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**PLEASE NOTE NEW ARRANGEMENTS
FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO DE NUMINE**

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

**Please also note new arrangements for requesting review copies –
see page 55, above the list of books for review.**



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

The Editor

Editorial



There are major changes ahead for AHSSSE in that Jean Matthews is leaving her post as RERC Archive Supervisor in April this year. So please note the changes to contact details for *De Numine* submissions, and for obtaining review copies of books. I am enormously relieved that it will still be possible to continue co-editing *De Numine* with Jean, who is moving abroad – the wonders of the world wide web.

She will certainly be missed as the mainstay of the RERC office in Lampeter, but we are of course very grateful to Marian MacPolin for stepping in to become the AHSSSE contact at Lampeter. It has also been a pleasure to welcome Thomas Pitchford as the new RERC Collections Librarian; he will be on hand for queries and requests about books from the Alister Hardy library, which he is in the process of cataloguing.

The theme running through this issue of *De Numine* seems to be the concept of unity in Spirit, from the relatively concrete (sic) aspects of deity and trinity explored in Wynford Jones' appraisal of Robert Govearts book to Howard Jones' article in which he posits a spectrum of theories on Intelligent Design; those towards the strong end of the spectrum implying a single Guiding Hand. Roger Coward's discussion of the transcendental in meditation and Mark Fox's thesis of the 'fifth love' both imply ultimate unity in Spirit in the sense of a transcendence of the individual – not to deny individual religious experience, but to acknowledge an all-encompassing love.

Our subject, crossing boundaries, at Llantarnam this year also addresses this theme in that we will be exploring (and attempting to overcome) our differences – the fault lines between religions often rest on definitions of deity, and although all the Abrahamic ones acknowledge ineffability, the differing images of God in our religious imagination can lead to bitter conflict. It is time in my view to recognise how significant the effect of emotion is in religious behaviour, especially when contemplating the terrifying rise of fundamentalism. It is the red heat of religious fervour rather than the calm, maybe rather icy heights of theology and doctrine that drive the atrocities committed in the name of God. A selective use of the latter can of course be used to stoke the fires of the former to devastating effect. As Andy Burns says in his View from the Chair, 'We are reminded of the very real need for the exploration of spiritual experiences which at their core bring us together in ways that no acts of violence can divide.' (p. 5)

As I write at the time of the Equinox, a late Spring sun is awakening the earth all around me with the wonderful white and gold of snowdrops and daffodils. Hope springs eternal ...

Patricia Murphy



A View from the Chair

I would like to begin by wishing members a belated happy New Year with the hope that you all had a restful and celebratory Christmas period spent with family and friends.

A new year brings both an appraisal of the old and a vision of the new and in this respect it is useful to look back at 2014 and to take stock of both Society and Trust matters over the last twelve months. I am pleased to report that the last twelve months have seen the consolidation of the two Religious Experiences Research Centres; both are beginning various new degree and study programmes. We congratulate both Professors Bettina Schmidt and Chris Lewis on the work that they are doing in Lampeter and Glyndŵr respectively. The online portal which allows researchers to access the accounts contained within the archive at Lampeter went live last year and this represents a major step forward in making this valuable resource more widely available.

Last year also saw the publication of several books by members: *The Wisdom of Near Death Experiences* (Dr Penny Sartori), *The Fifth Love* (Dr Mark Fox) and John Franklin's *History of the AHRERC and Society*. I was pleased to be part of the official launch of this last book at Open Day last year and to review it for this issue of the journal [see page 33]. Congratulations are due to Dr Penny Sartori, Dr Mark Fox and John Franklin for producing these books which in their own ways keep the topic of religious experience firmly on the agenda and contribute to the ongoing discussion. [Mark Fox's *The Fifth Love* is reviewed on page 44, and Penny Sartori's *The Wisdom of Near Death Experiences* was reviewed in the Autumn 2014 issue, page 43.]

In November last year we heard the sad news of the death of Dr David Hay. David was a former Director of the RERC and long-time member who contributed so much to the development of research and in later life wrote the definitive biography of Sir Alister Hardy. He was a strong supporter of the Society, attending all Open Days with his wife Jane, until failing health prevented this last year. He will be greatly missed and we extend our deep sympathies and condolences to his family [see pages 28-31 for tributes to David Hay].

The 2014 AHSSSE Open Day was again held at the Catholic Chaplaincy in Oxford and was well supported. The main lecture was given by Professor Chris Lewis (*Religious Experience, Psychological Well-being, and Culture*) and it is fair to say that it produced mixed reactions with some interesting and probing questions from the floor. I was privileged to give a presentation based on Sir Alister Hardy's book, *A Cotswold Sketchbook* (see report on page 19). We are already planning for this year's event and I can advise that the date will be Saturday 17th October 2015 returning to a previously used venue at Friends Meeting House in St Giles, Oxford. Please make a note in your diaries now (see Events, page 58).

As always the AHS could not run without the goodwill and hard work of committee members, Trustees, Group Leaders, Journal editors, website managers and everyone who helps and supports the various events and publications. I would personally like to record my own thanks for the support that I have received over the last year and to say that I look forward to continuing the work of the Society this year.

In summary, as we stand at 'the gate of the year'¹ there is much to look forward to during 2015, including another Annual Gathering at Llantarnam Abbey in July* (see Events, page 58), together with an emerging calendar of Group Meetings with many exciting speakers in the pipeline. I am writing this report a few days after the terrible atrocities committed in Paris by

terrorists claiming allegiance to Islam. We are reminded of the very real need for the exploration of spiritual experiences which at their core bring us together in ways that no acts of violence can divide.

Andrew Burns, Chair, AHSSSE

1. The phrase was taken from a poem by Minnie Louise Haskins (1875–1957) called *God Knows*, published in 1908. It became a favourite of King George VI who quoted from it during his 1939 Christmas address to the nation. Following his death the words were placed on the gates of a Memorial Chapel in Windsor Castle.
- * The subject for this year's Llantarnam gathering is 'Crossing Boundaries' – in part this will be about religious boundaries. Our subject, which we all agreed upon at last year's gathering, could not be more apt. Religion, as Andy points out above, is where the fault lines, between faiths, and between religion and secular society, are becoming ever more dangerous. Do take the time to look at the Llantarnam flyer sent to you with this issue of *De Numine*, and join us in July if you can. [Ed]



By Chance or by Design? A spiritual scientist takes a new look at Intelligent Design

It seems to be in the nature of the human mind to quest after the unknown – whether it be investigating how things work or exploring newly discovered lands. What is the fundamental stuff of which material objects are made? Why are we here on Earth? How have we managed to evolve in spite of seemingly inhospitable environments on the planet? Questions like these have challenged humankind since at least the time of the Greek philosophers. Philosophically we have a choice between randomness and determinism: has human life arisen by a succession of fortuitous events or is there some master plan conceived and controlled by a Grand Designer? The idea of an Intelligent Designer goes back to the work of William Paley in the eighteenth century, and long before that to the Roman orator Cicero [106-43 BCE].

Vitalism – the doctrine that the essence of life arises from some extra-corporeal principle – has been around since at least 1822 according to the Oxford English Dictionary, but the idea has waxed and waned in popularity in the two centuries since then. The concept of vitalism, i.e. the idea that any organisms other than human beings have minds capable of original thought, that there is any spiritual entity such as soul in living creatures, has rarely found favour with scientists. They don't like the idea because it invokes the participation of some supra-material agency with divine organizing and controlling powers, limiting the scope of human free-will and presenting difficulties for investigation by rational means. However, the concept of vitalism, or animism – that there is divine spirit in all living things – has been a core belief of indigenous people for millennia, and the Bible has ample illustrations of what is believed to be a divine agency influencing the hearts and minds of men.

Some form of vitalism was popular as a belief in the later 19th and early 20th centuries. The idea was bolstered when evidence that suggested survival of mortal death began to appear and was investigated by scientists and philosophers. Eminent scientists such as Lord

Rayleigh, J. J. Thompson, Oliver Lodge and William Crookes and philosophers such as James Hyslop and William James were persuaded of the validity of such evidence. Then, as physicists believed in the 19th century that they had solved all the outstanding problems of science, belief in vitalism declined. A specific application of vitalism re-emerged in the 1920s with the concept of (indeterminate) morphogenetic fields put forward by biologists Hans Spemann, Alexander Gurwitsch and Paul Weiss. Such fields were suggested as influencing the development of embryos. The concept of morphogenetic fields was expanded more precisely in the 1980s by Cambridge biologist Rupert Sheldrake.

What was previously described as 'vitalism' has surfaced again to become the subject of controversy that is now described as Intelligent Design (ID). One of the main advocates of ID in the 1990s was the Professor of Biochemistry at Lehigh University, Michael Behe. The idea was rapidly seized on by creationists as providing 'scientific proof' of God's handiwork in Creation. However, Behe's suggestion of the 'irreducible complexity' of certain living structures, like the eye and the cilia used for locomotion – structures claimed to be only of use in their created state of perfection – was soon shown to be flawed inasmuch as rudimentary but quite effective structures of these kinds have been found throughout the course of evolution. The complex structures of organic compounds, such as proteins or nucleic acids that require hundreds if not thousands of different components, would also seem to exemplify Behe's 'irreducible complexity' argument, though again less complex structures have a function in living tissues. Not to be easily deterred, American statistician and philosopher William Dembski followed up on Behe's work and suggested that the coming together of all the factors that are needed to cohere in order to create such refined structures of what he called 'specified complexity' was statistically improbable. But then statistics are notoriously malleable in interpretation. So the scientific validation of vitalism seemed to be in jeopardy.

Theologians also didn't like ID because it suggested a Divinity that needed to keep tinkering in earthly affairs to put things right. According to philosopher G.W. Leibniz, God surely would have created 'the best of all possible worlds'. Against the theological objections to ID it could be said that people continually offer prayers asking for God's help for loved ones in difficulty. If such a being has the power to directly interfere with the day-to-day lives of individuals, then surely a little fine tuning in the natural world is not out of the question? Others claim that a God exerting any control over individual lives would undermine the concept of free will. But free will is there for humans to chart the most advantageous path they can through whatever (random?) challenges life on earth might present them with. It is a moot point too whether the actions of deity can be rationalized by examining this or that feature of the natural world when the essence of deity is ineffability.

So is there any place for such an idea as ID in a rational world where, even so, most people still cling to the concept of some form of interventional deity? The two philosophies – rational and spiritual – may not be as incompatible as they first seem. Their complementarity was well represented by one of the pioneers of the theory of evolution, Alfred Russell Wallace¹ a contemporary and colleague of Darwin, who adopted a teleological approach to evolution. Wallace saw human evolution as moving from physical to mental to spiritual – a process he described as 'the progression of the fittest'. Wallace wrote in one of his articles:

... man consists essentially of a spiritual nature or mind intimately associated with a spiritual body or soul, both of which are developed in and by means of a material organism. Thus, the whole *raison d'être* of the material universe – with all its marvellous changes and adaptations, the infinite complexity of matter and of the ethereal forces which pervade and vivify it, the vast wealth of nature in the vegetable and animal kingdoms – is to serve the grand purpose of developing human spirits in human bodies.

This approach is in contrast to that of Darwin, whose description of evolution envisages a thoroughgoing materialism in the process, in spite of the training for the Anglican priesthood he undertook in his early years.

In 1974, Brandon Carter proposed an Anthropic Principle that suggested that certain properties of the universe were necessary prerequisites for the evolution and existence of humankind as observers. This is known as the Weak Anthropic Principle. There is also a Strong Anthropic Principle proposed by Barrow and Tipler in 1986. This states that the universe must have those properties that will allow the evolution of observers at some stage in its history. These ideas have been elaborated, without any of the mathematics that some might find intimidating, in books by Paul Davies.

I would suggest that we already also have a Strong and a Weak Intelligent Design theory. Strong ID is the belief of many fundamentalist theists that there is a Divinity that has controlled the whole process of human development, with or without any of the principles of evolution suggested by Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace. Although Darwin's book is called *Origin of Species*, it suggests a pathway of evolution from simple organisms to more complex forms but makes no suggestion as to the origin of living beings. Although Darwin used the term 'creation' he made it clear that this was not intended in any theological context but merely equivalent to 'appearance' – by some unknown mechanism. Strong ID supporters also maintain that the creation of the universe involved a mechanism described popularly as the Big Bang, which was under the control of a deity. So any scientific explanation for creation or evolution is rendered unnecessary.

But there is also a Weak ID theory that finds a comfortable home in the ideologies of many religious scientists or philosophers, like Amit Goswami, Denyse O'Leary, and by quantum physicist turned Anglican priest John Polkinghorne, among others. The Weak version of ID theory allows for the existence of an influential cosmic agency but maintains that the suggestions of the theory of evolution are essentially correct and that the universe has been generated by physical mechanisms – whether as a singular cosmological event, as suggested by Georges Lemaître, or as a gradual and continuing process by some variation of the steady-state theory suggested first by Aleksandr Friedmann (who also suggested the alternative single-event hypothesis) and by James Jeans. The steady-state theory² was then developed by Fred Hoyle, Thomas Gold and Hermann Bondi. If creation was indeed a singular event, then we can never know what happened, either by scientific argument (which relies on several instances of the same event and the data from 14 billion years ago and which is capable of various interpretations) or because we are within the system we need to observe from outside.

In recent times, Pfeiffer and Mack (2007) and Goswami (2008) have put forward this hypothesis for incorporating an interactive (divine?) agency in the rational scientific processes of creation and evolution: that underlying these physical processes is a comprehensive and inter-penetrating cosmic spiritual energy, represented by physicists as the quantum zero-point field, which governs every process in the universe, including the process of Creation itself. Such a controlling agency is indistinguishable from the spiritual deity to be found at the heart of most major religions. In recent decades, some eminent theologians and several equally distinguished philosophers of science have added their support to what is effectively Weak ID, though not described as such by them. The books by Bishops John Robinson and John Shelby Spong present the religious approach and have generated a wide readership. The American physicist Walter M. Elsasser pointed out that the laws of physics relate to systems where properties represent an average value taken over huge numbers of particles. Biological systems deal with individuals, so new 'biotonic laws' would be needed to describe these systems. Eugene Wigner claimed that the existence of consciousness alone is sufficient to

make it impossible to describe life systems completely by the laws of physics, and that concepts extending the present scope of the 'laws of physics' would be necessary. Philosopher Anthony O'Hear has pointed out the limitations of pure 'survival of the fittest' explanations to account for the huge range of human experience for which so far no survivalist explanation has been found – the appreciation of beauty, artistic creativity, and spiritual experiences.

Recent studies of psychic events, such as OBEs and NDEs, and the wealth of verifiable material purporting to come from the afterlife by communications through mediums, would seem to bear out the idea that an omnipresent cosmic energy field has indeed influenced and continues to guide events on the Earth plane, quite possibly operating through the mechanisms discovered by application of the laws of physics. The studies of children who claim to have lived before also suggest that there is a spiritual home for the soul between lives. Thus the notion of at least a Weak Intelligent Design lives on and there is a sense in which the spirit of the Divine is immanent in our everyday lives, expressed through our consciousness. This is an interpretation with which any non-sceptical scientist or non-fundamentalist theologian should be comfortable.

Howard Jones

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1. See the biography by Michael A. Flannery: *Alfred Russell Wallace: A Rediscovered Life*, Discovery Institute, 2011.
 2. In cosmology, the Steady State theory is a now-obsolete expanding universe model alternative to the Big Bang theory of the Universe and its origin. [Wikipedia]

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Heightened Awareness – Expanded Consciousness

The enterprise is exploration into God.

What are you waiting for? It takes

So many thousand years to wake.

But will you wake, for pity's sake.

(Christopher Fry, 'A Sleep of Prisoners')

Being aware of 'something more' is part of the universal human experience, across probably every human ethnicity and culture. It seems to say something of huge importance about who or what we really are, beyond the trappings of our phenomenal existence. For many, it is a kind of awakening. It is of course not confined to those of particular religious belongings. The word 'God' can have a million different meanings, and 'God language' is not essential. It is surely also possible to speak of 'the exploration of inner space' as being equally significant, and for some more psychologically satisfactory. So this 'something more' need not be confined to what is often described as religious or even spiritual.

Do spiritual/religious experiences belong to a particular 'category' of consciousness, or are they a particular manifestation of a more general heightened state of awareness and consciousness? Another way of asking this question is by posing the 'common core' theory, as, for example that proposed by Aldous Huxley in *The Perennial Philosophy*¹ and by Sir Alister Hardy in *The Spiritual Nature of Man*.² Hardy lists the cognitive and affective elements of spiritual awareness as 'the sense of joy, peace, security, awe, reverence, and wonder; the feelings of exaltation and ecstasy, of harmony and unity, of hope and fulfilment; the sense of timelessness, the sense of presence, the sense of purpose, and the sense of prayer answered in events. There is also the darker side: feelings of remorse and guilt, of fear and horror.'

If there is a 'common core' to religious and spiritual experience, its manifestation is surely very wide, and infinitely diverse to the extent that it will be impossible to place boundaries on its description. Nevertheless, any description of the 'common core' must surely accommodate the characteristics of awareness which Sir Alister describes, whether those characteristics are found in accounts of experiences specifically described as spiritual or religious, or in other experiences identified as heightened awareness or expanded consciousness, which are perceived as being outside the 'religious' or 'spiritual'.

