



ISSUE 47

faith

INITIATIVE

EMBRACING DIVERSITY
CELEBRATING OUR 22ND YEAR

WINNER

SHAP AWARD 2011

“...be in this world as the
bee: it eats only good,
produces only good,
and when it rests upon a
flower it neither ruins
it nor deflowers it.”

**Imam Qayyim
al Jawziyyah**

Brother. do. you. love. me.

Manni Coe and Reuben Coe

Enslavement: Voices from the Archives

Church Commissioners for England

Challenging Cultural Perceptions

Diana Nammi

WILD ORCHIDS



In these low worked-out limestone hills, I found
wild orchids grow,
a thrilling sight, the charm
of early purple, common spotted, bee,
a rarity and joy.

It's often said that poets go to war
to save their homes,
the people, language, place,
but I find love in all diversity,
I'll happily fight for this.

The fields and rivers are polluted, spoiled;
we need to work,
re-wild our countryside
and coasts, restore the health of everywhere,
to re-connect our loves.

Simon Fletcher

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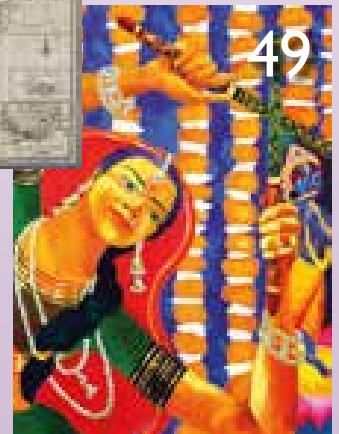
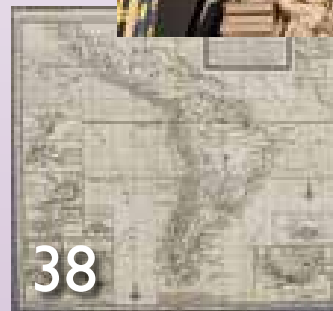
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editorial

As we go to print I am aware that the pages of this Issue of the magazine brings us a wealth of challenging insights – historically, politically, socially and spiritually. Our contributors of all faiths test the perceived norms that often keep us in our comfort zones. Our keynote writer Jagbir Jhutti-Jolal highlights the lack of equality, a basic human right, that is prevalent in all its forms across the world. As a Sikh she recognises that freedom of religion and belief violations, and institutional racism are on the rise, creating discrimination, poverty and non-access to basic services. She gives focus to the rallying cry of the United Nations for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ‘Leave no one behind’, which looks to build a world in which everyone’s needs are met. To achieve such a world, she says, we need to actively draw on our values of compassion, humility and love to create a greater sense of communal belonging and global interconnectedness. Inequality in its most strident form was, and still is, demonstrated through enslavement of fellow human beings. On discovering, and subsequently opening up its archive in an Exhibition in Lambeth Palace Library, the Church Commissioners for England have publicly acknowledged, with dismay, the links of the Church Commissioners Endowment to the transatlantic trade of Chattel Slavery through Queen Anne’s Bounty, established 1704. The documents displayed make for challenging reading as the voices of enslaved persons echo through the text, and the lack of compassion in the response of those with power illustrates for us all to see the self-serving arrogance of that regime, both religious and secular. A contemporary view of the desire for equality in Christian engagement with people of different faiths, and none, is given through the writings of James Walters, David Wilkinson and Chris Chivers, each with their own perspective on the Coronation as a state ritual. Although celebrating the richness of the occasion, the sacredness of the surroundings, and the spirituality expressed through the ceremonial music and religious service, they offer a critique on the lack of meaningful representation of secular and faith communities on the day. Each writer recognises that there is much work to be done to openly acknowledge, with integrity and understanding, the depth and diversity of beliefs that the UK has to offer, and the Coronation should serve as a catalyst for change. Our *Language of Art* feature offers solace for the soul as we pause to acknowledge the tenderly unfolding love and understanding of brothers as they walk the Camino de Santiago, and communicate their depth of feeling for one another in profoundly meaningful words and pictures.

Lorna Douglas

We thank all our contributors - writers, artists, poets and photographers – and of course subscribers. We also gratefully acknowledge the support of donors, who wish to remain anonymous. To sustain and develop the magazine however we need regular financial donations. If any readers know of Trust Funds, Grants or private donors who may be willing to help with funding, however small, the Editor (Heather Wells) would appreciate your advice and/or recommendations. For contact details please see above.



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Initiative Interfaith Trust

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Trustees: Heather Wells, Lorna Douglas
and Charanjit Ajit Singh

Object:

The promotion of religious harmony by: Providing educational resources and information to promote a better awareness of the causes and consequences of inter-religious tensions and conflicts; and educating the public in the diverse nature of religious belief.

Faith Initiative: Embracing Diversity Magazine

Editorial Panel

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Co-Editor and Design Consultant: Lorna Douglas

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Shiban Akbar OBE

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Poet in residence: Rebecca Irvine Bilkau

Aim: The aim of the magazine is to open windows on the beliefs and practices of people of different faiths and cultures; to foster understanding and reduce racially and religiously motivated violence.

Statement: Whilst the contents of this magazine will always be in accordance with the 'object' of Initiative Interfaith Trust there will be freedom of expression.

Invitation: We invite you to contribute articles, poems, letters, artwork and responses so that the magazine reflects the religious communities it seeks to serve.

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Issue 48 Themes:

1. Science and Spirituality
2. Animal Symbolism in Religious and Cultural Belief

Front cover image: David Rose

Front cover quote: *Al Fawaa'id*, A collection of wise sayings of Imam Qayyim al Jawziyyah (rahimahullaah), pub. 2019 Pg.187.

Back cover: Poem 'Tide Marks' by Rebecca Bilkau

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SPIRAL: "This is an ancient symbol that reminds us of the womb and the protective mothering nature in all of us. It takes us from the broad sweeps of the outer life to an infinitely small centre where we cease to exist."

Cited:
Mandalas: Spiritual Circles for Harmony & Fulfilment
Laura JWatts (2002) Pub.Hermes House,
London ISBN 184308 973 7

The spiral logo was designed by Caroline Jariwala for Initiative Interfaith Trust

What it is to be **HUMAN** in an **UNEQUAL** world



As we mark the 75th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights¹, I am reminded of the UN programme '**Leave no one behind**'² which serves as the rallying cry of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: an Agenda³ that looks to build a world in which everyone's needs are met. As a Sikh however, I am constantly reminded that we live in a world in which economic and social inequality, institutional

racism and freedom of religion or belief violations are on the rise. We all know that the idea of equality is not only a moral and ethical imperative, but also a fundamental human right that must be upheld and protected in our, undeniably, interconnected and interdependent world. Such global interconnectedness and interdependence crucially calls for a fair and equitable sharing of resources, yet we continue to see discrimination and prejudice based on race, gender, sexuality and social class in many areas of life, including some major institutions that are absolutely vital to economic and social equality. What is clear is that systemic discrimination and marginalization of certain groups of people is widening the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged leading to inequality in treatment and access to services in areas such as health, policing and education.

A recent incident in the UK, highlighted in the media, gives emphasis to institutional racism and discrimination when Child Q, a 15 year old black schoolgirl was strip-searched by police in school after being wrongly suspected of carrying drugs.⁴ The race and culture of this child is believed to be a major factor in the strip-search being carried out on the spot, without her parents being informed or an adult being present. The incident undoubtedly showed a blatant disregard for the dignity of this young girl: a disturbing memory that will, I am sure, remain with her for many years to come.

This incident also reminds me how discrimination and violence against women whatever their age, race or religion is endemic, and often starts in the womb. For example, countries from Southeast Europe to South and East Asia have

a skewed sex ratio at birth, and now we are set, through pre-natal sex selection worldwide, to 'lose' another 4.7 million girls by 2030, mainly because of cultural preference for sons.⁵

The COVID-19 pandemic has especially laid bare Global inequalities, when it became evident that wealthy countries were able to access vaccines and deal relatively effectively with the spread of the disease, whilst the developing world, with many communities living in cramped conditions, struggled to cope with a lack of vaccines and medicines, threatening the welfare and survival of large sections of the population.⁶ This action by wealthy nations will undoubtedly have long term effects on the global poor. Indeed, a recent UN report states that pre-existing inequalities are continuing to deepen following the pandemic, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems, and amplifying the overall impacts for women.⁷

World populations, especially in the global south, are suffering from the devastating impacts of climate change; from flooding, heatwaves and drought, resulting in food, water and energy insecurity on a massive scale.⁸ It is now generally accepted that global warming is largely created by the rise in carbon emissions resulting from the burning of fossil fuels - oil, coal and gas - and deforestation by rich industrialised countries who choose to ignore the needs of poorer nations, and fail to commit to a fairer and more equal sharing of resources.

An awareness of such global inequalities and discrimination can lead to disillusionment, and the view that selfishness, greed and individualism has become the norm. But hope must lie in our ability to raise our individual voices, to call out and challenge human right abuses and inequality wherever we see it.

Born into a society which was dominated by religious persecution, social, economic and caste and gender inequality, the Sikh Gurus set about to bring equality to all.⁹ The teachings of Guru Nanak and subsequent Gurus are in fact an early version of what we now see as Human Rights, and these are still relevant today.

1. Women's right to equality

The Sikh Gurus raised a forceful voice against patriarchy and the social injustices inflicted on women. Guru Nanak challenged the second-class status of women, and Guru Angad, the second Guru, opened schools and also standardised the Punjabi alphabet into Gurmukhi, the text on which Sikh scriptures are based,

*We are set, through pre-natal sex selection worldwide, to 'lose' another **4.7 MILLION** girls by **2030**, mainly because of cultural preference for sons.*

*Hope must lie in our ability to raise our individual voices, to **CALL OUT** and **CHALLENGE** human right abuses and inequality **WHEREVER** we see it*

to ensure that education and teachings were accessible to all sections of society, and not just be the preserve of priestly classes in Indian society.

2. Respecting religious pluralism and protecting freedom of religion or belief.

The Eternal Guru, Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy scripture), which was completed in 1604, focuses on the 'oneness' of humanity and the universality of religious teachings. It demonstrates respect to religious pluralism and diversity by the inclusion of the names of God from other traditions, for example, Hari, Ram, Allah and Khuda, and also teachings reminding us to respect the scriptures of other faiths:

Do not say that the Vedas, the Bible, and the Koran are false. Those who do not contemplate them are false.¹⁰

Freedom of religion or belief has always been under threat and in 1675 the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, was executed for standing up for the rights of another faith community, Hindus, to practice their beliefs and traditions without interference or duress to convert:

He protected the forehead mark and sacred thread (of the Hindus) which marked a great event in the Iron age.

For the sake of saints, he laid down his head without even a sign

For the sake of Dharma, he sacrificed himself. He laid down his head but not his creed.¹¹

3. Equity

Guru Nanak established the town Kartarpur which was the site of the first *Guru Ka Langar* (community kitchen) which was institutionalised by the second Sikh Guru, Guru Angad to dismantle existing social hierarchies and to ensure that no one would be hungry, regardless of socio-economic status, caste,

gender, religion or ethnicity. *Langar seva*¹² or the community kitchens continue to flourish today:

The Langar - the Kitchen of the Guru's Shabad has been opened, and its supplies never run short. Whatever His Master gave, He spent; He distributed it all to be eaten.¹³

The current cost of living crisis across the world is also deepening racial inequality because soaring prices are disproportionately impacting people from ethnic minority groups. Gurdwaras everywhere, despite being impacted by rising costs, inflation and a reduction in volunteers, are functioning like food banks and soup kitchens and increasing their *langar* provision to support the homeless people and those unable to meet the rising costs.¹⁴

During the COVID-19 pandemic *langar* became very significant across the world, and in India during the second wave we also saw it take on a new role when gurdwaras started providing 'Oxygen *langar*' to people who could not access oxygen from hospitals due to the national shortage.¹⁵

If we, in present times, as members of the human race are to give positive focus to the rallying cry of the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development, '**Leave no one behind**' then we all have to draw on our values of compassion, humility and love, and actively work towards addressing social issues such as poverty, discrimination and inequality so that we create a world where everyone is given equal opportunities, rights, and respect, regardless of where in the world they come from. By challenging discrimination and injustice, feeding the hungry, providing shelter to the homeless, and supporting those in need, we develop a greater sense of belonging and connection to the community, and this in turn fosters a sense of unity and solidarity enabling everyone to flourish and feel valued.

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The Future of Interfaith

ATTENDING TO THE DEPTHS OF DIVERSITY

TO ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, THIS WAS A CHRISTIAN SERVICE AT WHICH OTHER RELIGIONS WERE VISIBLE AND WELCOME SPECTATORS



For decades the word on the street was that the coronation of King Charles would be a multifaith affair. The prince who told Jonathan Dimbleby in 1994 that he wanted to be Defender of Faith rather than Defender of the Faith was seen as wanting to spurn the pageantry of Christendom seen in 1953 and begin his reign with a service celebrating Britain's modern religious diversity.

This is certainly how the service was spun by some news outlets, particularly overseas. "Prince (sic) Charles to have a multi-faith coronation," announced Fortune Magazine after the publication of the Coronation Liturgy just a week before the event. "Jews, Muslims, Sikhs Get Major Coronation Roles as King Charles Makes Diversity Push" was the headline in Time Magazine. It was an obvious take, particularly following the recent publication of the 2021 Census showing that non-Christian religions now make up over 10 percent of the population of England and Wales for the first time.

