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THE SACRED

The term Sacred in the minds of many is related to the realms of religion and spirituality. The Sacred may refer to a special, high and exalted state and inner human experience that can vary in quality, meaning and depth according to each individual or society. For some it is connected to the intellect, thinking and the reasoning faculty of the mind at its most insightful and perceptive. Here the mind provides the individual with an understanding into the nature of the human soul and the meaning of life. For others, words can never touch the higher and deeper experience of the Sacred in their lives. For these individuals to touch the Sacred creates one of life's core experiences and includes a deep sense of spiritual and profound love, and can be associated with extremes of joy and happiness, or deep pathos and sadness.

The Sacred is also sacramental and connected to the major portals of life such as birth, marriage and death. For many Catholics and Buddhists the body of their saints, sages and even Buddha himself can be among the holiest of relics to be worshipped and prayed over. For others the experience of the Sacred may be a transcendental moment in the flow of life when an experience of purity, truth and beauty in a work of art or a passage in music exalts us beyond time and space. Some religions and sacred philosophies approach the Sacred as the source of absolute truth, ideal love and meaning of life representing some kind of Holy of Holies that has the power to transform an individual and offer a taste of the ultimate experience in life.

The Sacred can be found in the beauty, majesty and tranquility of nature. Sometimes it can be found in the mystical, physical and spiritual union between man and woman. Carl Jung describes the psychological and alchemical synthesis between opposites in his book *The Mysterium Coinunctionis*. Others may find the Sacred in beautiful objects such as sacred source books of some philosophies and religions, especially those first produced and written by the original prophets and sages. There are many other physical expressions of the Sacred including reliquaries, cathedrals, chapels and shrines that contain the mysteries and unseen energies of the Universe that have been given material form by the cosmic prism of higher humanity.

Humanity is touched by the Sacred at moments when they may least expect it. It can be associated with the experiences of exquisite and fragile beauty, deep and pure love especially when there is the possibility of total loss, a moment of absolute truth rather than relative truth; the experience of total and genuine freedom where an individual can be their real self in life; and a taste of spiritual or material perfection however it is achieved. Each of these states offer moments of what Rudolf Otto calls in his famous book *The Idea of the Holy* the 'Mysterium Tremendum' or 'The Wholly Other' where there is a union of mind, body, spirit and heart and there is a sense of the transcendental moment of resurrection and rebirth.

Over the millennia some spiritual philosophies and higher religions have attempted to discover what is sacred in our life. The adherents then try to create both a symbol and a place where the Sacred can exist, be experienced and lead human evolution into a positive and creative future of hope and potential rather than despair and extinction. At this time there is a need for a purer and greater cosmic religion to arise that will provide a sanctuary for the human Soul and its need for the Sacred. Einstein's book *Cosmic Religion* of 1931 outlines a possible model that may act as a guide towards such a Sacred Philosophy for the future.

Barry Seabourne
Managing Editor

On the front cover is a detail from the Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci painted c. 1506. This painting is, perhaps, one the most famous and highly respected paintings ever created in the world.

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Pull out Summer School Application Form in centre pages

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The Foundation for Theosophical Studies has a full programme of events planned for this year with its sponsorship of special days and weekend conferences and its excellent Summer School. This year our Summer School will be at Chester University, which is within walking distance of the ancient town centre. This year's theme for the school is 'The Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy' and what better subject could we have for a week of theosophical study? We are very pleased to be able to bring you the full programme for the week as well as booking forms for residential and day visitors. Usually it is not possible to have all of this ready for the first edition of the year but this year our organisers have surpassed themselves and given us plenty of time to book with early booking at lower prices before May 31st.

This issue of *Esoterica* revolves around the theme of the sacred. Usually associated with religion, we see here various articles that show the subject's true depth and breadth in a series of articles and art forms that elucidate clearly and creatively this essential and vital human experience.

We have an interesting and perceptive introduction to the subject by Barry Seabourne on the inside front cover. This is a bold and effective essay on what must be one of the most difficult concepts to define - akin to love and beauty. Barry has as usual selected the art works and written with wisdom and insight about a number of sacred themes throughout this special edition. You may want to keep this copy with you over the coming weeks to provide knowledge and inspiration when you have a moment free. The vignettes on the art in this issue cover classical works, architecture, relics and other interesting images including the photomontage by Julia Still, a modern day artist living and working in Wells very near the spiritual centre of Glastonbury, the legendary burial place of King Arthur.

Main articles include Dr Simon Wilson's look at Rudolf Otto's classic treatise on the sacred *The Idea of The Holy*. Dr Gilbert is featured twice in this issue. His article on the sacred is comprehensive and deserves in depth study. Dr Gilbert's recently published book on Gnosis and Gnosticism is reviewed by Barry Seabourne. Other articles include a very clear exposition on the spiritual philosophy of Dionysius by Julie Parker of the Fintry Trust. Barry Thompson, the Theosophical Society's librarian at Gloucester Place, has written a short and succinct article with his observations on the sacred in contemporary society.

For me, the sacred is that which moves me beyond my personal boundaries into a higher and more universal experience of life. Mostly this has been through a reaching out into the heart of Mother Nature such as in the company of trees or in the high and wild places of mountains and windswept moorland. Such times have been the high points in my life alongside the sharing of love with family and friends. What does the sacred mean for you?

As the daylight hours gradually lengthen and we look forward to the arrival of spring, let us hope for a little less rain and a few more sunny days to help put last year's washout from our minds. Hopefully you will find this edition enlightening and inspirational and it will lead your study and experience of theosophy into fresh directions that suit each of you individually.

I wish you peace and contentment.

Eric McGough

SEEKING THE SACRED

Dr. Robert A. Gilbert

The very word 'sacred' conjures up a kaleidoscope of images, for it is an adjective: a word that describes and qualifies something. And what is it that is described? In its proper, spiritual usage the word applies to an object – and what that object may contain, such as the words in a book – a place, a person or an activity that is dedicated to, set apart for, or in some other manner directly associated with deity. And what is so perceived will also inspire awe, reverence and devotion among the believers of the religious faith with which it is associated. In turn the inward awareness of, and response to such feelings can create and sustain a sense of sacredness within us. But let us first consider the outward signs.

We encounter these in expanding form. First there is the specific, material sacred thing, the holy object, which is designed to portray in symbolic form the essence of the spiritual reality that the sacred object represents. This may be the written words of a sacred text; a painted or carved visual image; or the person or relics of a particular human being. Whatever it may be it does not stand alone; it is set in the context of a sacred space that provides a focus for human attention to be drawn to the sacred object: perhaps the book in which the words are written or the shrine in which the image or relic is contained. This setting is itself within a discrete location: a sacred place. As an example of this progression from the sacred thing itself to its immediate and wider settings, let us take the Temple at Jerusalem.

The most sacred object in Judaism was, and is, the Tablets of the Law: the material symbol of both divine truth and divine power, brought down by Moses from Mt. Sinai and representing the very presence of the Holy and Living God. These Tablets were contained within the Ark of the Covenant which was itself enshrined in the Holy of Holies, the innermost part of the Temple at Jerusalem. Not only were the successive Temples sacred places, so also was the city of Jerusalem itself. Even today Jerusalem is a symbol of what is sacred to all three 'Religions of the Book': Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Of course, what is perceived as being sacred will vary according to the faith of those concerned; thus, the Cross will have little significance save for Christians, and those who are not Buddhists will not look upon relics of Gautama Buddha as being holy in their eyes. And yet sacred places – sites that are identified with, or dedicated to, a spiritually significant person, event or activity and that may also be places of pilgrimage where an event of spiritual enlightenment, revelation, birth, death or transformation took place in the past – are often recognised as such across a broad spectrum of spiritual belief. Many of these sacred sites, whatever their nature or origin, can and do give us an immediate sense of 'otherness', provided that we are attuned to them and are open to a sanctity that goes deeper than the boundaries set both by our own faith and the specific faith to which this sacred place relates. At the very least we can be deeply moved by the beauty of an illuminated manuscript or religious painting, even if we are not instructed in – and thus do not recognise – its symbolic meaning.

We should also be aware that entering or being within a sacred place does not necessarily ensure that the veil between matter and spirit wears thin for each of us or that we become immediately aware of a transcendent spiritual reality and are thus moved to experience simultaneously both awe and joy. Cultural conditioning and the degree of difference between this place and those that 'belong' to our own faith may dim the awareness of sanctity, but only the utter materialist can fail to be inwardly affected to some degree. There

are also those whose sense of sacredness is so narrow that when it is stirred by the experience of what is, to them, an 'alien holiness', they react violently against it.

To these intolerant fanatics such a place cannot be holy, rather it is blasphemous: a profanation of what *they* believe to be sacred and so they seek to destroy the outward symbols of this alien faith that this place contains. Thus it is that the history of mankind is littered with outbursts of iconoclasm: the wholesale, wanton destruction of religious works of art and other symbols of sacredness, with no regard for their inherent beauty or for the spiritual truths that their makers have tried to represent in symbolic form. This destructive fury, driven by fear and hatred, brought about the looting and destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem by the Romans; the obliteration of monastic art – shrines, libraries and buildings – during the Reformation in Tudor England; the demolition of the Buddhas of Bamiyan by the Islamist Taliban; and the would-be annihilation of Tibetan religious culture, and all that was sacred within it, by the commissars and Red Guards of Communist China.

It may seem out of place to catalogue such episodes and we need not dwell upon them, but it is important for us to realise that identifying what is sacred is a subjective process, carried on within ourselves. When, as with the religious iconoclasts, our awareness of spiritual reality and our faith in God are weakly held and rooted in fear there is the ever-present danger that we will turn upon any and every outward sign of the Good, the True and the Beautiful and seek to destroy them. The materialist society in which we presently live strives, albeit in more subtle ways, to do just that – by denying even the possibility of spiritual reality or of any form of existence other than the purely material. For the materialist anything that we may designate as sacred must be denigrated and shown to be without objective value.

And so we must respond by ensuring that future generations are not denied access to all that is and has been held sacred by those, of whatever valid religious and spiritual path, who know from experience the truth of spiritual reality. We have a duty to preserve the sacred symbols, the outward signs of that reality, so that all mankind may have access to the holiness that they represent. Ultimately that access is not external. We may perceive the outward symbols of that which is sacred, but our appreciation of their sacredness remains a subjective matter – it is not a canon of criticism arbitrarily imposed upon us, for the heartfelt response that wells up from the depths of our inner being is a universal human attribute, even though many may choose to shut themselves off from it and none of us can be fully open to each and every symbol of sacredness. Even so, it is only within us that our true experience and understanding of what these symbols represent can take place.

It can do so because every one of us has the potential to be aware of the numinous, to sense the presence of the divine and experience the spiritual uplift that accompanies it. And such an experience, subjective though it may be, can be stimulated by an objective reality: the outward manifestation of that which is sacred. But what exactly evokes our response so that we can recognise and comprehend particular symbolic forms? We respond to the presence of sanctity when it strikes a chord within us; when we perceive it as the container of the spiritual reality that is the goal of our personal spiritual pilgrimage. But that which is sacred cannot be possessed: our external response takes the form not of desire, but of veneration, adoration and worship, focussed though our physical senses on the manifested sacred object.

Internally our awareness of the presence of sanctity is 'seen' and 'heard' not by eyes and ears but by the heart and the soul. We cannot adequately articulate the experience, although spiritual ecstasy, an inrush of awe, of wonder and of joy, is perhaps as close as we can come to a verbal description. We also recognise that it does not belong to us alone: when we apprehend or perceive what lies behind the sacred object or image we realise that it is not

something to be seized and shut up within us for our private benefit, but is to be willingly given out and shared – in a manner somewhat analogous to the celebration of the Christian Mass. We share it because it is holy, and because of its 'otherness' this sharing does not diminish it, but just as it spiritually empowers us, so it increases the sphere of human awareness of its sanctity.