Most of us will probably agree that religious experience is a particular category of spiritual experience, and maybe we will be able to agree that spiritual experience is a state of heightened consciousness which seems to come about through a connection with that which is more than our separate, individual selves. This in no way diminishes the importance of genuine religious experiences. These are capable of being the deepest and most life-changing experiences of which we are capable, but insofar as they are described as 'religious' they do seem to occur within the context of a particular cultural and spiritual tradition, expectation and permission. David Hay prefers to say that spiritual experience provides a 'common context' for religious experience.³

Spiritual experiences can be 'triggered' by specific religious activities, as Marianne Rankin excellently describes in her book *An Introduction to Religious & Spiritual Experience*.⁴ But they can also be 'triggered' by an infinite variety of situations and activities which are outside the religious domain. For instance, is the thrill of a great sporting event a 'spiritual experience'? Or a beautiful sunset, or the sight of a new-born baby, or being in love? The list can be endless, and sometimes spiritual experiences, or states of heightened consciousness, seem to

occur quite spontaneously. Perhaps we are also being presumptuous if we imagine that it is only humans who are capable of states of heightened awareness. As we become more aware of the complexities of animal behaviour we are also becoming increasingly aware of the wonder and potential of (at least) the higher forms of sentient beings besides ourselves, and to realise our interdependence together.

Am I limiting heightened states of awareness to states of cognitive or emotional experience which are explicable within the chemistry of the individual? I do not think so. Rupert Sheldrake points out in *The Science Delusion*, 'Most neuroscientists take it for granted that minds are in brains and memories are stored as material traces.'⁵ The thesis of his book is a challenge to the many scientific claims which are normally taken for granted because they conform to the predominant ideology of the time. In this book he also refers to his theory of morphic resonance, which is pertinent here: 'The hypothesis of morphic resonance provides another unifying principle: all self-organising systems draw upon a collective memory from similar systems of their kind.'⁶ He goes on to ask the important question 'Are mystical experiences just what they seem to be: connections between human minds and larger, more inclusive forms of consciousness?'⁷

The Hardy question, of course, recognises the possibility of experiences which are different from everyday consciousness. The Religious Experience Research Centre archives are full of experiences which describe a 'more than' quality. Accounts of mystical experiences suggest that our given physical boundaries can indeed be transcended. In near-death experience accounts the experiencer often feels he/she is outside the confines of the physical body, and it is often 'more real than real', so much so that they are often life-changing. Psychical experiences suggest a realm beyond physical limitation. So we each have to make a choice: can consciousness be explained by the reductionist theories which state that it is a result of incredibly complex biological processes, or is it more reasonable, and indeed becoming increasingly necessary in the divided world of our times, to look further? When people talk about a sense of 'something more', are they attempting to articulate their sense of an experience which is beyond human language and physical sense perception, or is it all purely personal imagination?

Dr Penny Sartori believes that consciousness, rather than being simply a result of physical processes, is better understood as something which is *mediated* through the body.⁸ She also observes, with regard to NDEs in particular, that 'During the NDE there is an overwhelming understanding that everything is interconnected'.⁹ Putting this in another way, David Hay observes: 'Since individualism is quite clearly a socially constructed ideology, there is always the possibility of deconstruction.'¹⁰

A further school of thought, exploring the idea that consciousness is more than a product of the physical body is that which postulates the 'filter' hypothesis. Aldous Huxley in *The Doors of Perception* (1952), like Henri Bergson, Ferdinand Schiller, William James, and others before him, described brain functions as a filter, normally shutting out perceptions, memories, and thoughts that are not necessary and sometimes superfluous for the survival and reproduction of the organism. Rather than *producing* consciousness, these observers believed, the brain largely *eliminates* it, diminishing what consciousness is capable of revealing to us. As T. S. Elliot says in one of his Four Quartets, 'Humankind cannot bear too much reality'. (Burnt Norton)

Is it now time to recognise that the changes in our understanding of life and the world around us 'reveal more and more clearly the underlying spiritual nature of reality, to show that matter flows from consciousness and Spirit, not the reverse'?¹¹ Max Plank, the originator of

Quantum Theory, said in 1931 'I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness'.¹² There is also the oft-repeated quote of Sir Arthur Eddington 'The stuff of the world is mind-stuff'. Is materialistic reductionism, the stereotype of scientific rational thinking for so many people today, becoming outdated to the extent that it is likely to become the dinosaur of tomorrow?

Whatever theory we find comfortable to accommodate our personal understanding of who we really are, whether that theory takes its origin from religion or some other branch of human thinking and endeavour, it is surely necessary that we listen to the variety of people's experiences, and take them seriously. I now want to try to gather together observations, from both the above and from the stories which people tell, to suggest:

We live in an interconnected universe, whose true nature transcends the phenomenal world of which we are aware through our physical senses. 'The ecology of the soul and the ecology of the natural world are intimately related.'¹³

States of heightened awareness or expanded consciousness come about through a connection with, or a realisation that we are part of, that which is more than our separate and individual selves. 'Consciousness is the underlying reality of everything, the matrix in which everything is held.'¹⁴

Consciousness is *mediated* through the phenomenal world. 'Each of us is conscious in so far as we share in this universal consciousness.'¹⁵

To live in a state of heightened awareness is not, as some people suggest, a loss of self. It is rather to experience selfhood more deeply. Ramana Maharshi taught "'I am" alone is real. The egoless "I Am" is not thought. It is realization.'¹⁶ We should also remember that these states of heightened awareness or expanded consciousness cannot be contrived and are usually of short duration.

The filter theory of consciousness suggests that we are normally only able to access so much of reality as is appropriate for our survival and well-being in this physical world. There can however be times when the doors of perception can be widened. It follows that reality is essentially about non-duality; true states of heightened awareness are about the realization of non-duality, or unitive consciousness. Nevertheless, we are incarnate beings, and we have to operate in a space-time world which normally requires the illusion of separateness and objectivity as a necessary means to preserve our survival, and our individual and corporate well-being here on planet earth.

States of heightened awareness or expanded consciousness are a gift. They are gifts of grace which give our lives purpose and meaning. They are the existential basis for all true spirituality, and religion, ideally, adapts to contemporary shifts in awareness rather than fading away in the face of advancing human evolution, becoming increasingly important as a means and a context for human fulfilment and cooperation. In other words, the future of the world is up to us!

So even religion cannot remain fixed and unchanging. It must evolve if it is to serve genuine human need. It must accept its role to be servant and not master (St. Mark's gospel, Ch. 10, verse 45). It must learn humility. Here is a rather nice quote from Sadhu Sundar Singh, who

was a convert to Christianity from Hinduism: 'The children of God are very dear but very queer, very nice but very narrow.'¹⁷

The litmus test is, of course, ultimately love, as the famous poet and mystic Jalal-uddin Rumi made clear: 'The astrolabe of the mysteries of God is love'.¹⁸ Perhaps it would be a good idea if over every church door there was the inscription 'Know thyself', as was written over the entrance to the temple for the oracle at Delphi in ancient Greece. I started this article with a quotation from a poem, so I will also end with some lines from a poem:

You are part of one stupendous whole,
Whose body nature is, and God the soul. (Alexander Pope)

Jonathan Robinson

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18. *Ibid* p.94

NDE and Inter-Faith indications in Meditation Research

There are indications that near-death-like experiences and interfaith connections occur in the Meditation Research about which I wrote in my article 'Scientists of God' in the Spring 2014 edition of *De Numine*. I tried to show that a scientific approach could be applied to the inner world of meditation which I suggested was a particularly appropriate way of researching Spiritual Experience.

Many people think that the purpose of meditation is to become calm and peaceful and indeed it may be an incidental result of a practice but at least one major grouping sees it as a way of linking to other human and trans-human spirits¹ and another as a way of 'investigating' *mind*.² I can remember my last meditation teacher repeating 'investigate', 'investigate', 'investigate'.

Ironically the experience I want to describe was of a special peacefulness which occurred during a ten day silent retreat. This was timetabled for both group and individual meditations with individual daily consultations with the teacher. My last instruction had been to unite the perceiver and the perceived which in my case at the time was consciousness and the inner light.

It happened during a private meditation session in a small shrine room the focus of which was a life-sized and beautifully sinuous golden Buddha Rupa – or Statue of the Buddha's meditating form. Flower offerings had been made and placed around the Rupa in vases and very good quality sandalwood incense was burning profusely. There were between eight and a dozen other meditators present and I was sitting at the front close to the Buddha Rupa which I loved very much. My eyes were closed.

Sitting in a version of the lotus position with a large pile of cushions underneath me I struggled to unite my consciousness with the perceived inner light – and suddenly I did it. Immediately I could see inwardly a horizontal silver disc spreading out across the room from my heart and the words from Philippians 4:7 came into my mind. 'This is *the peace which passeth all understanding*' which so perfectly described the very solid and perfectly calm peacefulness I was experiencing. Extraordinary! Although we can't say it is *proven*, this experience does suggest that the 'peace' or 'samadhi' that the Buddhist sutra's speak of is similar to the 'peace' of which Christianity speaks.

Whilst resting in the 'peace' of this experience it continued and I noticed that, although my eyes were closed, I was looking down on the people sitting *behind* me and my inner vision had changed from *binocular* to *cyclopic* – like a very clear *camera obscura*. I remember the tops of the heads and type of clothes of some of the other meditators. I also noticed that I could see through the thick stone wall to the grass verge outside! The wall was of a converted barn and about two feet thick!

Reflecting on this experience and reading about NDE research I have come to realise that this is very like the moment when the consciousness of the person having an operation leaves the body and looks down on the operation and the surgeons – and hopefully sees a card left on the top of a cupboard by a NDE researcher! There are also reports of NDE'ers having out of body experiences which go outside the building enabling them to look down on it. With or without a grass verge it is very similar to my meditation experience suggesting that there is a connection between possible meditation investigations and the experience of an NDE'er.

When I was researching Mandalas for my presentation at the first Llantarnam Retreat at the beginning of the Wales Group's Mandala Project I noticed that certain mandalas with a white or light coloured centre looked very much like a tunnel. The painted Thangka type Mandalas are intended as meditation devices working one's way around the levels with the aim of reaching the centre – possibly enlightenment or a stage on the way. An example might be the Mandala of Sarvavid Buddha Vairocana.³ A receding tunnel with a god bathed in light at the end seems to be part of this meditation tradition as well as of near-death experience.

Incidentally, my experience of seeing through the wall with my eyes closed also says something about the relation of mind to matter – which is known to physicists to be largely empty. All this is familiar to experienced meditators. In this one experience something of the nature of God could be said to have been experienced – a taste of *omniscience*, unbelievable *peacefulness* and the *transcendence* of the physical. Mary Cooke's description, also in the last edition, of her *big dream* – as psycho-analysts would call it – showed how the greater self could participate in the trans-temporal or *eternal* aspect of the nature of God – or reality. My sense is that much of the Perennial Philosophy and the underlying Unity of Faiths will be re-discovered by the practical scientific method of Meditation Research. I believe the Great Faiths have nothing to fear from such an approach even if they may have to tweak some of their stranger doctrines. The trans-temporal aspect of inner research is relevant to what happens after the death experience.

Although I personally dislike the idea of returning to the world for another life, a third area which I have researched is past lives – which inevitably imply future lives! This is part of the Perennial Philosophy. After a very long period of training to be a psychotherapist during which you are required to have a very valuable personal analysis, I remember relaxing into my arm chair shortly after qualifying and thinking, 'I don't feel at all sorted or as if I know myself'!

This was just at the time Dr Roger Woolger came to London and his very well argued book *Other Lives, Other Selves*⁴ was given to me. I was very convinced, worked with him personally and qualified as a Past Life Therapist through his courses. After many realistic and convincing regressions (I was a sceptically minded psychotherapist after all) the depths of my personality and Self gradually made sense. I knew why I was where I was and knew, roughly, where I should put my focus. A generalised rock-like deep peace and confidence descended – which didn't exclude the occasional panic and impatience with immediate circumstances! It is interesting that the cultures which believe in one life and an eventual heaven are the most violent – the Christian and Islamic. What has one to lose if you treat the world badly if you are not coming back? The Hindu and Buddhist cultures who acknowledge re-incarnation are historically and generally more peaceful – after all, if you are coming back you would be advised to look after the environment and your relationships.

My examples are a demonstration that Meditation Research is a productive way to go. The meditation group under whose auspices the first experiences described above occurred was founded by a Buddhist Monk on a Motorbike almost simultaneously at the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, London and Manchester. This is a good model since young people of high intelligence were attracted to the work and adopted the discipline when they were most malleable. By their mid-lives were very experienced meditators.

To imply that I am a meditation researcher is being quite generous even though there have been many extraordinary experiences. I am unable to go back and repeat the above experience although a more experienced meditator would be able to do that. It is also likely

that I was helped unawares by the strong energy of other meditators on the retreat mentioned above. Nevertheless I did have the experience. If I had started meditating when a student and stuck with it then I might be able to investigate more.

The difficulty with Meditation Research is that each meditation organisation promotes the idea that they are the best and only serious one and directly or by implication dismisses other groups. This makes inter-group exploration nearly impossible – and there are many types of meditation. Once again, there is a serious need for openness and humility in the making of a science of meditation research.

Roger Coward

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1. Arcane School, Suite 54, 3 Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EF
 2. Various Buddhist Groups such as Amavarati, St Margarets Lane, Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ or The Samatha Centre, Greenstreete, Llangunllo, Knighton, Powys, LD7 1SP.
 3. Martin Brauen, *Mandala: Sacred Circle in Tibetan Buddhism* (Arnoldsche, 2009), Plate 17, p. 110
 4. Roger J. Woolger, *Other Lives, Other Selves: A Jungian Psychotherapist Discovers Past Lives* (Dolphin 1987; Aquarian 1994)
 5. Dr Penny Sartori, *The Wisdom of Near-Death Experiences: How understanding NDEs can help us Live more Fully*, London, Watkins, 2014

EXPERIENCE

***Nathan the Wise* – coincidences and guided drawing**

Newport Interfaith Group was to offer a reading of G. Lessing's play *Nathan the Wise*¹ as their contribution to Interfaith Week. I was to produce it.



I needed a picture showing Saladin's younger brother, Assad. I went upstairs to make the bed, and was drawn to my desk in another room where lay a piece of paper the right size to fit the frame I had in mind. In a tiny drawer were some small crayons from my childhood. I took the paper & crayons, and let things happen. Without my having any idea at all of how the sketch would turn out, Assad gradually emerged from the page. Perfectly!

The person whom I asked to be the dervish, Al Hafi (meaning 'the barefooted one') told me after his first appearance at rehearsal, that *he* had been on pilgrimage to the Ganges – just as Al Hafi was proposing to do – and that his guru had reprimanded him for *not being barefooted!* All pilgrimages to the Ganges have to be undertaken barefooted. A French friend of 40 years has a second cousin (whom we have also known for many years) who has the Polish surname Vilniek. Later on, we find the Templar's name is Vilnek!

We had to postpone the performance because of casting problems & lost rehearsal time. By pure chance the hall became vacant for a fortnight later due to a cancellation. A neighbour of ours was disappointed at not being free to come to the play because it was the 80th birthday of a friend of hers, and there was to be a surprise party that afternoon. Telling one of the guests (who was a professor of German in the States) that she was missing *Nathan the Wise* – a play our neighbour herself had not heard of, nor had she heard of Lessing before – she was amazed at being told that that guest had not only heard of Lessing, but knew his works well, and had seen *Nathan* many times in America.

Mary Cook

1. *Nathan the Wise* (original German title: *Nathan der Weise*) is a play published by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in 1779. It is a fervent plea for religious tolerance. Its performance was forbidden by the church during Lessing's lifetime; it was first performed in 1783 in Berlin. In 1922 it was adapted into a silent film of the same title. There will be a play-reading of *Nathan the Wise* at the 'Crossing Boundaries' gathering at Llantarnam Abbey in July.



REPORTS

From the Director of Communications

Much of my role involves speaking to various groups of people about our work. The contexts and venues vary but I am able to explain to the public who we are and what we do. There is always a great deal of interest, which sometimes leads to new members, although not as often as we might wish. People are happy to attend meetings here and there or to follow our activities on the website or on Facebook but committing to membership is another matter. This is why we are so very grateful to everyone who supports the AHSSSE through membership. But special gratitude must be expressed to those who give so much time and effort to enable our various activities to take place – AHSSSE Chair, Vice Chair and Webmaster, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Local Group Leaders, and of course Paddy and Jean who produce this excellent journal *De Numine*.

The end of 2014 was a busy period for me. I had been invited by Candle Conferences to speak on Spiritual Experience at two A Level Conferences on two consecutive days – first to about 300 students in Birmingham and the following day to 450 in Manchester. It was an amazing experience. I decided to begin with a moment of silence – which I often do when giving talks, to allow for a change of dynamic after the bustle of arrival. I used Tibetan cymbals and asked the students to sit quietly between the first sounding and the second. I had expected fidgeting and giggles but everyone sat still. I then gave a PowerPoint presentation about spiritual experience in general and our own work in particular. I introduced the Hardy Question, 'Have you ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?' early in my talk and asked the students to bear the question in mind during the presentation. I posed the question at the end of my talk and a fair number of hands went up to answer it in the affirmative.

Recently I have been working at a Christian Retreat Centre near Evesham, Holland House (which you can google). This is a wonderful, peaceful place on the River Avon, just twenty minutes from my home. The warden Revd Ian Spencer runs conferences, retreats and Quiet Days. He is keen to open up to other religions – and in fact he and his wife lead a Zen Sangha there. I am able to contribute by speaking on retreats and leading Quiet Days. In February I will lead the first of a series of three Quiet Days on *Spiritual Experience* and in March a day on *Near-death Experiences and what we can learn from them*. From 15th to 17th September Jonathan Robinson (former AHSSSE Chair) and I will lead a retreat on *Experiencing Spirituality*. Bookings can be made through www.hollandhouse.org and further details are on our own website.

All these activities bring our work to the attention of people who often have no idea that so many others are aware of a spiritual dimension in life and have had profound, transformational experiences of something beyond the everyday.

We have just heard of a web-based research study by the States of Consciousness Research Team at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, based on the question ‘Have you had a personal encounter with God or a Higher Power?’ If you would like to participate, visit www.EncounteringTheDivine.org

Marianne Rankin
AHT&SSSE Director of Communications

Religious Experience Research Centre Lampeter: Update from the Director

The second RERC conference at Lampeter will take place on July 3rd 2015 in the Founders’ Library (University of Wales Trinity Saint David) from 10 am to 4 pm. The topic will be the study of Angels. The aim of the day will be to highlight how angels are perceived in different traditions and how we study them in different academic approaches.