But what we saw in Westminster Abbey was hardly the multicultural jamboree many seemed to anticipate. The placing of the crown of St Edward on the head of the Church of England's new supreme governor by the Archbishop of Canterbury took place in the context of a traditional celebration of Holy Communion. The hymns and prayers were exclusively Christian and the anointing at the heart of the ceremony reaffirmed the British monarch as the last anointed Christian sovereign in the world. It is significant that in the liturgy itself, other faiths were represented, not by religious leaders, but by members of the House of Lords. The leaders of different faiths bookended the service with their processions and greetings to the King. But to all intents and purposes, this was a Christian service at which other religions were visible and welcome spectators.

So what happened? Where was the spiritual smorgasbord many envisaged? Earlier in April, The Daily Mail ran the unconvincing story that Buckingham Palace had been at loggerheads with Lambeth Palace as the Church of England defended its privileged role to the exclusion of other groups. This was flatly denied. All evidence suggests the Church hierarchy has taken with utmost seriousness the role now enshrined in the new preface to the Coronation oath of seeking "to foster an environment in which people of all faiths and beliefs may live freely."

The truth is that the kind of interreligious event some imagined was always a naïve and somewhat dated confection. The official commentary on the Procession of Faith Leaders noted how "this represents the multi-faith nature of our society and the importance of inclusion of other faiths whilst respecting the integrities of the different traditions." This attention to diverse religious integrities is something interfaith enthusiasts have often overlooked. While well intentioned, multifaith liturgies have usually been liberal-minded adherents of different faiths conforming to more or less Christian assumptions and cultural norms.

If non-Christian faiths were kept at an arm's length in the coronation service, it was not because religious pluralism was ignored; it was because we are finally starting to take it seriously. Other faiths are not exotic variations on the Christian model. They have their own worldviews, their own ideas of the sacred, and their own theologies of governance and monarchy, which should not be appropriated and shoehorned into an ancient ceremony as a tokenistic form of inclusion.

With a Hindu Prime Minister reading the lesson and a Muslim Mayor of London in attendance, religious minorities in the UK are coming of age. This much was made clear in Colin Bloom's long awaited report into how the government engages with faith, published last month. After confidently proclaiming, "The idea that faith is dying is a myth" (1.2), *Does government do God?* covers the bewildering range of questions our multifaith society needs to address from Religious Education to forced marriage. But most refreshing is the almost brutal honesty it brings to matters that are too often sentimentalised or sanitised. How are different religious interests represented in UK public life (one of the most vexing problems faced by the planners of the Coronation)? What are we to do about the politicised forms of religion that are on the rise across the world and manifest in British communities? The riots in Leicester last summer, prompted by interreligious tensions on the Indian subcontinent, may be a warning of dangers to come.

An interfaith coronation liturgy would have reflected an outdated approach to these questions: participation on the basis of conformity to post-Christian and secular norms which we assumed all faiths shared without really attending to their depth and diversity. The reign of King Charles as an era of flourishing religious pluralism will not be measured by how he was crowned, but how well we continue to take religious communities seriously on their own terms, listen to the problems they are facing, learn about their cultures and worldviews, and effectively respond to the global tensions that arise between them. With his strong interfaith friendships and knowledge of different traditions, King Charles shows every intention of taking the lead.

IF NON-CHRISTIAN FAITHS WERE KEPT AT AN ARM'S LENGTH IN THE CORONATION SERVICE, IT WAS NOT BECAUSE RELIGIOUS PLURALISM WAS IGNORED; IT WAS BECAUSE WE ARE FINALLY STARTING TO TAKE IT SERIOUSLY

A LESSON IN *Ritual*

BUILDING A SHARED HOME, NOT A COUNTRY HOUSE FOR SOCIETY



One of the stand-out features of the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla on Saturday 6th May in Westminster Abbey were the bishops in attendance. They completely identified with the theme of service writ large across the liturgy from the moment a young chorister of the chapel royal greeted the monarch (a new innovation), to

the crowning of the King itself. They did so through magnificent attentiveness to their royal 'charges'. Whether this was handing them an order of service, adjusting a train, holding cards for the Archbishop on which were the next words in the liturgy or simply by smiling or speaking words of encouragement, they reminded us that those who bear the highest episcopal offices are always first and foremost deacons, servants whose towel-wearing, foot-washing ministry points to the essence of Christlikeness itself. They embodied something of the essence of the historic occasion adding much humility and humanity.

The music was all beautifully-judged. It represented the best of different genres - Anglican and Catholic 'art' music, Protestant hymnody - a wonderful arrangement by the most recent director of the Abbey Choir, James O'Donnell - himself a Roman Catholic - of *Christ is Made the Sure Foundation* being the stand-out. Greek Orthodox chant was used brilliantly to underlay the investiture with a texture not previously heard on such an occasion, as the ebullience of Pentecostalism, and more popular musical idioms - of which the Lloyd Webber Coronation anthem and Patrick Doyle Coronation March were such conspicuous examples - contributed much to the celebratory tone.

A considerable shout-out to Christopher Robinson for seven fanfares at crucial parts of the liturgy - brilliantly played by the RAF trumpeters, the best of the military musicians - each perfectly articulating the moment for which they were designed.

Andrew Nethsingha - now directing the Westminster Abbey Choir and fresh from a stint as director of perhaps the finest choir on earth, at St John's College, Cambridge, which Christopher Robinson had previously directed too, ensured not only musicianship of the highest level - he is quite simply the best around in this regard - but also music perfectly chosen and in many cases commissioned to articulate the movement, emotional intensity and shape of the liturgy.

Ethnically a Sri Lankan by heritage, he was also well-placed to ensure that the representational character of the music - this was the first time that women composers, for example, had featured at all let alone equally with their male counterparts at a British Coronation - was echoed seamlessly in terms of representation in national, ethnic, and cultural terms among those who contributed as musicians.

Roddy Williams - of mixed Jamaican and Welsh heritage sang beautifully as a baritone soloist and as composer wrote one of the movements in an orchestral triptych based on the Irish hymn, *Be thou my vision*. Pretty Yende from South Africa wowed with her yellow-winged dress and her stunning soprano voice. Girl choristers from Truro - for the Duchy of Cornwall - and Belfast - completing a full-house of the United Kingdom's nations, ensured that the Coronation Choir brought together male and female singers for the first time. Sir Bryn Terfel, singing Paul Mealor's Kyrie - in Welsh (another first) - was felt by many to be a highlight of the service as was the playing of the Coronation Orchestra under the exuberant baton of Sir Antonio Pappano and the opening singing of the Monteverdi Choir under Sir John Eliot Gardiner.

MUSIC PERFECTLY CHOSEN AND IN MANY CASES
COMMISSIONED TO ARTICULATE THE MOVEMENT,
EMOTIONAL INTENSITY AND SHAPE OF THE LITURGY

A NATION SEEKING TO EXPRESS THE BEST OF ITS SACRED AND SECULAR VALUES IN RITUAL

It was but a natural step beyond such crucial representative ministry to have the coronation regalia offered to the Sovereign by peers of different faiths and the monarch similarly presented north, south, east and west for recognition by people representing diversity both in ethnic and faith terms.

Add to this the multi-denominational Christian blessing - with a Roman Catholic Cardinal included for the first time since the Reformation - not to mention the interfaith greeting at the door as the newly-crowned King left the Abbey, and one was left deeply impressed by the serious intent to reflect and narrate a broader rainbow definition of nation than anything seen previously at a British State occasion of this sort.

The thematic focus on service itself was a masterstroke and entirely apt, both for the way in which it joined people of all faiths and world views together, but also, since it is the distinct note that any coronation makes at its heart when a monarch, in this case stripped to white shirt and black trousers, kneels before the altar to be anointed with the Holy Spirit in order to offer themselves to each and every citizen in a spirit of Christ-like humility.

To so richly-textured and beautifully-crafted a spiritual occasion it seems churlish to offer any critique. But two areas will for King William III's coronation need close attention.

Firstly, the Coronation Oath - which is the only truly constitutional, and in this sense parliamentary element of the occasion as things stand - will need to be reworded. Upholding the 'Protestant' religion 'by law established' is perfectly understandable in historic terms. It is literally stating the reality of a settlement now hundreds of years old. But any reading of the history itself, and the evolution of modern ecumenism, which has considerably eased the tensions in denominational Christianity, would be hard-pushed to argue that Anglicans are that Protestant; or that it helps anyone now to rake over what was anyway much more a political than religious reformation in sixteenth century England. Anglicans have for a very long time indeed claimed to be both Catholic and Reformed, not merely Protestant. As an Anglican myself I really do not feel at the heart of my faith that I am protesting against anything, least of all the bishop of Rome or my Catholic fellow Christians. The wording jarred, and no amount of contextualisation by the Archbishop could lessen this. The oath will simply need to be rewritten and this will be agony of course because a minority of folk in parliament will doubtless behave in a silly way about this, making fuss where fuss need not be made, hijacking the discussion to make other political points not germane to the issue of the oath itself. Despite this, the work

can and must be done. It will be perfectly possible to preserve the monarch's unique role as defender of the faith, in relation to the Church of England, whilst reflecting a more balanced reading of society as it is in sacred and secular terms.

Secondly, this would also redress an imbalance which saw the Anglicans on 6 May, for good historical but not contemporary reason, still clinging too tenaciously to the sense in which as Established Church they convene and host. But as the late Jonathan Sack's book, *The Home we build together: recreating society*, rightly implied, the model of society as country house, where the Anglicans are Lords and Ladies of the Manor, has been a fiction for many years. What we saw on 6 May was it's inevitable - albeit graceful - death throes. Yes, the monarch is defender of the faith. Yes, the monarch is crowned in the context of what is the normative act of Anglican, indeed Christian worship - the Eucharistic service which remembers the self-giving and saving love of God in Christ on the cross. All this must and can be retained. This is the particularity of the British monarchy in constitutional and religious terms. But can this - realistically - be the terrain of merely the Anglicans when they represent such a minority of citizens? Can Anglicans seriously continue to animate the national narrative for all? The other faiths are repeatedly generous in paying tribute to the Anglicans as hosts and thus guarantors of all at the table. Anglican patrimony, with its strong notes of colonialism and paternalism - though considerably reinterpreted and transformed for instance by the presence of women bishops of diverse ethnicity for the first time - has nonetheless run its course. As King Charles's coronation already began to show, those suggesting any longevity for Anglican dominance must all be answered with a resounding no. Next time, a more embracingly interfaith, secular and parliamentary Recognition could be a fitting prelude in Westminster Hall to the service itself. Which is why the new Prince of Wales needs to begin work now on what will be needed for his own Coronation. We hope of course that this will be far-off, but now is the moment to learn the lessons and reset the terms of what is to come, with gratitude for the journey walked thus far and the inclusive, embracing note of genuine respect and love most certainly already expressed. There is much on which to build here in what will doubtless prove to have been a critical moment of development in the interfaith and multi-cultural journey of a nation seeking to express the best of its sacred and secular values in ritual whose function is surely to resonate now with our aspiration to recreate a sustainable model of society and build a home together.

Building Solutions

Indigenous People and the Overdeveloped World



Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim

Religion is important says Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim. “My people have deep faith. We are here as guests and we must support our faith in order to preserve the planet as God gave it to us.”

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim is an environmental activist from Chad. Her people, the Mbororo, are nomadic farmers who traditionally herd and tend their own cattle, the zebu. She was born into this way of life in the semi-arid, central Sahel region. When she was quite young the family moved to N’Djamena, the capital of Chad, where her mother ensured that she and her siblings were sent to school and received a good education: at the same time however, her mother was determined that her children would not forget their background culture and so, in their school holidays she returned with them to re-join their nomadic community and the pastoralist way of life of herding, guarding and tending the zebu.

When she was fifteen and aware of the discrimination inflicted on her people, Ibrahim founded the *Association des Femmes Peules Autochtones du Tchad* (AFPAT) or *The Association of Indigenous Peul women and Peoples of Chad*. This especially focussed on the rights of women and the education of girls, and environmental protection, specifically in her area. This was supported by IPACC or the Indigenous People’s co-ordination committee which was originally founded by the Norwegian Church Aid, and also the African representatives of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Desertification – when vast areas of land that are viable for farming are transformed due to long-lasting drought into desert-like environments - is a major problem in many regions of Africa. For example, Lake Chad is the reservoir of water for Sahel where forty million inhabitants depend on it, but the Lake is drying up and is now less than 10% of the size it was in the 1960's*. It has lost in the region of 90% of its surface water. This creates an ongoing tension in what is one of the most vulnerable regions of the world. People fight each other for access to water and other natural resources thus disrupting social cohesion within their local and extended communities. Ibrahim is adamant that establishing the legal rights of the indigenous people is essential to protecting natural resources when developments like oil drilling, use of hydro-electric power and mining threaten to displace them.

The specific desert region of Sahel is home to 250,000 Mbororos who depend on subsistence farming. These people, like the native population of other developing countries, are not only primary victims of climate change, but victims also of the main contributors of carbon emissions. The experience of the effects of global climate change on the Mbororo community has emphasised the need of relying on natural resources to ensure the survival of themselves, together with their livestock. Deforestation of rain forests in the world is a major contributor to the severe rise in global greenhouse gas emissions in many communities, and Ibrahim has given this special focus, emphasising that regional cooperation is critical to stopping and preventing deforestation in Central Africa. She highlights the fact that in forested areas where indigenous people are able to maintain their rights, and make use of their knowledge for sustainability, the picture overall is far less bleak.