But how do we communicate and share our experience? With what language do we describe its nature and its effect upon us? It is not incommunicable in the sense that no ordinary, verbal language can convey mystical experience, for there are outward pointers toward it – the form and imagery of the material containers of holy things – but the words we use to identify and describe these things must be chosen with great care so as to be unambiguous and easily comprehensible. We do not need to make a mystery of all that is sacred for ineffability is inherent in it, but we cannot describe it or express its nature in anything other than symbolic or parabolic terms.

What we can convey, through its inner effect upon us, is our certain knowledge that we have indeed experienced it, and that we feel the universal human need to enshrine it in this outer world in the most truthful and beautiful forms that we can create. Thus humanity constantly gives new birth to the ever-changing forms of sacred art.

Of course these forms cannot be universal as they have arisen in individual human hearts that are themselves grounded in particular cultures and faiths, but if we contemplate them with care we will be able to recognise a commonality of purpose within all of them. They represent, after all, the material outpouring of the inner experience that befalls all who have sought and found what is sacred – who, whatever their faith, have sought the Kingdom of God and have found, as Christ told us, that it truly does lie within us.

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SACRED ARCHITECTURE



Cathedrals, Temples, Churches and other buildings that have attempted to represent the sacred and the divine are the largest forms of art that we have. Human beings throughout history have attempted to create spaces that separate the ordinary and functional part of their lives with the extra-ordinary, very special and sacred part of their lives. Sacred architecture aims to create a realm for the 'Gods' here on earth where worshippers can enter a three-dimension space and commune for a time with something from the more cosmic and sacred part of our life experience .

Most major religions and esoteric belief systems acknowledge now or in the past that there are patterns, structures, alignments and differing types of energy that occur in the cosmos and on the planet that can be harnessed to the benefit of those humans who can tune into these subtle forces and systems. This does not mean that we have to accept the cultural myths, stories and interpretations that may be put onto these pure and subtle energies. Only the most insensitive atheist, humanist and materialist can fail to acknowledge there is a different atmosphere and feeling when you enter a Catholic church after a service, with the slight hint of incense hanging in the air, as to when one enters the local supermarket to buy the weekly groceries?

Both Salisbury Cathedral and Stonehenge are said to be sited on ancient alignments that are sometimes said to reflect lines of telluric earth energy (ley lines). Both are definitely aligned to reflect cosmic cycles. Salisbury Cathedral has been situated, as have all Gothic cathedrals, on an East–West axis so that the devout face the rising sun at sunrise each day. The altar at Stonehenge is aligned so that the sunrise on Summer Solstice breaks through and illuminates the high altar on or around 21st June. The mystery of Stonehenge continues but the main structure is circular and its celestial alignment suggest a sacred and spiritual function to the ancient Briton that may also indicate it was a burial site, healing sanctuary and a place of worship. Its position on Salisbury Plain may relate to Silbury Hill as the symbolic centre of the Universe at that time to represent the planet Earth. The nearby Avebury rings made of large dolmens symbolise the Sun and Moon according to early Druid plans and maps that have been discovered.

The magnificent Spire of Salisbury takes the soul and the spirit towards the cosmos and at the same time draws down the cosmic and divine energies. The use of stone as an element in the construction of sacred buildings, monuments and sites has an importance that goes back into the history of the human race and across all civilisations. Salisbury Cathedral is one of the most important sacred sites in Europe, if not the world. Today the interior and exterior shows the ravages of the reformation, the 'restorations' of James Wyatt and Gilbert Scott and the current day cheap functional furniture that adorns a building that doubles as a tourist site and a protestant (Church of England) place of worship.

The domes of many Islamic mosques and Christian churches such as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, St Peters in Rome (opposite) and St Pauls, London, use the dome to represent heaven or the divine cosmos. Some of these beautiful buildings are also designed with windows of differing sizes and shapes to create an ethereal effect of light filtering down from heaven into the human world. The Egyptian pyramid replicates the cosmic sun with its rays spreading from its top central point to the ground in a triangulation symbolising the majesty of the sun.

Notes by B Seabourne and images courtesy Wikipedia



THE WHOLLY OTHER: The Essence Of The Sacred

Simon Wilson

Central to the sacred in all its facets is the wholly other. The term “the Wholly Other” refers to that which is utterly and essentially different from the profane material world most of us inhabit, and which seems largely to determine us. *The Wholly Other* is unconditioned, irreducible and transcendent. It is also and at the same time our true nature which, while not identical with God, is divine. Traditionally it is said to have constituted our being at some time in the past, and somehow to have been lost. It is however our true eternal state and does not belong to some historical time-bound moment, past and irrecoverable. Sacred traditions, indeed, strive to reveal and restore it.

The phrase “The Wholly Other” was coined by the German theologian Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) in his influential work *The Idea of the Holy*. If we examine his use of the term, then, we may come to a deeper understanding of some of its implications.

First published in 1917, Otto’s classic work is an attempt to identify the undetermined and unchanging essence of our encounter with God. Otto argues that that essence – the core of religion itself - does not primarily lie in rational or even ethical categories, in piety or in purity, but in what he calls “the holy.” Specifically, it is to be found in something “extra,” a numinous excess which is neither contained nor determined by any other category (Otto pp.5-7).

The wholly other, “that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar...” (Otto p.26), is the very essence of Otto’s numinous excess. A “category of valuation which has no place in the everyday natural world of ordinary experience” (Otto p.15), it is beyond all structures, all familiar modes.

The experience of the wholly other transforms the usual, the intelligible and the familiar, it erases them, and replaces them not with a feeling of alienation, of estrangement from reality or of absence of self, but with an inkling that The Wholly Other is The Wholly Real, the Absolute, the permanent and the eternal. The every-day self - “the personal ‘I’” Otto calls it - is annihilated before The Wholly Other nature of God, but it is replaced with the knowledge that “the transcendent [is] the sole and entire reality” (Otto p.21).

The wholly other essence of religious experience is – initially at least – disorientating and disquieting. One finds that one’s customary and apparently most intimate point of orientation in the world – one’s own self – is in fact unreal. The encounter with the wholly other stands in opposition to everything most of us identify with and have learnt in our upbringing and our education. We are not independent, self-reliant individuals making our own decisions, weighing up the pros and cons, discerning truth and falsehood, discriminating between good and bad. This is all blanked out in the brilliance of the Absolute.

It is indeed painful for most of us to realise that the scaffolding of our own life has been resting on a misunderstanding, a sort of illusion, fine intangible dust which is blown away by the merest exhalation of the Real. Our chill - our numbed wonder as the breath of God reduces us to nullity - is, Otto argues, a species of awe, dread or even horror (Otto pp.12ff.).

On the face of it the fierce truth of the wholly other is enough to deter anyone from approaching God. Yet many of us - most of us I would hope - are drawn to, and indeed long for, experience of the

Divine. We somehow know that the experience of our utter nothingness, with all its terror, is in fact a moment of divine grace. And Otto writes that the dread and dismay is always and at the same time balanced by unutterable bliss, overwhelming beatitude and rapture beyond compare (Otto pp.31ff.).

I think that this is relatively easy to understand. The awe or even horror comes as all we thought we were is obliterated in the face of the overpowering, incontrovertible reality of the Absolute. But we are immediately aware that we have in fact been granted a special grace, the grace of being who we truly are and knowing that this true self derives from – is part of – the Transcendent. That is to say, our experience of the wholly other nature of God is supplemented by the knowledge of His immanence in ourselves and in the world. We know, in the words of Kallistos Ware, that God is both “beyond and above all that we can think or express, yet closer to us than our own heart” (Ware p.23). Otto quotes a passage from the *Confessions* of St Augustine which characterises this double nature of the wholly other. St Augustine writes:

“What is that which gleams through me and smites my heart without wounding it? I am both a-shudder and a-glow. A-shudder, in so far as I am unlike it, a-glow in so far as I am like it.” (Otto n.1, p.28)

Part of us trembles as we leave our familiar land; part of us is filled with joy as we realise that we are coming home.

When Otto employs phrases like awe or bliss, or writes about feelings and knowledge, he is of course not using such words in their conventional sense, to represent mere emotions or logic-derived knowledge. He is endeavouring to delineate truths which are in themselves incommunicable. They do not belong, for example, to just another category of every-day emotion, no matter how intense, no matter how persuasive. Different in quality from familiar passions, the experiences described by Otto represent a kind of wholly other way of knowing or sensing, “a direct, first-hand apprehension of holiness manifested,” he writes, and goes on, “the ‘intuition’ and ‘feeling’ of it...” (Otto p.155)

They are perceptions of what lies behind and beyond physical appearances (Otto pp.112ff.) They are not reducible to the workings of the psyche. If the wholly other did not correspond to our own deepest reality, our own ground of being, such knowledge, such perceptions would not be possible:

“In us, too, all that we call person and personal, indeed all that we can know or name in ourselves at all, is but one element in the whole. Beneath it lies, even in us, that ‘wholly other’, whose profundities, impenetrable to any concept, can yet be grasped in the numinous self-feeling by one who has experience of the deeper life.” (Otto p.203)

We are, as it were, otherly whole or complete than is generally recognised. Behind Otto’s remarks on the wholly other lies, in fact, the traditional Judeo-Christian understanding of the wholeness of a human, which divides it into body, soul and spirit (see, for example, St Paul, 1 Thess. 5: 23). Here, body refers to the facts of our physical existence, while soul constitutes our natural, everyday consciousness and emotions. Soul is the source of our opinions, our tastes, our most deeply-held convictions, and our very character. Most of us live our lives in

the soul world and in the empirical world of the body. Body and psyche are, most of us learn, all that there is and all that can be cultivated in the garden of our lives.

It is the third element in this model of human nature, however, which constitutes our wholly other essence. It is, that is to say, the spirit which is our unconditioned, immortal and divine part, our true reality: terrifying and blissful when it stirs, it is only through the spirit that we can truly know God.

But *The Idea of the Holy* is no mere abstract description of the movements of the spirit. Otto clearly intends reading it to be a numinous experience which will transform the reader. His book is an active attempt to evoke the spirit, to break through the shell of soma and psyche, and thereby enspirit us. As he writes, its subject "cannot... be taught, it can only be evoked, awakened in the mind; as everything that comes 'of the spirit' must be awakened." (Otto p.7)

It is Otto's aim to call forth these ineffable, wholly other realities in our being. His words are in effect symbols, and he employs them in the hope that those with eyes to see will perceive the spiritual essence which lies behind the words. Sensing the spirit in the letter, these readers will then experience the awakening of their own spirit.

Otto, then, hopes that we, on reading his book, will feel the spirit radiating through our entire being, so that we become enspirited bodies, spiritualised souls. We will then be completely shot through with the Real and with knowledge of the Real.

If this happens, we will in fact undergo what I am tempted to call a kind of resurrection, here and now. The experience may at first be terrifying, but only by shedding the old self will we become truly ourselves, wholly other and wholly Real. Indeed, we will then be incarnations of the sacred.

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SACRED RELICS AND RELIQUARIES



The Turin Shroud is considered by many Christians to be a sacred relic and to be the actual impression created by Jesus Christ when he was wrapped in linen after the crucifixion. Or is it Jacques de Molay the last Master of the Knights Templar?