The day will begin with the **Rev. Dr June Boyce-Tillman** MBE, Winchester University who will give the annual **Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecturer**. She will speak about the methodological challenges encountered in the academic study of angels. The Revd. Dr Boyce-Tillman, a Trustee of AHT, is an anthropologist of religion with a particular interest in the ethnographic study of the afterlife. She has worked at the Universities of Wales and Bristol in the UK, Linköping in Sweden and the University of Virginia in the USA. She is founder of the Afterlife Research Centre and is currently a Senior Visiting Research Fellow in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at King’s College London.

Other speakers are **Dr Catrin Williams** on angels in the New Testament, **Prof Densil Morgan** on Karl Barth and angels, **Theolyn Cortens** on Angels in Jewish thought, **Dr David Morgan** on angels in Buddhism, **Prof Martin O’Kane** on angels in Biblical art and **Dr Gary Bunt** on

angels and djinns in Islam. Further information about the papers, including abstracts, will be made available in June from the Religious Experience Research Centre: RERC@uwtsd.ac.uk – or see the RERC website:

<http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/alister-hardy-religious-experience-research-centre/>

The conference is free of charge and open to the public (tea and coffee will be provided and lunch facilities are available on campus).

It is possible to book accommodation on campus (enquiries to: pgresearch@tsd.ac.uk).

RERC is currently applying to the Alister Hardy Trust to reinstall the Bursary for postgraduate students. It will be based on needs and offered to students accepted on the MRes in Religious Experience. It is hoped that it will be made available from the next academic year.

Professor Bettina Schmidt



Open Day 2014

Following the success of an in-house Open Day in 2013, the AHSSSE decided to repeat the pattern in 2014. Andy Burns, AHSSSE Chair was invited to speak and the Director of the new RERC at Glyndŵr University in Wrexham, Professor Christopher Alan Lewis to deliver the annual Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture. Both talks took place in the afternoon, following a new format, with the AGM before lunch.

Chris took as his title *Religious Experience, Psychological Well-being, and Culture*. He laid out the research done in the field and emphasized the huge amount still to be explored. The audience was given a thorough overview of the academic papers written on the subject of spiritual experience and well-being so far. The new RERC at Glyndŵr University is well-placed to undertake such work under the Direction of Professor Lewis, now supported by Professor Jeff Astley, who has taken up the new post of Alister Hardy Professor of Religious and Spiritual Experience on a one day a week basis.

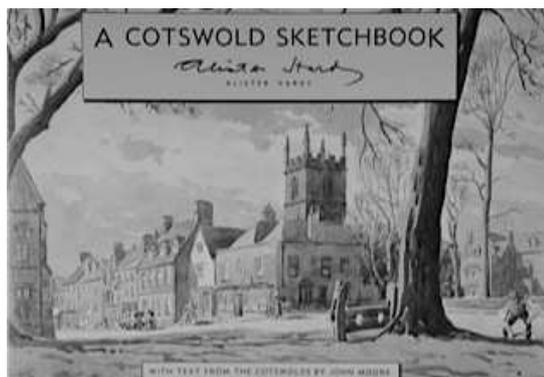
Andy Burns, a professional photographer, turned his attention to Sir Alister Hardy's beautiful *Cotswold Sketchbook* [see his report, below]. Andy followed in Sir Alister's footsteps, recording with his camera contemporary views of the landscape that Sir Alister had painted in watercolour in the 1920s and 1930s. It was a fascinating journey through the past and present of a glorious part of the country. Andy offered members the opportunity to buy a book he had compiled, juxtaposing his work and that of Sir Alister – a marvellous memento of a very good day.

The Catholic Chaplaincy in Oxford has been a welcome venue for the last couple of years but on October 17th 2015, Open Day will return 'home' to the newly refurbished Friends Meeting House in St Giles.

Marianne Rankin, AHT/AHSSSE Director of Communications

Sir Alister Hardy's *A Cotswold Sketchbook* revisited in photographs

My own afternoon presentation was largely visual as you would expect from the subject matter and is difficult to reproduce in text without the many accompanying images. The following is a summary which I hope will give a flavour of the visual presentation.



Some members will be aware that in my professional life I am a photographer and as such have an interest in image making. I have long appreciated Hardy's skills as a sketch artist and felt that this side of his life is rather less known than his more prominent academic career. I therefore chose to explore his sketches through a book he published in 1984 entitled *A Cotswold Sketchbook*. The book contains many images from Hardy's visits to the Cotswolds region. During the summer of last year I visited the same areas, and, using the book as my guide retraced his steps, visiting many of the same towns and villages that Hardy had visited some 60 to 70 years ago when he first began sketching. I photographed a number of the scenes that he had sketched, using as far as possible the same angles and formats. This proved surprisingly easy for the most part because many of the scenes were little changed since Hardy had visited. There were of course some exceptions to this; in most villages parked cars were visible in my own photographs, reflecting the popularity of the Cotswolds region and the increase of vehicles in general and certainly since Hardy's visits all those years ago. On this point of course the artist can choose not to include certain aspects in a sketch, whereas the photographic image records the scene as seen, with only post-image manipulation available.

The idea to sketch really began when Hardy was appointed to a post at Hull University. He had been encouraged to take the post by the Principal, Eustace Morgan. He found the setting up of a new department and writing undergraduate courses very demanding, and the pressure built to the point where he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Morgan, realising Hardy's stress, advised him to 'take a holiday, go to the Cotswolds and walk'. Hardy reports 'I did and fell in love with them'. His first visit was in February and although he does not specify the year it must have been around 1928 or 1929. His wife Sylvia, to whom the book was dedicated, reported that Hardy's sketching was his 'bottle of medicine' and indeed Hardy agreed, saying that his visits to the Cotswolds, if only for a day, were a wonderful break from his intensive scientific work.



The views (above) are of the village of Lower Slaughter, showing Hardy's original sketch on the left and the same view photographed today

Hardy had no formal technical or art school training, though he had sketched from a young age, and was much encouraged by his art mistress whilst attending Bramcote School in

Scarborough. Nonetheless he became an accomplished artist as can be seen in the book under discussion here, and in several others that he illustrated. Hardy describes his own view of art by noting that the representational artist is not trying to reproduce a scene to a photographic likeness. The true landscape artist is slightly exaggerating certain features, playing down others and thus intensifying the impression of the scene that he is painting. He notes, and this is particularly interesting, that all of his sketches were completed at the scene and not 'worked up' later. He says,

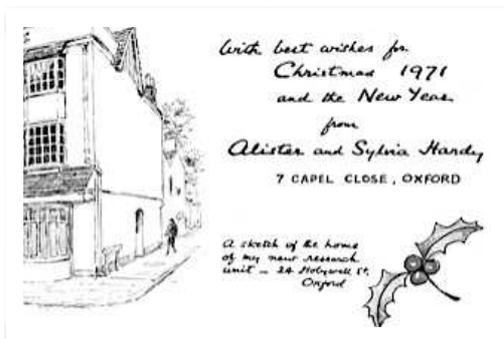
the hand of the artist is in some way guided by his emotional appreciation of what he is actually looking at. If he comes away and finishes it from memory, much of the truth of the picture is lost (1984, p.8)

Whilst researching this presentation I also looked at other publications that Hardy had illustrated, in particular a book entitled, *Great Waters* (1967). The book is an account of Hardy's research to study whales and plankton in the Southern Ocean whilst on the Research vessel Discovery. The book is Hardy's personal account of the sea voyage aboard the Discovery which set sail in September 1925 (the voyage lasting almost 2 years) The book is extensively illustrated with colour plates and black and white sketches, all Hardy's work and he notes in the introduction that they are untouched since they were done on the spot, many in pen and ink.

Hardy viewed his sketch book as the first in a series of books intended to develop what he called his, biological philosophy. He explains in the preface to the book that ever since childhood he was an ardent Darwinian and at the outbreak of war in 1914 made a promise to himself that if he survived he would devote his life to the reconciliation of the Darwinian doctrine with that of the spiritual nature of humankind. He refers to his earlier books (*The Divine Flame*, *The Spiritual Nature of Man* and *Darwin and the Spirit of Man*) as stressing the importance of the spiritual side of life, in relation to evolution. He explains that he intends the sketch book to be another aspect of this all important spiritual side. He says,

I am playing the part of naturalist looking at different phenomena that make up man's spiritual nature, and art is certainly one of them (1984, p. 9)

In summary, I hope that this brief look at Hardy's sketch book as prompted you to reflect on this lesser known side of his life. For those to whom the sketch book is well known I hope that you have enjoyed my re-interpretation through photographs and that some of your own favourite views were included in my presentation. For those to whom the book is unknown I hope that you are encouraged to seek out a copy and look at it in full to appreciate the artistic talents of Sir Alister Hardy.



Hardy often illustrated his own Christmas cards for family and friends. This example from 1971 shows a sketch of the first Religious Experience Research Unit at the corner of Holywell Street, Oxford. It was from this small office that Hardy first began to receive and collate accounts sent in by the public.

Andrew Burns

References

Hardy, A (1984) *A Cotswold Sketchbook*. Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited

Hardy, A (1967) *Great Waters: A Voyage of Natural History to Study Whales, Plankton and the Waters of the Southern Ocean*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers

AHS Annual General Meeting 2014

The Annual General Meeting for this year was held again at the University Catholic Chaplaincy, Rose Place, St. Aldates, Oxford, on Saturday 4th October, and attended by some 40 members and guests. Andy Burns, Chair of the Society, welcomed all. Apologies were received from Sheelah James, Mike Rush, Penny Sartori and Aled Thomas (Committee members); Dr Bettina Schmidt (Director); David Greenwood (Hon. Treasurer); Marian MacPolin (Hon. Membership Secretary); Jean Matthews (Archive Supervisor); Patricia Murphy (Editor, *De Numine*); Rt. Revd. Wyn Evans (Bishop of St. David's, Patron); and Members David Brazier, Mary Cook, Katherine and Jeremy Davies, Revd Stephen Parsons, Rhonda Riachi, Revd Kevin Tingay and Verena Tschudin:

The Minutes of the AGM of 2012 were agreed and signed. Under Matters Arising, the current position was reported regarding publicity, digitalisation of the AHRERC publications, and Marianne Rankin's continuing work with schools.

Chair's Report: Andy Burns gave an overview of the past year covering the activities of the Local Group and events, *De Numine* and the Society's website. He announced the launch of a 2nd edition of the *History* of the AHRERC and Society – an update as at September this year – thanking John Franklin for producing this book, and also for his work for the Society. He also thanked Committee members and local group leaders in particular, Michael Rush for his work on the website, Marianne Rankin and John for representing the SSSE at the One Spirit Alliance meetings, Mary Cook for running the Llantarnam Abbey Gathering this year, and Jean Matthews, the Archive Supervisor, who would be leaving at the end of the year, for all her work for the Society in addition to her work for the Trust in looking after the AHRERC archive of accounts.



Marianne Rankin presenting flowers and books to Jean Matthews at the RERC office, UWTSO

Chair and Vice-chair of Trustees' Report: Revd. Professor Leslie Francis referred to the three core aims of the Alister Hardy Trust; and welcomed the appointment of Professor Jeff Astley as part-time AH Research Professor in Religious and Spiritual Experience at Glyndŵr University, working alongside Professor. Christopher Lewis. He also welcomed Thomas Pitchford as part-time Archivist at Lampeter, who is working on cataloguing the remaining AHT books and archival documents of the Trust and Society. He thanked Marianne Rankin for her work as Director of Communications and John Franklin for producing the new revised edition of the *History* of the AH Trust, RERC and Society; and congratulated Dr Mark Fox on the publication of his new book, *The Fifth Love*. A question was raised regarding the number of accounts of spiritual and religious experiences, which had remained at the quoted figure of '6,000' for a number of years now, and Prof. Francis said that this would be looked into.*

Directors' Report: a): Prof. Christopher Lewis, introduced by Andy Burns, presented his Director's report from Glyndŵr University. He outlined the happenings there, thanking the AHT for funding the appointment of Prof Jeff Astley, and announcing the establishment of a dedicated website, which will contain material regarding its activities; and announced a one-

day conference being planned for March-May 2015. The publication of a journal was under consideration; and talks were ongoing with the Templeton Foundation with respect for funding of future research.

b): Andy Burns read Prof Bettina Schmidt's Director's report from UWTSD, covering the re-launch of the AHRERC there; the giving of the first Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture, by Dr Fiona Bowie, at a one-day conference on 4th July; the development of online access to the database of accounts of spiritual and religious experiences; and the validating of a new Master by Research Programme in Religious Experience. The development of an online journal for the study of religious experience, and the publication of the AHRERC Occasional Papers also on the new RERC website is in hand; and Thomas Pitchford, the new Collections Librarian at the AHRERC, started work in September. The retirement of Jean Matthews, Archive Supervisor, at the end of the year was reported. Tribute was paid to her work, which would be taken over in part by Marian MacPolin. Application for funding for further research was continuing, and Bettina expressed thanks for the congratulations she had received on the occasion of her promotion to professor.

Hon. Treasurer's Report: Andy Burns read David Greenwood's report, in which announcement was made of application for Charitable Incorporation Organisation (CIO) status. He reported that the finances were in good shape, with £117,661 in the HSBC Current account and £202,079 invested which had generated an annual gross income of £7,588 (3.76% gross yield): the portfolio value had risen by 2.89% during the past six months. Congratulations and thanks to David were expressed from the floor.

Hon. Membership Secretary's report: Marian MacPolin's report was read by Andy Burns. It was reported that whilst the total number of names on the database has shown a slight increase, there has been a slight decrease in the number of paying members. At the present time the total number of full members stands at 230, with a further 40 on the Society's mailing list for receipt of newsletters only. 9 new members have joined the Society this year, but there has been a loss of 17 members for various reasons. Marian congratulated Marianne Rankin on her new membership application brochure, and members were urged to take copies of the new membership application brochure and promote the work of the Society and the AHRERCs.

The Archive Supervisor's Report: Andy Burns read Jean Matthews' report, in which she said she had enjoyed her 10 years as Archive Supervisor and would be sorry at leaving at the end of the year. Her work had included help in putting the database of accounts online and re-formatting the RERC Occasional Papers for putting also online, and this is now nearly finished [all are now online]. She was pleased to be working with the new Collections Librarian, Thomas Pitchford who, after cataloguing the rest of the AH library, will be organising the 'history' archive of the AH Trust which is kept in the same place at the archive of accounts of spiritual experiences. After retirement, she would still continue to work with Patricia Murphy on preparing future editions of *De Numine*. Jean was warmly thanked for all her work over the last 10 years.

Director of Communications Report: Marianne Rankin reported on the changes that took place in 2013; the relaunch of the RERC at Lampeter on 4th July and the establishment of the new RERC at Glyndŵr University, Wrexham. Other activities during the last year included the Annual Gathering at Llantarnam Abbey; involvement with the One Spirit Alliance. We joined the OSA for a one-day conference in Sheffield on 15th March on *Deeper Dimensions in Education*, and a one-day conference in London on *Spirit in Action* on 28th June. We also

produced the new publicity brochure for AHSSSE which includes all relevant information formerly contained in many different leaflets. Marianne continued her continuing networking and speaking activities. A tribute of appreciation to Marianne for her work was expressed from the floor.

Amendment to the Rules of the Society: Two small amendments were recommended, to Rule 5, to reflect that there now two Directors, rather than just one; and to Rule 10, to increase the minimum period of notice of a Special Meeting from 14 days to 28 days. The amendments were proposed and seconded, and approved unanimously.

AHSSSE Committee elections: the following were nominated, and elected unopposed:

Michael Rush (Vice-chair), for a period of three years:

Proposed by Marianne Rankin, seconded by Tanya Garland;

Sheelah James for a period of three years:

Proposed by Andy Burns, seconded by Marianne Rankin;

Aled Thomas for a period of three years:

Proposed by John Franklin, seconded by Andy Burns;

Valery Duffy-Cross (Student Rep – UWTSO, Lampeter) for a period of one year:

Proposed by John Franklin, seconded by Andy Burns;

Jana Britton (Student Rep – Glyndŵr University) for a period of one year:

Proposed by John Franklin, seconded by Andy Burns.

Any Other Business: a member recorded that the expression ‘spiritual but not religious’ (SBNR) is so far recognised as to appear among the questions asked by at least one Dating Agency. [It might be noted that it is referred to as a ‘quasi-official’ religious movement on website www.academia.edu].

A tribute of appreciation and thanks to Andy Burns was expressed from the floor.

The date of the next Annual General Meeting: A provisional date in October was set, according to the availability of a speaker; the venue yet to be determined and a return to the Friends Meeting House may be best appropriate.

[Subsequently the date of **Saturday 17th October** has been confirmed for the 2015 AGM, with the venue the Oxford Friends' Meeting House, 42 St. Giles, Oxford, OX1 3LW. See Open Day details in Events, page 58]

John Franklin, Hon. Secretary

[Copies of the full Minutes of the AGM and written reports presented at the meeting can be obtained from: Marianne Rankin, Homer Lodge, Bredons Norton, Tewkesbury, Glos., GL20 7EZ – please send stamped and addressed C5 (162 x 229mm) size, or similar]

* There are now about 6030 record numbers on the database (including 351 sent to us by Peter Fenwick from his research on near-death experiences).

The figure of 6,000 must have been produced in the past (before my time) by an error in calculating methods: this could be partly because a large backlog of accounts had not been added to the database, but the names and addresses had been entered; presumably this number was included twice in the calculation. [Jean Matthews].

