dreaming, Melinda has encouraged me to trust my dreams and to respond to the guidance they offer. I remember my own dreams more clearly now and find this renewed focus illuminating, as you may too. In the book, Melinda says, "When two souls touch, something new comes into being in the space between them...". In sharing openly of her own dreams and life, Melinda Powell has offered the reader just that. It's a rare gift - as is this book.

Marianne Rankin

David Lorimer, A Quest for Wisdom - Inspiring Purpose on the Path of Life. Aeon Books, 2021, 346pp. ISBN 978-1913504762. £24.99.

Readers of De Numine will need no introduction to the work of David Lorimer, as he will be familiar through his writings or his lectures to the Scientific and Medical Network and many other groups.

This volume of essays has been selected from his output over many years and is organised under three headings. Firstly: Philosophy, Spirituality and Meaning. Second: Consciousness, and Transformation. Third: Taking responsibility – Ethics and Society. Twenty seven papers are preceded by a personal account of Lorimer’s own life journey and summed with by an afterword and an extensive bibliography. The latter demonstrates the range of his reading and to the quantity, and quality, of books on spiritual and scientific themes that have been published over the past half-century.

Of particular interest to De Numine readers would be the second group of essays which address the significance of death, survival, and near-death experiences but all of them can, and should, be read by all who regard themselves as seekers for spiritual wisdom. Amongst individuals whose writings who have proved of value to the author are Victor Frankl, Beinsa Duono,

Radhakrishnan, Swedenborg, Hammarskjöld, Voltaire and Russell. The latter section of the collection calls the reader to address the ethical and social significance of the spiritual quest. At a time when the traditional organisational structures of religious and spiritual movements are in decline in the West there is a danger that individuals can lose sight of the social and political implications of the spiritual. Fanaticism and fundamentalism can tempt many to see society in binary and antagonistic terms.

The final essay invites us to develop an ethic of interconnectedness within a culture of love. The study of spiritual experience should not be directed to the individual alone but to the communal dimension in all its variety and extent.

The book would be of great utility for a book group, as the length of the papers renders them easily read in a relatively short time and could be selected to be shared over several months of study. For the individual reader, it is an ideal volume to dip into, its wisdom coming in digestible packets and in an accessible style.

Kevin Tingay

James Roose-Evans, *Inner Journey, Outer Journey*. Redemptorist Publications, 3rd edition, 2019, 242pp. ISBN 978-0852315569

Inner Journey, Outer Journey is amazingly a 33-year-old book, but reads like a 21st century spiritual companion for the Christian seeker aspiring to develop a prayer life.

Roose-Evans has penned a classic and it is the sort of writing that I know I could go back to again and again. The writing is autobiographical as he takes us on the early to middle years of his theatrical career, his exploration in a monastery and his subsequent ordination in the Church of England.

Roose-Evans takes us into the inner world of theatre, which is explosively creative and you soon experience the metaphorical sights and smells of a theatrical lesson with him as he describes some of the technicality of dance and at the same time lets us into a world of spirituality. Our outer world is not divorced from the inner and both offer opportunities for self-awareness, awareness of others and growing into God.

You will most certainly need a journal and pen at your side as you read this book, to note all the nuggets of wisdom that fill the pages. Whether one is starting out on a new or renewed journey of prayer, Roose-Evans sets out the mystery/non-mystery of what it is to pray and how to meditate, setting it out in a friendly and accessible way. He does this whilst sharing his own experiences of success, failure and struggle in the world of theatre.

We are introduced to a myriad of people, some names that will be familiar to readers and others he introduces as long-lost friends, telling how their stories have impacted his own, and skilfully weaves the story of the reader into the artistic world he occupied. We are reminded that prayer and meditation is for everyone. Intellect or prior knowledge are unnecessary to begin this journey, but instead a humility. Humility is: “not to take ourselves as the measure of all things”.

He shares his own journey of learning to pray and gives the sense that we are not just

listening to the author, but journeying together with him. The presentation is not that of a well-qualified teacher distributing notes for class, and leaving the student to study – he excites because he is excited by the profundity of prayer. He charms us with eclectic wisdom.

There are points in the book where the culture of 1987 and 2021 stand at variants. For example, the notion of a “five-day week” and consideration of how we might spend all our leisure time!