Catholic cathedrals of the middle ages were centered on the lives of saints and the importance of the Virgin Mary. Many of these contained (or were said to contain) parts of the hair, clothing or bodies of Saints. In the Treasury of the

Vatican we can also see monstrance's that contain various parts of the True Cross or the actual thorns of the Crown worn by Christ at his crucifixion.

This importance given to relics in the Christian religion can be seen as early as the mid-second century. This is surprising as in pagan antiquity adoration of relics was not used as body parts were considered to be impure.

So where and when did parts of the human body of those people considered to be pure and sacred become objects of devotion and worship.

In the Bible it is said that a woman who had been suffering from bleeding continually for twelve years could get no cure from the doctors of her time. When she heard of Jesus she went to see him and when she saw him came from behind and touched his clothing. Suddenly she felt a surge of energy and was healed. Jesus, it is said, felt his energy go from him at the same moment turned and said "Who has touched me?"

From this and similar episodes it is believed that some people contain an energy that has the power to heal and transform the lives of others. This power is found when another person is either near to them or can actually touch their body and release its cosmic energies.

Relics were thought to have a similar curative quality and thus relics became a special part of cathedrals, sanctuaries and shrines where pilgrims could visit for healing and spiritual energy. Some cathedrals had genuine relics while other said that they had such sacred parts so as to attract pilgrims. Relics are an important part of Buddhism where believers cherish and worship anything connected to the life of Buddha.

In the Catholic faith relics are considered to be in three classes. First class relics are those that are actually part of the body of a saint or are known to be connected to Jesus Christ or Mary. Second Class relics are items that have been touched by a Saint or Christ. Third Class relics are items that have touched by Second Class relics.

In the recent exhibition Treasures of Heaven at the British Museum in 2011 a beautiful collection of relics and reliquaries were displayed. Many of these works were exquisite art treasures in their own right. Many items displayed were crafted in gold and other precious metals and gem stones containing a variety of sacred remnants of clothes worn by saints or actual body parts.

In the world there is special importance given to items that were touched or in some way relate to the original creator. It may be something belonging to or produced by a scientist; such as a signed copy of Einstein's book Relativity or the Secret Doctrine signed by the mystic Madam Blavatsky. These can then take on great added value. Or even clothes worn by celebrities or royalty can be sold at auction for greatly inflated prices. Works of art where Leonardo da Vinci or another famous artist has actually touched and created a painting can give much added value.

What is the mysterious power of the physical manifestation of someone sacred to us? What is the lure of a rare first edition of a book? What is the special importance of a drawing or painting by someone passed away? Perhaps even when we hold dear a photograph, piece of clothing or a locket to remind us of someone we deeply loved while they were in this world can become a sacred icon for us.

Notes by B Seabourne

Image opposite: Byzantine Icon c. 1300 – Courtesy of British Museum, Treasures of Heaven exhibition - 2011



THE SACRED IN A CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Barry Thompson

According to the dictionary, the word 'sacred' comes from the word to consecrate, or set apart, something considered worthy of veneration and respect – the Holy, relating to the gods. There is an implicit idea of a realm of being that is set apart from the world that is a part of our everyday experience. This duality between the holy and the profane is reflected in many myths and symbols which, for example, describe the human race as being fashioned from earthly materials then being infused with a spiritual essence – the Biblical account of Adam being formed from 'dust' then having the 'breath of life' breathed into him is an example that is probably the most familiar to us.

Perhaps inevitably, there is the growth of a priestly caste who is empowered to maintain such sacred spaces, and who lay down rules for access. The experience of the Sacred becomes divorced from everyday life. If the gap between the experience of a people and the mysteries of their official religion becomes too wide, there is a spiritual crisis. Such a crisis was occurring at the end of the nineteenth century, when the Theosophical Society was founded, and it is significant that one of the objects of the Society is to encourage 'the study of comparative religion, philosophy & science,' indicating that new realms of understanding need to be added to the spiritual dialogue of modern man, in place of the dogmas that were blocking development.

Spiritual impulses, like any other, when no longer operating within the framework of an established tradition may develop in strange and exotic ways. One phenomenon of note is the 'secularisation of spirituality', in which the category sacred is attributed events, processes, and orders of being that had hitherto been regarded as secular. A fairly obvious example of this is the conflation of charismatic spirituality with celebrity; one can see this in any number of evangelical television channels, where preachers who are more like rock or film stars preside over meetings which are dominated by emotions which seem more at home in a football stadium or political rally. A related example, arguably exhibiting a reverse process that might be closer to home would posit cases where people who might reject traditional Western themes of grace, salvation or intercession are happy to accept their Eastern equivalents within exoteric Hinduism or related faiths, as the formal structure is different. One either infuses old structures with a new content, or builds 'new' structures on which one's old thought patterns blithely play out. There is change, but we may question whether it results in growth. Perhaps in examples such as these it would be wiser to look at cases individually.

The category of nature is another popular modern source of 'alternative' spirituality; given the fact that it is unmediated (in its original state) by human hands, some circles see it as superior to a false and degraded man-made modern world which they have come to associate with discredited forms of civilisation and the faiths that they see as underpinning them. But what is natural is neither right nor wrong, it simply 'is'. A key concept of spirituality is that of a moral order, the transcendent sacred realm set apart from the profane. Morality implies choice, a factor that is lacking in the natural world. Referring again to traditional accounts of the human spiritual state, the duality adverted to earlier implies a natural inheritance that may be transcended. We inherit two strains of being, and are called upon to pursue one of two paths. As seekers of spiritual truth we seek 'to become more than human', and in doing so enter the realm of the sacred in which we truly experience the Divine.

An important question that any authentic system of spiritual teaching must answer is: "What is the relationship between a sacred realm 'set apart' from the mundane realm, and that mundane realm itself?" If there is no relationship, for example, then we may view our immediate lives as a snare or complete illusion, or a trap set to deceive us – and the spiritual may become something so abstract that it has no power to act in our lives. We may then either seek refuge in the visions and fancies of psychism, the 'astral realm' referred to in *'The Voice of the Silence'* translated by H. P. Blavatsky, which she says contains 'coiled serpents' of delusion waiting to entrap us, or we may emphasise our own selves at the expense of the whole, identifying spiritual growth with emotional satisfaction & immediate gratification, which is effectively a form of spiritual materialism.

Theosophy indicates that a key to this conundrum may be found in the distinction between the psychic and the spiritual as described in the sevenfold constitution of man. The realm of the psychic, or the mental, is the witness to the play of forces within the embodied man. The lower psychic is the realm of the desire nature, which seeks the gratification of all desires centred on the person. This person is one unit in a series of wholes, and also, one life in a series of many. It looks towards the lower vehicles of manifestation and experience as objects in themselves rather than as a means to an end. The Monad sometimes described as the One is "a drop out of the shoreless Ocean beyond, or...within the plane of primeval differentiation." It is divine in its higher aspect and human in its lower state..." [*The Secret Doctrine* volume 2 p 186] Described as the Higher Self, we discover it in us – and in others – in our most altruistic & open moments. Self-dying to be reborn as the Other. We err when we seek to place a limit on its potential, or set a final goal to its development.

We realise our own Divinity when we see it in others around us, tempering the recognition with the realisation that this 'itself' is but a step on the way. Paradoxically, might we suggest that the concept of Unity is dependent on the concept of Diversity?

Barry Thompson is the Librarian at the Theosophical Society Library housed at its headquarter in London. The Library is available for research to members of the Theosophical Society on application

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

International Headquarters: Adyar, Chennai 600 020, India

President: Dr Radha Burnier Vice-President: Linda Oliveira

The Theosophical Society was formed in New York, 17th November 1875, and incorporated at Chennai, 3 April 1905. Its three declared Objects are:

- * to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
- * to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.
- * to investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.

The annual subscription in the English Section of the Society is £40

(£20 concessions). **Financial hardship shall not be a barrier to membership.**



SACRED ART 1

Opposite VIRGIN MARY - Leonardo da Vinci - detail from *Virgin of the Rocks* 1508

National Gallery, London

'THE GREATEST ART IS ALWAYS SACRED' Martinus



The term Sacred Art can be used to describe a whole range of human expression whose main aim and purpose is to express what is held to be sacred and divine in various world religions. The actual art forms vary considerably depending on which religion and culture is being referred to. In Christianity we have the genre known as Icons. Here there is an attempt to create an image of the deity – God or Christ. In the Muslim faith artists are forbidden to represent any image of the world including the human face. In a mosque the outside and inside walls are adorned with designs taken from geometry, calligraphy of sacred texts and abstractions of organic forms.

Other art forms that help create the numinous experience of the sacred, divine and holy include sculpture and architecture. It is in architecture we see the main forms that attempt to create the experience of the sacred for humanity. We can be transported to another part deep within ourselves where we experience uplift and inspiration as well as a place to fall silent and reverent in a kind of awe if the building contains certain attributes.

For some a similar experience can occur when visiting an art gallery or attending a concert of exceptionally beautiful music. Art attempts to communicate and share the experience of one individual with another. The psychological state and spiritual level of the artist will produce works of a level of 'consciousness' which will in turn affect the viewer who is similarly attuned. A work of art, literature or architecture can communicate from the soul of one person to the soul of another that touches on an eternity giving us a sense of immortality even for a brief moment in our lives. We sense we know the other in a secret way that is not easily communicated in the language of the everyday world.

Many of the works of Leonardo da Vinci often have a powerful effect on many people where nationality, culture, belief system and academic knowledge are transcended in respect and admiration for an artist who touched something within himself that has endured across time. Some of his paintings have not survived the changes in taste and style. For many the Mona Lisa (see front cover) is a mystery. Why is it considered to have such high status in the art world? Why do many people think she is so beautiful? What secrets does it hold?

The painting opposite is a detail of the *Virgin of the Rocks*. This is the version exhibited in London and was painted around 1508. There is an earlier version painted in 1487 held in the Louvre in Paris. This detail and the two other details shown in the above insets to the left and to the right also show the attention to exquisite details and painstaking patience and consummate skill of Leonardo. He attempts to achieve a type of perfection in his art that is akin to the attempt of many to achieve perfection of some kind in their lives. This is the magic of Leonardo and other artists who attempt to create something that somehow communicates a state of excellence of the human spirit often to a world that is not listening, does not care or is unable to feel that whatever they may do will have any importance to the world in which they live.

Notes by B Seabourne and images courtesy Wikipedia



SACRED ART 2 – PYGMALION AND GALATEA

EDWARD BURNE-JONES 1878

(Opposite - The Heart Desires – Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery of Art)



2 The Hand Refrains

3 The Godhead Fires

4 The Soul Attains

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) was a very English art movement that was concerned with subjects and issues that were to them sacred. They wanted to create an art movement that moved away from the dominance of Joshua Reynolds and the Royal Academy (c. 1770 – 1850 and after). They were interested in a former period in Western art and culture that preceded the Italian Renaissance of around 1420-1520. This included Dante, the Legends of the Grail, romantic poetry, beauty and nature as well as artists of the Italian Quattrocento. They often used the new invention of photography (1839) to help them achieve greater realism in their paintings.

There were three main artists who exhibited at their first exhibition in 1848 - Gabriele Dante Rossetti, Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais. This group worked together until around 1855. In 1856 they separated and Rossetti moved to Oxford and formed the second PRB group with Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris.

Edward Burne-Jones was studying theology to become a priest and it is in his work that we find the greatest focus on the spiritual and the sacred of the group with the possible exception of Holman Hunt who became focused on Christianity with famous works such as *The Light of the World* by Holman Hunt and *The Scapegoat*. In the work of Burne-Jones we see a numinous and spiritual emanation that is of a different order.