Alister Hardy Trust Accounts for the year ended 31st July 2014

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 has been a successful year, largely owing to the substantial bequests received over the past few years. At the time of writing, I am able to say that, subject to probate, we shall also receive with much gratitude a bequest from the late Mrs. Margaret Fryer, a long standing supporter of the Society and Trust. We are of course very grateful for legacies as they provide our main source of income; it is sad that we are unable to thank these generous donors in person.

I set out below a short summary of the accounts – a full set of accounts will be available online for those who wish to view them.

<u>Income</u> (including donations received £8536 (concluding payment from the John Meldrum legacy), subscriptions £4230)	£20,235
<u>Expenditure</u> (including donation to UWTSO of £10,000, various honoraria, and additional expenses associated with increased activity on the part of volunteers and trustees)	£26,463
<u>Net deficit</u>	<u>£6,342</u>
<u>Fixed Assets:</u> Tangible assets (mainly books and works of art)	£50,205
Current assets (Bank accounts and invested funds)	£340,706
<u>Total assets less current liabilities:</u>	£385,697

The accounts were unanimously approved by the Trustees at their AGM held on the 4th December, 2014.

David Greenwood, Honorary Treasurer, January 2015

Reports from the Local Groups

London Group

On 1st October Dr Mark Fox gave us a talk on *The Fifth Love*. Basing this on his new book, *The Fifth Love: Exploring Accounts of the Extraordinary*, Mark referred first to the four loves described by C. S. Lewis – love for family; Eros, physical or erotic love; friendship; and agape or unconditional or spiritual love – and went on to describe what he calls a ‘fifth kind of love’ – a spiritual transcendent love. He said his research drew on the archive of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre at Lampeter – including descriptions of love extending beyond death. He concentrated on two aspects, examining the questions, does love survive death? and, what features of such experiences are held in common? He outlined occasions of these experiences: some people have spiritual revelations as a result of relationship and health crises, and he had found that bereavement, physical pain and doubt can be removed by love at the highest point of the crisis. Love ‘breaks in’ and causes a turning point. Unusual experiences of light and love often turn around experiences of despair and darkness and

transform people permanently. The experience of love or light intervening seems to come from no earthly source, and can transform and transfigure its recipients for the better, often permanently. He presumed that this is from the outside, or God. His conclusion – one that he reaches in his book – was that there *is* a fifth aspect of love, that of a spiritual, transcendent love, a love that can transform lives.

The talk was followed by a most interesting discussion session, including thoughts on such questions as can experiences such as this be engendered, and what is their meaning and import. Mark said he felt we are on Earth to learn how to engender love and that the experiences seem to indicate there is a better life than this. People who had this sort of experience were more interested in its function than in its origin. And in answer to another question – can love act as a messenger? – he said, yes, people spoke of having dreams or psychic communications with the dead or dying or acting as a channel to convey something to the bereaved or distraught. The conclusion was that these experiences can come when ego is not present – when one is not emotionally involved in a situation or one is in a state of non-thinking.

In November Helen Jameson gave us a talk on Trance healing; Helen said she prefers to call this 'extreme day-dreaming healing'. The art is simply to subdue consciousness to allow healing to come through from a beneficial power, which uses your senses to help others. Her method is to put her hand on the patient's back and let the power move through her to them. She said she works with people and animals, and chronic and acute conditions, though fewer of the latter since acute cases are usually in hospital or already under a doctor's care. She went on to say that this power is a beneficial healing intelligence and she now realises she is just a channel and needs to do nothing. The closer you link yourself to that power, the more effective you become as a healer. You allow yourself an altered state of mind to enable the healing intelligence to use you. She works on physical and mental problems, and says that healing can work on several conditions inside a patient at the same time. Changes in people's perceptual states can occur and they can experience insights and improvements in optimism and outlook, all of which are healing she feels, and this can happen in 15 minutes. These can be permanent changes. She said she finds it an extraordinary privilege to be involved in this work.

After a question and discussion session, Helen offered the experience of trance healing or healing energy to several members of the group, which ended a most enlightening and stimulating afternoon.

John Franklin

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

Midlands Group

See Events, page 57, for future events

Oxford & Cotswold Group

Dementia and spirituality

Having taken most of 2013 off from organising AHS events whilst writing my dissertation on communication in dementia care, it was a pleasure to join forces with the Scientific & Medical Network Oxford Group for a joint meeting in March 2014. About 20 participants attended the meeting at the Turl Street Hub in Oxford. Maggie La Tourelle, a kinesiologist and psychotherapist, spoke about her extraordinary book *The Gift of Alzheimer's: Heart & Soul Journey*. Maggie transcribed her mother's words during her visits to the care home, including descriptions of spiritual experiences, after her mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Maggie writes a blog about the book and related themes at www.maggielatourelle.com

Telepathy and why it matters

In November 2014 we hosted a meeting over a weekday lunchtime at the Oxford Quaker Meeting House entitled *Telepathy: what it is and why it matters* by Professor Emeritus Don Mason. Don has been a member and supporter of the AHS for many years, so it was a delight to hear him present the evidence for telepathy, his personal experience of it and the scientific debates about it. 24 attended this meeting, which was a great success, given it was our first foray into lunchtime meetings during the working week.

Can we go on meeting like this?

Since the joint meeting in March the Oxford SMN Group has not met again, as Charla has found it increasingly difficult to attract members to meetings and to organise speakers and so on. I have a similar difficulty, juggling AHS work alongside my day jobs, without any committee to support me, and have not had time to set up AHS Oxford meetings for 2015.

As it is now six years since I took on the Oxford Group chair, I welcome offers to take the baton from members in the Oxford & Cotswold patch. I am very happy to share the role for a while, split the task between several people, or manage a 'slow handover' – whatever suits. I would rather not have to drop it entirely with no successor, so please get in touch if you are interested.

Keeping in touch

For more information on the Oxford Group please send me an email message as below. Occasionally I send out news of events organised by cognate associations, such as the Wrekin Forum. Don't forget the Wrekin 'Café Spirituel' meetings, which may be organised in your area – contact connect@wrekinforum.org for more information).

See Events (page 57) for details of the forthcoming **Joint AHSSSE/SMN one-day conference** on 27th June 2015.

Rhonda Riachi

ahs@riachi.free-online.co.uk

South-East Wales Group

Our group continued the theme of the Four Elements – Earth and Air were covered in the last issue (no. 57), p. 34.

'Fire'

On the 19th September Eric Cook gave an entertaining description of the physics and chemistry of fire, and how it affects all of the processes on the earth. Ubiquitous as a tool for humanity Eric said fire could be seen as an aspect of the 'oneness' of everything. He invited the group to contribute, and the discussion ranged widely, looking at fire in the context of the Zoroastrians, rituals in the temple at Jerusalem, and the practice of alchemy; and exploring the following ideas:

Linking Fire with Air and Spirit, we have the Pentecost event when the Holy Spirit is seen as a 'tongue of fire' above the heads of the disciples, awaking their spiritual 'channels', and as a dove at the event of Jesus' baptism by John. Both could be seen as roughly the same shape, and both could be a spiritually-sensitive observer's interpretation of the manifestation of Spirit at these initiations.

Fire has been seen as transformative from time immemorial. To the Zoroastrians it was (is) associated with the burning off of the stubble ready for the new season's crops – purifying the land. The influence of Zoroastrianism was felt to be the origin of the Jewish belief in the holiness of fire, coming into Jewish culture from the 'Fertile Crescent'. The Temple contained a never-to-be-extinguished fire that was kept alive continuously during exile. It was as though the presence of God in the temple depended on the presence of that fire. From that idea came the burnt offering, and fire ascending to catch the nostrils of the Divine with the savours of cooking meat. (God was certainly not interested in being vegetarian!) The burning of incense is used to create a worshipful atmosphere in many religious ceremonies.

Alchemist – and all chemists come to that – recognise the transformative possibilities of fire, and of course, the very Earth itself is born from fire, still the dynamo that keeps the Earth in perpetual evolution...

A TV series from maybe 30 years ago about life in Indonesia, entitled 'The Ring of Fire' referred not just to the ring of volcanoes that dominate the area, but the skills and abilities certain people had developed that we might well call 'spiritual powers'. One man was persuaded to show his ability to set things on fire just by using his hands as a channel for the great internal heat he could generate.

We talked of fire as light, for instance the candles frequently used in meditation, and fire as heat – 'pictures in the fire' – we miss having a fire indoors & love a bonfire!

'Water'

Val's talk on the 10th December gave us some interesting background of both scientific facts, and information gleaned from her experiences:

Over 70% of the earth's surface is covered by water. 65% of our bodies is water. All life mirrors these facts, the numerical correlation seeming meaningful in itself – all life being of the earth in every way. (How the spiritual fits into this we didn't discuss, but by extrapolation, spirit too is 'of the earth'.)

Water has always been of necessity a preoccupation of us all – it comes out in everyday phraseology, but is also worshipped, evoked, delighted in, feared, just as divinities have always been. As Val told us, in Greek mythology ‘the titan, Oceanus, was one of the elemental forces which were part of the creation of the world’.

Purification rituals of Christian baptism, Ganges bathing, Muslim washing before worship, are of fundamental importance to the religious. She mentioned that in Bristol there is a ritual bath-house for the Jews dating back to the late 17th century. The cleansing rituals of the sauna in Scandinavia, the ‘on sen’ in Japan, whilst possibly not in essence religious or spiritual, carry that same feel. Visiting Japanese friends asked her, where are your ‘on sens?’

We have so many (holy) wells and spa towns, but we seem in the main to have lost their original value of relaxing, cleansing and healing.

Val discovered a Welsh Marches connection [from the Larousse Encyclopedia] stretching back in time: the Celtic-Romano temple at Lydney in Gloucestershire is dedicated to Nodens – also mentioned in Irish myths – revealing a Celtic-Classical mix. Nodens was a god of healing, of the sea and a protector of the fortunes of the Severn fishermen.

This will be followed up by a spring-time group visit to Lydney. [see events p. 57]



Remembering Friends:

David Hay (1935 – 2014)

David Hay – a personal tribute

David Hay was a profound influence on my life. It was through reading his early books: *Exploring Inner Space* and *Religious Experience Today* that I became convinced of the importance of researching religious and spiritual experience, and hence the need to promote and develop the work of the Hardy Centre. I remember telling David after I became Director that I found myself constantly quoting from his writings.

David’s greatest contribution was to challenge the assumptions of the ‘secularist thesis’ which equated the steady decline of religious practice in Europe with an inevitable demise of human religiosity. What David found was that religious experience, which he defined as an awareness of ‘something there’, was an instinctive human reality and was vastly more common than people had supposed. David’s research also showed that religious experience was characteristically associated with high levels of mental alertness and psychological stability and hence it was empirically false to treat it as some kind of pathology.

David’s research in Britain encouraged the Centre to test his hypothesis by exploring other cultures. This led to the major Templeton-funded research into religious experience in contemporary China. Thanks to David it also led to a research project into religious experience in Turkey led by Professor Cafer Yaran whom David encouraged and advised.

In 'retirement' David remained very active. He was always supportive of the Centre's work and frequently attended Open Days. Despite the presence already of his final illness he researched and completed his book on Alister Hardy, *God's Biologist* to ensure full documentation of how the Research Centre began. We will all miss the inspiration of his enthusiasm.

Professor Paul Badham



When I think of David Hay, I remember of course his immense contribution to the study of religious and spiritual experience, which I frequently quote in talks I give on the subject. But several personal memories stand out for me.

The first is that when I invited David to write the biography of Sir Alister Hardy, he accepted the challenge, despite his poor health. As a result we have the most valuable and beautifully-written *God's Biologist, A Life of Alister Hardy* which was published in 2011. When David came to deliver the 2007 Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture, he gave us all a fascinating insight into the research he was doing for the book. A fact I found particularly interesting (as have the A Level students I speak to) was that one of Sir Alister's students at Oxford was a certain Richard Dawkins.

Another abiding memory is of a convivial evening in 2010 held to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the move of the RERC to Lampeter. On this occasion David presented the RERC with a drawing of Sir Alister Hardy by Hans Schwarz. Most people left soon after dinner and I expected David and Jane to go as well – but not a bit of it. They stayed on for quite some time chatting. It was a real privilege to be able to enjoy David's company in such a relaxed way.

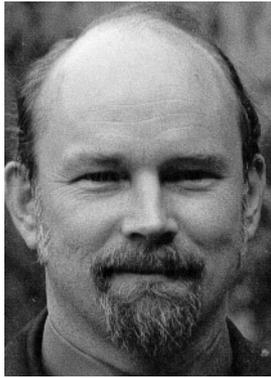
David was a stalwart supporter of the activities of the AHSSSE, always attending Open Day when he could, even as this became increasingly difficult for him due to ill-health. He will be greatly missed.

Marianne Rankin

AHT/AHSSSE Director of Communications



News of the death of Dr David Hay came as a great shock, although he had been very ill for some time. David suffered in his last years from Parkinson's disease and, after a final long illness, he died peacefully on 27th October 2014 with his wife, Jane, by his side. Too late to include in the Autumn issue of the journal, an announcement of his death, and funeral arrangements, was posted on the Society's website. A Burial Mass was held on 28th November in St. Barnabas R.C. Cathedral, Nottingham attended by over 150 people, at which I was privileged to represent the Alister Hardy Trust, RERCs and Society. The service was followed by cremation at Bramcote Crematorium.



I first met David in February 1986 when I went to see him in Nottingham – and, later that year, I started to work with, and for, him in an administrative capacity at the AHRERC's offices in George Street, Oxford – he was Director of the Centre at that time. He was my mentor, and a greatly valued colleague, and friend.

David was a zoologist by profession; he studied zoology as an undergraduate at the University of Aberdeen and went on to become a lecturer in Biology at Nottingham University. Towards the latter part of his career, he was appointed Reader in Spiritual Education at Nottingham, and Visiting Professor at the Institute for the Study of Religion at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland. He held an Honorary Senior Research Fellowship at Aberdeen University, and also an Honorary Research Fellowship at the University of Wales, Lampeter [now part of University of Wales Trinity Saint David].

It was whilst still an undergraduate at the University of Aberdeen that he met Sir Alister Hardy, who was then Professor of Zoology and Head of Department at Oxford University. During the summer of 1956 David worked with Sir Alister on the Marine Research Trawler, *Explorer*, at that time discussing Hardy's ideas on the biological implications of religion. Later he worked with Sir Alister as a researcher while lecturing in Biology at Nottingham. David shared Hardy's interests and conviction that spiritual awareness, having evolved through the process of natural selection, underlay all genuine religion and was of survival value and necessary for human well-being. Much of David's academic career was spent exploring and establishing through survey and analysis factual evidence that spiritual experience was common and associated with good health. He directed the first national survey of religious experience in Great Britain set up by RERU in 1975, going on to conduct in-depth surveys of local residents and University students in Nottingham. He became Director of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre, as it was renamed in honour of Sir Alister, in 1985. He held this post until 1989 when he retired to take up the position of Chair of the Centre's Advisory Research Council (1990 to 1994). During this time he saw to the expansion of the Centre's archive of accounts of spiritual and religious experiences, which now number over 6,000. His publications, besides numerous scientific articles, included: *Exploring Inner Space: Scientists and Religious Experience* (1982); *Religious Experience Today: Studying the Facts* (1990); *The Spirit of the Child* (with Rebecca Nye) (2006), and *Something There: the Biology of the Human Spirit* (2006, 2007, Darton, Longman and Todd). His last book was a definitive biography of Sir Alister Hardy, *God's Biologist: A Life of Alister Hardy* (2011, Darton, Longman and Todd).

David was an early member, and later Honorary Life member, of the Alister Hardy Society. His interest in the work of the AHRERC and Society continued throughout his life and, until recently, he regularly attended the Society's Open Days in Oxford with his wife Jane. Besides being a distinguished scholar, he was a warm-hearted, kind and empathetic man who was greatly respected and loved by all who knew him – he will be remembered and greatly missed by many people, and our condolences go out to Jane and her family.

John Franklin, Hon. Secretary, AHSSSE.



Dr David Hay and the Survey on Muslim Religious Experience

I felt very sad when I heard of David's death. I saw him as a friend and as a wise man. He was a good natured person, a successful scholar, and a very well-known expert on the subject of religious experience in modern times. He was interested in religious experience not only in Christianity but also in all other religions.

I met him first at a religious experience conference in London in 2004. He offered to do a joint research project concerning Muslim religious experience in Turkey and the U.K. We wrote to each other several times on this issue. In 2005, we met in Lampeter to finalize the details of the survey questions. I admired him at that time; he was very eager, helpful and knowledgeable. The title was going to be 'A Comparison of Religious and Spiritual Experience amongst Muslims in Turkey and the UK: How do we Recognize the Common Core?'

I applied the survey to 1236 people in Turkey, which is still the only work on the issue; but the U.K. side had some difficulties. Nevertheless, he found a Muslim girl who was a student in the Faculty of Medicine to do the survey. Unfortunately she only interviewed 20 people in Nottingham, so we could not manage to realise the project properly and publish a book on it in English as two authors. But I published a book in Turkish, and presented a paper in English, and always mentioned my deepest gratitude and kindest respect to Dr David Hay because of his suggestion, orientation and contributions to this work.

I will always remember him as a successful scholar and prolific writer on religious experience, but especially as a sincere, tolerant, and friendly wise man. God rest his soul.

*Prof. Dr Cafer Sadık Yaran
University of Ondokuz Mayıs,
Faculty of Theology, Samsun, Turkey*





Flowers

When I lay flowers on your grave
I think you know.
But what else reaches you about me?
I could not bear to break into your Rest
which you have so well earned,
with mundane problems and anxieties.
Still less with suffering.

But if I had a moment of great joy,
perhaps some echo of it might find you,
so that we could share it as we always did.

And then we could remember
that before too many years apart
we shall meet again.

Susan Glyn



Lady Susan Glyn FRSA wrote the collection of poems from which this one is taken after her 90th birthday last year. She has been granted an archive in the Bradford University Library for her collected works. She is also an artist of repute, having created a series of magnificent stained glass windows; the Alister Hardy library collection holds a folio of these, called 'Completion', and copies of her poetry anthologies. (Ed.)