Who is the person who yearns to be one who prays? “That person is the one who seeks to rediscover our most urgent feelings, aspirations, fears, and seeks... to understand ourselves better through art, music, ritual, colour and ceremony”.

Worship begins within, Roose-Evans writes. Our prayer lives are very personal and meditation is a time for us and God. However, the sub theme in the book is oneness, about noticing and desiring our corporate need for unity, which Jesus prayed for His disciples. A unity in our diversity that was present on the day of Pentecost.

A first read, or a re-read if this book is already familiar to you, is so timely for the pandemic situation that we are facing. Many of us are hungry for a stillness of the mind, body and spirit and we are reminded of the integral nature of holistic praying – something that Roose-Evans points out as a journey that the West is still on, and still learning from our sisters and brothers in the East. Our posture, our breathing, our words, our disciplined practice all contribute to the development of our prayer life.

Those who are already converted to a spiritual meditative practice will be encouraged by this book to maintain a committed prayer rhythm. Newcomers will be inspired and find the passion and vulnerability of the writing irresistible and will be eager to start the journey. And for those who find themselves in

a faltering place or may have paused for a while, particularly in a time of learning how to manage universal stress and fractures in our lives, will also be gently encouraged to revisit and resume the blessing of praying and becoming the prayer.

Roose-Evans is persuasive, honest, open and authentic in what he writes. I am already a convert to the practice of silent prayer and learning from within, so I admit my bias, but this is an invaluable book.

He is an arty person, and arty people are very good at name dropping; there is an abundance of 'celebrities' including Maggie Smith, as well as the posthumous references to TS Eliot, Gerard Manley Hopkins, William Blake, Jung and others.

You will find yourself wanting to scribble down many wonderful quotes from this book where author sums it up perfectly. The book is full wonderful wisdom that you will want to hold in

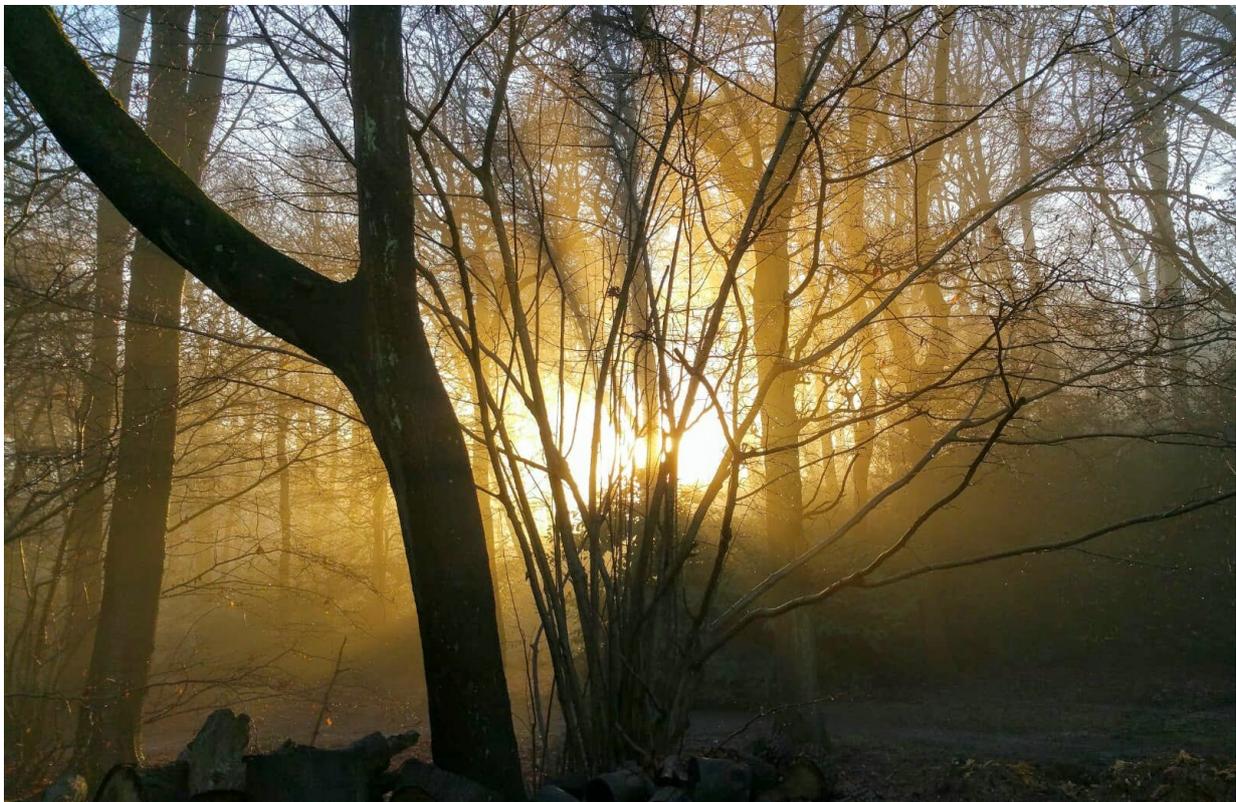
your memory: 'The way in is the way forward'; 'The worse the time.... The more we should look for the powers within'; and 'God is both the journey and the journey's end'.