By the age of 30, her experience on the ground enabled Ibrahim to work both locally and internationally improving the rights of indigenous people, and advocating this to be the essential basis for sustainable development in the areas where they live. The role of women in particular is a vital consideration because they have the knowledge and natural instinct for such sustainable living, especially in finding water in the dry season. Ibrahim says: "Our grandmothers can predict the weather. They observe the cloud formations and wind direction, animal immigration, bird migration, size of fruit, little insects, and behaviours of their

own cattle by observing the environment." "We follow the rain" she says, "we know how to live in harmony with nature: we know that everything is connected through the eco-system, and we work with that knowledge".

She questions whether world leaders are doing enough. She advocates that each State or country must place indigenous people's traditional knowledge at the centre of their thinking with regard to addressing climate change. She maintains that her culture is better than that of the developed world at taking care of the planet. We have ancient traditions enabling us to survive while ignoring the 'developments' of the rest of the world, or as she calls them overdeveloped countries who take more than they need to survive. For example, governments are not providing clean energy, and companies are still digging for fossil fuels. In fact there are hundreds of new fossil fuel projects and these can cause floods, drought and hunger. The importance of ensuring the survival of the indigenous population who live in these areas is not considered. "We need to invest in nature" she says. Only 1% of finance concerning the climate is dedicated to nature. This is not enough. There is more talk than action, she says: "**It is time for action**".

Her favourite form of activism is building solutions together with the community. At the World Economic Forum Ibrahim stated that she, together with other indigenous people, are "the engineers of nature". With their scientific knowledge of nature and ecosystems, indigenous communities can help bring about agreement instead of dispute on the sharing of natural resources. This can be done through the use of **3Dimensional Maps**. A major development in technology. Community members create the maps by pin-pointing areas that contain sacred forests, trees with medicinal properties, water points and corridors for cattle - areas that need to be protected and preserved to ensure sustainability for the indigenous people, and the planet. This information is then utilised by those with modern mapping technologies to provide solutions to development disputes: nature and technology working together to preserve our planet....this is the solution, she says. By creating this form of activism, Ibrahim is giving a voice directly to her people, and other indigenous communities, to help ensure a long-term sustainable way of life for humanity, and the natural world.

Each state or country must place indigenous people's traditional knowledge at the centre of their thinking with regard to addressing climate change

* information produced by AFPAT using information provided by NASA satellites

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim is the recipient of numerous international awards. President of the Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad. In 2019 she was appointed advocate of Sustainable Development Goals by the UN together with sixteen others. She is also Member of Council, FSC Indigenous Foundation.

Image of Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim sourced from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hindou_Oumarou_Ibrahim.jpg Author: Fatakaya. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.

Education: Preserving the Treasure

Human Rights and the
Freedom of Religion & Belief



Freedom of religion and freedom of belief are essential and precious freedoms. They might be considered sub-categories of the freedom of thought itself - the freedom of expression, to agree or disagree, to challenge social, scientific or even religious dogma, to invent, to imagine, to propose changes to the accepted ways of being of individuals and society. We

tend to take these freedoms for granted, but this has not always been the case. All these freedoms are governed – and limited – by our definition of human rights.

Despite their having been created from the heights of the spiritual message common to all our religious and secular ethic teachings, human rights have been repeatedly violated throughout history by an insatiable, unleashed desire for dominion. Totalitarian regimes, but also social clans and families themselves, can limit the freedoms of other human beings when the concept of every individual person having been “created in the image and likeness of Our Creator” has not been correctly

taught to children and has therefore not become, for them, a non-negotiable, indisputable, basic, indelible, conscious as well as subconscious value of life.

The Golden Rule of all religions – the command to “Do unto others that which you would wish to have done unto you” or “Do not do unto others that which you would not wish to have done unto you” - are two inseparable aspects of this precept, contained in all religions, and in all dreams of humanity for a more just society. At the base, it assumes that we recognize that every human being is born and was gifted by our Common Creator with a divine spark defined as “the image and likeness” of the Creator – of Divinity and Holiness. Thus, according to our highest religious traditions - and also our secular legal systems - every human being deserves to be treated equally, with respect and empathy. This concept, this knowledge, is itself at the basis of our spiritually and religiously inspired ideals of justice, that find expression not only in all our different faiths but also in the secular legal systems and constitutions of our societies.

However, these laws and systems vary according to how deeply we have assimilated the ideals of justice and to what degree our understanding of them has not been polluted by human passions that can interfere, distort and pervert the original purity of their message.

“human rights have been repeatedly violated throughout history by an insatiable, unleashed desire for dominion”

To “do justice” is a universal precept, but in our attempts to define what is just and what is unjust we continue to fall into the traps of responses conditioned by the authorities to whom we feel, rightly or wrongly, that we owe allegiance. Thus the human tragedy is due to the enslavement of freedom of speech and belief by political or so-called “religious” tyrants whom we have mistakenly defined and accepted as our leaders, as well as by the social groups, the clans, even at times the families, into which we are born and who exert undue pressure to force us to conform to false and destructive examples of behaviour.

And yet, the concept of human rights and justice dates back to the beginnings of recorded history. The legal code of the Babylonian King Nammurabi who reigned from 1792 to 1750 BCE is the earliest written attempt at enacting justice. Then, in the year 539 BC, Cyrus the Great, the first king of ancient Persia, conquered Babylon, freed the slaves, and declared that all people had the right to choose their own religion, and established racial equality. This decree was recorded in the Akkadian language on a baked-clay cylinder known as the Cyrus Cylinder, recognized as the world’s first charter of human rights, translated into the UN’s six official languages and constituting the basis of the first four Articles of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Other dates are important in recalling the evolution of our concepts of human rights:

1215 – the Magna Carta confirmed that society must be governed by “the rule of law”. It defined the rights and liberties of all persons, providing protection from arbitrary persecution

and incarceration. Previously the monarch or King made his arbitrary decisions according to what he defined as “Divine Justice”.

1689 – the Bill of Rights in England, gave Parliament primary power above the monarchy. This was enacted under the reigns of William III and Mary II.

1776 – The Preamble to the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America proclaimed, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”. This last mentioned Right was unique and new. Perhaps it inspired the long cherished “American Dream” regarding the belief in unlimited possibilities for human development and attainment, the belief that any child born under any circumstances, regardless of racial, religious, social or economic origins, had the possibility of reaching the top of the ladder in any walk of life, including occupying the office of the president of the United States. (Of course, we all know how long this took to be even partially realized and not always for the best...)

1789 – the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen” in France, which in its preamble and 17 articles affirmed the “natural and inalienable rights” to freedom, ownership, security, resistance to oppression, equality before the law and justice system, and the separation of powers. This Declaration helped to ignite the French Revolution with its slogan of “liberté e fraternité” for all.

“Freedom of religion was suffocated by ideologies and continues to be so today, mostly, once more, because of the rise of new extreme ideologies across the world that ignore - and are ignorant of - those precepts of freedom and human rights that we cherish.”

“To forget the past is to
be condemned to relive it”
George Santayana

Yet today human rights and the freedom of religion are threatened by the same two tyrannical powers that have always caused persecutions and wars: political dictatorships and perverted religious authorities adhering to ideologies that pay no heed to our religiously inspired ideals and precepts as defined above. In the last century the ideologies of Naziism and Communism caused an estimated 70 – 85 million people to perish while the official Soviet Communist dominion’s record totals about 3.3 million. The continent was “ethnically cleansed” by the murder of two thirds of Europe’s Jewish population which was an estimated 9.5 million before World War II, while 220,000 of the 700,000 Romani in Europe were also killed. In a previous conflict, the Armenian Christians had been decimated. At the post World War II Nurenberg trials, two new war crimes were defined: “genocide” and “crimes against humanity”.

Freedom of religion was suffocated by ideologies and continues to be so today, mostly, once more, because of the rise of new, plus the resuscitation of old, extreme ideologies across the world that ignore – and are ignorant of – those precepts of freedom and human rights that we cherish.

So what can we of diverse religions, faiths and beliefs, committed to the highest principles and values of human rights and freedoms do today to preserve this treasure? The key to an answer probably lies in one word, “education”. We must fight ignorance, which is the worst blight of humanity. “To forget the past is to be condemned to relive it” said the Spanish-American

philosopher George Santayana. To study history, including that of the world’s religions, is an antidote to falling prey to ideologies that inevitably justify all means that trample on human rights to achieve their unworthy ends. We learn from the past that all ideologies that contain false promises of utopias lead to immense tragedies. People of different faiths, ethnicities, genders, nationalities, etc. easily become scapegoats during social and economic crises, channeling knowledge away from a search for truth and instead, directing it towards dark-age conspiracy theories. Our job must be to continue building educational and social bulwarks to stem the presently rising tide of racism, antisemitism, anti-Islam sentiment, xenophobia, resistance to accepting gender differences, and pressures to censor the literature and history of the past.

In addition, we must realize and remember that we also have enormous new opportunities to dialogue more closely and meaningfully with diverse Others. Barriers between the Western and the Arab and Islamic world, for example, are falling more and more each day. Many of us, through our different organizations, have built projects for reciprocal understanding and learning. We must continue.

A midrash of the Jewish tradition teaches that “If you have a sapling in your hand, and someone should say to you that the Messiah has come, stay and complete the planting, and then go to greet the Messiah.” (Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai – from Avot d’ Rabbi Nathan, 31b)

Lisa Palmieri-Billig has served as the American Jewish Committee (AJC)’s Representative in Italy and Liaison to the Holy See since 2005. Previously she held this position for ADL, and worked in the Rome office of the World Jewish Congress during the Ecumenical Council (Vatican II). She has written extensively on the papacies of Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI. In 1993 her interview with the then-cardinal Joseph Ratzinger on “*Jews and Judaism in the Universal Catechism*” was published in Italian by *Studi Cattolici* and in English by *Midstream*. Born in Vienna, she escaped to New York with her family in 1938, then transferred to Rome in the 1960’s to teach English language and literature. As a journalist, she is a Vatican specialist (“vaticanista”), and corresponds for *Vatican Insider – La Stampa*, and has been *The Jerusalem Post*’s Rome correspondent since 1965. Her reports from Rome and the Vatican on interreligious topics have appeared in international publications in English, Italian and German. She was Vice President of the European section of The World Conference of Religions for Peace for 25 years, is presently Honorary President of the Italian section and also served as the first President of the Rome Jewish-Christian Friendship Association. The City of Pescara awarded her Honorary Citizenship in 2022 for her lifelong commitment to creating better understanding through interreligious dialogue. She received an M.A. from Columbia University Teachers College, a B.A. from Barnard and is fluent in English, Italian, German and French.

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JUSTICE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

CHALLENGING
CULTURAL
PERCEPTIONS

It was a beautiful Spring day and a baker in Kurdistan, in Iran, was joyfully celebrating the arrival of his first child. As is custom, when a son is born, he was sharing sweets with his neighbours. However, this man was in fact celebrating the arrival of his daughter, and that baby girl was me. My father believed that a person's rights are universal, and that any custom that undermines this, should be challenged. This teaching was a great gift to me and would shape my life.

A few years later, as a little girl, I attended a local wedding with my family, which in accordance with tradition, lasted for three days. The groom worked for my father in his bakery. On the final day, the bride and groom were expected to consummate the marriage. A bloodied white sheet was to be presented as proof that the bride was a virgin. The dangerous myth that all women bleed at first intercourse, still persists today. Suddenly, there was a commotion, and the atmosphere became tense. I remember feeling frightened and hiding under my mother's long skirt. The groom accused the bride of not being a virgin and refused to accept her. This would have ended in her being murdered in a so-called "honour" killing. My father intervened and the marriage went ahead. This is my earliest memory of the threat of violence in the name of "honour".

I had a happy childhood and my father encouraged me to pursue my education and dreams. As a teenager, I decided to begin my training to become a teacher, which involved leaving home.

Then in 1979, my world, and the lives of everyone I knew, changed forever. We had lived under the Shah for generations, and anyone who criticised his rule faced harsh persecution. I remember a real excitement growing, as we began to believe that a new future was possible, free from exploitation.

At teacher training college, I had my first experiences of activism. And change came; the Shah was overthrown, and it seemed that our dreams were being realised. But our hopes were short-lived. Western powers had other ideas, and with their backing, the people's revolution was hijacked by religious extremists, led by Khomeini, introducing decades of oppression that continues to this day.

The new Islamic regime immediately turned to Kurdistan, brutally imposing control. I was in hiding, wanted on account of my activism. In our town, hundreds of people, including many of my friends, were divided into groups in the street.

They were to be executed or imprisoned.

I had to stand up against the persecution, so aged 17, I joined the Peshmerger, the Kurdish freedom fighters, to defend our people and our rights. Until this time, women joining the Peshmerger, had always been assigned to cooking or nursing roles. We were the first generation to demand equality. I was assigned to a battalion, and soon became a leader. Not only did we want to throw off the oppression of the Islamic regime; this was also our opportunity to challenge the long-held customs that discriminated against women and girls in our society. Alongside defeating the oppressive Iranian regime, core to my work with the Peshmerger, was tackling so-called "honour" based abuse, including forced marriages and "honour" killings.