In the four paintings illustrated we see a process of transformation from the initial contemplation, through to realisation, creation and attainment. The series has different titles including *Pygmalion and the Image* and or *The Sculptor and Galatea*. The idea comes from *Metamorphoses* written by Ovid. We see in the first painting *Pygmalion contemplating the perfect idea of his ideal partner*. It is called *The Heart Desires* (1). The story is based on the ideas of Plato where Beauty equates to Divine Truth. Here the sculptor is illustrating how the artist creates from within the soul. Pygmalion is trying to discover from within his own mind and soul a woman that could be his other sacred half.

In the second painting *The Hand Refrains* (2) we see the creation of the perfect marble sculpture of a classical type of Goddess - Galatea. Here this dream becomes a reality. The third painting is called *The Godhead Fires* (3). Here an outside force intervenes and a cosmic energy enters from the Universe. This force is Venus, the Goddess of Love, who transforms his marble creation into life. The fourth painting in the series is called *The Soul Attains* (4).

Notes by B Seabourne and images courtesy Wikipedia



BOOK REVIEW



Title: **GNOSTICISM & GNOSIS** (Published: 2012):

Author: R. A. Gilbert

Reviewed by Barry Seabourne

Doctor Robert Gilbert is well known to many members of the Theosophical Society for the lectures he gives to Lodges and at Headquarters in Gloucester Place. His depth of knowledge on various aspects of the esoteric and mystical philosophies and freemasonry is always welcomed. His particular areas of specialist knowledge include the Order of the Golden Dawn, A. E. Waite, and the development of the renewed interest in the Rosicrucians that started in the latter half of the 19th century continuing into the current period.

Dr Gilbert's interests and knowledge go much further and over the past years he has expanded into Tibetan and Shaker Art and, as this book illustrates, Gnosticism and Trinitarian Christianity. Although as he states in the book his commitment to Christianity goes to the core of his deep and abiding beliefs.

It is in this interest in the origins of the Christian faith that have given rise to this new book. To some extent this interest was apparent when he edited the excellent Volume 5 of The Canonbury Papers entitled *Knowledge of the Heart: Gnostic Movements and Secret Traditions* published in 2008 by Lewis Masonic for the Canonbury Masonic Research Centre. The current book under review was published by a smaller, specialist group Antioch Papers in 2012.

This book is essential reading for anyone who wishes to know the range of influences that have contributed to and helped create the complex and controversial area of 'Gnosticism'. Doctor Gilbert uses his wide range of knowledge of esoteric, hermetic and historical philosophy and practice to put the current interest in gnosis and Gnosticism into perspective. As the book progresses the reader gradually becomes aware that this book is something of a testament to the author's own deeply held beliefs, but never to the detriment of academic scholarship.

Throughout the book most points are supported by references to other authors and specialist experts writing about Gnosticism. As such it becomes a valuable source book for someone wishing to expand their own knowledge on this subject area. Of particular importance is the coverage of the early gnostic writers such Irenaeus, Valentinus, Origen, Basilides, Marcion, Carpocrates and Simon Magus.

To elucidate the definition of Gnosticism Dr Gilbert settles on the description offered by Birger Pearson:

"In Gnosticism the saving gnosis comes by revelation from a transcendent realm, mediated by a revealer who has come from that realm in order to awaken humanity to knowledge of God and a true knowledge of the true nature of the human self." This definition may be also acceptable to many people who are currently looking to Gnosticism as a possible contemporary spiritual pathway. But the quote continues into more controversial areas where we have the division into two visions of God. One a good, perfect and spiritual God who has created all that cannot be seen and a second God, sometimes called the Demiurge, which created the material world we inhabit who is considered to be an inferior and evil God.

Continued on page 23

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This belief in two Gods is the main belief that separated orthodox Christianity from the early Gnostics. Dr Gilbert then traces this dualistic system to have its roots in the older belief systems of Zoroastrianism and Mithraism. Some of these ideas were then reinforced by the discoveries at later dates in the 18th centuries and the even more impactful discovery of the Nag Hammadi documents in 1945.

This last discovery has done much to open an early belief system to modern interpretation. For some it offers a type of esoteric Christianity that looks to personal salvation through gnosis and ignores the nature of a Christianity that employs the figure of Jesus Christ as a Saviour. The definition of gnosis as similar to a core experience of spiritual knowledge, intellectual illumination and cosmic consciousness equates well to more contemporary ideas of higher consciousness, rebirth and symbolic resurrection. To some extent most modern interpretations move substantially away from the classical form with a few exceptions. Dr Gilbert infers towards the end of his book that most modern commentator's views make gnosis and the gnostic belief system flexible to a point where individuals create their own belief systems to suit their own idealistic vision of the meaning of life and thus lose the essence of this important early Christian form of belief.

The second half of the book shows historical circumstances where the division between the Gnostics and the Christians intensify. This is highlighted by the plight of the Cathars in 13th century Southern France who refused to capitulate to the monotheistic view of the Catholic Church and were gradually and systematically eradicated by force. After the annihilation of the Cathars and to quote from page 104 of the book "Dualistic religion in any form - faded away in the West, while in the East only the embattled Mandaean, still resolutely anti-Christian, kept the gnostic flame from utter extinction." Although they held dualistic views Dr Gilbert does question as to whether the Cathars could really be called 'Gnostics'.

There are some superb quotes from many and varying sources throughout the book that help give objectivity to the whole paper. Evolving from some quotes by Madam Blavatsky Dr Gilbert quotes G. R. S. Mead who he describes as "a real scholar" in a piece that heralds in the New Age of the 20th century and its fascination with gnosis and the Gnostics in an insightful comment from 1900:

"The Gnostics strove for the knowledge of God, the science of realities, the gnosis of things-that-are; wisdom was their goal; the holy things of life their study. ... Gnosis is not the end – it is the beginning of the path, the end is God – and hence the Gnostics would be those who used the Gnosis as the means to set their feet upon the Way to God."

The important question remaining is to whom is this book directed and to whom would it offer the greatest value to enhance the understanding of the subject under discussion. Interestingly it may be of most interest to enquiring Christians who want to understand the origins, roots and development of their faith in an intelligent and objective sense. For those who are already involved in Gnosticism through actual belief and interest it would also be of immense value as the text covers a very broad and varied spectrum from early Gnostics and various esotericists up to the modern period. For the modern enquirer it can provide both an insightful synopsis and inspiration for further study.

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SACRED COSMOLOGY

In the middle Greek Classical Period around 400 BC Plato defined the nature of the Soul as 'the essence of being human'. Since that time, and before, different cultures and religions have defined this essential human core or Soul differently. The monotheistic religions of the West have all evolved from the Judeo Tradition and both Christianity and Islam base much of their sacred writings on the Bible with an all-powerful male God at its head who has to be worshiped and prayed to. Here they all claim that the individual can, if they believe the sacred word of their faith, and live accordingly, achieve salvation and have eternal life in Heaven. Indian and Tibetan cultures and belief systems, as expressed in Hinduism and some forms of Buddhism, still believe that the human soul could be transferred from one individual when they die to another body or animate form waiting to receive the same - or that this liberated soul can even choose its new manifestation.

The Chinese had a vision that is nearer to contemporary science in some aspects. They believed that there is an energy force in the world that flows through everything. It is incumbent upon those human beings who wish to have a long and harmonious life to attune with the Way of the Universe - The Tao - as they attempt to tune into the Universal Energy called Chi and the balance of positive (Yang) and the receptive (Yin) forces. The Taoist has no need of a human intermediary but attempts to utilise this energy in a positive way through the technique of Feng Shui.

The various creation myths and 'when was the planet created' debate continues unabated even among some sections of the so-called educated world. The role of science to provide an objective and unrelenting search for 'real' truth continues with those who are able to discern superstition, prejudice and wish fulfilment from reality. Religion and philosophy do have a variety of functions and one is to try and make the Universe in all its majesty and diversity understandable and experiential in human terms and not just a series of statistics and facts.

Physicists are planning to emulate the beginning of creation and discover the Theory of Everything with the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) in Cern, Switzerland. At the same time some human souls are discussing new ways to touch the truly divine and sacred in life that focuses on the nature of cosmic energy and how it interacts with human energy. Older belief systems are not necessarily wrong and have, and still can, enhance the search for both material and spiritual fulfilment and truth. Pagan ideas of beauty, purity and the wonders of nature and the Universe have existed alongside some aspects of the major religions for many years. Most people with even a little sensitivity cannot fail to be moved spiritually, and occasionally even emotionally, on entering a sacred shrine full of reverence or a Gothic cathedral as rays of light flow through stained glass windows and the clerestory high above.

Sacred Cosmology sees the cosmos as a series of interdependent and evolutionary stages. At the beginning there was an unseen cosmic energy from which all evolved and in time returns back to. At this time science and religion do not know what was before the creation except in various myths or propositions. In Cosmic Cosmology this pre-creation stage can be called the Cosmic Mystery or Mysterium.

Cosmologists and scientists, who are at the cutting edge of scientific discoveries and insights, are making discoveries that are transforming the way we understand the world and Universe in which we are born, live and die. We are now at a new crossroads where many people are beginning to accept that there is new awareness of the Cosmos and the complex and interrelated systems of energy that are both within and around us.

As we move into the quantum age we need new ways of thinking, living and creating. We need the intelligence of humanity to be involved in evolution and not be distracted by the primitive and destructive elements that exist in the world society today.

We need new architectural structures to receive this cosmic energy, new symbols and ways to worship and relate to others who are, as Einstein commented, working with the cosmic religious feeling rather than the past ideas of fear, social approval, creeds and dogma of the 'older' religions.

*Notes by Barry Seabourne and opposite, **Humanus Novum**, a recent work by Julia Still*



DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE:

His Mystical Theology

Julie Parker

How all created things come into being and are sustained, and how we might know and properly speak of their Source - these were among the deepest theological subjects treated in the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite, the subject of this article. His writings represent sincere attempts to give expression to those mysteries, and for a thousand years they were studied and venerated by generations of mystics and theologians. Dionysius' name is barely known now, even among those with an interest in such subjects, yet this was not always so. 'It is hardly possible' says Evelyn Underhill 'to underestimate the influence of this Father of Christian Mysticism. At one time "St Deonise saith" was sufficient authority in itself.'

Among the Dionysian writings are two complementary treatises entitled *The Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology*. In these two works Dionysius set out to express the two aspects of the nature of God:- the differentiated and the undifferentiated. *The Divine Names* deals mainly with how God may be known through His differentiated aspects: He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit; He is Beauty Itself, Love Itself, Good Itself, Wisdom Itself, and all the other countless aspects of His Nature through which He is made manifest. *The Mystical Theology* by contrast deals with His undifferentiated nature: super-essential, super-vital, and beyond all human conception. In keeping with its approach, it is a short treatise composed of five short chapters, which appears to reach into the height, and then lapses into silence.

The author of these and other works assumed the identity of a man named in Acts XVII as being present at St Paul's encounter with Greek philosophers on the Areopagus ('the Hill of Ares') in Athens. Paul's missionary message to the Greeks was that the so-called 'Unknown God' (Whose altar he had just passed), was no longer unknown. He is Lord of heaven and earth, said Paul, and 'dwelleth not in temples made with hands'. The sermon was not well-received, but among the few who did not mock was 'Dionysius the Areopagite', who, rather than scorning Paul, 'clave unto' him.

The real author of the Dionysian writings, for all that he *wrote* as if he were associated with the apostles of the early Church, actually lived hundreds of years later, and was possibly a Syrian monk of the late fifth or early sixth century, whose writings moreover show strong Neoplatonic affinities. Yet for a thousand years, or so, his identity and authority as a Christian theologian were effectively unquestioned. He exercised a profound influence on medieval theology through the work of the Victorines, Bonaventure, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. Indeed, it is said that Aquinas refers to Dionysius no fewer than 1,702 times, and that if the writings had been lost, they could have been re-constructed from these references alone. Meister Eckhart, Tauler, Suso, Ruysbroeck, and Nicholas of Cusa were all indebted to him.