Roose-James offers a vulnerable telling of his story and about finding ways to listen deeply to ourselves, through ritual, sharing, creativity, loss, suffering, grief and celebration. As both a priest and artist, he sits in an interstitial place and is qualified to write as he does.

I leave the final words of this review to the author. "To speak of an outer journey and an inner journey is perhaps to suggest two separate journeys, as though one were trying to travel parallel paths or changing form path to path. In reality there is only one journey; every journey is also an inner voyage of discovery."

This is a timely classic and I believe that it will continue to be accessible and relevant in years to come.

Karen Lund



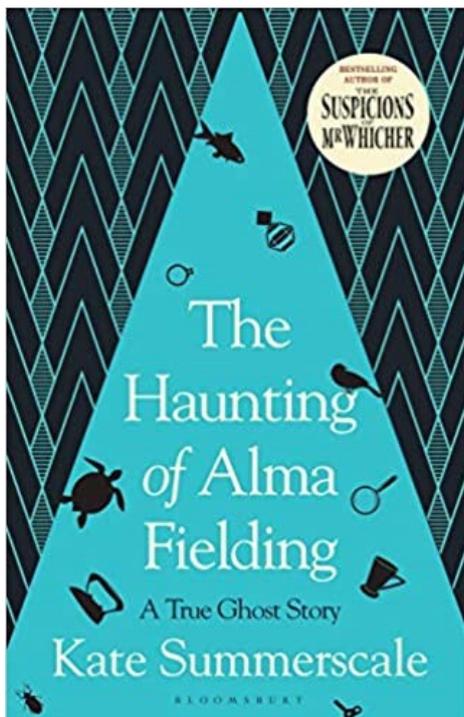
Morning sun and mist in the woods. Photo by Dave Sherwood

Kate Summerscale, *The Haunting Of Alma Fielding: A True Ghost Story*. London, Bloomsbury, 2020. 345 pp. ISBN 978-1-4088-9545-0

Jon Billman, *The Cold Vanish: Seeking The Missing In North America's Wildlands*. New York, Grand Central Publishing, 2020. 349 pp. ISBN 978-1-5387-4757-5

John Gray, *Feline Philosophy: Cats And The Meaning Of Life*. London, Allen Lane, 2020. 122 pp. ISBN 978-0-241-35114-7

The curious case of Alma Fielding, previously little more than a lost footnote in the history of psychical research, has recently been rediscovered and given fresh prominence by Kate Summerscale in *The Haunting of Alma Fielding: A True Ghost Story*, shortlisted for 2020's Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction. The book consists, on one level at least, of the author's examination of a range of typical poltergeist phenomena that seemed to centre on Fielding in the early months of 1938 when war seemed simultaneously imminent and very far away: objects thrown by unseen hands, smashed crockery, apports, JOTTs, and so on. On one level – and hence the title of the book – it was as if something *haunted* Fielding. On another level, however, Summerscale's tale hints that a different sort of 'haunting' was going on, with the gimcrackery of poltergeistery being merely a surface manifestation of a different – and much more deep-rooted - disturbance.