After many years on the front line, I had a baby and I had to secure her safety. We were given refugee status in the UK. I was assigned an interpreter, called Sobhia, to help register her at school. Sobhia was a kind woman, and I looked forward to our next meeting. When she didn't turn up, I enquired after her, to check she was OK. I was utterly shocked when I was told that she was dead. I assumed it must have been a road accident, as she had seemed well. But I learned that her husband had taken her to Kurdistan, Iraq on pretence of a holiday. He had suspected her of being unfaithful to him, and had arranged for her to be murdered in a so-called "honour" killing. The first attempt had failed, and Sobhia was taken to hospital. On her journey back from the hospital, Sobhia was murdered on her husband's instructions, in the name of honour. I spoke little English at that point, so with the help of a friend, I called the British police to report the murder.

I was even more shocked by their response, than the news of her death. They didn't want to get involved, at first saying that the case was not in their jurisdiction. I told them that Sobhia was a British citizen. I had seen other high profile international murder cases involving British citizens reported in the news, in which the police were actively involved. I told them that it was a so-called "honour" killing. It was clear that they didn't understand what this meant, and so I explained it to them. At this point they said, "we cannot get involved, this is your culture, if we did you'd call us racists."

These words, “this is your culture”, were so painful to hear. They were justifying a woman’s murder, in the name of culture. They were justifying denying her justice, in the name of culture. And they were simultaneously being racist and using racism to silence us as black and minoritised women. It raised so many questions for me. Did this mean that a woman or girl at risk of “honour” killing, or forced marriage, or female genital mutilation in the UK, would be ignored? Not protected from harm? Not supported to live free from abuse? Did it mean that black and minoritised women, like me, were segregated from justice?

Until then, I had assumed that within the UK, human rights were universal. It was devastating to realise, that in reality, there was a gaping hole in support, in policies and in laws, that would safeguard a woman or girl against “honour” based abuse or “honour” killing or on account of her ethnicity or the colour of her skin.

I made a commitment to turn my devastation into action. With the help of a few incredible women, who like me were refugees in the UK, I founded the Iranian and Kurdish Women’s Rights Organisation (now IKWRO – Women’s Rights Organisation), at my kitchen table, powered by the belief that culture must never be used as a justification for abuse. This year I am so proud that we are celebrating IKWRO’s 20th anniversary! What a journey it has been!

IKWRO provides a holistic response to “honour” based abuse and domestic abuse and is run by, and for, Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) women living in the UK. IKWRO established the first specialist refuge (shelter) for MENA women and our expert team of advisors and trained counsellors have supported thousands of women and girls to restart their lives in safety, empowered by knowledge of their rights. We have reached thousands of young people through our work in schools, and many more through our community engagement work.

From the start, we campaigned to change law and policy, to prevent the perception of culture, or the fear of being called racist, ever being used to justify “honour” killing and “honour” based abuse.

In 2002, I attended the funeral of Heshu Younes, a British girl who had been murdered in London. Determined to educate the police about “honour” killings, so that they could properly investigate this crime and other cases, unlike they had failed to do for Sobhia, IKWRO established the ‘Remember Heshu’ campaign. This led to the prosecution of her father for her murder, in what was the first widely recognised “honour” killing case. However, wrongly, the judge applied cultural relativism, taking his perception of the father’s culture as an excuse for his crime, and gave him a lower prison sentence.

In 2006, I was heartbroken to learn that Banaz Mahmod, another British teenager, had been murdered in a so-called honour killing in London, involving multiple perpetrators. We launched the Justice for Banaz campaign. Significantly, the judge stated at the sentencing of Banaz’s father and uncle, that murder should never be justified in the name of culture.

IKWRO’s campaigning helped secure the first extradition from Kurdistan-Iraq of two more of the murderers.

In 2014, after a decade long campaign, we helped achieve a landmark change in the law, when forced marriage became a criminal offence in England and Wales and shortly afterwards in Scotland. After tirelessly campaigning for almost another decade, this year in February 2023 we achieved a major step forward, with the ban of child marriage in England and Wales. Last year in 2022, we also succeeded in banning two further harmful practices, which have no place in a just society; virginity testing and hymenoplasty (surgery for the purpose of making a woman bleed at next intercourse).

We have come a long way, but there is much more to be done to challenge the persistence of so-called “honour” based abuse and to ensure that neither perception of a woman or girl’s culture nor racism, is ever again used as a justification, to deny her safety, rights and justice.

I hope you will join us and support IKWRO on this journey.



**These words, “this is your culture”, were so painful to hear.
They were justifying a woman’s murder, in the name of culture.
They were justifying denying her justice, in the name of culture.**

SUSTAINING THE NATURAL WORLD

Holding Together SCIENCE, *Theology* and Politics



The coronation of King Charles III was the first in history to involve the participation of faiths other than Christianity, with representatives from Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Bahá'í and Zoroastrian communities taking part in the service. Speaking ahead of the coronation, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said that the coronation intended

to reflect the diversity of modern society, and that he hoped “that all who share in this service, whether they are of faith or no faith, will find ancient wisdom and new hope that brings inspiration and joy”.

It wasn't just in the congregation that this diversity of beliefs was reflected, but in the very fabric of the building too. In the north-east corner of Westminster Abbey, a range of religious views – and indeed non-religious views – are represented in Scientists' Corner.

A collection of memorials to some of the most eminent names in physics, chemistry, biology, and mathematics grouped around the statue of Sir Isaac Newton, Scientists' Corner is in part a recognition of the Abbey's role in the national life of the country, and of those scientists who made outstanding contributions not just to science but also public life.

Some of the scientists commemorated alongside Newton were committed people of religious faith such as Michael Faraday, James Clerk Maxwell, JJ Thomson and Lord Kelvin. Others had more complex relationships with religion: during his scientific career, Stephen Hawking moved towards a position of atheism, while Charles Darwin was best characterised in later life as an agnostic.

There was some controversy at the interment of the remains of Darwin in the Abbey, due to his lack of explicit

Christian faith and some of the perceived problems that evolution had raised for Christianity. However, on the Sunday following the funeral, the then Bishop of Carlisle, Harvey Goodwin, used his sermon to support Darwin's interment, saying, “It would have been unfortunate if anything had occurred to give weight and currency to the foolish notion which some have diligently propagated, but for which Mr Darwin was not responsible, that there is a necessary conflict between a knowledge of Nature and a belief in God”.

Nevertheless, that conflict narrative has persisted to present day, largely through media portrayals of the relationship between science and religion. It has, in fact, framed the way in which church leaders engage with science. Together with my colleague Dr Lydia Reid, I researched the attitudes towards science among senior church leaders in the UK as part of the Equipping Christian Leadership in an Age of Science project, funded by Templeton Religion Trust. We found that, despite an overwhelming enthusiasm for and interest in science, most church leaders did not feel confident talking about science publicly because of the prevailing conflict thesis.

Now, King Charles has never shied away from engaging with science – though his own relationship with the subject has, at times, been the source of some conflict and controversy. He has been criticised for his backing of homeopathy and other forms alternative medicine and a resistance to genetically modified crops.

Yet he has a long history as a committed environmentalist. As early as 1970, at the age of 22, he made his first public speech on the subject where he argued that, “We are faced at this moment with the horrifying effects of pollution in all its cancerous forms”.

He continued to speak out on the issue and even wrote a book dedicated to the issue, co-authored with Tony Juniper and Ian Skell. This book, *Harmony*, highlighted that much of the problem was the way that humans perceived the world, seeing ourselves either as completely separate from or in conflict with the natural world.

“This is a place where leaders of nations, leaders of faith communities and the leading voices of science meet. All will have their differences, but all are needed to change the world.”

Part of this came from the perception of the natural world as mechanistic: a clockwork mechanism which is completely predictable and picturable, there to be used by human beings. He argued that seeing instead our deep relationship with the natural world would allow us to rediscover “the delicate balance and sacred harmony of the Universe” which gives us the motivation to live sustainably. He sees this sacred harmony represented in many faith traditions.

Perhaps this is why the physical space of Westminster Abbey is so significant not only for events such as the coronation but also for the future of the environment. This is a place where leaders of nations, leaders of faith communities and the leading voices of science meet. All will have their differences, but all are needed to change the world.

After all, the science of global warming has been clear for decades. Why, then, have we not changed our lifestyles, co-operated as nations and driven forward a green economy at a faster pace? I think King Charles is right in identifying that at heart this is a question about how we see the relationship of human beings, the natural world and the Creator of all.

Professor James Walters, Director of the Religion and Global Society Unit at the London School of Economics and a fellow Templeton Religion Trust grantee, believes the lack of pace in achieving climate targets is in part due to a failure to acknowledge the importance of faith in the way different communities engage with the natural environment.

Commenting on this further, he argues: “Part of the problem has been that, while consensus has been built around the science of climate change, the religious imagination has rarely been engaged. Senior faith leaders have been brought together to sign important shared statements on the care of the earth, but often the language used does not connect with the grassroots adherents of these religious traditions, particularly outside of the Western context.

That is why our researchers at the London School of Economics have been listening to how Muslims and Christians in the Middle East articulate their lived experience of water scarcity and extreme weather events in the hope that these discourses can be drawn together into new forms of cooperation. In this sense, it seems that King Charles’ longstanding dual concerns of environmentalism and interfaith relations have been very foresighted.”

As a Christian I want to value and affirm the importance and role of science in national and international life and to strive for it to be done well. For me, it is a gift from God to be used in service of all and for God’s glory. As LP Williams, one of the biographers of Michael Faraday, wrote, “his deepest intuitions about the physical world sprang from this religious faith in the Divine origin of nature.”

As the memorials to Faraday and other scientists looked on at the Coronation, it was a visible reminder to me of the importance of holding science, theology and politics together in ways that serve and sustain the natural world.



Revd Professor David Wilkinson is Principal of St. John’s College, Durham University, and Project Director of Equipping Christian Leadership in an Age of Science, a project funded by Templeton Religion Trust and the John Templeton Foundation. He has PhDs in Astrophysics and Systematic Theology.

Image: Isaac Newton Memorial, Westminster Abbey

Enlarging the Tent

A Journey Rather than a Destination

George Floyd's death at the hands of four Minnesota police officers in 2020 was tragically symptomatic of a racist world. As outrage and protests reverberated, I knew that remarking on the horror before quietly forgetting wasn't an option. I could only do something small, but I had to act. But what action?

As well as being a freelance writer and interviewer, I am also a Quaker. One of our core values is Equality, based on the presence of the Divine in every person, which demands that we honour that divinity. One way we can do that is careful listening to others' experiences and perspectives.

One extract from *Quaker Faith and Practice* comments on the power of listening: 'The capacity to listen is... greatly needed and... something which has to be worked at constantly.... We must endeavour to meet each other's minds and attempt... to achieve not only sympathy but empathy.'¹

This led me to a notion of interviewing someone with expertise about the situation. Fellow Quakers recommended I contact Nim Njuguna, a Kenyan former Baptist minister and Quaker convert, and seasoned chaplain, tutor, and social activist, amongst much else. Our initial contact was by phone: we discussed our backgrounds and experiences, agreeing to work together. Then came the surprise: Nim was less interested in being interviewed by me, as both of us interviewing each other.

This was at once very simple yet explosive. I knew my business with interviewing: planning, researching, crafting questions, agreeing a kind of agenda to be worked through, with the possibility of extra details and sidelights presenting themselves along the way. This new idea involved draft questions from both of us that we would plan and agree. Our dialogue would have the potential to twist and turn spontaneously.... But it wouldn't be purely about what Nim thought, rather what we both thought – and what we could do about the situation.

These conversations have now grown into a book of eight dialogues and ten worksheets for use by individuals and study groups to use as a starting point for their own dialogue projects.

If we look outwards, each world faith offers anti-racist principles. Hinduism states, 'No one is superior, none inferior. All are brothers marching forward to prosperity',² whilst Muslims are reminded: 'There is no favor of... white skin over black skin, nor black skin over white skin, except by righteousness.'³ This is echoed in Sikhism, where Guru Granth Sahib Ji is quoted: 'The clay is the same, but... fashioned it in different ways'.⁴

“Each world faith offers anti-racist principles”

Both Christians and Jews look to Genesis for the message that all humanity is in God's image: 'Let us make humankind... according to our likeness.'⁵ Christianity exhorts its believers to love their neighbours as themselves, whilst the Jewish law in Leviticus stipulates: 'You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know how it feels to be a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.'⁶ Furthermore, the Buddha is quoted thus: 'Not by caste, race, or creed, or birth is one noble, but by heart alone is one a noble being.'

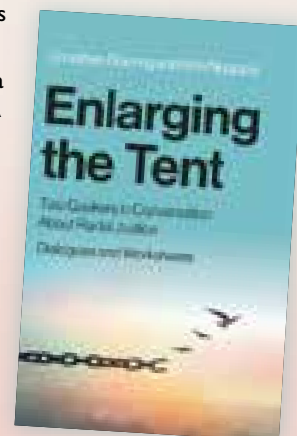
Of course, all faith communities have both experience of racism and have also, unfortunately, demonstrated prejudice. Assumptions of who may or may not be a genuine member of a faith community and the distortion of scriptures to justify certain views on this issue and the relative status assigned to different ethnicities, nationalities, and other categories, have all too often encouraged toxic intolerance that can poison communities, dooming their work to become blessed.