BOOK REVIEWS

John Franklin, *Exploration into Spirit: A Power Greater than ... The History of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Centre and Society origins, development and vision* (2nd Edition) Lampeter, AHRERC, 2014. xviii 157 pp. ISBN 978 0 906165 76 8. £9.50

This book is a second edition of the original history first published in 2006. The new edition takes the story forward from 2006, ending in July 2014. It incorporates an expanded bibliography and updated appendices.

The moment was most certainly right for an updated edition of the book. This period has seen many developments in the Alister Hardy Society and Trust, and the last two years have seen major developments for RERC, which now has two locations, an additional unit having been established at Glyndŵr University.

I welcomed John Franklin's energy and enthusiasm in undertaking the task. Those who know John will be aware of his attention to detail, and determination to not only update the history but also to do this in his usual cheerful and enthusiastic way. John is the ideal person to write the History; his long-time involvement with both the Society and Trust brings an insight into the day to day activities which is fundamental to any contemporary chronicle. In addition and more importantly, John has taken part in, and shaped, many of the events which he records here, and this sum of knowledge will now help others make sense of these events through his detailed recording and observations.

The new edition adds a further 35 pages to the book and concludes with the award of a Professorship to Dr Bettina Schmidt in July 2014, the same year in which she took up directorship of RERC at Lampeter. I know John was always keen to be as up to date as possible and this caused some headaches for those trying to proof-read the manuscript and get it to publication! In any event the book ends on a very positive note with the award to Professor Schmidt last year.

The book includes many colour and black and white photographs, which add to the account at key points and bring to life some of the main figures and events described in the text. I welcome the inclusion of very detailed appendices which are an important resource for the reader who desires to learn more. The appendices list all past and present Patrons, Directors, Trustees, Memorial Lectures, Occasional Papers, Society and Trust rules and the current administrative roles. I must also commend the general index which is both comprehensive and thorough; so often these days an otherwise good book is spoilt by poor indexing. The cross referencing and bibliography are also very thorough and will greatly assist the reader who seeks to learn more.

In the postscriptum of the book John expresses his own thoughts and views of the future, concluding the current edition by noting that,

in these times of fading interest in formal religion, affirmation of our spiritual nature that is of such value for both individuals and the community is of the utmost importance and well worth pursuing (p. 125)

The book is the definitive history of the RERC, Society and Trust and I thank John for updating his original work and both making it available to a new audience, and offering an enduring reference work which can be consulted with confidence. I have no hesitation in warmly recommending this book to members who wish to learn more about the history of the RERC, Trust and Society and also to others seeking to understand both how and why the legacy of Sir Alister Hardy continues to this day.

Reviewed by Andrew Burns (Chair, AHSSSE)

Jonathan Robinson, *Crossing Boundaries: Exploring Spirituality beyond Religious Institutions. With a foreword by the Rt Rev John Pritchard, Bishop of Oxford.* Private, 2014. vi 72 pp. (pbk) £6.00 + £1.00 p&p (from j.w.m.robinson@gmail.com)

I have watched the genesis of this book with great interest and am very glad to see all the products of Jonathan's fertile imagination in the area of liturgy contained in one volume. It is well tested and the debt he owes to a community in India and, in particular, to the work of Bede Griffiths is acknowledged gratefully.

It presents an interesting balance of tradition and innovation with a useful new translation of *Te lucis ante terminum* (Before the ending of the day), for example. It is easy to use and clearly set out with spaces and Celtic-style drawings. It shows an excellent grasp of liturgical possibilities.

The first section deals in detail with the subdivisions of the Eucharist, with useful and well considered examples of possibilities. The second section contains suggestions for Morning and Evening Prayer. The third section contains five 'celebrations':

- The Peace celebration – celebrating the gift of peace and for peace and justice in the world
- The Love celebration – celebrating the gift of love and for the deepening of love
- The Light celebration – celebrating the gift of spiritual light and for healing and wholeness
- The Creation celebration – celebrating our relationships with the Earth and for reverence for all creation
- The Oneness celebration and the essential oneness of all that is.

The final part, entitled 'A wider vision', subtitled 'Spirituality beyond religion'

is a celebration which requires no religious belonging, where we can come together, regardless of our different situations, backgrounds and traditions, to share in the deep and sustaining life of the Spirit (p. 61).

Concepts of interrelatedness and interdependence run deeply through the entire text. There is ample space in all the liturgies for contextualisation within a particular setting. The motivation is to combat secularism which offers little hope, and ultimately only despair:

We know that there is a search, a deep search, for what can be broadly described as authentic spirituality, for a quality of life beyond the shallowness of our materialistic consumer society, for what is more than social convention, for what is 'real', for what makes sense in the world in which we live our lives today. (p. 5)

This is based on research showing an increase in the use of the term 'spiritual' rather than 'religious' I like Jonathan's description of liturgy:

Good liturgy is like good music, where we are both players and the instruments that are played upon. (p. 5)

Shades of Hildegard echo here; she describes us as harps within God's hands. John Pritchard, in his introduction, describes what is offered in this context as 'creative liturgy' and recommends its acceptability to a variety of theological/denominational traditions within Christianity, commending it as 'a resource which can be regularly and selectively used. It can accommodate any lectionary of prayers and readings'. This is essentially a contemplative text with space for reflection and stillness, but at the same time open to a variety of uses and people.

I particularly like the third section on celebrations which will be particularly useful for more informal liturgy groups meeting in non-church settings, even the open air. Some of the prayers are beautiful and thought provoking, such as the blessing which includes 'the love, peace, warmth, surprise and completeness of God' on page 36. However, I am surprised that although we have a wonderful liturgy celebrating the earth, the natural world does not feature a great deal in the other intercessory prayers.

The whole is based quite clearly on the notion of a perennial philosophy – the notion of a common core experience that underpins a variety of faiths – so that in the end all traditions are one. This may well be what a considerable number of people accept, especially in interfaith circles, and particularly those following the work of John Hick; but it is not one to which all faiths or all traditions would subscribe. At the heart of the Christian tradition is the paradox of the Trinity – three in one and one in three – which can be interpreted as unity and diversity at the very centre of God. Although this book claims to celebrate diversity and unity, unity is undoubtedly dominant. As such, it often appears to set up what I would regard as unfortunate dualisms. There is a huge stress on the centrality of light; dark appears to be a metaphor for 'not good'. As one who has written a number of hymns extolling the necessity of darkness and its healing power within an enfolding darkness, I find this problematic. Similarly the stress on the sun, with little mention of the moon, means that day becomes prized over night even though, in my experience, sometimes a gentle darkness is a relief from blinding light. Even Evening Prayer asks us to see light beyond darkness rather than embracing the darkness – which is in the strand of apophatic theology – epitomised in the mystical *Cloud of Unknowing*.

Despite the fact that Jonathan has drawn on many traditions, including Buddhism and Hinduism, in the ritual actions that he suggests, the liturgies quite clearly originate in the monotheistic faiths and in that sense it may not be appropriate for all interfaith work. It is not clear whether the claims of universality in the title are intended to be within Christianity or wider. I am not sure how far polytheistic traditions would be able to use it. The language is, in general, inclusive which is a great asset in an age when the thrust towards gender equality in language in the late twentieth century has been reversed in the early twenty first. I am surprised that he does not, in this area, attempt an inclusive version of the Lord's Prayer. Many others have.

Yet despite these critiques this will be an extremely useful resource for all people who wish to bring liturgy alive and fresh. Well done, Jonathan!

Revd Professor June Boyce-Tillman MBE

John Harvey *The Bible as Visual Culture: When Text Becomes Image*
Sheffield, Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013. vii 214 pp. ISBN 978 1 909697 08 9 (hbk) £50.00
(£25.00 to students)

In reviewing this book, I must first of all declare an interest: the author is my doctoral supervisor. However, my reason for drawing it to the attention of the readers of *De Numine* is that I believe this book will appeal to much wider range of students and readers than the author or indeed the publisher realises. Many members of the Alister Hardy Society will be familiar with Biblical exegesis – the interpretation of a Biblical text usually expressed in literary form. This book is, however, possibly unique in that it is in many ways an exegetical analysis of biblical texts expressed in visual form. To quote from the publisher’s blurb ‘the book’s central question is: What happens when text becomes an image?’

Regarding methodology, the author makes a very clear distinction between the visual culture of the Bible, and the concept of the Bible as visual culture with which the book is mainly concerned. Texts from the Bible ‘undergo a process of transmediation and transperception as words become image, and reading and hearing are replaced by seeing and (sometimes) touching ... [and in so doing] ... call the reader/viewer to engage the culture of the text’s inception, the image’s creation and creator, and the audiences’ (and their own) reception’ (p. 7).

The first six chapters very roughly follow a chronological pattern, beginning with the rainbow being introduced as a religious image rather than a meteorological phenomenon, through a detailed analysis of the concept of the Garden of Eden, to a consideration of whether or not the colour field paintings of the American abstract expressionist artists Rothko and Newman call to mind Biblical images of the Old Testament. The remaining four chapters explore a number of different themes – portrayal of the poor in spirit, visual blasphemy and examples of proselytizing and memorisation, concluding with a chapter, written very much from a personal perspective, that leads into a description of the author’s own paintings. One of these describes Ezekiel chapter 4, verse 1: ‘And you, O son of man, take a brick and lay it before you, and portray upon it a city, even Jerusalem.’¹ As John Harvey emphasises, this is the only reference to the act of drawing in the Bible and one which he translates into an interesting grid pattern; for the explanation of this you must read the book.

Professor Harvey has for many years worked in the fields of visual culture and biblical studies. For the past ten years or so he has organised conferences in collaboration with the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Wales, Lampeter (now of course UWTSD) and the School of Art, Aberystwyth University. Some readers of *De Numine* will remember the joint conferences on imaging the Bible – the first of which was held in 2005.

Readers, particularly those unfamiliar with imaging the Bible will, I think, be fascinated and surprised by the many links drawn between the Bible and the image. Some may even be shocked by some of the images in the chapter on the iconography of profanity. While I have no hesitation in commending this book, there are occasions when the author exercises *eisogesis* (a subjective reading of a meaning back into the text). For example he argues, admittedly with some plausibility, that the colour field paintings of Rothko, with their huge blocks of colour that ‘fizzle and hover like presences in the uncertain space behind the picture plane summon associations with the Shekinah and the pillars of cloud and fire that went before the Israelites in the wilderness’ (p. 121).² The only other criticism that I have concerns the index: this is

limited to names only and would be greatly improved by the inclusion of subjects or a separate subject index. On the other hand, the index of Biblical texts is very useful as is the comprehensive bibliography. The text itself is very well supported by footnotes.

Whilst this is an academic book published as part of a series – *The Bible in the Modern World* – by Sheffield University, the language is very accessible and content can be enjoyed by readers without a detailed knowledge of either Biblical Studies or Art History. The cover price at £50.00 is expensive (not unusual for an academic book), but it is available to students at £25.00 and I understand it is heavily discounted when sold at conferences attended by the Department of Biblical Studies, Sheffield University.

Reviewed by David Greenwood, who is currently researching ways in which artists have portrayed the numinous.

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1. Old Testament, Revised Standard Version (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1980)
 2. Shekinah is a transliteration of the Hebrew and means dwelling place of the Divine

Robert Govaerts, *Cosmic Prayer and Guided Transformation: Key Elements of the Emergent Christian Cosmology*
Eugene, Oregon, US, Pickwick Publications, 2012. ISBN 978 1 61097 860 6 (pbk) \$27.00 (Kindle edition price £6.49)

Dear Robert,

When you first asked me to review your book I was both flattered and alarmed. Flattered that you thought me capable of writing a review of such a learned work and alarmed if readers of my review realised that I am not 'a fully developed Trinitarian' but an unorthodox Jew and my scientific credentials can be summed up as 'a lay-man, passionately interested in the natural world'. However, on reflection, my very lack of obvious qualifications may be an advantage in so far as I found reading your book to be a profoundly rewarding experience. I write to you as a friend, not as a fellow academic and I hope that I can persuade others like me to read your book and not limit your readership to 'fully developed Trinitarians'.

Regards, Wynford.

There were initial difficulties for me in the assumption, deeply believed by the author and millions of others, that the Trinity is a matter of fact or an article of faith. Atheists would deny any supra-normal being involved in creation, but there are also people like me who have a personal relationship with God and do not feel the need for Him to create a Son or Holy Ghost to fulfil His purpose: 'Hear ye, Oh Israel the Lord our God. The Lord our God is One'. For me, that is the 'be all and end all' of the matter. This is not arrogance on my part, I just feel the Old Testament is enough for me, or rather, the God of the OT is more than enough for me, though we have our disagreements now and then! However, I'll not risk declaring war on the Trinitarians as there are more of them than me, and the arguments in this book are, admittedly, very well expounded and supported by a plethora of Christian theologians from the early church to the present day.

Fortunately, for me, there is, in the opening chapters, of this book, much based on the Old Testament. My curiosity roused, I went in search of examples in the Hebrew Bible which would support your thesis and they came in droves. (I used the brilliant translation, The Jerusalem Bible'.) For example: The Apocryphal Judith Chapter 16 vs. 13-17.

I will sing a new song to my God.
Lord, you are great, you are glorious,
wonderfully strong, unconquerable.
May your whole creation serve you!
For you spoke and things came into being,
you sent your breath and they were put together,
and no one can resist your voice.

The 'doxologies' in Amos: Chapter 4 v. 13:

For he it was who formed the mountains, created the wind,
reveals his mind to man,
makes both dawn and dark,
and walks on the top of the heights of the world;
Yahweh, God of Sabaoth, is his name.

Chapter 5 v. 8:

It is he who made the Pleiades and Orion,
who turns the dusk to dawn
and day to darkest night.
He summons the waters of the sea
and pours them over the land.
Yahweh is his name.

Chapter 9 v. 5:

The Lord Yahweh of Sabaoth –
he touches the earth and it melts,
and all its inhabitants mourn;
it all heaves, like the Nile,
and subsides, like the river of Egypt.
He has built his high dwelling place in the heavens
and supported his vault on the earth;
he summons the waters of the sea
and pours them over the land.
Yahweh is his name.

And so on.

Much of the latter part of the book is your comprehensive exegesis on passages from the New Testament with commentaries by some of the greatest Christian theologians who have ever lived. Even by Chapter 3 in your book, I felt more at home. Studying for a philosophy degree many years ago, one entire year was spent exploring the philosophy of science. Now, for the first time in my life I could read the arguments which I could use as a theist who also believes in the reality of macro and micro physics, the cosmos and the subatomic. The relief of realising that the Divine Creator and the Big Bang are not incompatible was very exciting and has given me the basis on which to build future arguments.

Your book can also be recommended to those of a more humanist bent. The recent appearance of Eco-therapy and its practitioners, Eco-psychologists, endorse what 'non-technical' peoples have known for hundreds of generations, that is, that intimate contact with

nature in all its forms gives people a sense of well-being, a sense of belonging to a greater whole and a sense of purpose. The Hindu philosopher, Shankara¹, realized this centuries ago when he made The Great Identification, 'This art Thou.' We are all star-dust! Fauna and flora are all star-dust! Mountains, rivers and oceans, star-dust! Photons, quarks, bosons. Star-dust!

In the final chapters, you urge all of mankind to join the Cosmos in praising God. It is here that I find myself at odds with you again. I may well have missed the point somewhere along the line, but when I read Psalm 19 (King James Version):

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork

I take this to mean that the heavens (along with all of creation) do not *actively* praise God, but rather the Cosmos *reflects* His glory and it is for us, as sentient beings, to look, wonder, and, in awe, worship the Creator silently, opening our hearts to experience what Rudolf Otto called the 'numinous'. If your book can help to re-establish our links with God through the Cosmos, it will be a blessing indeed.

Reviewed by Wynford Jones

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1. Adi Shankara (early 8th century CE) was one of the most revered Hindu philosophers and theologians from India who consolidated the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta. (Wikipedia)

**Marcus Braybrooke, *Christianity: An Explorer's Guide*
Braybrooke Press, 2013. 300 pp. ISBN 978 1 291 55714 5 (pbk) £15.00**

Marcus Braybrooke is a leading figure in the worldwide interfaith movement, and he is also a Church of England parish priest. He states his aims at the outset, 'I hope this book will help people of other religions and none to appreciate Christianity. I also hope that Christians will learn more about the rich heritage which is theirs.' He succeeds brilliantly.

The history of the Christian tradition is told, from its origins through the Crusades and Reformation right up to the present day. The book can be read straight through or as there are nine chapters, each divided into clearly headed sections, the reader can easily dip into subjects of particular interest. Suggestions for further reading for each chapter encourage deeper exploration of the different topics covered. Although an index would have been helpful and proofreading could have been better, those are minor caveats in a book which is a joy to read and a privilege to review.

Marcus Braybrooke begins with religious experience. 'Chapter 1: Life-Changing Encounter' opens with the prayer of a Dalit in twentieth century India, who longs for an experience of God. This is a longing which has been felt by people throughout the ages and which for Christians is answered by the life-changing experience of the living presence of Jesus Christ. Braybrooke looks at the transformative effect this has had on the lives of some of the most influential figures in Christianity: Paul, Augustine, Luther, John Wesley, Sadhu Sundar Singh and Mother Teresa. Throughout the book Christianity is viewed not as 'a list either of teachings to be believed or of enjoyable ways of behaving to be avoided' but as an 'encounter with the Living God.'

At the outset, Marcus Braybrooke alludes to Schleiermacher, 'who has been called the father of modern Protestant theology' and whose experiential approach to religion will be familiar to many AHSSSE members. However, the objections raised by Karl Barth to that approach are also considered. This establishes the pattern of the book. Subjects are considered from different points of view and readers may form their own opinions.