In England, the 14th century treatise *The Cloud of Unknowing* was directly inspired by *The Mystical Theology* - 'the 'Cloud' representing the insufficiency of human discursive knowledge in penetrating the Ineffable Nature of God. The unnamed 'Cloud' author produced the first English translation entitled *Dionyse Hid Divinite*, which was so popular at the time, that it famously 'ran across England like deere', nourishing that fertile period of spiritual growth. The writings were also of great significance to the Florentine Neoplatonists in their work of reconciling Plato with Christ. But by the sixteenth century, scholars such as

Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus had raised doubts about the identity of the author: Dionysius was not who he said he was. He had not received divine revelations from the apostles themselves unmixed with human reason, St. Paul had not after all imparted the mystery to him, and in time the influence of 'St Dionysius' waned.

Yet the question of his chosen identity says something about his lasting contribution to human thought, for this author, once of such significance within the Church, was in this way a channel for the transmission of Neoplatonic ideas into Christian theology. The writings so closely reflect those of Proclus, one of the last great Neoplatonic philosophers and head of the Platonic Academy in Athens until his death in 485 AD, that Dionysius has even been called 'the Christian Proclus'.

Dionysius identified God the Father with the Neoplatonic One, which transcends all being. In order to approach It, all that is inferior to Its Supreme Nature must be set aside: only by Unknowing (agnosia) may It be sought. As he wrote in *The Divine Names*:

'Concerning this super-essential and hidden Deity, as has already been said, we must not presume to speak, nor even to think, beyond that which has been divinely revealed to us in the sacred Scriptures, for, as Itself has, of Its Goodness, taught us concerning Itself, the knowledge and contemplation of Its essential nature is beyond the reach of all beings, since It is super-essentially exempt from them all. And you will find that many theologians have celebrated It not only as invisible and incomprehensible, but also as inscrutable and past finding out; and it is certain that there is no trace of any traveller who has penetrated to Its most hidden Infinitude.'

The Mystical Theology sets forth with praise the manner in which the Unknowable may rightly be approached: by positive theology, which affirms and celebrates aspects of His Nature, symbolic theology, which draws on images from the world of sense to express metaphorical truth, and negative theology, which ascends to an understanding, by stripping away limiting conceptions of Him.

'Thus, in the former discourse, our contemplations descended from the highest to the lowest, embracing an ever-widening number of conceptions, which increased at each stage of the descent; but in the present discourse we mount upwards from below to that which is the highest, and, according to the degree of transcendence, so our speech is restrained until, the entire ascent being accomplished, we become wholly voiceless, inasmuch as we are absorbed in Him who is totally ineffable.'

Dionysius affirmed the complementary nature of these approaches: they can only be truly understood and practised in our lives and thought in relationship to each other. Moreover, this is not an intellectual process, but one which ultimately involves the purification of the whole nature. All that is 'this side of God' stands between us and perfective-union with Him, and needs to be done away with. It is a lifetime's work of love, as *The Cloud of Unknowing* reminds us, - both the love of the human soul for God, and His love for us, drawing us to Himself.

'Yet the Good...lovingly tempers to all things Its super-essential Ray, firmly rooted in Itself, by illuminations adapted to the particular nature of each, and thus draws up into such contemplation, communion and similitude as is fitting to them, the holy minds which strive after It with all their powers....steadily, with unwavering eyes, gazing upon

that Ray which shines upon them and with a love befitting those Illuminations shed upon them, with holy reverence and devout wisdom, speeding upwards on new wings.’

There is speculation as to why the author chose the identity that he did, but to one who played this role in the transmission of Neoplatonic ideas into the Church, the name Dionysius the Areopagite is apposite. Like his namesake on the Areopagus, Dionysius was present at the meeting of the Greek and the Christian philosophical traditions and played a distinctive part in ensuring that the Greek philosophical tradition received continued life as an element in Christian theology. Although his exact identity is not known, Dionysius was a link in that golden chain of philosophers and teachers who have sought to bring mankind closer to God through a true understanding of His real Nature.

* * * * *

Julie Parker is the Education Programme Co-ordinator for the Fintry Trust

Extracts are taken from *The Mystical Theology and The Celestial Hierarchies of Dionysius the Areopagite* and also from *The Divine Names*. Both volumes are published by the Fintry Trust and can be purchased from the Trust: www.thefintrytrust.org.uk.

THE FINTRY TRUST



The Trust is dedicated to the study of religious mysticism from an ideal and universal standpoint. It runs a programme of study days and retreats on philosophy and mysticism, and produces *Shrine of Wisdom* publications, integrating presentations of wisdom through the ages.

Past articles are free to download from www.shrineofwisdom.org.uk.

The Trust also has a library of unusual books on mysticism and philosophy, which can be visited on application.

Fintry has a beautiful retreat house in Surrey, available for hire by other similar organisations.

The house is situated in an idyllic situation surrounded by peaceful countryside.

The Trust organises a programme of lectures and meetings throughout the year plus retreats open to the public.

During retreats there is time for contemplation, study and meditation as well as discussions on philosophy and the chance to wander around the 13 acres of gardens.

(Retreats in 2013 include one led by Andrew Harvey on Divine Love in Action.)

For further details please visit www.thefintrytrust.org.uk and Fintry Trust Events Facebook page or contact:

The Administrator, Fintry, Brook, Godalming, Surrey GU8 5UQ

Telephone: 01428 682621 Email: fintry.administrator@btconnect.com

The Fintry Trust is a charity Registration No.313286



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The Foundation's FREE quarterly magazine with news and articles

TS LIBRARY

Large collection of rare esoteric, spiritual and philosophical books

LONDON PROGRAMME

Lectures held Sundays at 6pm, 50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA

Lectures include: 17 March *SHAMANISM & THE ROOTS OF THEOSOPHY*

24 March *PLANETARY AWAKENING OF CONSCIOUSNESS*

For full listings see the Society's free magazine *ESOTERICA* available from Watkins

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN ENGLAND & THE FOUNDATION FOR THEOSOPHICAL STUDIES

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Find out more about what's going on Call us today Tel: 020 7563 9817 | Email: office@theosoc.org.uk

WWW.THEOSOC.ORG.UK

THE SACRED FEMININE



In the Neoclassical painting opposite we see two young about to embrace. Cupid (*Love*) holds Psyche (*Soul*) in awe as he ventures to touch this image of perfection and beauty. Psyche was the ancient Greek word for soul or life. The soul was personified in ancient iconography as a goddess with butterfly wings, as the word psyche is also the Greek word for 'butterfly'. A butterfly hovers above the couple symbolising the Soul and the transformation brought about by the union of the Soul and Love

Dan Brown's trilogy, *Da Vinci Code*, *Angels and Demons* and *Lost Symbol*, has opened up many areas of religion, spirituality and the esoteric to many millions of people across the world. His clearly written and accessible fictions have helped various new and old ideas gain publicity. Although, as with most novels, reality can be confused with reality as with his assertion at the front of the *Da Vinci Code* that the Priory of Sion is an actual organisation. At the beginning on the film *Da Vinci Code* we see Robert Langdon happily signing his latest book *Symbols of the Sacred Feminine*. The actual story line sees Brown's concept that the Holy Grail is not a cup or a magical stone that has the power to transform human beings into immortal gods, but it is actually a woman and a blood line. The woman is Mary Magdalene and Brown sees the blood line as the result of the relationship between Christ and Mary. The book implies and states in equal measure that the church has repressed this knowledge and in so doing has relegated women to lower status in relation to men! In some earlier pagan religions there was acceptance that the world owes its creation to both gods and goddesses. In mythology, science and psychology we see two life forces as being important. In Greek myth these are sometimes called cupid and psyche. Artists have often illustrated various human characterises in these masculine and feminine forms to symbolically express love and desire that leads to the creation of new life. The soul, psyche, is given a female form with attributes that are associated with femininity such as beauty, love and purity. Women in art take on many roles from attractive, mesmerising sexual sirens to pure, virginal, perfect goddesses such as the Virgin Mary.

In the two inset images below we see *The Sleeping Beauty* awaiting the liberating kiss of her Prince who must fight through a briar rose wood. The symbolism is that the soul (woman) has been put to sleep by the world (evil witch) and is waiting to be awakened by perfect love in the form of the ideal man (the Prince).

The second image is the secret Cult of Aphrodite (where only woman can belong) practicing their sunset ritual in Aphrodite's Bay in Cyprus.

The way a religion and a society treats women is in general terms a barometer to the level of human evolution, refinement, intelligence and spiritual awareness.

Notes and inset right by B Seabourne and other images courtesy Wikipedia



CALL FOR PAPERS

Enchanted Modernities: Theosophy and the arts in the modern world

A Conference at the University of Amsterdam, 25-27 September 2013

This is the first conference of the newly established research network, Enchanted Modernities: Theosophy, modernism and the Arts c. 1875-1960, funded by the Leverhulme Trust. The conference will be organized in collaboration with the Centre for the History of Hermetic philosophy and related currents, University of Amsterdam.

Building on a very successful exploratory colloquium at Liverpool Hope University in December 2010, this conference will explore what the arts can tell us about the complex relationships between Theosophy, modernity and artistic culture c. 1875-1960. The purpose of this conference is to bring together an international group of scholars working on Theosophy and the arts across the globe in this period, and as a result, map the rich variety of artistic responses to the influence of Theosophy and the Theosophical movements in the modern world. The connections between Theosophy and modernist aesthetics have been well documented in relation to certain artists such as Kandinsky and Mondrian, as well as composers like Scriabin and Rudhyar. However, the purpose of this conference is to develop a more nuanced and complex picture of the multiple layering of art, modernity and mysticism in a range of artistic practices in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The wider critical significance of the relationships between painting, sculpture, applied and decorative arts, music, architecture on the one hand and Theosophy on the other, with the exception of a few well known case-studies, is still largely to be explored, possibly because, as the historian Alex Owen has suggested, 'the very notion of mysticism and the occult seem to run counter to our conception of modern culture and the modern mind set'.

Individual papers might explore how artists, musicians and performers came into contact with Theosophy and other mystical doctrines or practices, and how Theosophical ideas, especially those of key figures in the Society in this period, such as Helena P. Blavatsky and Annie Besant, were given material, visual and audible form and shape.

Other topics of interest for the conference will include: the international artistic networks of the Theosophical movements (including R. Steiner's Anthroposophy and post-Theosophical developments, such as G.I. Gurdjieff's Work), the interrelations of mysticism, music and the visual arts; women artists/musicians and Theosophy; the artistic significance of A. Besant's and C.W. Leadbeater's book *Thought Forms* (1901).

We plan to publish the proceedings of this conference. Please indicate whether you are interested in developing your paper, if accepted, for a publication of collected essays after the conference. In 2015, the network will hold another conference at Columbia University, New York, which will focus more on literature and text.

Language: English

Deadline for paper proposals: Wednesday, 29th February 2013

Proposal format: abstract (300 to 500 words) and a short bio (100 to 200 words)

Please send your proposals to Dr. Marco Pasi: m.pasi@uva.nl

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION FOR THEOSOPHICAL STUDIES

It has often been asked “What is the Foundation for Theosophical Studies, and what does it do?” So here is an outline of the organisation behind the magazine you are reading right now.