The only way forward is to open ourselves to the Other and each other. The more we do this, the more we realise both the depth and richness of human diversity and just how alike we really are.

So Nim and I began our experiment in attention and revelation, covering such issues as the legacy of guilt, creating a suitable environment for dialogue, and how to keep positive change going. There were moments of humour, embarrassment, and insight; through the process, it became crystal clear that we, indeed everyone, are implicated and directly involved in this situation – and the solution.

Hopefully, our book will function as a map. Not a clear, simple route from A to B, but rather a detailed and nuanced ordnance survey with hills and valleys, beautiful sites and challenging areas, with which readers can plot their own, personal progress around and through one of the key issues of our times.

There is still much to address. The debate about contentious landmarks, the question over historical reparations, and the continuing race pay gap all still demand consideration. But this is a journey rather than a destination, with *Enlarging the Tent* as one hopefully useful travel guide.



“Our book will function as a map. Not a clear, simple route from A to B, but rather a detailed and nuanced ordnance survey”

Enlarging the Tent: Two Quakers in Conversation about Racial Justice, by Jonathan Doering and Nim Njuguna, will be published by John Hunt on 9th December 2023

1 D June Ellis, 1981, 'Are we being educated?', Presidential address to the Guild of Friends in Education, 1981, collected in *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 23.76 (Fifth Edition).

2 Rig Veda V.60.5

3 Musnad Ahmad 22978

4 Ang 1350

5 Genesis 1:26

6 Vayikra (Leviticus) 19: 33-34

The Kind of Life

Living in Community with God as Priority



I was born in Surrey and, like all my family, I was christened in the Church of England. I am English, but my Scandinavian surname comes from my father, of Danish origin. That was in 1939, three months before World War II broke out. As a young child I recall my family getting to know some of the prisoners of war based in our village.

A few of them became good friends – my father spoke German with them and they would visit us at home and I was party to interesting conversations, in English, about the futility of war. But the War was over, so I could not understand why they were not returned to their homeland. My parents agreed, and recommended that I write to our MP to protest, and I did. His secretary agreed with me but said that it was all very complicated. The reasons were never fully explained to me but I was thankful that the POWs I knew were not badly treated, and the experience led me to join Amnesty International and become a writer of letters for 30 years.

When I was eleven, we moved to France and stayed there for eight years, followed by three years in Switzerland. I immediately loved France, and having got over the initial facher of being “*la petite Anglaise qui apprend le français*”, was utterly happy with school, friends and Girl Guides. All this was in a Roman Catholic setting. Impressed by the seriousness of my friends over their faith, I began to attend Sunday mass (service) with some of them, and asked questions. With my mother who, unbeknown to me, was taking an increasing interest in Catholicism, I approached one of the friendly young priests. After religious instruction, a few days before my 14th birthday, I was baptised after school and made my first communion,

i.e. I could take part fully in every mass, anywhere in the world. That was in 1953. In those days, before the 2nd Vatican Council of Renewal and Adaptation, converts had to receive “conditional” baptism to change Christian denominations. Now, my original baptism would be recognised as entirely valid.

I thought hard before taking this step of conversion. My parents and godmother were very keen on following one’s conscience, and that is what I did. Later on, my little sister, and my mother took the same step. My elder sister has always remained a committed Anglican; my brother and his Indian wife, also christened as a child, followed their own faith path.

It was in Paris that I first got to know the Roman Catholic nuns, Sisters “of the Holy Child Jesus”, who attracted me by their cheerful simplicity, and their sense of humour, while working hard. They ran a small school and a hostel. I asked questions... that was the kind of life I wanted: without luxury, organised in community to let God be the priority. Eventually I joined them, received a thorough training, committed myself definitively and have never regretted it.

Consecration in a religious order is a very good life if that is your vocation – naturally with its ups and downs. Our spirituality is centred on the Person of Jesus Christ, and our congregation is international, which suits me very well. Many but not all of us have been engaged in education; we are present in Europe, America and Africa. In the former our numbers are diminishing, but our future lies in Africa where new candidates apply every year to join the Order.

As a nun I have moved around the world. I lived for 20 years in France, teaching and involved in parish work. I was given a sabbatical year to study pastoral theology. I say “given” because along with definitive vows of chastity (celibacy) and poverty (mainly sharing and aiming at simplicity) we take a vow of obedience, implying that although you may certainly make known your preferences and attraction to a particular ministry, you are always accountable to the Society (congregation).

Having children of different traditions growing up side by side, is essential for a harmonious future

I Wanted



When I was 53, an appeal came to the whole Society to help start a new foundation in Chad, Central Africa. I volunteered and was missioned to N'Djamena along with two American Sisters and two Nigerians. With trembling hearts and much excitement, we set off to lead, what became, a rich community life among the extremely welcoming Chadian people.



Chad is a Muslim country in the majority. To prepare ourselves in our respective countries, we underwent training sessions, including a study of Islam. After our arrival we attended Arabic classes to aid communication (the principal language is French). Besides the Catholic "Communautés Ecclésiales de Base" and the Christians of other denominations, our neighbours were Muslims or adherents to Traditional Religions. We learnt so much about Islam especially. Inter-relations were generally good, though very much connected to tribal ways of life and politics. An excellent secondary school run by other nuns educated about 1000 boys and girls of which roughly half were Catholics and other Christians, and 500 Muslims. The then Archbishop of N'Djamena maintained that having children of different traditions growing up side by side, is essential for a harmonious future.

Before our first year was out we became rather busy in a variety of roles. One nun distributed medication at the brand new Order of Malta dispensary; another began work in the French/local languages diocesan audio-visual office; we accompanied the "Communautés Ecclésiales de Base" and supported a local Nigerian community; another nun became parish assistant and another took classes for the catechists. An NGO requested some rapid "formation" for two young people preparing to teach young children of fathers who had died. At night, the premises, with electric light and quiet, were used by young people heading for exams: but the mosquitoes were tiresome. One nun accompanied the Guides and Brownies and coordinated a modest New Testament

correspondence course; another complied with the Archbishop's request to start an information centre on HIV/Aids in French and local languages. Nobody taught yet in a school, nor had the Women's Centre taken off, although this was to become our principal work. But somehow, everyone seemed to be teaching someone, and the young people were eager to learn.

Personally I only lasted a year in Chad, finding the heat intolerable, my resistance to parasites dropped, and so I had to give in

and return to Europe for a rest. This rest went on and on, and apart from a wonderful return to N'Djamena for our 10th anniversary, I have never been able to live there since. But my African experience marked me profoundly, enriching and changing me, and I am deeply grateful for it.

I returned to Europe in 1993. Since then I have lived in various SHCJ communities in Hastings, London, Milton Keynes with such wonderful ecumenical and inter-faith relations, Oxford and now Harrogate. During my London years, I volunteered at a drop-in and advice centre for asylum seekers, and from Milton Keynes I was one of a multi-religious chaplaincy team in an Immigration Detention Centre. This was tremendously enriching, but also heart-rending work to do, and I loved it.

Now, I am older and have less energy. But I remain supremely grateful for so many diverse cultural and faith-affirming experiences. I have wanted to serve, and can still do so among the Sisters and other residents of the care home, which is now my religious and home community. There are current issues to be aware of: peace, poverty, the environment, refugees... and still the possibility of campaigning, mainly by internet. Our Constitutions affirm: "This is our mission: to help others to believe that (God) lives in them and in our world, and to rejoice in his presence." Because God, under whatever name, in whatever ways, is among us all ... let us be glad and keep hope. We have to hold onto that.

Let us be glad and keep hope...

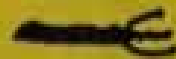
LANGUAGE OF ART



Reuben, aged 38, was living in a home for adults with learning disabilities. He hadn't established an independent life in the care system and was still struggling to accept that he had Down's syndrome. Depressed and in a fog of anti-depressants, he hadn't spoken for over a year. The only way he expressed himself was by writing poems or drawing felt-tip scenes from his favourite West End musicals and Hollywood films. Increasingly isolated, cut off from everyone and everything he loved, Reuben sent a text message: 'brother. do. you. love. me.'

When Manni received this desperate message from his youngest brother, he knew everything had to change. He immediately left his life in Spain and returned to England, moving Reuben out of the care home and into an old farm cottage in the countryside. In the stillness of winter, they began an extraordinary journey of repair, rediscovering the depths of their brotherhood, one gradual step at a time.

Combining Manni's tender words with Reuben's powerful illustrations, their story of hope and resilience questions how we care for those we love, and demands that, through troubled times, we learn how to take better care of each other.



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brother.
do. you.
love.
me.

recovery will be slow, I understand that. It may never be complete and I will probably need to adjust my expectations, but at the same time I'm determined to nurture that space in Reuben's mind where he can wander freely without fear.

Maybe we'll never see the Reuben of old completely back in the room, but I am convinced that fighting for the small changes, the tiny steps, will shift him away from the reality of his depression. Every step he takes, every day we get through together, is ground that we have gained and a step towards him rediscovering the confidence to speak again.



over these last weeks and months, every walk has left and returned to Reuben. Always, whether I am with him or without him, I am walking the labyrinth of his past and future, through the folds of the landscape, the ridgeways and the holloways that bring such intimacy to being here. I've been a walker since my teens – when my mind is jumbled, this is how I help myself untangle it all. Every year – except for two – since 2001 I have walked the Camino de Santiago, either as a guide or because it has become such an essential part of my year. I love the route. I love the ritual of wearing the pilgrim's shell and swapping my nationality for a pilgrim's passport. Every walk has become a small pilgrimage for me. Sometimes I carry my burdens too heavily, and each step becomes penance for a sin that I have even never committed. But every walk always has promise. Every walk is a commitment.

When Nathan and I took Reuben along the Camino, he was coming up to his twentieth birthday. I was thirty years old,

Nathan was twenty-five. Three brothers striding out. As you walk the Camino, you naturally gather a wider pilgrim family, of all ages, genders, languages, cultures, politics, religions. Give or take a few kilometres, most people walk a similar distance each day, so you reconnect with the same people at lunch stops or dinners, forming your own, loose band of merry pilgrims.

It's one of the most rewarding parts of the experience, the surprise of strangers and how you weave in and out of each other's paths and lives so effortlessly. I'm pretty sure it has always been that way, back into the twelfth and thirteenth century, when use of the Camino was at its peak, and the artefacts of this diaspora began spreading along the route – monuments built by aristocrats and royalty, entire towns settled by pilgrims who never went home, convents and monasteries that were founded by the devout, hospitals that were opened for the weary and infirm.



None of this collective sense of history and pilgrimage happened for us brothers, though. Our journey was different. We did meet people but conversations were usually left unfinished, and we rarely saw the same faces twice. Pilgrims weaved through us, smiled, chatted for a little while and then, with apologies, needed to get going. We heard it over and over again. 'I'd love to hang out with you guys but I really have to continue.' (Probably true.) 'I'm getting cramp.' (No way of telling.) 'I'm getting cold so I really need to hit the road.' (Off you go then.) 'Maybe we'll see you tonight?' (Fat chance!) 'If you guys make it to Astorga tonight, I'd love to buy you dinner.' (We didn't make it to Astorga that night.)

I get it. It's fine. Don't feel bad. Reuben walks a third the speed of most people. We were the last to leave and always the ones who never arrived, having to stop somewhere in the middle of each official stage. By walking so slowly, we missed out on Camino friendships and community. At the start we didn't notice or mind, but as we clocked up the miles, the strain of isolation began to show as Nathan and I were locked deeper into Reuben's existence. His slow, quiet ways were showing us something that nobody else on the Camino could. Over days, we started to experience the world through him. We walked at his pace, stopped when he stopped, to look at the flowers in his *Secret Garden* or notice the same animals of Narnia and the trees of Middle Earth that dotted his path every day. We weren't taking Reuben on a pilgrimage, he was leading us. But late one afternoon, three kilometres from the next town, Reubs sat down in the middle of a dusty path.

'Reubs, what are you doing?' I asked.

'I'm done, bruvr,' he replied.

'You can't be done. We're not there yet.'

'I'm done,' he repeated.

Nathan and I looked at each other. We had packed a tent just in case, suspecting that something like this might happen,

and pitched it right there for the night. After that, Nathan and I started to feel frustrated by Reuben's pace. We didn't tell each other this – neither of us wanted to admit impatience. Instead, we bickered and grew more and more exhausted by the day.

At our wits' end, we very nearly abandoned our pilgrimage – twice. When a huge argument loomed, at the next fork we agreed to carry on walking to the same place separately, along different paths. Nathan took off one way with our miniature schnauzer, Monty, and I pulled Reuben along another.

I walked an even lonelier path that day. Sometimes, being with Reuben is like being by yourself. He demands nothing from you in conversation. He can stay happily silent for hours. Often, I glanced down to remind myself that he was on the end of my arm. As we walked, I came to the sad conclusion that this is what life must be like for my brother: he meets people, casts his nets of friendship, full of love and aspirations, only for those nets to be hauled back empty. People simply cannot or do not want to slow down enough to get to know him. He only sees people again if they wait for him, or if they come back. It's never up to him. This is one decision he can't make. If he does, it tends to lead to disappointment, which gets harder the more you experience it. He still dreams of true friendship, I'm sure of it. Yet any true or intimate human connections with peers seem to have evaded him.