From experience we move through other dimensions of religion: ritual, myth, doctrinal, ethical, social, material and on to an explanation of the Phenomenological Approach to the subject. In Chapter 2 the historical Jesus and the world he lived in are explored. Just who were the Sadducees and the Pharisees? The life and teaching of Jesus are recounted up to his crucifixion. Then the resurrection is approached as recorded in the gospels as well as through other interpretations. In subsequent chapters the question of just who Jesus was – Son of Man or Son of God – is explored. Chapter 4 deals with God – from the Hebrew Scriptures to Richard Dawkins' views. The next two chapters tell the history of the church worldwide. How to live a Christian life, the meaning of the sacraments and priorities for the individual and the church follow.

Braybrooke writes that every book 'reflects the outlook and standpoint of the author' and so we are afforded 'An Autobiographical Excursus' which gives the reader a fascinating insight into his own life and spiritual journey. This is important for throughout the book we are accompanied by a wise and unobtrusive guide; Marcus Braybrooke allows his own measured voice to be heard. His open-mindedness, and deep connection with what lies behind all true religion, inform his approach to other faiths. 'Interfaith dialogue is not just a matter of understanding the other, it is a grappling together towards a deeper apprehension of the divine, in which different insights correct and enrich each other.' Thus his own faith underpins his engagement with those of others.

A copy of the book has been donated to the Library at UWTSD in Lampeter and I urge AHSSSE members to borrow it – or better, invest in a most enlightening and clearly-written work of scholarship.

Reviewed by Marianne Rankin

**Diarmuid O'Murchu, *God in the Midst of Change: Wisdom for Confusing Times*
Maryknoll, NY, Orbis, 2013. (iv) 195 pp. ISBN 978 1 62698 041 9 (pbk) £12.99**

The metaphor of the opening sentence sets the tone for this book: 'Millions of people have their heads buried in the quick sands of our changing world'. Life has become so complex; the pace of life has become so fast and the extent of change so far-reaching; and whatever political party we vote for, we can have little influence on any of the factors that shape our daily lives. For many, the turmoil is just too much to face up to, so they shut down mentally and perhaps opt out practically – they live their lives in a state of denial. To counter this fear and apathy, the author is suggesting we put our faith in the wisdom of the creation itself with a Divine creativity as its central inspiration.

The book is in three parts. The first part deals with the distortions, misrepresentations and misinterpretations of the pillars of present-day western society; these foundations – like the Bible – are now considered to be without meaning or purpose. The second part deals with the chaos that many feel surrounds their everyday lives, which leaves many people feeling dis-

empowered, dislocated and disillusioned. This part of the book opens with an assessment of the impact of computer technology and the effects of our plundering of the Earth, and ends with a dire warning of potential human extinction if we do not mend our ways. We can no longer rely on the 'God of the Gaps' to save us!

The third part of the book is an exhortation to put our trust in the existence and wisdom of the evolving Cosmic Spirit – in other words, God. The author wants readers to extend their horizons of vision further back in time than just the 2000 years of Christianity, and further out into the cosmos than just human happenings on Earth. O'Murchu is encouraging us to rekindle the close association with the Earth we experienced in an earlier and less sophisticated age, as has been advocated over the past few decades by Fr. Thomas Berry – a move towards the more animistic pagan beliefs and those of the East. The world is increasingly rejecting the capitalist, colonialist past of the west – this patriarchal will-to-power, to borrow a term from Nietzsche – and is increasingly embracing a more spiritual outlook.

O'Murchu sees the concept of the autocratic sky-god at the heart of western religion as part of this patriarchal attitude, and throughout the book is advocating an individual spirituality to replace authoritarian religion, and a view of ourselves as part of an organic Earth metaphorically represented by James Lovelock's *Gaia*. He sees greater conscious collaboration between humans as our contribution to *Gaia*. He does however, disturbingly, believe that Earth is a source of abundant (and therefore, by implication, inexhaustible) resources: we need only to re-structure our economic systems of distribution and there will be enough for all. Other than the author's fellow Catholics, I suspect there are few who would agree with this stance [this is not an intrinsically Catholic viewpoint (Ed.)]. I was relieved to see however that he dismisses the 'original sin' myth. O'Murchu sees the exploitation by humans of one another and of the environment as symptoms of stunted sexuality.

The third and final part of the book uses quantum interaction as a metaphor for the shift in consciousness that humankind now needs for survival. Happily, O'Murchu rejects the materialistic view of consciousness expressed by philosophers such as Daniel Dennett in favour of a more spiritual interpretation. This is an excellent, interesting and thought-provoking book, the contents of which I suspect conservative Christians will find it hard to accept, but which those with more liberal views should welcome.

Reviewed by Howard Jones

**Dr Natalie Tobert, *Spiritual Psychiatries: Mental Health practices in India and UK*
London, Atheos 2013. xxii. 389pp. ISBN 978 1 494962 25 8 (pbk) £15.00**

In this groundbreaking book the British medical anthropologist, Dr Natalie Tobert, makes a comparative analysis between various psychiatric protocols found in her own multi-ethnic London borough of Harrow, and a variety of field settings in India. A major thrust of her work is that mental health strategies found in the latter could and should be transferred to the former (and beyond).

In Part I she highlights multiple treatments found in, for example, studies conducted in Kolkata and Pondicherry. Dr Tobert's sample consisted of forty respondents who were mixed

in terms of caste, gender, age and profession. She discovered that a plurality of treatments were the typical regimen for individuals presenting themselves with psychological difficulties. This plurality was mirrored in the multitude of explanatory models and theories for causes of illness.

Treatments included Western pharmacology, homeopathy, Ayurvedic herbal medicine, Bach flower remedies, and spiritual healing including prayer, ritual, pilgrimage and divination (e.g. palm leaf oracles). Sacred sites such as the Mahalingam temple in Tamil Nadu were also utilised and the importance of sacred architecture stressed. Dr Tobert discovered explanatory theories of disease causation to be just as diverse, depending on the kind of practitioner she interviewed. Thus she found, in addition to bio-medical and psycho-social issues, references to the influence of the planets, karma and spirit possession. The patients also embraced a wide aetiological range: metaphysical beliefs about existence and post-mortem survival were further variables to be included in developing an overall picture.

Each account of her field work settings provides the reader with rich and detailed imagery in respect of her journey to the location, her experiences with different kinds of informant, the surgery, consulting room, nursing home and temple. Dr Tobert notes the lack of purely individual consultations as opposed to more collective ones, when even a whole extended family may turn up in support of the patient, probably not at the appointed time – waiting to see a practitioner is in itself considered to be therapeutic. Patients in the parts of India described seemed to appreciate, even expect, treatments to be eclectic. In tandem with Western orthodoxy we thus find ‘complimentary’ or ‘alternative’ approaches commonplace. If need be patients may go to a range of different specialists, or on occasion be referred. These could include astrologers (clairvoyants), traditional healers (shamans) and architectural experts.

Patients appeared to experience as wide a collection of symptoms as anyone in the West. However, they seemed less inclined to distinguish between the physical, emotional and mental, therefore the treatments on offer bridged the conventionally psychiatric, the spiritual and the occult. Beliefs in the efficacy of one did not exclude belief in the potential power of the others. There seemed to be a cultural complementarity between practitioner and patient as regards theorising on the reasons for malaise and the recommended aid. This is less likely in the West, where gaps between different kinds of knowledge and their application are found, and any affinity is rare, often expensive and frowned upon. Cultural interpretations by Indian patients of their respective conditions included reasons that are mentioned rather less in the West, including for instance ‘pressure to marry’ (because arranged), ‘over use of the occult’ (because Indians are more likely to follow occult precepts) and issues around honour and shame. Of course, all these *can* be found in multi-ethnic boroughs like Harrow, London which is exactly Dr Tobert’s main thesis.

She noted that there was no proper terminology for depression as a disease. Rather such visits of the ‘black dog’ were treated as no more than transient ‘episodes’. Hence stigma was less likely and positive value placed on the somatization of symptoms. Both diagnosis and treatment thus involved a matrix of tools at the practitioner’s disposal. Allopathic, homeopathic and ayurvedic systems were found to flourish both together and apart – the spectrum could be very wide. In addition, religious figures (gurus) like Sri Aurobindo and The Mother (Madame Mirra Alfasa) are often venerated as deities and thus have the power to heal. Dr Tobert noted that genealogy played an important role both in terms of particular healing arts, e.g. plant medicine, and patient outcomes, i.e. influences of former lives in the same lineage.

Professionals in the Indian study like the psychiatrist, Dr Miovic, showed they were quite *au fait* with many healing modalities including herbalism remedies, acupuncture, homeopathy and flower essences. I would not think a psychiatrist at the Maudsley Hospital, just down the road from where I live, would be as likely to have such a wide perspective or suggest to their clients supportive religious rituals – nor would the clients expect such in return!

In chapters 6 and 7 the reader will find a discussion of the use of religious establishments for relief of mental distress as a parallel adjunct to the approaches covered above. Again, this would be an uncommon view in the U.K. where, for instance, people have to find retreat centres for themselves. In terms of my own interest in earth mysteries, religious buildings and architecture I found this section particularly enlightening, as was the author's account of perambulations at the Tiruvidaimarudur temple (reminiscent of my own experiences of walking meditations while on Friends of the Western Buddhist Order retreats). A number of sites in Tamil Nadu were highlighted and rituals and divinatory practices witnessed. The links between goddesses, gods and the planets were explained. Again we have a richly textured description throughout.

In Part 3 Dr Norbert compares mundane and esoteric models of mental distress and mentions a number of triggers. I found some of the mundane ones actually quite esoteric e.g. the effect of energies of the land and role of geographical space, and I considered the esoteric ones often deterministic, even fatalistic. The discussion between the writer and one of her key informants, Dr Basu, was especially interesting in respect of spirit possession, the overshadowing of vitality and entities. Not all of these were seen or experienced as negative.

Part 4 addresses Indian frameworks of knowledge and points up the Western cultural limitations of curricula for philosophy and psychology. This appeared to be a frustrating matter for Indian teachers, as a hierarchy of knowledge does exist and in contrast the author explored the widely accepted concepts of the guru and of initiation: the guru is considered to have a wider gnosis at his or her disposal than practitioners limiting themselves to purely Western approaches, and the kudos of initiation adds prestige and power. Cultural definitions of what was considered 'normal' appeared to be rather wider than in the West and this was a theme throughout the book. Practitioners might consider the complete range of illness causations before advocating any treatment specifics (this no doubt being one reason why appointments took much longer than at one's local G.P. surgery in the UK).

Although loss of cultural identity because of growing individualism was posited as a concern for both sexes in Dr Tobert's Indian study, the differentiation between Indian and British conceptions of the self was highlighted, the former being a much more collective phenomenon containing the subtleties of caste and sub-caste divisions. Dr Tobert argues for a more integrated model of western and eastern approaches to reduce the hegemony of the former. T. S. Kuhn in his seminal work on paradigm shifts in science (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* 1962) and Dr Pandey, one of the author's respondents, both argue for the necessity of such an approach in the Western world, a shift towards a more integrated West-East paradigm of medical theory and practice. On the educational front also one can ask who trains the trainers? Knowledge stops at a certain level and does not filter down much, as the author herself is aware. What about staffing levels? The values of cultural humility, inclusion and so on are those we may all uphold. However, the kind of syncretism seen in India is unlikely to be reproduced over here anytime soon I feel.

In Part 5 the author considers the possibility and practicality of transferring models and concomitant treatments found in the East to Western environments. While her arguments are

very detailed and full there seems to be insufficient consideration of how this could be done, economically speaking, with current funding levels for mental health. Also, I think Dr Tobert does not take into account the degree of navigation required to surmount the bureaucratic structures encountered across a whole range of NGOs, charities, government departments, health institutions and the like.

Part 5 therefore acts as an appeal and as a programmatic as to what could be done but it is maybe, unfortunately, a counsel of perfection at the moment. This book deserves a wide distribution both among the many mental health and other agencies she cites as well as the lay public. But I note that it is privately published and may fall between two stools, viz. not being sufficiently scholarly for the academy or sufficiently populist for the 'new age' reader. This, if correct, is a shame. If she can afford it I suggest that Dr Tobert gives away as many free copies as she can afford to appropriate figures, agencies, institutions and specialist libraries (no doubt she will have done a little of this already) plus making her text available as an e-book (not just on Kindle).

Kenneth Rees

**Mark Fox, *The Fifth Love: Exploring Accounts of the Extraordinary*
Kidderminster, Spirit and Sage, 2014. (viii) 182 pp. ISBN 978 0 9928197 0 5 (pbk)**

In a field veritably glutted with arguments for or against the possibility of ascertaining whether religious experience is a 'real' phenomenon that can be studied, Mark Fox's *The Fifth Love: Exploring Accounts of the Extraordinary* gives scholars and the lay audience something real to work with. Building his argument from actual data – from the RERC archive – Fox writes that it will be the central goal of the book to show how the experiences of ordinary people might 'show us something of what supernatural, transcendent – perhaps in some cases Divine – love feels like' (p. 20).

In comparison with his previous works¹, for which Fox has also mined the Alister Hardy Archive to pursue the subject of extraordinary experience, the current work seems more intended for a non-scholarly, popular audience. At the outset one senses his main audience is 'the interested but casual reader' (p. 26) for whom the book's often universalizing tone will be unproblematic or even welcome. His idea of a *fifth love* is given the following the poetic description: 'the other-worldly numinous 'charge' of the transcendent, encountering love' (p. 81). Fox's lyrical language sends a message to the reader that we are about to engage in an accessible, non-mechanistic encounter with the topic.

Moreover, one gets the immediate impression that Fox is turning the tables on the traditional scholarly approach to religious experience in this text, when he writes, after presenting one of his first accounts, that it would be 'tempting to speculate' that the mother's anguish over learning of her son's death in war, and the sudden turning on of a torch across the room by no-one's hand, are 'only coincidentally linked.' However, he signals from the beginning that in his view an acceptance of the extraordinary is to be taken as normative, that it is knee-jerk skepticism rather than belief that is a form of speculation, or at least that such belief is not to be automatically put 'on trial' as in so many studies of the paranormal. Here, he argues that if any purely naturalistic, this-worldly explanation were able to account for such experiences, this sort of positivism will be considered as only one possibility, and a rather dubious one at that.

As the book progresses, however, a more scientific tone is taken. Fox diligently covers his bases. That the study of transcendent love ‘must consider alternative this-worldly explanations of its data before it can be said to be complete’ (p. 128) is an important admission, which will relieve any unease with the unorthodoxy of his position. And by chapter three, Fox has effectively eased the reader into a scholar’s more critical register, establishing a tone of inquiry suitable to any secular viewpoint.

Love, he tells us, is a trendy topic of study. Fox has framed his coining of the idea of a *fifth love* after C S Lewis’ 1960 study of *The Four Loves*. These Lewis describes as affection, friendship, eros and charity. But what about God’s love, which has also been referred to as ‘Transcendent Love?’ Fox’s focus is here; he particularly wants to delve into the question of the affective dimension – what such transcendent love *feels like*.

Unifying elements of the accounts he examines are crisis, light, and passivity. Various types of crises in the accounts that may precipitate fifth love (such as existential crisis, relationship struggles, or dealing with death of loved one) are grouped for examination. To deal with accounts that mention an experience of light, he builds from his previous research on light phenomena, examining instances of love and light occurring together. His helpful distinction of passive versus active religious experience in chapter 3 is also well supported by his previous scholarship (p. 117). However, when he offers the statistic that 84 accounts were found to have elements of passivity versus 59 of activity, one is not clear if the sample is based on all 6000+ accounts in the archive.

Skeptics will have trouble with the frequent use of the word ‘clearly’, as in ‘Whatever might turn out to be the source of these ... episodes, it is clearly not a purely human, this-worldly one.’ (p. 6) Also, some might take issue with the lack of a quantifiable measurement standard inherent in assertions like, ‘... these experiences of love *so frequently* appear to have a source *outside of the physical realm*’ (p. 46, italics mine). But they will appreciate his critique of several cognitive psychological approaches to extraordinary experience, including attention to such issues as recall and memory, to which a large section of chapter 4 is devoted. Fox is correct in pointing out that we are dealing with a different order of phenomena when we talk of felt experiences versus perceived or observed experiences, and as such they may require different means of analysis. He points out that for experiences that are ‘literally beyond words, the problem of accurate and detailed recall of them is compounded,’ not only by questions of accuracy of recall and verification but by their private nature (p. 150).

A skeptic also won’t be comfortable with Fox’s conclusion that the love-experience accounts are *a priori* more meaningful than those produced in the laboratory experiments he critiques. That the experiences are not in the end reducible to distortions of memory or temporal lobe lability is a case not quite sufficiently made.

Fox is open, though, to the question of whether the burgeoning field of neuro-theology might be useful if applied to understanding what the brain is doing at the moment when a religious experience occurs, as well as upon recall of the experience. In chapter four he explores and finds wanting theories that would reductively explain love experiences in terms of temporal lobe lability, abreaction, rebound, and endorphins. The main contribution here is that these theories can be potentially used to explain *some* kinds of religious experiences but each has problems accounting for other types. For example, regarding the endorphin hypothesis, he notes that there are time issues: whereas the effects of an endorphin ‘dump’ may last many hours to a few days, ‘experience of love last for seconds at the most, unless the fruits of the experiences are factored in, in which case we are dealing with experiences that last, in some

cases, for years' (p. 168). The good news is that this beckons researchers to become more explicit in their typologies of religious experiences, and furthermore, it might provide a push toward more interdisciplinary partnerships in research. That is, to the extent that those in the sciences come to realize that it may not be efficacious to lump an array of different experiences together for study, they may be more inclined to consult the research of religious studies scholars such as Fox, who have been diligently working on theoretical frameworks that can better sort and categorize – or, equally important, show where such taxonomies are not possible.