The Foundation for Theosophical Studies is a registered educational charity. Formed in 1992 it was set up to work alongside the Theosophical Society to the mutual benefit to both, particularly in pursuing the 2nd and 3rd Aims (Objects) of the Theosophical Society, which are about study and research. Because of its very close association with the Theosophical Society, the Foundation has, since its inception, been based at the Society's H.Q. in London.

Its Aims of the Foundation are stated at the back of this magazine as:

“To advance education in and promote or further the study of or research into religion philosophy and science and to disseminate the results of such study and research to the public”
and

“To advance the recognition of the fundamental unity of all people through a knowledge of the theosophical principles of unity evolution and perfectibility”.

“To help people understand and discover the essential truths at the heart of all philosophy, science and spirituality, especially the fundamental unity of all people”.

ACTIVITIES

What does the Foundation do?

The Foundation publishes the quarterly magazine, “**Esoterica**”. Around 6000 copies are printed and distributed every quarter through a variety of channels including specialist esoteric booksellers and many other kinds of shops, businesses, organisations throughout England. It is also circulated to the many members of the Theosophical Society and their guests in Lodges and Centres throughout the country.

The Foundation runs a yearly Theosophical **Summer School**. During this week there are talks, lectures, discussions and workshops. There are also experiential and meditation sessions plus organised visits to places of interest and social activities.

Each Summer School is organised around a specific theme, with topics presented at both introductory level and at more advanced levels. In order to make the School accessible to as many people as possible the residential week is held in different Universities across the country each year.

The Foundation organises a **National Speakers Scheme** which provides and pays the expenses of speakers on theosophical topics at meetings all over England and Wales. Anyone organising an event at which a speaker on esoteric/theosophical topics is required, can use a speaker from this scheme free of charge. Of course, a donation is always welcome when the economics of the meeting make this possible. Details of the scheme including a list of speakers and topics are available on request from the Administration Officer whose contact details can be found on the inside back page of this magazine.

The Foundation is able to provide some **Bursaries** for approved activities. These give financial assistance to individuals who would otherwise not be able to benefit from some events which fall within the Foundation's Aim. For further information or an application form please apply in confidence to: bursar@theosophy.org.uk or write to “The Bursar” at 50 Gloucester Place London W1U 8EA

The Foundation sponsors a number of joint events and provides some external grants for activities which are in keeping with its Aims/Objects. It maintains the website www.theosophy.org.uk where you can find more detail on the Foundation's activities and various articles by Foundation speakers.

ORGANISATION

Who runs and manages the Foundation?

There is a Board of Directors/Trustees, all volunteers, who attend its business meetings and organise its activities. Its Chairman is Eric McGough, who is also the National President of the Theosophical Society in England and Editor of *Esoterica*. The Directors/Trustees of the Foundation are elected by its Members at the Annual General Meeting in April. As an incorporated charity, the Foundation is subject to stringent regulation, and its Directors/Trustees attend regular seminars on charity law, and charity finance, etc. to ensure compliance. The Foundation depends on volunteers to help run events like Summer School and to raise awareness of its activities.

GETTING INVOLVED

If you feel in tune with the Aim of the Foundation, and would like to assist with its work, either as a volunteer or by arranging a local event, please get in touch by email to info@theosophy.org.uk or 0207 563 9815. If you would like to support the work of the Foundation financially, please consider a one-off gift, a legacy, or regular giving through monthly or annual Gift Aid. In either case your help will be much appreciated.

Here is a selection of talks across the country supported by the Foundation of Theosophical Studies

SPEAKER'S DIARY MARCH, APRIL, MAY & JUNE 2013

DURHAM

THE FACE OF THE DIVINE – SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY EXPLORED

Susan Bayliss

Saturday 2 March, 2 pm

Mystics and deep spiritual seekers of all religions, or of no religion, tell us of an absorption into an experience which brings knowledge love and truth and oneness. This reflective talk explores the role of near-death experience in our awakening to the higher life and takes a journey through the some of the latest scientific research. Some fascinating experiences of enlightenment help us to consider what relevance such concepts may have for us. These can help to deepen our spiritual practice and open our conscious awareness of the world around us.

Durham Centre for Theosophical Studies

Shakespeare Hall, North Road,

Durham City DH1 4SQ.

Tel: Jim Blakey 0191 386 0492

Email: Durhamcentr4ts@btinternet.com

BOURNEMOUTH

AGNI YOGA & SHAMBHALA: THE MYSTICAL WORLD OF HELENA ROERICH

Robert Kitto

Saturday 2 March, 2.15 pm

Helena Roerich was a remarkable Russian writer,

thinker and scientist . . . and the inspiration of her legendary husband - the painter and humanist Nicholas Roerich. Together they developed a system of living ethics known as Agni Yoga, which is based on Theosophy, and the writings of Helena Blavatsky. Their speculation about mystical Shambhala, Maitreya, and an occult hierarchy are ideas that resonate with many of today's spiritually minded.

Cobham Lecture Theatre, Bournemouth University, Talbot Rise, Bournemouth.

Details: 0800 612 7282. Visit:

www.bournemouthsociety.org.uk

HOLYHEAD

RIGHT RELATIONS

Teresa Keast

Saturday 9 March. 2 pm

Right relations within establish right relations with others, our community, our world. Through inner observation we harmonise and unify our intellect with our intuition, our yin and yang energies, our personality with our soul. Truth pervades enabling us to see past the imperfections of the personality of another and see instead the light of their soul . . . and right relations blossom.

Harvest Moon Shop, Newry St, Holyhead.

Details: John Jeffrey 01407 760062

tsholyhead@gmail.com

SHIPLEY

THE LOTUS OF LIVING BEAUTY

Kathy Newburn (USA)

Saturday 9 March. 2.30 pm

This talk will focus on the cultivation of beauty in the daily life. In a time of fear and uncertainty, of too much activity and information overload, we are easily distracted from the world of significant realities. In the new age life will be simpler and quieter. Simple spiritual exercises and creative visualisation techniques will be an essential part of this presentation.

Room 2, Shipley Library, 2 Wellcroft,

Shipley BD18 3QH. Tel: Atma, 01274 598455 or

info@ts-bradford.org.uk.

BANGOR

THEOSOPHY: A LIVING REALITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Wayne Gatfield

Tuesday 26 March. 7.30 pm

This talk explores how we can use the information gained from our Theosophical Studies and make use of it in a practical way in our daily lives and how it helps us to relate to our fellow creatures on a deeper level.

Hiraël Meeting Room, Ambrose Street,

Bangor LL57 1DF

BANGOR

THE ART OF PEACE AND THE SCIENCE OF LIVING

Wayne Gatfield

Thursday 28 March. 7.30 pm

Can we find true peace amidst all the turmoil of modern life? Is it possible to find that calm centre whilst the storm rages all around us? Using the words of some great thinkers and Spiritual teachers as a springboard this talk explores ways in which we can try to find the 'peace that passeth all understanding' and use it in our day to day lives. It also shows how the Higher Self is more accessible than we may think!

Hiraël Meeting Room, Ambrose Street,

Bangor LL57 1DF

BOURNEMOUTH

CHRIST - COSMIC, SOLAR AND PLANETARY

Christian Bodhi

Saturday 13 April. 2.30 pm

Within all major religion we encounter Trinity, which Christianity describes as Father, Son & Holy Ghost, while in Hinduism it is termed as Shiva, Vishnu & Brahma. This talk will explore the Son or Vishnu principle on various scales of existence, its manifestation and the role in Creation, from the inner Christ within us all, to the greater manifestation of the Christ principle in the spiritual Masters and Avatars. We seek a better understanding of this evolutionary force in the Universe.

Cobham Lecture Theatre, Bournemouth University,

Wallisdown, Bournemouth

Tel: 0800 612 7282. E-mail:

bournemouthsociety@yahoo.com

Web: www.bournemouthsociety.org.uk

SHIPLEY

STRIVING FOR PERFECTION

Colin Price

Saturday 13 April. 2.30 pm

Life presents us with various challenges for our body, mind and spirit. When we train our bodies we try everything which will bring them to perfection for the task assigned to us. However, we also have to strive for perfection in our thoughts and the rules here are very demanding in accordance with Karma.

Room 2, Shipley Library, 2 Wellcroft, Shipley BD18

3QH. Tel: Atma, 01274 598455 or

info@ts-bradford.org.uk.

LEEDS

H. P. BLAVATSKY AND THE VEDAS

Colin Price

Sunday 14 April 2.30 pm

The **Vedas** are the oldest of all known ancient records and corroborate the occult teachings in almost every respect. **H. P. Blavatsky's** commentaries provide a mine of deep esoteric insight into the fundamental teachings of theosophy. In fact the key to the Vedas is in 'The Secret Doctrine' and many of her other writings.

12 Queens Square, Leeds LS2 8AJ. Details:

Walter, 0776 849 5726 or info@ts-leeds.org.uk

BOLTON

H. P. BLAVATSKY – OLYMPIAN HERO

Susan Bayliss

Sunday 14 April, 2.30 pm

Isis: "the women clothed in the sun and with the moon under her feet, to whom was given two wings of the great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness".

Through her own spiritual labours HPB gave to us the fruits of her first Olympian task "Isis Unveiled" and from this inspirational work, her Olympian vision. In revealing the gift HPB gave to the world, we will explore Isis goddess of the mysteries and much more; unlocking some of the esoteric keys in the Greek myths and symbolism of the ancient world.

School Room, Bank St. Chapel, (Crown St entrance),

Bank St, Bolton BL1 1TS. Details: Chris, 01257 401152

or lchrislowe@yahoo.co.uk

NOTTINGHAM

THE HEALING POWER OF THOUGHT – AURAS, CRYSTALS & ANGELS

Susan Bayliss

Saturday 20 April 2 pm

We are surrounded by a hidden world of colour and light. Thought forms and vibrations can influence the way we think and feel and interact with each other, just as easily as speech and smiles and other expressions of our feelings. An understanding of their subtle properties can change our lives and help to bring healing into the world. We will explore the role of auras,

crystals and angels and how the Power of Thought can become a dynamic healing tool.
**Theosophical Hall, 73 Maid Marion Way,
Nottingham NG1 6AJ**
Finian 0115 974 5752 (evenings) or
info@theancientwisdom.co.uk

SIDMOUTH

REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE THEOSOPHISTS

Cynthia Trasi

Saturday 20 April 2.30 pm

Surely this request is as relevant today as when the **Master K.H.** made it? This talk looks at what has been written by and about the Masters in respect to any possible guidance – or contact with them. It seems it requires hard work!

Valley Cottage, Stintway Lane, Sidmouth EX10 9QW. Details: Julie 07967 167984

TORBAY

MANTRAS IN SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Cynthia Trasi

Sunday 21 April 2.30 pm

"The speech of men cannot reach the Gods. They must be addressed in their own language. It is composed of sounds, not words. This language or the incantation of mantras being the most effective agent and the first of the keys which opens the door of communication between Mortals and Immortals." – H P Blavatsky.

26 Parkhill Road, TORQUAY TQ1 2AL.

Details: Tel: 01803 203195

COLWYN BAY

H. P. BLAVATSKY – OLYMPIAN HERO

Susan Bayliss

Thursday 25 April, 2 pm

Synopsis as per 14 April meeting in Bolton

Parkway Community Centre, Rhos-on-Sea, LL28 4SE.