On the Camino, Reuben's reality hit me. I kept gazing over at him, wondering how he did it. How could he be so brave? My love for him swelled. I didn't have to imagine his emotions any longer. As we stood there in the middle of a field, an ancient path beneath our feet, we were both alone, isolated by our particular pace of life. I imagined the hundreds of thousands and millions of people who had passed that very spot throughout the millennia. Ghost pilgrims. On the Camino, at least, you are never really alone.

without malice, never with judgement, Reuben walks with an open heart. He never expects, he rarely asks for anything. It is our job to anticipate his needs, to know what's best. But this is the tricky bit, because what he needs and what you think he needs are not always the same thing. The only way, I've realised, is to keep asking the questions and be patient enough, slow enough, to wait for the answers.

'I miss my Nathan,' he said finally.

'I miss him too, Reubs. It's alright. We'll meet up with him tomorrow. He'll be waiting for us, I'm sure.'

When all three of us were back together, reunited, we hugged as if we'd been apart for weeks. Those twenty-four hours were just the oxygen we needed to carry on. From then on, we managed to settle more easily because we accepted the rhythm as it was. We were still far from Santiago, but we no longer wished to be somewhere else, with someone else, or further along the path. And along the way, Reuben established his own routine. Each evening, normally while Nathan and I were figuring out dinner, he sat on his bunk with his felt-tips drawing a wardrobe into Narnia. Every night the same: another wardrobe would appear. Usually, he gave the finished artworks to one of us. But I remember one evening he left a picture on the bunk of a young man from the United States, who approached me just before lights out.

'Hi, I think your brother left this on my bed,' he said, showing me the drawing.

'Did he? Bless him,' I replied.

He faltered, almost embarrassed to ask. 'But what is it? What does it mean?'

'It's a wardrobe. It's from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis.'

His face blanked.

'It's a book. A story about children finding their way to a magical world, called Narnia, through the back of a wardrobe. My brother is finding the Camino tough, so at the end of every day he draws a wardrobe as a sign of hope – one day soon he'll find a Narnia.'

Even though the room was barely lit, I could see that the man's eyes were full of tears. 'Fuck,' he whispered as he disappeared into the shadows of the dorm.

We never saw the man again, but we learnt on the Camino grapevine that Reuben's drawing had reversed his decision to abandon his pilgrimage. Before meeting Reuben, he had decided to quit. He was tired, mentally and physically. The wardrobe had been a sign for him to continue, to finish what he had started. When we told Reubs about it, he replied with an uncanny glint in his eyes.

'I know,' he said.



From then on, whenever we arrived at a pilgrims' refuge, we would discover that somebody had reserved a bed for Reuben. This went on for the rest of the journey. Every evening, a guaranteed bed. We never found out who they were, so we called them the Camino Angel. Perhaps it was that man who was about to give up, or somebody who had heard about it along the way.

Then towards the end of our journey, we walked with two young women from England for a day. They were not in a hurry either, it turned out. So we ambled at Reuben's pace, glimpsed some of his magic, and although we parted company the following morning, they left a trail of letters, gifts and sweets along the Camino, like a series of talismans showing us the way home, hooked over bent nails, lassoed over gate posts, stuck to noticeboards, or dangling from low branches. Reuben loved it.

He spent the remainder of his Camino seeking them out, and the anticipation pulled him forwards, up hills, through valleys, even into the crowds of Santiago de Compostela.

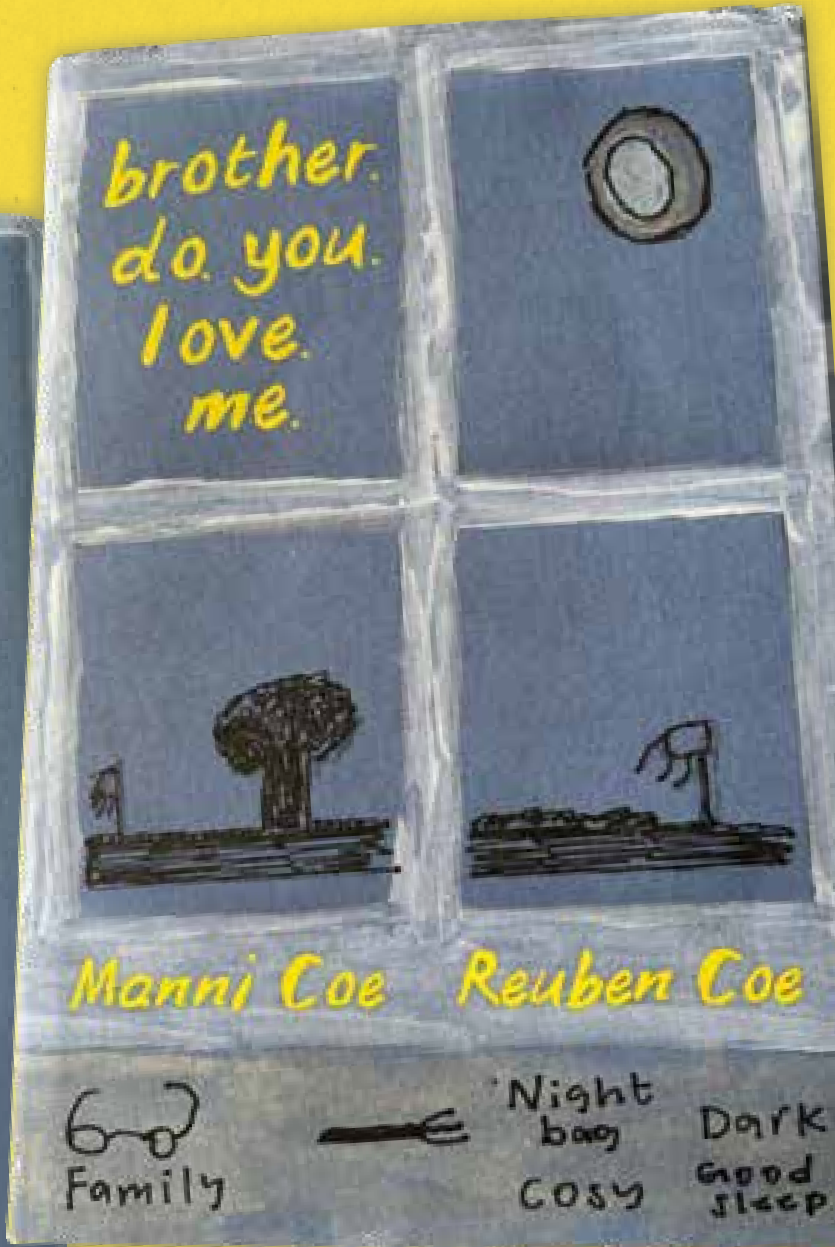
Getting to know Reuben is an act of patience, possibly even an act of devotion. At my usual speed, it would take two or three lifetimes to get to know my brother properly. If you take your time, perhaps it would only take one life. But let's be honest, hardly anyone has the time. Sadly, our lives are too busy. We're constantly trying to keep up with everything and everyone else. Being able to step away from our usual lives and walk the 210 miles of Camino with Reuben, was a privilege. Nathan agrees, those twenty-five days were fundamental in shaping the rest of our adulthood. The experience changed us, and forged an unbreakable bond between us brothers.



Before I went to bed last night, I hovered at Reuben's bedroom door and watched the quiet rise and fall of his back as his breath eased him into sleep. How he has navigated the raging emotional storms of these past two years will never cease to amaze me. He has held on for dear life when no one knew how to explain the source of his pain. Sometimes, even if you love someone, it isn't easy giving their feelings a name. And this is why sharing time with him is such a privilege. Through our brotherhood winter, I have learnt to live through him. Yes, we have suffered, individually and together, but those trials have bound us with even more unbreakable bonds. He is my home and always will be.



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Binding the Wound

Years ago, anthropologist Margaret Mead was asked by a student what she considered to be the first sign of civilization in a culture. The student expected Mead to talk about fishhooks or clay pots or grinding stones.

But no. Mead said that the first sign of civilization in an ancient culture was a femur (thighbone) that had been broken and then healed. Mead explained that in the animal kingdom, if you break your leg, you die. You cannot run from danger, get to the river for a drink or hunt for food.

You are meat for prowling beasts. No animal survives a broken leg long enough for the bone to heal.

A broken femur that has healed is evidence that someone has taken time to stay with the one who fell, has bound up the wound, has carried the person to safety and has tended the person through recovery. Helping someone else through difficulty is where civilization starts, Mead said, we are at our best when we serve others.



Margaret Mead, born 16/12/1901 died 15/11/78, was an American cultural anthropologist and writer. A pioneer, whose fieldwork in Samoa in the 1920's transformed the notion of anthropology and social science, she focused her research on understanding how culture shapes human behaviour, particularly in relation to gender roles and child rearing practices. Her work challenged conventional wisdom about these topics and opened up new avenues for research into cross-cultural differences. Cited: *The Life and Legacy of Margaret Mead – Pioneering Anthropologist* by Claudine Cassar anthropologyreview.org

Dr. Ira Bycock is a leading palliative care physician.

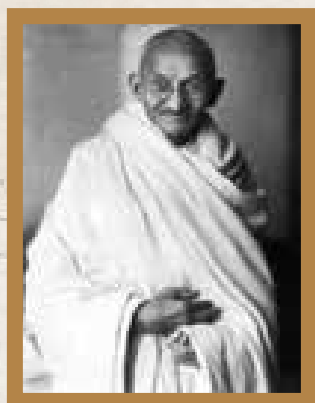
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TRANSFORMING FEAR INTO A POSITIVE FORCE FOR GOOD

“GENERATIONS TO COME, IT MAY BE, WILL SCARCE BELIEVE THAT SUCH
A ONE AS THIS EVER IN FLESH AND BLOOD WALKED UPON THIS EARTH”
ALBERT EINSTEIN

“MAHATMA GANDHI WILL GO DOWN IN HISTORY
ON PAR WITH BUDDHA AND JESUS CHRIST”
LORD MOUNTBATTEN

“I HAVE NOT A SHADOW OF A DOUBT THAT ANY
MAN OR WOMAN CAN ACHIEVE WHAT I HAVE”
MAHATMA GANDHI



Gandhi's 'saintly' reputation, that steadily grew in his own lifetime, was one that he was never really comfortable with, or one that he openly courted. In his autobiography he wrote the following about being called Mahatma (The Great Soul): “Often the title has deeply pained me; and there is not a moment I can recall when it may be said to have tickled me.”

Gandhi maintained that in the face of injustice and inequality he had no real alternative but to make a stand and confront the controlling influence of imperialism. This he did with commitment and determination of heroic proportions, but throughout his entire political engagement he never lost sight of the fact that he was a man, just an ordinary man placed in extraordinary circumstances. Later in his life he said: “I have not a shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have.”

Many may challenge these words; believing instinctively that Gandhi was indeed a rather special individual who attained a degree of awakening that no one else could. A man marked out for greatness. A spiritual man far removed from the rest of humanity – but was he? Are we saying that Gandhi, and Gandhi alone was the only one who could inspire his fellow countrymen to seek Independence? Are we saying that Gandhi, and Gandhi alone was the only one who could fight injustice and discrimination? Are we saying that Gandhi, and Gandhi alone was the only one who could stand up for truth?

I believe that the prejudicial conditions that British imperialism created in India, with the surfacing of discrimination and injustice, were the conditions that created *Mahatma Gandhi* - The Great Soul: one was but an unavoidable consequence of the other. This is not to suggest that some form of rigid inevitability existed, but history has shown that where there has been an unjust balance of power, challenges to the regime have invariably followed. Gandhi's challenge to British control of India eventually led to a complete transference of power to the Indian people, but if Gandhi had refused to address the problematic issues that his country faced, then others, I firmly believe, would have eventually led the way.

Whilst Gandhi was respected, revered and even idolized by millions there were, nevertheless, many critics who disapproved of him; his personality, his methods of working, even his vision for India in a post-colonial stage of development. But despite all this there still seems to be fairly universal agreement about one thing – Gandhi was a brave man who showed no fear towards anyone or anything. But he wasn't (even by his own admission) unique: he was in fact very much aware of his own personal fears, and it was by acknowledging them, and working with this presence in his life, he succeeded in transforming his fears into a positive force for good.

“The golden rule is to act fearlessly upon what one believes to be right.”
Gandhi

Gandhi realized that fear would lead him to all the wrong places so he worked constructively and positively with this negative energy to minimize its influence on his life and his visionary work. Certainly he was an exceptional individual, but in reality we could all be exceptional, for we all carry the seeds of potential within us. Gandhi wasn't afraid of his potential and he seized every opportunity to work with it, to allow it to deepen his life and effect a qualitative change for others.

Fear is the dragon that we must face in our lives. *Fear is a projection, not a reality: it is a self-induced, subjective state of mind. We should never allow our fears to grip our hearts so that we become frozen and incapable of responding in a positive manner to life's inevitable challenges and difficulties.* Fear is grounded in ignorance of our true potential which could take us on a journey of self-discovery, enriching us as individuals and enabling us to step into a new and better life.

Gandhi's fearless life, along with many other brave individuals, can inspire us all to look at our fears, worries and anxieties so that we may summon up the strength to deal with them effectively: transforming them into a power for good to help ourselves and others, especially those suffering inequality, injustice and discrimination.