Fox calls attention to the limits of scholarly projects examining accounts of religious or spiritual or mystical experience. He reminds us that 'we are not dealing with experiences but with *reports* of experience' (p. 105) when we read from and interpret narrative accounts. While it may seem a picayune point, it is one all too often missed in debates about scholarly approaches to the study of mysticisms. The major point here is the caveat that we must be wary of taking testimonies at face value. But, he says, 'even if memory does become 'corrupted' over time, surely we are right to conclude that at least in some cases, something overpowering, overwhelming and life-changing occurred that is needful of explanation.' (p. 168)

Fox does not wish to interpret the source of transcendent love as having a psychological origin, though we are not sure why such a reading should be off the table. The fact that he can speak of 'subconsciously incubating mental phenomena suddenly breaking through into consciousness' (p. 103) shows that he can walk both sides in terms of a psychological reductionism. However, by the conclusion of his book he will align unequivocally on the side of affirming spiritual experience as non-reductive.

Whether or not he can, in the end, confirm that the *fifth love-experience* exists—and his case is well-made if we align with his parameters – he has achieved his more modest goal: to 'have raised serious questions about the adequacy of many taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature – and perhaps the mechanism – of religious experience'. We are left with no doubt that this goal has been met, 'creating in turn further questions that might provide 'springboards' for future research'. What is more, as with all of his work in which he engages with the Hardy Archive, the reader is left fascinated by the material, the array of experiences and his enthusiastic examination of what they may portend. Even if *The Fifth Love* were merely 'a glimpse of an as-yet dimly seen truth' (p. 173), for readers, sharing Fox's journey through accounts of transcendent experience can only feel a rich and worthy one.

Reviewed by Linda Ceriello

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1. *Religion, Spirituality, and Near Death Experience* (2002), and *Spiritual Encounters with Unusual Light Phenomena: Lightforms* (2008)

**Annekatriin Puhle, *Light Changes: Experiences in the Presence of Transformative Light*
Guildford, White Crow Books, 2013. 276 pp. ISBN 978 1 908733 18 4 £11.99**

Light Changes is the second book to focus exclusively on light phenomena in spiritually transformative experiences. The first was Mark Fox's 2008 book, *Spiritual Encounters with Unusual Light Phenomena: Lightforms*. Puhle acknowledges Fox's groundbreaking contribution and uses 153 of his cases. She adds cases from the literature beginning with the founding of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882. Finally, she includes 51 first-hand accounts of her own which she has compared to the previously-published cases. She offers a total of 809 usable cases drawn from a cornucopia of spiritually transformative experiences, including mystical, religious, and spiritual experiences, deathbed visions (DBVs), After Death Communications (ADCs), and Near-Death Experiences (NDEs). She acknowledges that this sample is not exhaustive and, in fact, lists books that could be used for further research in a footnote.

The author begins with a discussion of the role of light in myth and religion. She concludes that in virtually all the world's religions, God, other divine beings, and the human soul are experienced as light; also, that light is a key element in mystical experience. Puhle identifies 21 light forms (e.g., Beings of Light, Apparitions, Divine Beings).

The bulk of the book is composed of representative case reports, followed by an analysis of the data. From her composite data, Puhle identifies 6 antecedent variables:

- 1) Experience with a shapeless light or a light form other than human
- 2) Encounter with a dying human being in light
- 3) Encounter with a deceased human being in light
- 4) Encounter with an unknown human being in light
- 5) Encounter with an angel, a being of light, a religious being, or God
- 6) Communication with the light or a light figure

Next, she identifies 6 consequent variables:

- 7) Meaning of the experience
- 8) Message and information
- 9) Advice for, or foretelling of, the future
- 10) Comfort and well-being derived from the light or the light figure
- 11) Influence and impact and/or transformation of the person
- 12) Confidence in life after death

In the analysis of the data presented, Puhle finds that

32% of cases have communication taking place;

30% of the cases encounter a being of light – sometimes interpreted as an angel, Mary the Mother of Jesus, Jesus, or God – usually fitting into the religious frame of reference of the person;

23% were after-death communications;

16% were given previously-unknown information which later proved to be true;

14% were deathbed visions;

13% were encounters with an unknown person or persons;

6% were given information about the future that later proves accurate.

Puhle notes that 11% of the cases have more than one witness, with 3 cases having more than 50 witnesses. Only 2% were negative experiences, and this is consistent with Mark Fox's

findings on light forms. The overwhelming majority of cases presented (91%) found their experience meaningful, and 57% found comfort in the experience. The most meaningful experiences were those in which there was communication with the light or with a figure or human being in the light (31%).

Puhle concludes that these experiences with light, 'appear to be the most pleasant and uplifting of all exceptional human experiences (EHEs).' Significantly, she also finds that 'those who have been in touch with this other quality of light, and experience some conversation with it, have acquired a knowledge which could best be called an 'inner certainty'.'

I found *Light Changes* by Annekatriin Puhle to be a valuable addition to Mark Fox's pioneering work on light forms. Anyone interested in spiritually transformative experiences will find this material in Puhle's new book enlightening.

Reviewed by Dr Ken R. Vincent

Callum E. Cooper, *Telephone Calls from the Dead*

Portsmouth, Tricorn Books, 2012. xiv 193 pp. ISBN 978 0 9567597 2 6 (pbk) £8.99

Telephone Calls from the Dead offers some new data for this relatively rare sub-category of After Death Communication (ADC). As a point of departure, Cooper uses the 1979 publication *Phone Calls from the Dead* by D. S. Rogo and R. Bayless in which 50 cases are presented. Cooper includes 30 cases of his own, as well as 20 previously unreported cases acquired by the brilliant parapsychologist Scott Rogo. Interestingly, some of Cooper's cases involve calls on out-of-service telephones or telephones never connected.

The author begins with a brief description of the field of parapsychology and early research into electronic voice phenomena. The most famous researcher in this category is Thomas Edison who attempted to build a telephonic device to contact the dead. Building on Rogo's classification system, Cooper comes up with six categories:

- 1) Simple calls (14 cases) – a call from the deceased when the recipient knows that the caller has died;
- 2) Prolonged calls (5 cases) – a call from the deceased when the recipient has no knowledge that the caller has died and later learns of his/her death;
- 3) Answer calls (1 case) – a living person makes a call to someone they do not realize is dead, and yet they get an answer from the deceased;
- 4) Mixed calls (6 cases) – a mixture of simple and prolonged calls;
- 5) Intention calls (6 cases) – when a living person intends to make a call but doesn't – and the person they intended to call still gets the message;
- 6) Miscellaneous accounts (18 cases) – dreams, hauntings, or coincidence; voice-mail messages.

Cooper provides examples for all these categories. He goes on to discuss multiple theories including mis-perceived sounds, pranks, non-psychotic hallucinations/apparitions, and the super-psi hypothesis¹. He also includes a chapter on text messages and emails. The final chapter presents comments from three of his esteemed peers, and Cooper concludes with a statement of his desire to continue researching anomalous telephone experiences.

I have to say that I was disappointed that Cooper failed to reference one of my personal favorites – the classic 1995 study by Bill and Judy Guggenheim, *Hello from Heaven*, which includes an excellent chapter on telephone calls from the dead. Of the 3,300 cases analyzed, they found ‘about 50’ that were telephone calls from the dead and concluded that this was the rarest form of ADC. Regarding ADCs that involve dreams in which the contact is made by telephone in the dream, I agree with the Guggenheims that these are no different from any other ADC in a vivid dream. The Guggenheims noted that most of their ‘fearful’ ADCs were not from loved ones experiencing hellish spiritual experiences, but rather ADCs in which the appearance of the dead loved one scared the experiencers who often feared they were losing their minds. Erlendur Haraldsson in *The Departed Among the Living* alluded to the same phenomena.

This book is very readable, but for those who prefer an academic analysis of the data, it will be forthcoming in an article to appear in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, vol. 78,2 entitled, ‘An Analysis of Exceptional Experiences Involving Telecommunication Technology’ by C. E. Cooper.

My own feeling is that phone calls from the dead may be a way for our loved ones to contact us without frightening us; i.e., a telephone call is probably less frightening than the touch of a solid apparition.

Reviewed by Dr Ken R. Vincent

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1. Super-psi is the theory that the evidence for the afterlife is really caused by the unconscious psychic abilities of living persons. However, there is overwhelming evidence for the afterlife which cannot be explained by super-psi. <http://ncu9nc.blogspot.co.uk>

R. Craig Hogan (ed.), *Afterlife Communication: 16 Proven Methods; 85 True Accounts* Loxahatchee, FL, USA, Greater Reality Publications, 2014. 320pp. ISBN 978 0980211177

This edited volume comprises contributions from participants at the ASCS conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, 11-13 July, 2014, but the book is very far from being a dry compilation of Conference Proceedings.

Numerous books have been written telling us about the Afterlife and what we can expect when we pass over. Those books that offer the most comfort to relatives currently grieving over recently deceased relatives give detailed descriptions of contact by others with their departed loved ones. These messages also give hope to those who are contemplating what happens after Earthly life has ended and who are unsure or frightened of the future, or even if they have one. Many of the successful communications described here are very moving.

The difference with this book, compared with others, is that it is not about just one method of communication with Spirit but many different ways of communicating – through mediums, by self-guided connections, during meditation, by using pendulums; in dreams; through automatic writing; messages received through electronic media (ITC) such as telephone, radio or computer; and other methods. Craig Hogan suggests that people can be trained to contact Spirit though guided meditation. Karen Herrick recounts stories of what might be described

as ‘miracles’ where an agency (Karen calls these ‘guardian angels’) intervenes by non-material means to prevent a disaster to some individual: why such people should be chosen to be saved is not for us to fathom in this lifetime. Anne and Herb Puryear write about the construction of a Faraday cage to assist in afterlife communication in a simplified *psychomanteum*¹.

This shows just how flexible Spirit can be so that we have the greatest chance of understanding what passing to Spirit means to us. It also makes the book considerably more interesting than those that deal with only one method of communication, or messages received by just one medium, however insightful they may be.

The communications have taken place with varying degrees of ‘reliably obtained’ evidence: some under scientifically rigorous conditions while others have taken place quite naturally in an everyday setting; others fall somewhere in between these two extremes of spiritual communication. However, whether or not these events occur under scientifically rigorous conditions, they involve non-material agencies and it is clear that the information being given is meaningful to the souls on Earth for whom it was meant. Each connection has a personal meaning and a resonance not only with those receiving the messages but, I would suspect, with the readers of this book.

Herein is a cornucopia of evidence of the Afterlife, which would be comforting to those who have no difficulty in opening their minds to accept what is freely given but equally could be a starting point for those who are sceptical about this aspect of life here on Earth and its potential connection with another dimension. This is a fascinating, compelling and thoroughly uplifting book with its central message that Spirit is all around us all of the time.

Howard Jones

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1. In parapsychology and spiritualism, a *psychomanteum* is a small, enclosed area set up with a comfortable chair, dim lighting, and a mirror angled so as not to reflect anything but darkness intended to communicate with spirits of the dead. (Wikipedia)

Harry Freedman, *The Gospels’ Veiled Agenda: Revolution, Priesthood and The Holy Grail* Winchester, ‘O’ Books, 2009. (xiii) 182 pp. ISBN 978 1 84694 260 0 (pbk) £11.99

This interesting and dynamic book, set in the time when Jesus was teaching and the gospels were being formulated, demonstrates parallels with today’s world. The author explores the sheer difficulty of communicating spiritual truth through religions and spiritual organisations, with their internal politics, fashionable excitements and ideological battles, in a world of ever changing political situations and the proliferation of texts by all sorts of people.

Harry Freedman, with a PhD in Aramaic (the language of Jesus) brings considerable knowledge from his research and publications centered on religious and historical Judaism during Jesus’ lifetime and immediately after. He draws not only on the Bible but also on the many texts circulating at the time and soon after without even quoting from Nag Hamadi or the Dead Sea Scrolls which he mentions in passing. Some of those he cites are of the early Church Fathers but most are of lesser known Jewish texts which reflect the Gospels or at least his argument from them. He claims to be using *Midrash* – the Rabbinic form of exegesis used

to clarify and update the Torah for legal (*Halakhic*) or teaching (*Aggadic*) purposes. *Midrash* was first written down in the second century but Freedman applies it to the first century gospels in the 21st Century. Why not? He writes in a fluid and engaging way.

He observes that the Rabbis would promote their ideas by weaving them into well-known biblical themes and compares this with Shakespeare's use of earlier stories such as the Florentine *Il Pecorone* story as a framework for *The Merchant of Venice*. Similarly the writers of the Gospels, all Jews, would want to write in the mould of their existing sacred texts – later known as the Bible – to give authority and conviction to the story of Jesus, also a Jew.

At some length he shows how various episodes in the life of Christ (Jesus) echo stories in the Old Testament. For example: Herod's killing of male children under two in Bethlehem mirrors the Pharaoh's killing of Jewish boys at the time of the birth of Moses; Moses received the Ten Commandments on a mountain top just as Jesus was transfigured on a mountain top; Abraham travelled for three days to the site of the sacrifice of Isaac just as three days elapsed between the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus; the theme of Saviour/Scapegoat starts in Leviticus with the goat of Azazel bearing 'all the iniquities ... in the wilderness' and ends with Jesus on the Cross of Calvary 'to give his life a ransom for many'.

He describes this as a literary technique – just story telling – suggesting there is no further reality behind it. But is that all it was? He doesn't mention that these themes correspond to the realities of the collective unconscious postulated by C G Jung, in which the hero's birth, the number three, death and rebirth, the mountain and the scapegoat are all significant, shared archetypal phenomena?

The establishment of a symbol from history is important for his Grail argument, but before developing this he diverts to his 'Revolutionary' theme. He acknowledges that he takes this from Hyam Maccaby's *Revolution in Judea* (1973). In the all-important Temple of Jerusalem, where Jesus often taught, the Sadducees were the old guard of wealthy families, friendly with the Romans and wishing to maintain the status quo; the Pharisees wanted change and to take the temple into the community and education, but, Freedman argues, Jesus was part of a group, along with John the Baptist, who wanted to deepen the spirituality of the temple. A reformer of the Temple – not quite the revolution that Christianity was?

Whether 'Jesus' true ambition' was to be a Jewish religious reformer it is difficult to ascertain. Perhaps in his process of individuation (a Jungian psychological concept) he may have thought he needed to reform the Jewish Temple – or somebody did. To progress to the role of Christ-bearer may have taken him longer to appreciate – and events conspired. Later he said he was the Christ and 'whosoever believeth in me shall be saved'. This is not mentioned by Mr Freedman.

One of the many interesting details in the book is about the controversial severing of the ear of the High Priest's servant Malchus by Peter when Jesus was arrested. Freedman associates this with the fact that at the induction of a High Priest sacrificial blood was sprinkled on the tip of his right ear. A beautiful chapter traces the symbol of the special garment – from Adam's clothing made by God, through Joseph's coat of many colours to the touching of the hem of Jesus's garment – 'If only I may touch his garment, I shall be made well.' From the Apocryphal Acts of Judas Thomas he cites the exquisite 'Hymn of the Pearl' where the hero's garment symbolises his spiritual purity. All are examples of clothes as caring and protecting, enfolding and identifying.

On symbolic correspondences in the context of seeking the Grail, Freedman quotes St John: 'Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They therefore said among themselves, "Let us not tear it but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the scriptures might be fulfilled' (John 19:23-24). The Hebrew language is structured by consonants and the word for lot is *goral* whose root is *grl*. And this sounds like Grail so Freedman argues that this means the seamless tunic is the Grail. This is unlikely because *goral* means *lot* which could be anything – a sack of potatoes perhaps? The most commonly accepted etymology of the word *grail* or *grail* is that it derives from the contemporary latin *gradalis* or *gradale* via an earlier form, *cratalis*, a derivative of *crater* or *cratus* which was, in turn, borrowed from the Greek *krater* (κρατήρ, a large wine-mixing vessel) none of which sound like *grl* or *goral* – meaning a gamblers lot.

The symbol of an eternal vestment without seam is beautiful and likely to be a spiritual entity like an aurora borealis stretching through time and space. The book trade prefers to make it a materialist object which can be sought and found, preferring to deny its reality as a state of consciousness with the fine spiritual qualities of receptivity and inclusiveness. The problem is that those who have to trust texts are *believers* rather than *knowers*. When you've found the Grail you will know it by direct experience unmediated by a book.

If you want to know more about how religions are made up, especially Christianity, and discover many fascinating facts then this book is an easy read and worth picking off the shelf, where it has been for six years and is still available.

Reviewed by Roger Coward

**Mara Freeman, *Grail Alchemy: Initiations into the Celtic Mystery Tradition*
Rochester, VT, Destiny Books, 2014. ix 278 pp. ISBN 978 1 62055 191 2 (pbk)**

From the cauldron of the Goddess to the cup of Christ, the Grail has had many shapes throughout its long history. (p. 154)

'The Holy Grail won't go away.' The first sentence in Mara Freeman's book is, to my mind, an encouraging intimation of things to come – no beating around the bush then? I am not disappointed. Ms Freeman manages a fine balancing act between a compelling and imaginative telling of the Grail's story, backed up by a wide ranging knowledge and impeccable referencing, both in her specialist subject, Celtic spirituality and mythology, but also in the links she makes with other traditions.¹

Early on she introduces us to a journey through the religious (in a broad sense) imagination which has banished the feminine from the divine, the grail being the quintessential feminine symbol. But, as she points out, this element keeps surfacing, notable in the adoration of the Virgin Mary, made manifest in the cathedrals of mediaeval Europe and the tradition of courtly love (pp. 3, 4). The undeniably androcentric theology of mainstream Christianity may be stubbornly resistant to according Mary the Mother of God divine status, but this cannot quell her pride of place in the popular religious imagination: 'the human thirst for the divine feminine was something that could not be assuaged by the Church with its one-sided masculine authority' (p. 4).