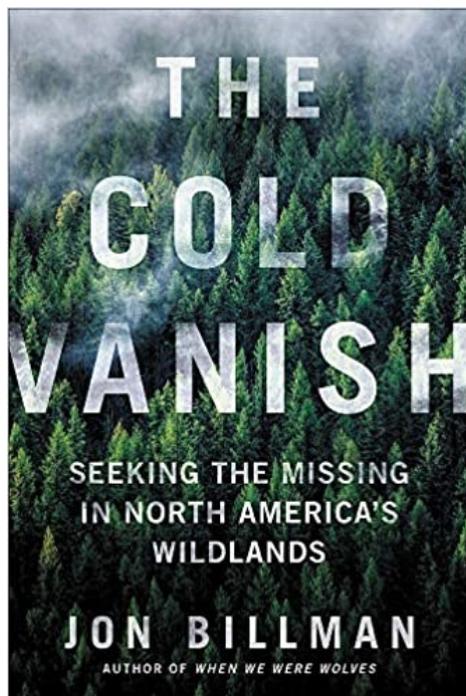
This mainly biographical treatment is actually that of *two* persons: Fielding herself and Nandor Fodor, a Hungarian émigré and the then leading psychical researcher for the International Institute for Psychical Research. In a crucial sense, both personalities needed each other: Fielding receiving – at least at the beginning – the empathy and support she needed to accept and understand her experiences, and Fodor receiving much-needed validation of his own role and methods within the Institute. Indeed, it is no coincidence that when the mutual support fell away – as it did, within a matter of months – the whole case came crashing down.

Fielding specialised in producing 'apports': manifestations of objects ranging from broaches to beetles which she could seemingly bring into being from nowhere. Fodor was initially impressed with these, but over time it became clear to him and his co-researchers that Fielding was simply secreting them on her person and producing them when everybody's back was turned. Summerscale paces the narrative well as the penny drops, but even when it *does* drop you sense that the game wasn't quite up, with Fodor obviously loathe to admit that the case, psychically at least, wasn't worth a candle. Finally, though, the truth clearly became inescapable for him; his earlier support – even affection – giving way to a harshness which I found quite disconcerting. Summerscale is careful not to judge, however, letting her 'fat folder of evidence' – obtained from a visit to the Society for Psychical Research in 2017 – tell its own story.

Recognising that Alma Fielding was a troubled and deeply traumatised lady, Fodor eventually repented of his later harshness, but by then the relationship between the two had irretrievably broken down. His psychoanalytic treatment of

the case – including an endorsement from Freud, no less – was ground breaking and paved the way for much that was to follow within his field.

Overall, I enjoyed Summerscale’s book, despite its rather pedestrian style. Indeed, apart from the somewhat plodding prose, only the historical context jarred. The building storm clouds of war might have provided the historical backdrop to the tale but they do little to enhance the narrative; distracting instead of shedding light. I found myself wondering why the author didn’t do more to weave the two ‘stories’ together, instead of placing them side-by-side as little more than two parallel plots. As is well-known, times of crisis always call forth ‘signs and wonders’. Could examination of yet another layer of ‘haunting’ have shed even more light on this odd case? Summerscale’s failure to explore this felt like a missed opportunity to go deeper still, despite the impressive depth of research exhibited elsewhere.



The initial ‘mystery’ of Alma Fielding was how she could make things appear seemingly out of nowhere. But what of those mysterious episodes where things – particularly people – ‘disappear’ into nowhere? Jon Billman’s *The Cold Vanish: Seeking The Missing In North America’s Wildlands* considers some of these,

and the result is a moving and wide-ranging travelogue as the author journeys in the company of Randy Grey on a search for Grey’s missing son Jacob.

That people go missing in large numbers in American national parks comes as no surprise when you consider the sheer size of these wilderness areas. The Olympic National Park alone – where Jacob Grey went missing – contains 640 million acres of federal land; much of it forest. Early on Billman tells us that nobody actually knows how many people go missing in the parks per year, but that the numbers have almost certainly been consistently underestimated: even by those such as David Paulides who have made such disappearances their literary and investigative stock-in-trade.

Although the focus of Billman’s book is the vanishing – and search for – Jacob Grey, he gives some consideration to other missing persons’ cases too. Several conclusions follow; not least the fact that a few steps off a beaten track can turn a simple ramble into a fight for survival. Of more interest to *De Numine* readers, however, will be the fact that many persons *choose* to vanish: or, at least, to take themselves off the beaten track in search of spiritual resurgence and rejuvenation, sometimes with tragic results. This was almost certainly the case with Jacob Grey, whose quest for enlightenment on the slopes surrounding Hoh Lake in the Olympic National Park led to his death in April 2017 at the tragically early age of 22.