Only then can we look to the future as a rich source of possibilities supported by a confident positivity and a strong presence of faith:

- faith in ourselves
- faith in others
- faith in truth
- faith in goodness
- faith in an interwoven, interconnected, spiritually sustained humanity

“FEAR IS THE DRAGON THAT WE MUST FACE IN OUR LIVES”

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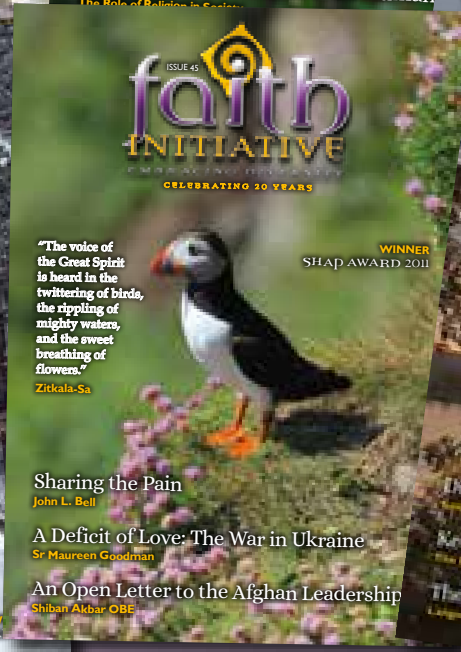
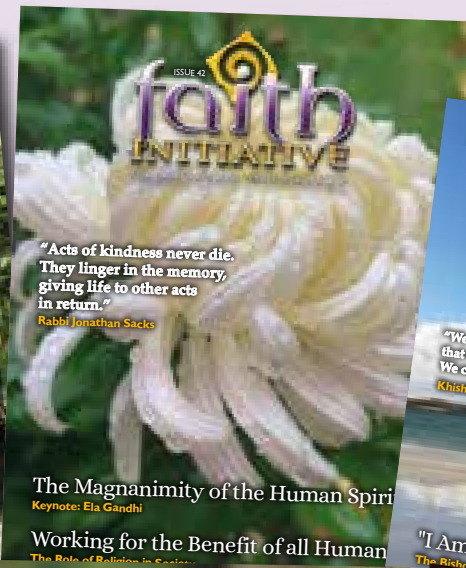
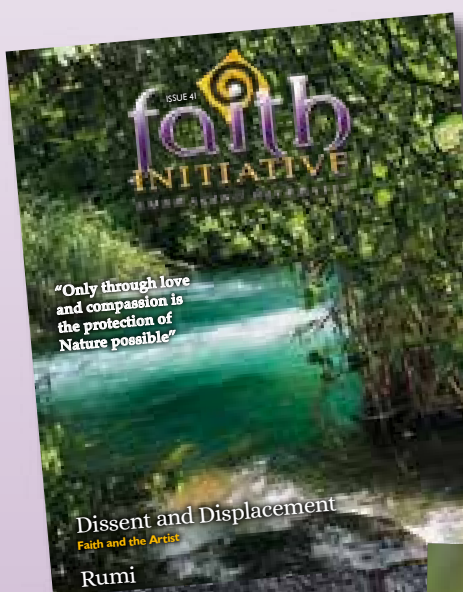
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A Woman of Spirit

Mary Braybrooke was a rare individual whose whole life was dedicated to serving others, whether it was her family, her church community or the wider community. I have known Mary and Marcus since 1986, when Marcus became a patron of 'The Million Minutes of Peace Appeal' for the UN International Year of Peace. Then, gradually, followed a friendship that grew closer and closer, and we were delighted when Marcus and Mary were appointed to the parish that includes the BK Global Retreat Centre. Our neighbours were frequent visitors and we to them. Mary had many encounters with Dadi Janki (late head of the Brahma Kumaris). They shared a deep love and respect that nurtured the soul. She became one of the '100 Women of Spirit' honoured on Dadi's 100th birthday.

I will always treasure Mary's compassion, principles and wisdom: being with her at many interfaith events and activities,

I could see how she had a deep interest in people and a capacity to really listen. She would wish everyone to be treated equally and be offered opportunities to grow and develop. She was very clear in her values and had the inner strength and faith in God to follow her conscience. She served with her heart and soul.

Wherever Marcus and Mary have gone, the congregation has grown. Mary's warmth and care played a huge part in this. I know for myself that on a religious or spiritual path, part of maintaining faith and commitment is the support from the faith community. Mary made her faith real through serving selflessly and extending a sense of belonging to all. She made an impact on many, many lives and so gained blessings from all those whom she served.

When you live a life of service, when you follow your conscience, when you love with faith and trust in God, then it is a life well lived.





Translation of Khan Ataur Rahman's song

Mon-majhi tor boit-ha nere

The River of Sadness¹

O Steerer of my soul, take hold of the oar!
I'm too fatigued to press on!
Forever swept away by the surging tide,
The sadness does not ebb away!
Steer me away from sadness!²

Through the wilderness of sorrow, the wailing river flows.
In quest of happiness, the anguished soul cries out!
O Steerer of my soul: the more self-absorbed you are,
The more wretched is my fate!
My tranquillity is swept out by an unending woe.
I've no will to press on!

O Skipper of my soul: take hold!
Steer me away from sadness!

© *Shiban Akbar OBE*

The genre is 'Bhatiyali', a form of folk music sung by boatmen

1 The song is known by the 1st line, 'Mon-Majhi tor boit-ha nere'. Mon-Majhi literally means coxswain of someone's / the poet's imagination. I have taken the liberty to add a title to the translated piece.

2 Literal translation would read "I cannot row anymore / I am losing the will to row anymore."

Khan Ataur Rahman (11 Dec 1928 – 1 Dec 1997) was an eminent figure in Bangladesh. He was an acclaimed actor, director, producer, screenplay writer, music composer, songwriter and singer who was recognised in his lifetime with Bangladesh National Film awards and UNESCO fellowship. He was posthumously awarded Ekushey Padak, the 2nd highest civilian award by the government of Bangladesh.

Photo: Lorna Douglas – River Dochart, Perthshire, Scotland

ENSLAVEMENT

Voices from the Archives

On the 10th January 2023 the Church Commissioners for England announced the publication of a full report into historic links to transatlantic chattel slavery, and a new funding commitment of £100m in response to findings.

The report follows an interim announcement in June 2022, which reported for the first time, and with great dismay, that the Church Commissioners' endowment had historic links to transatlantic chattel slavery¹. The endowment traces its origins partly to Queen Anne's Bounty, a fund established in 1704.

In response to the findings, the Church Commissioners' Board has committed itself to trying to address some of the past wrongs by investing in a better future. It will seek to do this through committing £100m of funding, delivered over the next nine years commencing in 2023, to a programme of investment, research and engagement. This will comprise:

- Establishing a new **impact investment** fund to invest for a better and fairer future for all, particularly for communities affected by historic slavery. It is hoped this fund will grow over time, reinvesting returns to enable it to have a positive legacy that will exist in perpetuity, and with the potential for other institutions to participate, further enabling growth in the size and impact of the fund.
- Growth in the impact fund will also enable **grant funding** for projects focused on improving opportunities for communities adversely impacted by historic slavery.
- **Further research**, including into the Church Commissioners' history, supporting dioceses, cathedrals and parishes to research and address their historic links with slavery, and sharing best practice with other organisations researching their slavery legacies. As an immediate action, Lambeth Palace Library is hosting an exhibition with items from its archives that have links to historic transatlantic chattel slavery.
- The Church Commissioners will also continue to use its voice as a **responsible investor** to address and

combat modern slavery and human rights violations, and to seek to address injustice and inequalities.

- A new oversight group will be formed during 2023 with significant membership from communities impacted by historic slavery. This group will work with the Church Commissioners on shaping and delivering the response, listening widely to ensure this work is done sensitively and with accountability.
- The full report into historic links Queen Anne's Bounty had to transatlantic chattel slavery can be found on the website www.churchofengland.org²
- The Church Commissioners will use the results of the research to ensure it continues to be at the forefront of responsible investment globally. One of the key principles of its responsible investment approach is 'Respect for People'. Every human being is made in the image of God, and Jesus teaches us that he came so that we all may have life in all its fullness. Chattel slavery, where people made in the image of God have had their freedom taken away to be owned and exploited for profit was, and continues to be, a shameful and horrific sin.
- The Church Commissioners is deeply sorry for its predecessor fund's links with the transatlantic slave trade.
- The exhibition (held in Lambeth Palace Library): *Enslavement: Voices from the Archive* included early 18th century ledgers from Queen Anne's Bounty that was founded in 1704, a predecessor fund to the Church Commissioners' endowment, and an anonymous letter written by an enslaved person in 1723 to the 'Archbishop of London', the earliest known such advocacy for freedom. A missionary book from 1808 published specifically for enslaved and former enslaved people will also be on display. This book contained selected sections of the Bible, deliberately edited to remove all references to freedom from slavery.

1 'Chattel slavery' is the enslaving and owning of human beings and their offspring as property, able to be bought, sold, and forced to work without wages. This is distinguished from other systems of forced, unpaid, or low-wage labour also considered to be slavery.

2 https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/church-commissioners-england/who-we-are/church-commissioners-links?mc_cid=d-409b4696e&mc_eid=UNIQID

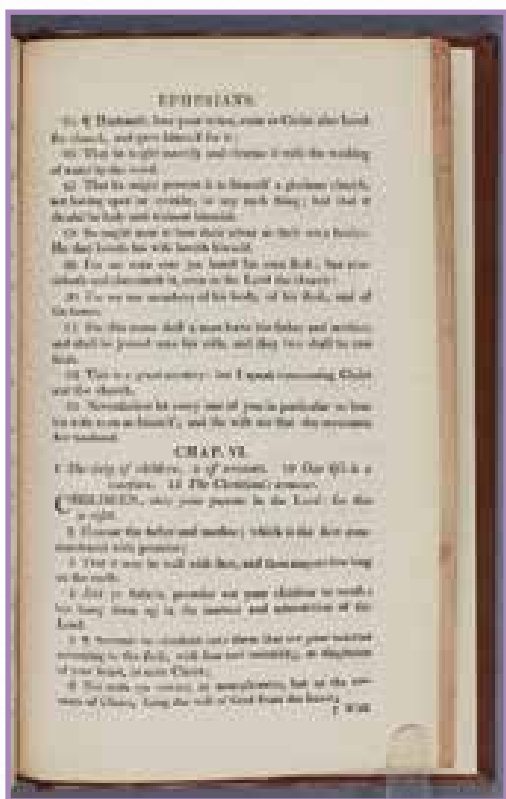
Lambeth Palace Library is the historic library of the Archbishops of Canterbury and preserves the national archives of the Church of England.

- Missionaries sent to work in the Caribbean and the Americas documented the harsh conditions of daily life on the plantations. Enslaved people were not allowed basic Christian rights such as baptism and marriage in case these rights damaged the property and legal rights of the owners. Some voices were raised against enslavement including Revd Morgan Godwyn, an Anglican missionary to Virginia and Barbados. He wrote in 1680 appealing to the Archbishop of Canterbury to allow Anglican priests to baptise enslaved people.
- As a result of the transatlantic slavery economy, enslavement, and disease, Indigenous populations were virtually wiped out. It is believed that of the 12 million Africans enslaved and transported to the Caribbean and Americas between 1500 and 1900, only around 10 million reached their destination. The effects and legacy of slavery are visible to this day.

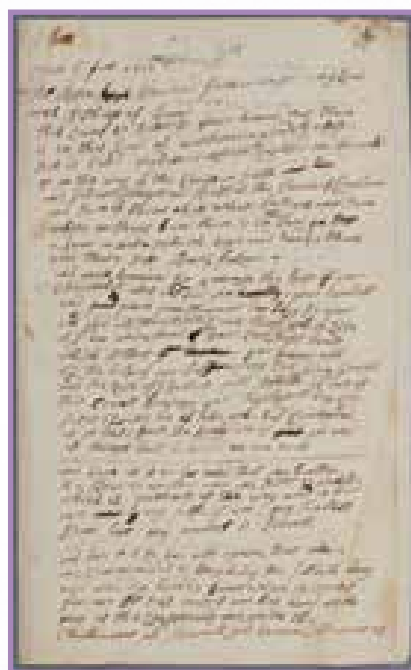
EXTRACTS FROM THE ENSLAVEMENT: VOICES FROM THE ARCHIVE EXHIBITION

Exhibition held in Lambeth Palace Library and open to the public 12th January 2023 - 31st March 2023

Select sections of the Holy Bible for the use of the Negro Slaves. (London, 1808)



Anonymous petition addressed to the 'Lord arch Bishop of London'. 4 August 1723.



This volume, commonly called the 'Slave' Bible, was published on behalf of the Society for the Conversion of Negro Slaves, founded by Bishop Beilby Porteus, who was an advocate of abolition. This version was published the year after trade in enslaved people was abolished and four years after the successful anti-slavery revolution in Haiti.

Whereas a standard protestant Bible contains 1,189 chapters, this version contains only 232. It excludes 90% of the Old Testament, and 50% of the New Testament. Many references to freedom and escape from slavery were removed and some passages encouraging loyalty and submission to masters were emphasised. For instance, the text skips directly from Genesis 45:28 to Exodus 19. It includes the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), but the first 18 books of Exodus, in which the Israelites escape slavery in Egypt, have been removed.

E198.N3

This letter, sent from Virginia, is one of the earliest known pleas for freedom by an enslaved person. Created in secrecy over a period of a month, probably using home-made ink, it asks for the freedom of mixed-race enslaved people.