Ms Freeman goes on to illustrate the imbalance caused by the loss of the divine feminine with the story of the rape of the Well Maidens, whose offering of well water to thirsty travellers was symbolic of the free gifts of nature to humanity, and whose violation (their free gifts taken by force) resulted in a wasteland. 'This fatal imbalance [masculine over feminine] has been the tragic theme sounding throughout the history of Western civilization ... [in] our war-torn, ravaged and polluted world.' (p. 7) As the story unfolds and the Grail emerges from pre-Christian legend, Ms Freeman deftly places it in the landscape, notably in Glastonbury where grail legends abound, so we are anchored in time and space, yet still immersed in the legends that surround the quest through history. So, as promised by that first sentence, the scene is set; and we are taken with stories, and visualisation exercises at the end of each chapter through our own search for the Grail. What we need for our 'visionquests', she says, are focus, concentration and imagination, this last, far from being 'unreal' is '*the language of the soul* and the source of creativity' (p. 11).

There are so many stories from the rich store of the Celtic tradition, such a wealth of references and sources given to contextualise and expand our understanding, that there is no space in a review to itemise them. The book itself is a skillful guide for a journey of discovery on the inner and the outer levels which is a joy to embark on. But it is not just for personal exploration; the theme is always our connection to our world, and the indivisibility of spirit and nature in the Celtic tradition. This is the centre, but links with other mythologies and traditions add richness, and the connection of past and present in the linking of the historical Grail quest with modern pilgrimage gives a reassuring sense of continuity and hope, in spite of our current plight: 'The Holy Grail won't go away' ...

One extremely important aspect of Celtic spirituality is the understanding of cycles, life and death in the round, so to speak, rather than the contemporary mind set which perceives time in linear terms and seeks perpetual growth and expansion, and runs from death. The Alchemical Grail is a metaphor for the balancing/uniting of polarities, of the masculine and feminine principles. Alchemy was in literal terms the attempt to create life by uniting these elements (silver and gold, sulphur and mercury, sun and moon). Has modern science really advanced so far beyond these aims? It seems that we are still trying to create life in the laboratory, while ignoring natural creation and a world in travail, because we are still not in balance.

Having waxed lyrical in my praise of this book, which I so enjoyed, I do wonder why 'The Alchemical Grail' is such a late chapter (p. 157) since the title promises us alchemy from the start, as it were. There are allusions here and there throughout the text, and of course alchemy is no light matter (sic). The process, on whatever level we look at it, is painstaking and subtle, so it could be argued that we need the preparation offered by the chapters and vision quests that precede it to be in the right frame of mind, and heart, to understand. Further, the intention may be for us to discover that the transformative process awaits us whenever we undertake a quest, or a spiritual journey such as this book offers, that alchemy is a process inherent in all journeys towards spiritual awakening and a deeper connection with the natural world. Ms Freeman relates the alchemical Grail to Glastonbury, having prepared us for this in the previous chapter 'The Grail Comes To Glastonbury': '... the streams of the grail legend flowed into the physical world and became a part of the geo-mythical landscape of the British Isles' (p. 127). There are indeed red and white springs that flow into the Chalice well gardens below the Tor, and the Chalice Well with its *vesica piscis*³ cover is still a place of pilgrimage for many seekers of the Grail.

It becomes apparent that if one takes the red and white of alchemy², the sulphur and mercury, as masculine and feminine, the chapter is well placed – successful alchemy in these terms would be a healing of the imbalance and duality [the story so far] that have beset western civilisation and led us to such a state of alienation and danger. Ms Freeman quotes Anne Baring a Jungian analyst: ‘Alchemy is the science of bringing the two great feminine and masculine principles ... into relationship – into a state of marriage’ (p. 158). The Grail quest has been ongoing for thousands of years, perhaps 157 pages in this instance is allowable!

We in the Society are interested in spiritual experience. This book is a manual, with its 'visionquest' exercises, for just this, but it also gives us the pleasure of old stories retold, a wealth of contextual detail, and many well considered links to traditions outside Ms Freeman's area of expertise. Thus it offers glimpses into other journeys, other spiritual adventures, other realms for the imagination to wander in.

Reviewed by Patricia Murphy

1. The author does make one minor error when outside her comfort zone: she refers to Safed as ‘a holy city in Acre’ (p. 155). Safed and Acre are both cities in Northern Israel
2. In country folklore red and white flowers together are still considered unlucky, (this sort of superstition indicates that the object/combination etc. was deemed a powerful one, dangerous without due care) This tradition may be dying out; for instance it was once a strong taboo to bring red and white flowers to the sickbed, but now that flowers are often banned from hospital wards for hygienic reasons, it is slowly fading away.
3. *Vesica piscis*: interlocking circles where the fish shaped overlap symbolises the meeting of the outer and inner worlds. 

Mara will be leading a workshop and retreat in July this year at the Chalice Well, Glastonbury. See flyer, and Other Events p. 58 for details

Library News

University of Wales Trinity Saint David: Library and Learning Resources Libraries Together Passport

As part of the further harmonisation of services across the new University Library and also across Wales, the Lampeter Campus Library has been reviewing the various external membership schemes currently running within the service.

It was felt that many of these schemes duplicated provision and so for ease of internal and external management, and to ensure a more consistent approach for AHSSSE members, it is suggested that those who wish to use the University Library do so by joining the Libraries Together Passport scheme rather than the previous generic external membership scheme.

This arrangement also allows access to a number of other academic libraries within the region, which the previous scheme did not, and so adding value for members.

In order to access this scheme Alister Hardy Society members are asked to complete the Libraries Together passport form available via the University Library website, and return to the Alister Hardy Collection Librarian, along with details of Society membership to:

Thomas Pitchford
Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre
Lampeter Campus Library, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter. SA48 7ED
e-mail: t.pitchford@uwtsd.ac.uk Telephone: 01570 424821 (Lampeter)

Please note that the other main external membership scheme is SCONUL Access, which is a reciprocal service, for academics, supported by most of the higher education libraries of the UK and Ireland. To apply for membership visit the SCONUL web site at www.sconul.ac.uk and complete the application form. For queries and further details please contact sconul@tsd.uwtsd.ac.uk

For further information or if there are any queries regarding this proposal please contact:

Alison Harding
Head of Library & Learning Resources: Carmarthen, Lampeter & London Campuses, UWTSD
e-mail: a.harding@uwtsd.ac.uk
Telephone: 01267 676778 (Carmarthen) 01570 424802 (Lampeter)

Books Received for Review

Please see below for the list of books we have received for review. If any of our current reviewers, or other interested readers, would like to write a review of any of these, please contact **Marion MacPolin** – mmacpolin@yahoo.co.uk who will arrange for a copy to be sent to you. When we receive your review, the book will become yours. If you would like to review a book that is not on this list, please contact the Editor – theotokos66@gmail.com

Baker, David W (ed.)	<i>Biblical Faith and Other Religions: an Evangelical Assessment</i>	(Kregel, 2014)
Lassale-Klein, Robert	<i>Blood and Ink: Ignacio Ellacuría, Jon Sobrino, and the Jesuit Martyrs of the University of Central America</i>	(Orbis, 2014)
Haight, Roger	<i>Spirituality Seeking Theology</i>	(Orbis, 2014)
Chryssides, George D & Geaves, Ron	<i>The Study of Religion: an Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods</i> (2 nd Edition)	(Bloomsbury, 2014)
Stewart, Pamela J & Strathern, Andrew	<i>Ritual: Key Concepts in Religion</i>	(Bloomsbury, 2014)
Magesa, Laurenti	<i>What is Not Sacred? African Spirituality</i>	(Orbis, 2013)
Mandair, Arvind-Pal Singh	<i>Sikhism: a Guide for the Perplexed</i>	(Bloomsbury, 2013)

- Spurgeon, C H *Sermons on Women of the Old Testament* (Hendrickson, 2014)
- Alexander, Eben MD *The Map of Heaven: How Science, Religion and Ordinary People are Proving the Afterlife* (Simon & Schuster, 2014)
- Storbakken, Jason *Radical Spirituality: Repentance, Resistance, Revolution* (Orbis, 2014)
- Blakely, Colin *Christian Thinkers: a Beginner's Guide to over Seventy Leading Theologians through the Ages* (Hendrickson, 2014)
- Horan, Daniel P, OFM *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton: a New Look at the Spiritual Inspiration of his Life, Thought, and Writing* (Ave Maria Press, 2014)
- Keathley, Kenneth D *40 Questions about Creation and Evolution* (Kregel, 2014)
- & Rooker, Mark F.
- Min, Anselm K (ed) *The Task of Theology: Leading Theologians on the Most Compelling Questions for Today* (Orbis, 2014)
- Perry, T A *Wisdom in the Hebrew Bible: Exploring God's Twilight Zone* (Hendrickson, 2014)
- Crockett, Kent *Slaying Your Giants: Biblical Solutions to Everyday Problems* (Hendrickson, 2013)
- Fredrickson, David E *Eros and the Christ: Longing and Envy in Paul's Christology* (Fortress, 2013)
- Habito, Ruben L F *Zen and the Spiritual Exercises: Paths of Awakening and Transformation* (Orbis, 2013)
- Tanous, Alex, D.D. *Conversations with Ghosts* (White Crow, 2013)
- with Cooper, Callum E.
- Himes, Kenneth R *Christianity and the Political Order: Conflict, Cooptation, and Cooperation* (Orbis 2013)
- Jonson, Jonas *Wounded Visions: Unity, Justice, and Peace in the World Church after 1968* (Eerdmans, 2013)
- Stewart, Robert B (ed.) *Can Only One Religion be True: Paul Knitter & Harold Netland in Dialogue* (Fortress, 2013)
- Treston, Kevin *Emergence for Life not Fall from Grace: making sense of the Jesus story in the light of evolution* (Mosaic Press 2013)
- Veneroso, Joseph R *Honoring the Void: Meditations on the Meaning of Life* (Orbis, 2013)
- Myers, Ched & *Our God is Undocumented: Biblical Faith and Immigrant Justice (US/Mexican border)* (Orbis, 2012)
- Colwell, Matthews



AHSSSE Events, April to December 2015

Friday 17th April 2015

7.30pm Midlands Group: *Seeking the Light: How Travel Changed my Life*, talk by Eleanor Hewson

Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove B60 1DA.
(Contact: Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Thursday 30th April 2015

3.00 pm AHSSSE London Group: Talk: *Journey to the Centre: the development of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre at Glyndŵr University*, by Prof Christopher Lewis.

Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, London, W8.
(Contact: John Franklin, e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com)

Thursday 30th April 2015

South-East Wales Group: Outing to Lydney Park
(Please confirm details with Mary Cook, e-mail: maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk)

Friday 22nd May 2015

7.30pm Midlands Group: *Anthroposophy and the Camphill Communities*, talk by Mrs Christina Hall

Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove B60 1DA
(Contact: Sheelah James, e-mail: sheelahjames@aol.com)

Thursday 18th June 2015

2-4.00pm South-East Wales Group: *Science and Religion*, talk by Alan Underwood

Venue: 12 Wood Close, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran NP44 8UR.
(Contact: Mary Cook, e-mail: maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk)

Friday 19th June 2015

7.30pm Midlands Group: talk by Mike Rush

Venue: 1 Woodcroft Close, Blackwell, Bromsgrove B60 1DA

Saturday 27th June 2015

10.00 am AHSSSE/SMN joint one-day conference. Dialogue on the theme *Science,*
to *Religion and Spirituality: Moving towards a Post-Materialist Paradigm?*

4.00 pm Speakers: Prof. Bernard Carr and Revd. Prof. Jeff Astley; followed by open discussion.

Venue: The Catholic Chaplaincy, Rose Place, St. Aldates, Oxford, OX1 1RD.
[Cost: AHSSSE/SMN members £30.00; non-members £35.00; Students £15.

Contact: John Franklin, e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com]

Friday 3rd July 2015

10.00 am AHRERC Lampeter one-day Conference: *Religious Experience and the Perception of Angels in Different Religions*, in co-operation with the School of Theology, Religious Studies and Islamic Studies. Speakers: Revd Dr June Boyce-Tillman MBE who will give the annual Alister Hardy Lecture; Dr Catrin Williams; Prof Densil Morgan; Theolyn Cortens; Dr David Morgan; Prof Martin O'Kane; and Dr Gary Bunt. See page 17 for details.
4.00p m
Lampeter
Venue: Founder's Library, University of Trinity Saint David, Lampeter. SA48 7ED
Contact: RERC@uwtsd.ac.uk – or see the RERC website: <http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/alister-hardy-religious-experience-research-centre/>

Thursday 23rd July to Sunday 26th July 2015

6th Annual Gathering at Llantarnam Abbey.

Thursday 23rd July:

4.00 pm Informal get-together and introduction to the weekend.

Friday 24th July to Sunday 26th July:

3 pm Friday to 2 pm Sunday: Theme: Crossing Boundaries

For those staying all three nights the fee for members is £155 – for non-members £170, with an option to take membership at no extra fee. Those not staying on the Thursday night can deduct £50 from these prices.

Venue: Ty Croeso Centre, Llantarnam Abbey, Llantarnam, Cwmbran, NP44 3YJ.

Contact: Mary Cook, e-mail: maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk

Thursday 10th September 2015

2-4.00 pm South-East Wales Group: *The Hunters Moon*, talk by Trudy Porter.

Venue: 12 Wood Close, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran NP44 8UR.

(Contact: Mary Cook, e-mail: maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk)

Thursday 17th September 2015

3.00pm London Group: *Sir Alister Hardy's Paintings – and Ethiopian Churches –* illustrated talks by Andy Burns and Rowena Rudkin.

Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gdns Terrace, W8 4RT.

(Contact: John Franklin, e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com)

Saturday 17th October 2015

10.30 am AHSSSE Open Day 2015, including AHSSSE AGM.

to 2015 Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture by Prof. Bettina Schmidt, and talk by

4.30 pm Dr Penny Sartori

Venue: Oxford Quaker Meeting House, St. Giles, Oxford, OX1 3LW.

Inquiries and bookings: Marianne Rankin 01684 772417 or 077140 32643; email: mariannerankin@icloud.com

Thursday 26th November 2015

2.00-4.00pm South-East Wales Group

Venue: 12 Wood Close, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran NP44 8UR.

(details to be announced: Contact: Mary Cook, e-mail: maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk)

Other Events

Friday 27th March 2015, 6.30 pm and Saturday 28th March, 2 pm

Tibor Putnoki, from Hungary, talking about his 9-minute clinical death and consequent transformation

Venue: The Natural Health Service (above the Quaker Meeting House), 2 Page Street, Swansea SA1 4EZ

Contact: (booking advisable) Tel. 01792 651717

Thursday 9th April, 10.00am to 4pm

Holland House *Quiet Day on Experiences of People Today.*

A day to hear about the extraordinary spiritual experiences of ordinary people; from the RERC archive at Lampeter

Venue: Holland House, Main Street, Crophorne, Pershore, WR10 3NB.

website: www.hollandhouse.org

Cost £30 – includes morning coffee, two-course lunch and afternoon tea

Friday 10th April to Sunday 12th April 2015

Scientific & Medical Network: Mystics & Scientists Conference 38:

Harmony: Cosmos, Nature and Self.

Speakers: Prof. Charles Jencks, Dr Lucy King, Satish Kumar, Chika Robertson, Prof. Paul Robertson, Dr Jean-Philippe Uzan

Venue: Horsley Park, East Horsley, Surrey, KT24 6DT.

(For further information contact: Conference Administrator, Tel: 01608 652000. e-mail: Charla@scimednet.org)

Saturday 25th April 2015

10.20 am Society for Psychological Research: Study Day 69 *Making Things Happen:*

to *The effect of expectation of PSI in Life and Lab.* Speakers: Dr Richard

5.00 pm Broughton, Prof. Adrian Parker, Dr Zofia Weaver and Mary Rose Barrington.

To be followed by SPR Annual General Meeting at 5:15 pm.

Venue: St. Mary Abbots Church Hall, Vicarage Gate, London, W8 4HN

(Cost: SPR members, £38; non-members £42; discount for Concessions.

Contact: Peter Johnson: secretary@spr.ac.uk)

Friday 10th to Sunday 12th July 2015

The Inner Quest for the Holy Grail

Venue: Chalice Well, Glastonbury

Residential £260; Non residential £230

Contact: Tel. 01239 858830 email: retreats@chalicecentre.net

Monday 13th July to Thursday 16th July 2015

Modern Church in association with WCF: Annual Conference, Theme:

Christianity in dialogue with other religions and the world. Conference Chair:

Canon Dr Alan Race

Venue: High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Herts.

(Conference fees: £295 (ensuite), £230 (standard)

Further details; Booking Secretary: Revd Ruth Fitter, 84 Frampton Park, Gloucester GL1 5QB. conference@modernchurch.org.uk 0845 3451909)

Friday 4th September to Sunday 6th September 2015

Wrekin Trust: Weekend Retreat. Theme: *Daily Dying for Living Well*,
with Ravi Ravindra.

Venue: Hawkwood College, Painswick Old Road, Stroud, Glos. GL6 7QW
(For further information, contact: office@wrekintrust.org)

Tuesday 15th September to Thursday 17th September 2015

Holland House: Retreat on the theme, *Experiencing Spirituality*,
led by Marianne Rankin and Revd Jonathon Robinson.

Venue: Holland House, Main Street, Cropthorne, Pershore, WR10 3NB.
[Cost: £170, Monday arrival available at extra cost. For further information, see
Holland House, website: www.hollandhouse.org]

Friday 2nd October to Sunday 4th October 2015

Wrekin Trust: Round Table Gathering. Theme: *Being the Change*. All welcome.

Venue: Hawkwood College, Painswick Old Road, Stroud, Glos., GL6 7QW
(For further information, contact: office@wrekintrust.org)



The Peace
that is beyond all understanding
cannot be understood
only known.

Be still, and know ...

JM