HERNE BAY

THE MASTERS AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF HUMANITY

Robert Woolley

Saturday 26 May, 2pm

Details & address: Daphne Wood 01227 370920

SHEVINGTON, Cheshire

THE RAYS AND ENERGY FIELDS

NorthWestern Federation Workshop

Ted Capstick and Teresa Keast

Saturday 18 May, 10 am to 4.30 pm

Cost £ 12 - including buffet lunch and refreshments

The Methodist Church, Gathurst Lane, Shevington WN6 8EA (just of the M6 J27)

Details: contact Maureen Atkinson

mla.gold@yahoo.co.uk

LEEDS

INITIATION AND THE PATH

John Gordon

Sunday 23 June 2.30 p.m

The talk is based on **John's** latest book of the same name.

12 Queens Square, Leeds LS2 8AJ. Details:

Walter, 0776 849 5726 or info@ts-leeds.org.uk

OBITUARY

PAULINA MUCHA (1951 – 2012)

Paulina sadly passed away in November 2012. Paulina joined the TS in England in 2005 and from the outset distinguished herself as one of the most valuable volunteers. Paulina was generous with her time – regularly working two full days during the week – mostly processing tapes orders and assorted clerical tasks in the Information Department – and acting as cashier/receptionist for our Sunday afternoon workshops and evening lectures at the London HQ. Her service to the Society followed on from a successful career as a designer of ladies clothes for some of Europe's top fashion houses. Her work involved her living in a number of continental cities – including Paris and Milan. Not surprisingly, she was fluent in both French and Italian and had an enduring love for music and theatre. Paulina was a much loved addition to the small team of volunteers serving at 50 Gloucester Place. She will be greatly missed!

Colyn Boyce

LONDON PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

JANUARY - MARCH 2013

SUNDAYS (courses, lectures & workshops)

50 GLOUCESTER PLACE, LONDON W1U 8EA

Theme: THEOSOPHY: THE UTOPIAN DREAM

*All 6 pm lectures can be ordered after the event on CD or audio cassette from Barry Thompson –
books@theosoc.org.uk or 020 7563 9816*

*Please note: The opinions of the speakers do not necessarily represent the views of the
Foundation for Theosophical Studies nor the Theosophical Society*

Unless otherwise stated all talks have been arranged by the Foundation of Theosophical Studies

Sunday 17 February, 2 pm

ACCESS YOUR INNER LIGHT

Dr Susan Jamieson

'The Lightdoctor', Dr Susan Jamieson, will explain the ancient healing theories, and teach a series of gentle exercises that use movement, breath and colours to help participants to connect to the innate energy of the Earth and boost the flow of Chi to five key organs in their bodies: the heart, lungs, spleen, kidneys and liver. As well as energizing our vital organs, this workshop will teach us how to process emotions such as anger or grief. This is the subject of Susan's latest DVD, elements of which will be highlighted in the workshop. Further details of Dr Jamieson's work can be seen on www.lightdoctor.net. *£15, £10 concessions*
Arranged by the Theosophical Society

Sunday 17 February, 6 pm

WE'VE LOST THE LIGHT

Dr Susan Jamieson

Tonight's presentation is a journey through ancient philosophies and spiritualities that were better acquainted with the reality of Light than we are today. This is the light of our beings, our eternal soul, secrets of life and death which explain why we are here – mysteries that we humans have sought to explain for millennia. Modern science is finally catching up with the ancient world of Light. Susan Jamieson is a physician, specializing in combining modern medicine with ancient healing traditions. She is author of Findhorn Press's 'Medical to Mystical, Bring Light into Your Life'.
£7, £5 concessions

Sunday 24 February, 6 pm

THE DRAMA OF DUALITY IN THE TAROT AND SHAKESPEARE

Clemens Brennan

This colourful talk shows a remarkable correlation between Shakespeare's vision of human nature and that

of the Tarot. Eleven spectrums of duality make up the backbone of the Tarot de Marseille, juxtaposing complementary poles of life experience. Each spectrum is confirmed, explored and thrillingly dramatized in one of the seminal plays of Shakespeare. The interplay of masculine and feminine qualities in the story of a dynamic character such as Hamlet, Cleopatra, Othello or Juliet forms more than a theme or motif. It becomes a fateful driving force of their destiny. Clemens Brennan is a professional Tarot reader and a lover of literature, cinema and theatre.

£7, £5 concessions

Sunday 3 March, 2 pm

MAGIC, THEOSOPHY AND QABBALAH

Finian Heavey and Sally Singer-Fraser

This workshop aims to answer comprehensively two essential questions: what is Magic and what is the Qabbalah? The afternoon explores the two forms of Qabbalah – the Jewish and Hermetic and focuses on the basics: including the Hebrew alphabet, and the Tree of Life diagram. Finian Heavey holds a degree in Comparative Religion. Finian trained as a Scientist (Applied Chemistry). Sally Singer-Fraser has studied Hinduism and Vaishnavism for many years.

£15, £10 concessions

Arranged by the Theosophical Society

Sunday 3 March, 6 pm

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY GOD?

Finian Heavey

In this evenings talk Finian investigates Eastern and Western Ideas and examine Avatars in the East with the 'Incarnation' in the West. The teachings of Lord Krishna, Christ and the 'Noble Silence' of the Buddha are contrasted and Judaism and the Dharma are compared. The views of H. P. Blavatsky in the *Secret Doctrine* about 'God' are explored and contrasted with those of Annie Besant and Alice Bailey, considering the concepts of The Heart and the Monad and the 'god' within. Finian

Heavey is the President of Nottingham Theosophical Lodge and holds a degree from London University in Education and Comparative Religion
£7, £5 concessions

Sunday 10 March, 6 pm
THE UNIVERSE WITHIN - MIRRORING THE UNIVERSE WITHOUT
ARE CROP CIRCLES THE INTELLIGENT LINK?

June Kidd

The talk is based in part on the book by Vera Stanley Alder, "From the Mundane to the Magnificent". When your body is injured, white cells come to help healing. We are not aware of the universe within answering the call. Crop circles are more than stunning works of 'art'. They should be viewed as an intelligent, not invasive, way to encourage humans to lift their eyes to the heavens and remind us that we are not alone - and that we are all co-creators of the quality of life on this planet. *(Please note that these are the views of the speaker and not the Theosophical Society)*

£7, £5 concessions

Sunday 17 March, 6 pm
SHAMANISM AND THE ROOTS OF THEOSOPHY
Victor Ball

Writing in *Isis Unveiled* of her encounter with a Tartar Shaman, Madame Blavatsky describes Shamanism as 'that strange and most despised of all surviving religions - "Spirit-worship . . . or belief in the immortality of the souls . . . a practical blending of the visible with the invisible world'. The oldest known spiritual discipline in the world, Shamanism utilises ancient practices of altered states of consciousness to contact the gods and spirits of the 'other world' and bring their blessings to mankind. In recent times there has been a resurgence of interest in 'the way of the Shaman' and many 'New Age' groups have incorporated techniques and exercises drawn from the ancient tradition into their practice. Victor Ball teaches Philosophy and Religious Studies and is currently President of the Newcastle upon Tyne Lodge.

£7, £5 concessions

Sunday 24 March, 6 pm
A PLANETARY AWAKENING
Kathy Newburn

Many people understand that we are passing through a period of tremendous change and upheaval in our world. This talk will focus on helping us understand what is going on, by looking at the deeper, subjective factors underlying outer events and preparing us for a planetary expansion of consciousness. We will explore the importance of this period in planetary history and what we can do to contribute towards the process of change. Topics considered include the Aquarian Age, the planetary centres, the teachings of esoteric astrology, the seven rays, spiritual initiation, and the

techniques of raja yoga meditation. Kathy Newburn worked for many years at the Lucis Trust and the Seven Ray Institute in New York. She now lectures in the US, Europe and South America to bring knowledge of the Ageless Wisdom to wider public notice.

£7, £5 concessions

Sunday 2 June, 6 pm
HOW TO BUILD A UNIVERSE
A do it yourself guide to just about everything.
Eric McGough

If you were to set about building a universe how would you go about it? What ingredients would you need and how would you tackle the making of a human being? Eric McGough is National President of the Theosophical Society in England and author of a popular audio-course on the Ageless Wisdom.

Arranged by Foundation for Theosophical Studies
£7, £5 concessions

BLAVATSKY LODGE

Meets take place at 50 Gloucester Place
Thursdays 7 - 9 pm; £5 : £3 TS members.

THURSDAY 7 March — Yuri Stoyanov
Ismaili and Theosophical Tradition

Professor Stoyanov is a member of the Department of the Near and Middle East, Faculty of Languages and Cultures, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He has lectured and published widely on various facets of the interaction between the theologies and soteriologies of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam as well as the persisting interchanges between some of their heterodox and apocalyptic trends

THURSDAY 21st March: — Joseph McKeaney
"Gurdjieff's Law of Seven"

In this talk we will explore together Gurdjieff's wisdom on the chakras.

We will also explore the Law of Seven & its corollary the Law of Three.

These two cosmic laws also known as Octaves & Triads, combine to form the ancient cosmic glyph - the Enneagram.

We will look at such related matters as:
The seven levels of Man.

The Law of Deviation of Forces.

The Three Sacred Impulses for Man.

The Three minds ... The sensual,

The intermediate and the Inner-Mind.

The great Triad in Gurdjieff's teaching

Essence, Personality & the False-Ego.

INTRODUCTORY COURSE ON THE AGELESS WISDOM

Sunday afternoons at 4.45 – 5.45 pm

Free admission

THEOSOPHY: HIGHWAY TO SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

20 January – 24 March

Informal sessions in which the basic teachings of the Divine Wisdom are explored and discussed. Everybody on this planet is in the Great School of Life - of spiritual development. Over the weeks we shall look at the great hidden truths which make sense of our lives and which gives them purpose. This is a basic grounding in the Eternal Mysteries, and it has absolutely no strings attached! The book *The Key to Theosophy* is recommended for newcomers.

Leader: *Edward Archer*

WEEKNIGHT THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY MEETINGS

50 GLOUCESTER PLACE, LONDON W1U 8EA

ISIS UNVEILED Study & Discussion Group MONDAYS 7.00 – 9.00 pm

21 January – 25 March

Isis Unveiled, published in 1877, is H.P. Blavatsky's first major work on Theosophy, examining religion and science in the light of Western and Oriental ancient wisdom and occult and spiritualistic phenomena. This study group will systematically read and discuss *Isis Unveiled* - a key text for all those who are seeking spiritual knowledge.

Leader: *George Wood* is a former teacher of Religious Education who has regularly led courses on Gnostic Christianity.

Free Admission but donations welcomed

THE SECRET DOCTRINE

TUESDAYS 7.00 – 8.30 pm

Until 26 March and 23 April – 26 June

Leader: *Victor Hangya*

Our sourcebook is the *Secret Doctrine*, which claims 'logical coherence and consistency' and should be treated as a 'working hypothesis'. The SD sheds light on some of life's greatest mysteries. Arranged by The Foundation for Theosophical Studies.

Free Admission

Dhyana Centre of the Theosophical Society

THE JOY OF MEDITATION

Tuesdays 7 - 9 pm:

8 January – 19 February; 26 February – 9 April

Sundays 11 am – 4 pm

27 January, 17 March

The Dhyana Centre holds regular introductory courses for beginners on weekdays, dovetailing with weekend intensives that cover the same ground in a truncated form. Courses teach the theory and practice of meditation as a spiritual discipline.

Leader: *Alan Perry*. Admission free, donations welcome.

For details of retreats and other events, go to info@dhyanacentre.org.

THEOSOPHICAL GALLERY TOURS

With *George McNamara*

London's Galleries and Museums are a storehouse of the world's culture, much of which has meaning from a spiritual perspective. Though I am not an expert in any of these topics, I hope that a small group can pool our understanding and sensitivity to art and history (and have a nice cup of coffee too)

I am leading another short series of visits to galleries for members of the TS, enquirers or friends (or indeed anyone interested in "cultural studies") to investigate the following ideas:-

We will meet at 2pm at the relevant main entrance. For dates of meetings and more information please **phone George McNamara on 078 8181 3242** or email George on george@whatever-will.be.