Billman considers paranormal and quasi-paranormal ‘explanations’ for some missing persons cases, exploring everything from otherworldly ‘portals’ and alien abductions to Bigfoot, but ultimately the tragedy behind every case is of a person who for whatever reason walks into the wilds and never returns. The book also displays a thoroughgoing knowledge of search and rescue techniques and contains some genuine shocks and surprises. I hadn’t known, for example, the extent to which red tape and problems of co-ordination hamper many search efforts, nor the extent to which many federal authorities refuse to let search and rescue volunteers self-deploy. One thing

that came as no surprise, however, was the lamentable record of self-proclaimed ‘psychics’ in discovering the whereabouts of missing persons via visions, dreams, or whatever. In fact, that was one of the major take-aways from the book: if you need to track down someone who’s missing, do *not* employ a psychic. Bloodhounds fare rather better, but even they can hinder rather than help.

Billman’s study is well-written but occasionally overwritten and sometimes irritates stylistically. He clearly likes interviewing persons whilst they’re driving, for example, but describing a steering wheel as ‘Wonder Woman’s golden lasso of truth’ does him, or the reader, no favours. That the quest for spiritual enlightenment drives many people into solitude may come as no surprise, but that some lose themselves – and, by extension, the world – in a quest to find themselves is but one of the ironies explored in Billman’s eye-opening and, at times, genuinely moving study. It made me want to know more about such cases, but the lack of a bibliography or any references other than when he was personally involved in a search came as a genuine disappointment: hindering my own search for more detail concerning some of the fascinating cases that he chose merely to skim over.

It has been nearly seven years since my cat walked into my life, introducing himself with a *miaow* at the back door and very much wanting to be found. I have had many disturbed nights’ sleep since, but John Gray’s charming *Feline Philosophy: Cats And The Meaning of Life* makes an admirable job of convincing the reader that cats give as much as they receive; perhaps more so.

In this little book he sets himself an ambitious goal: to examine what cats can teach us about contentment, meaning, self-transcendence, purpose and the ‘good life.’ Along the way, he touches on various aspects of the human condition, pausing at each turn to examine what we can learn from our feline friends. Well, maybe ‘friends’ isn’t the right word, for, as Gray deftly shows, the attitudes and states of mind which comprise the human condition do not always find their natural counterparts in the world of cats. Indeed, for him, this is a clue as to why we so often fail to find contentment. Cats, he argues, do not torture themselves with questions of meaning, philosophy, happiness, ethics, love, and the soul. Indeed, he suggests (a suggestion born of observation), it is enough for a cat to simply *be*.

Whilst Gray’s final conclusions may sound trite, they are amply supported by the search that leads to them. Cats can still teach us much, he argues, despite the divide that separates the human and feline ‘worlds’, and when I look at my own cat slumbering on the window sill I am reminded of Gray’s sage advice that we should sleep for the joy of sleeping and never complain that the world doesn’t make sense or that we don’t have enough time to do the things we want to do.

Mark Fox

Mark Fox is an independent researcher, speaker and writer. His latest book, *Cold Inn*, explores spiritual, religious and Fortean themes within a fictional context. He can be found at www.markfox.co.uk

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The Routledge International Handbook of Spirituality in Society and the Professions	Edited by Laszlo Zsolnai, Bernadette Flanagan

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EVENTS

Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Religious and Spiritual Experiences

The seventh annual conference of the
Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre
at the **University of Wales Trinity Saint David**

Saturday 10 July 2021

Online via Zoom

The conference is free of charge.

Book via Mike Rush: mikerush@virginmedia.com

The Harmony Interfaith Colloquium will also be online (8-9 July). Please contact
interfaith@uwtsd.ac.uk

Programme

11.30 Welcome by Prof Bettina Schmidt, Director of the Religious Experience Research Centre and Marianne Rankin, Director of Communication of the Alister Hardy Trust

11.40-12.30 **The Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture**

Prof Jane Shaw, Principal of the Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford

Religious Experience and the early twentieth-century Revival of Mysticism

12.30-13.00 Discussion

13.00-14.00 Break

14.00-15.30 Panel on Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Dr Jack Hunter, Honorary Research Fellow, UWTSd

Listening to the Land: Other-than-Human Voices in the Anthropocene

Prof Marta de Freitas, Catholic University of Brasilia

Religious Experiences and Mental Health: Psychological implications

15.30 End of conference