N.W. FEDERATION MEETINGS 2013

TRANS-PENNINE WEEKEND -

Friday 26th – Sunday 28th April

The Langdales Hotel, St Annes on Sea, Lancashire

£150 - including £15 non-returnable registration fee.

(Also day delegate rate available)

Fri. dinner to Sunday afternoon refreshments)

Theme "Messages of the Mahatmas and It's Relevance Today" (Mahatma Letters)

Guest Speaker... COLIN PRICE

SPECIAL DAY EVENT -

Saturday 18th May 10am to 4.30pm

A Day with Ted Capstick and Teresa Keast

"The Magic of the Rays" (Workshop and Study)

Venue; The Methodist Church, Gathurst Lane, Shevington WN6 8EA (just of the M6 - J27)

Cost £12 including buffet lunch and refreshments

SPRING CONFERENCE

Saturday 29th June 2 – 5pm

**Venue: The Quaker Meeting House.
Mount Street, Manchester**

Guest Speaker - Janet Hoult (Nottingham)

2 talks:

1. A MIND TO EMBRACE THE UNIVERSE

An investigation of mankind's divine nature and spiritual makeup, based on the booklet by E. L. Gardner, published in 1960, and also looking at the context with regard to the piece in the *Secret Doctrine* from which it is taken.

2. THE DHYANI BUDDHAS

Dragons of Wisdom, angels, arupa devas - they have many names and in this talk we will be looking at some

aspects of this hierarchy of celestial beings. What is their nature, and do they affect us directly? The talk will also include Bodhisattvas and the 'Sons of the Dragon'. Admission £5, Concessions £3. (Bring and Share Vegetarian Refreshments)

DRAGONS AND INITIATES -

Sunday 30th June 2 – 4.30pm

Venue: The UNITY ROOMS, Unitarian Chapel, Knights Hill, Padiham 2 – 430pm

Guest Speaker - Janet Hoult - (Nottingham)

Admission £4. concessions £3. Includes refreshments

For more information please contact:

Maureen Atkinson: mia.gold@yahoo.co.uk or

Heather Carroll: hcarroll1@ntlworld.com

ESOTERICA ADVERTISING RATES

Please note that the Editors reserve the right not to publish any advertisement that is deemed not to be in line with the aims of the Foundation for Theosophical Studies.

All sizes are approximate and may vary slightly depending on the design and the overall format of the magazine and other material published.

There may be a small extra charge if any advertisement presented for publication needs extra design work and imagery. Advertisers will be informed of this before any advert is placed in the magazine.

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FULL PAGE - £700

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QUARTER PAGE - £220

EIGHTH PAGE - £130

SUMMER SCHOOL 2013

AT UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER

AUGUST 3RD-10TH

Supported by THE FOUNDATION FOR THEOSOPHICAL STUDIES

This year we are at the University of Chester for the first time. It is a very pleasant campus close to the city centre. The accommodation is all en-suite at a very reasonable price with a discount if booked before the end of May. The University has an excellent restaurant with an award winning vegetarian chef.

The theme for the School is "Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy". We are pleased that the respected Theosophist Peter Barton will be giving the Sunday afternoon Blavatsky Lecture entitled "The Evolutionary Task of Humanity". Peter is also giving a Public Lecture at the University on the Wednesday evening to which all are welcome. The title of his talk is "The Essence of Theosophy".

It is with pleasure that welcome back to the School David Roef from The Netherlands who will give a lecture and take a three day study course in which he explores the reality of consciousness. Other speakers and Study leaders include Eric McGough, Colin Price, Gary Kidgell, Ted Capstick, Hugh Agnew, David Harvey, Tony Maddock and Susan Bayliss all of whom will be imparting their considerable knowledge of esoteric and Theosophical matters.

Not all the School is study and hard work as the afternoon optional activities include yoga, Tarot, reflexology, healing and Chi Kung. The evenings are more relaxed with musical and other entertainments and the days start and finish with meditation.

If you have not attended Summer School before and are looking for answers to deeper questions we highly recommend this School. There is always a good atmosphere at the school and new friendships are made and old ones renewed. Day visitors are most welcome. Application forms can be downloaded from the Theosophical Society website or acquired by contacting the registrar Colin Price at 50, Gloucester Place, London, W1U 8EA or on 07960 450316.

Jenny Baker,
Director of Summer School

FOUNDATIONS OF ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

Sponsored by the Foundation for Theosophical Studies

UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER, PARKGATE ROAD, CHESTER CH1 4BJ

AUGUST 3RD-10TH

SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAMME

SATURDAY 3RD AUGUST

2.30pm ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION.
7.30pm WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN
PREVIEW OF STUDY GROUPS AND WORKSHOPS.

SUNDAY 4TH AUGUST

7.00am - 8.00am YOGA (Sunday - Friday)
9.30am - 9.40 am MEDITATION (daily)
9.45am - 10.40am **LECTURE – PROEM – Eric McGough**
10.40am - NOTICES (daily)
11.15am – 12.30pm STUDY GROUPS “A”.
(Sunday to Tuesday)
1. Fascinating Facts of the Paranormal - Marian Barton
2. Soul Wisdom –Heart of Life - Susan Bayliss
3. The Hero's Journey; Principles of the Spiritual Path and the Symbolism of Myth - Gary Kidgell
4. Studies in Consciousness: Absolute and Relative – David Roef
2.30pm - 3.30pm Free time or choice of the following:
1. Understanding Energy through Yoga with Teresa Keast
2. Chi Kung with Mike Hall
3. Healing with Veda Hutchinson
4. Adventures in Consciousness with Ruby Tovet
4.15pm-5.30pm THE BLAVATSKY LECTURE
THE EVOLUTIONARY TASK OF HUMANITY - Peter Barton
7.30pm - 8.30pm SIGHT AND SOUND IN CONCERT – Damon Scothern
9.00pm - 9.30pm Meditation (daily)

MONDAY 5TH AUGUST

9.45am - 10.40am LECTURE -
THE CONSCIOUS UNIVERSE - Janet Hoults
11.15am-12.30pm – STUDY GROUPS “A”
2.30pm - 3.30pm – Free time or choice of the following:
1. Reflexology for Health and Well-being with Dana Eaton
2. Learn how to be a 'karmic Alchemist' with Olivia Stefanino
3. Understanding energy through yoga with Teresa Keast
4. Adventures in Consciousness with Ruby Tovet
2.00pm T.O.S Annual General Meeting
4.15pm - 5.15pm – LECTURE – EVER BECOMING THE
ETERNAL PILGRIM – Hugh Agnew
7.30pm - 8.30pm – THEOSOPIHICAL FORUM – A panel of
experts will answer your questions

TUESDAY 6TH AUGUST

9.45am-10.40am – LECTURE – THE POWER & ENERGY OF
GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS – Teresa Keast
11.15am-12.30pm STUDY GROUPS “A”
2.30 pm GUIDED WALKS THROUGH HISTORIC CHESTER
7.30pm - 8.30pm - EVENING ENTERTAINMENT

WEDNESDAY 7TH AUGUST

9.45am - 10.40am – LECTURE – THE CONCEPT OF GOD –
COLIN PRICE
11.15am – 12.30pm
STUDY GROUPS “B” (Wednesday to Friday)
An Introduction to the Third Eye and its opening in Spiritual Development - Ted Capstick
The Jewel in the Lotus - Wayne Gatifield
The Mahatma Letters - David Harvey
The Secret Doctrine - Tony Maddock
2.30pm-3.30pm Free time or choice of the following;
1. The Way of Psychic Tarot with Clemens Brenan
2. Chi Kung with Mike Hall
3. Understanding energy through yoga with Teresa Keast
4. Adventures in Consciousness with Ruby Tovet
4.15pm-5.15pm LECTURE –
SACRED WAVES AND THE FOUR WINDS – Susan Bayliss
7.30pm-8.30pm PUBLIC LECTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY -
ESSENCE OF THEOSOPHY – Peter Barton

THURSDAY 8TH AUGUST

9.45am-10.40am LECTURE - UNITY: ONE FUNDAMENTAL LAW
OF OCCULT SCIENCE - Ron Wallwork
11.15am – 12.30pm STUDY GROUPS “B”
1. The way of Psychic Tarot with Clemens Brenan;
2. Reflexology for Health and Well-being with Dana Eaton;
3. Healing for Health with Veda Hutchinson;
4. The Sound of Your Voice with Desiree Ickerodt.
4.15pm - 5.15pm LECTURE - THE UPANISHADS: ESOTERIC
WISDOM OF THE SAGES – Atma Trasi
7.30pm - 8.30pm – THE SPIRIT OF THE DANCE - CLASSICAL
MUSIC PRESENTATION – Jenny Baker

FRIDAY 9TH AUGUST

9.45am - 10.40am LECTURE – THE ULTIMATE REALITY OF
CONSCIOUSNESS – DAVID ROEF
11.15am – 12.30pm STUDY GROUPS “B”
2.30pm - 3.30pm Free time or choice of the following;
1. The Way of Psychic Tarot with Clemens Brenan;
2. Chi Kung with Mike Hall;
3. The Sound Of your Voice with Desiree Ickerodt;
4. Learn how to be a 'Karmic Alchemist' with Olivia Stefanino.
4.30-5.30pm LECTURE - PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF
ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY - Barry Thompson
7.30pm CONCERT

SATURDAY 10TH AUGUST

9.30am THE FOUNDATIONS OF ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY -
COLIN PRICE
10.30am CLOSING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN

Departure after coffee

FOUNDATION FOR THEOSOPHICAL STUDIES

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or email: office@theosoc.org.uk

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Barry Thompson – Librarian: Telephone 020 7563 9816

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CONTRIBUTIONS: Articles, letters, obituaries and other material on the Ageless Wisdom, spirituality, philosophy, science, obituaries on long standing theosophists who have passed on can be sent to the Editor.

All material submitted is on condition that this material can be accepted or rejected in part or in full, or it can be amended or sections deleted on grounds of content, space and suitability without any reason given. Any manuscript sent by post cannot be returned. Material can be emailed.

Please note there is no guarantee that an article, information, obituaries or other material will be included.

Please ensure that any material you may submit is subject to the above conditions

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ARTICLES, ADVERTS AND OTHER MATERIAL FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF ESOTERICA SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO:

EDITOR, ESOTERICA 50 GLOUCESTER PLACE, LONDON W1U 8EA

OR emailed to office@theosoc.org.uk

No later than Monday 29th April 2013

Editor's note: Some articles are received that have no author's name on them. When they are brought up from the files at a later time for consideration we sometimes can't trace who sent it in. Contributors should ensure that their articles have been proof read by a competent person prior to submitting and that every attempt has been made to ensure reasoned argument, correct grammar/spelling and clarity of style etc. Consideration should be given to the use of definitive statements to avoid stating as fact that which is actually speculation.

Thank you.

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The aims of the Foundation are:

**To Advance Education, Promote Study and
Research into Religion, Philosophy and Science and to
Disseminate the Results to the Public**

**To Promote Study and Research into the
Laws of Nature and the Powers Latent in Man**

**To Advance Recognition of the Fundamental
Unity of all People through Knowledge
Of Theosophical Principles of Unity,
Evolution and Perfectibility**

**The Foundation holds lectures, seminars, workshops
and conferences and organises regular residential courses
and an annual Summer School**

For more information telephone 0207 563 9817

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