It provides an account of the abusive practices at a plantation. Only a few months earlier, plantation owners in Virginia crushed various plans by enslaved people to secure freedom.

The writer tells us that they are 'but a poor Slave' and reveals that they are owned by their own brother. This fact is emphasised by being underlined twice. The writer's main appeal for emancipation is then followed by a plea for Christian education. Becoming literate and Christian were seen by some plantation owners as acts that undermined the system of enslavement.

The fact that it was addressed to the 'Lord arch Bishop of London' demonstrates that enslaved people were addressing their protests and pleas beyond those they were forced to serve. There is no evidence that any response was ever made to this petition.

FP XVII ff. 167-168

Map from *A view of the coasts, countries and islands within the limits of the South-Sea-Company.* (London, 1711)

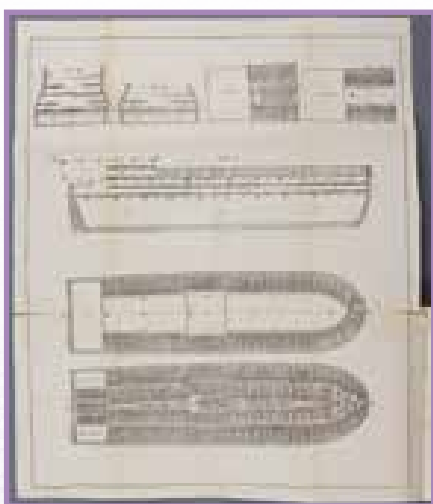


This map is from a book that describes the area of operation of the South Sea Company. It was published in the same year that the Company started its operations.

The South Sea Company was founded to refinance England's national debt. In exchange, it was awarded a monopoly from 1713 to provide enslaved African people to the Spanish-held ports in the Americas. The South Sea Company became a significant participant in transatlantic chattel slavery as the trade expanded during the early 18th century. Between 1715 and 1739, this was its core commercial activity. Investors in the company would have known that it was trading in enslaved people. Although it ceased trading in enslaved people in 1739, it continued to exist as a company until 1853.

KZ2221.V5 1711

Diagram of the ship 'Brookes' from *Regulated slave trade: reprinted from the evidence of Robert Stokes.* (London, 1849)



This diagram is of the ship 'Brookes' that transported enslaved people between 1781 and 1804. Around 490 people were kept on board in crowded conditions for several months. This illustration of the horrors of the journey across the Atlantic was widely copied and distributed by abolitionists from the 1780s onwards.

MT867 1.04

Petition from Esther Smith, a slave, to Archbishop Secker. 19 July 1760



This petition was written on behalf of Esther Smith. She was born in New York and brought to England by one of her enslavers. The letter documents the number of times she had been bought and sold in her life. In this petition, she is asking to be baptised so that she could,

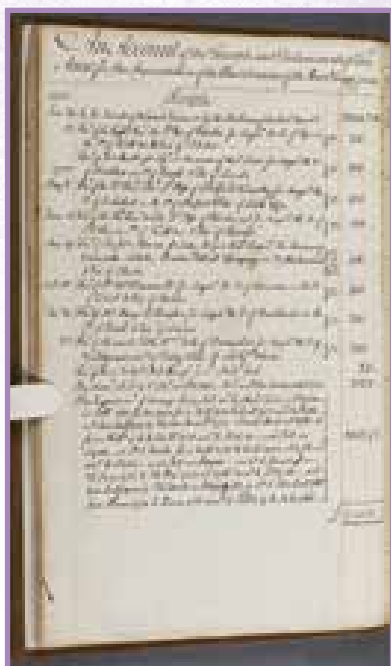
'[...] attend the Service of Almighty God on the Lordsday, as she always had been accustomed theretofore to do at every opportunity'.

Esther's enslaver opposed her baptism. Further correspondence contained within the archives provides a raw account of Esther's desperation and fears. She tried to obtain baptism at St Alphage's church in Greenwich, London, and fought to avoid being sent to the West Indies, as confirmed by letters from the church's vicar Revd Samuel Squire and a Methodist prison visitor Silas Told. Archbishop Secker eventually sought advice from Philip Yorke, 1st Earl of Hardwicke, who confirmed that 'a slave brought to England is still a slave' and baptism would not change this status.

MS 1123/2 item 177

Whether Esther succeeded in her efforts remains unknown.

One of the first records of the dividends from the South Sea Company from Queen Anne's Bounty Accounts Ledger Vol. 1

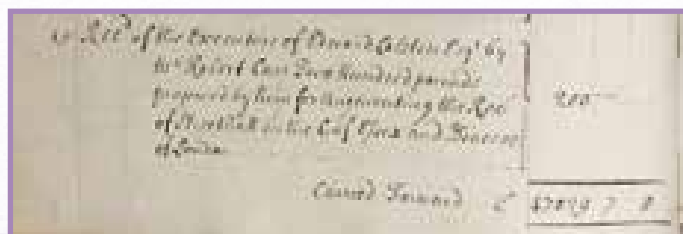


This is the first in a series of eight ledgers recording the transactions of Queen Anne's Bounty. This first volume provides a summary of the accounts from 1708 to 1776.

It includes the Treasurer's accounts showing receipts and disbursements, listing dates, descriptions and amounts in pounds, shillings and pence. These accounts were examined annually and approved by the General Court of Queen Anne's Bounty from 1711 onwards. It also contains abstracts and summaries of the accounts as well as details of stock interest amounts received by Queen Anne's Bounty. One of the first records of the dividends from the South Sea Company, dated 22 December 1721, is visible on the left-hand side of the opening page.

QAB/4/1/1

Entry in Queen Anne's Bounty Accounts Ledger Vol. 3 showing money received from the executors of Edward Colston



This entry records money received from the executors of Edward Colston, who was heavily involved with the Royal African Company during the period when it held a monopoly on the trade of enslaved people from Africa to the Caribbean. The sum was donated for augmentation of the Rectory of Strethall, Essex, Diocese of London.

QAB/4/1/3

Morgan Godwyn. *The Negro's & Indian's Advocate*. (London, 1680)



This is one of the first publications encouraging Anglican priests to baptise enslaved people. It was described in the 1880s by the American abolitionist Frederick Douglass as 'the foundation of all the grand concessions yet made to the claims, the character, the manhood and dignity of the Negro'.

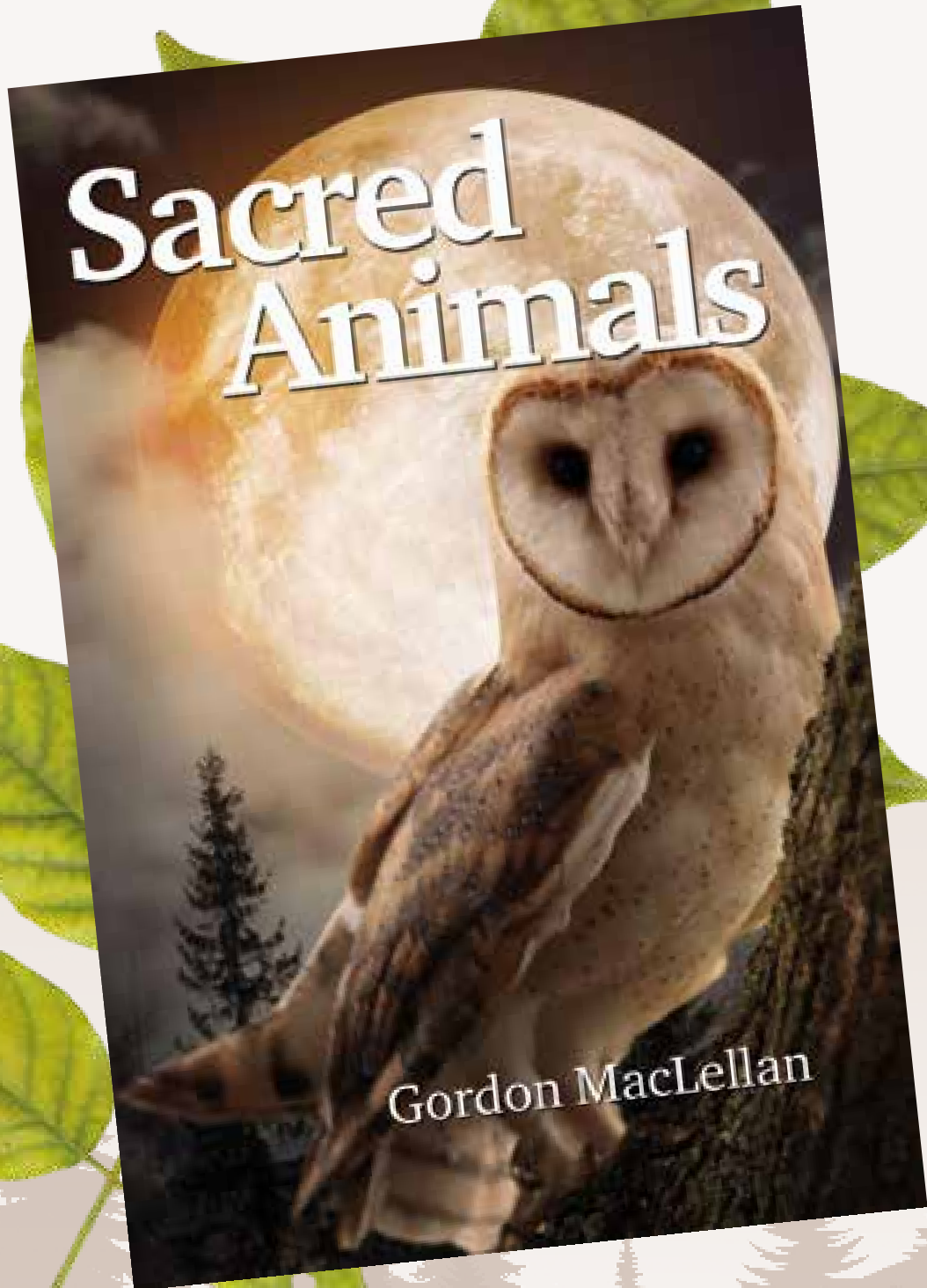
An opponent of slavery, Morgan Godwyn was an Anglican minister who had witnessed the barbarity of slavery in Virginia and Barbados. After returning to England, he published several tracts calling for the conversion of enslaved people to Christianity. Closer reading reveals that his arguments voiced criticism not only of the lack of Christian conversion but of the immorality of both the trade in enslaved people and enslavement itself.

Godwyn's last published sermon was *Trade before Religion*. It was addressed to King James II and delivered at Westminster Abbey and other churches across London. He compared enslavement and the trade in enslaved people to a pact with the devil:

'We have exceeded the worst of Infidels, by our first enslaving, and then murdering of Mens Souls. For how can it be endured that a Nation once so famous for Zeal and Piety... should prostrate her self to that foul Idol Mammon, and worship Trade'.

After preaching this sermon in 1685, Godwyn vanished from historical records.

KY185.7G6





INTRODUCTION

Rewilding Souls

People like telling stories. We seem to learn best through stories and it's when we connect with the story behind a cause that we commit to its mission. Numbers may be convincing, the science may be compelling but it's the story: the hungry child, the last furry snow-leopard cub, the gentle gorilla, the struggling ant that draws us into action and change.

In the western, allegedly “developed” world, somewhen, we started telling ourselves a new set of stories and our relationship with this wonderful world we live in changed. We picked up a tale of control and ownership and freedom to use as we wanted. This story could have many names: empire, manifest destiny, institutional religion takes over, corporate greed....Whatever the source of that new “story”, we have gone off down a path of exploitation and unprecedented destruction of other species by our single species over the last few centuries. Finally, as the consequences of that action come home to rest, we are realising the mess we have made and (hopefully) are trying to change.

Now people talk about “finding a new story”, building a new relationship with the world around us but often this talk seems to expect a single instant result. “Do this”, “say this”, “feel this (often anger, despair, guilt or blame)”, trust in technology and everything will be sorted.

I am sure it won't be that simple and most approaches to environmental change stay on a relatively superficial level. Yes, we need to change energy use, reduce consumption, manage gas emissions, stand in the way of runaway biodiversity loss, but all these are often approached as individual unconnected actions. What is needed runs deeper and all other actions need to become aspects of a more profound sea-change. The answers to our environmental challenges, I suspect are relatively simple. How we get there is something else. We need to step out of our self-centred bubbles – that includes both an “exploitation” bubble a but also a “it's up to save the environment” bubble. Burst the bubble and look at the world around us. We need to remember wonder. To recognise the joy of simply being alive. We need to remember that we are part of this world and we need to respect the world around us and recognise the right of the world and its inhabitants to go on living, evolving, becoming whatever comes next. We need to remember we are part of it,

not bigger than the whole, certainly not more important than everything, everyone, else. We need to renew our respect for this world and to find a celebration in life

Rewilding is one of the big initiatives of the moment. Even that is a bit of an illusion: often we're not rewilding, we're planting trees again, sewing seeds. Good things to do but that is not letting the wild restore itself, it's us making choices and decisions again rather than waiting and seeing what will grow. We're not trusting that the world will grow what is ready to grow in its own time, not necessarily in ours.

For me, the solution to our issues involves addressing the symptoms – climate change, biodiversity loss and the rest, but more importantly it needs for us to look at our own relationship with the world around us both as individuals and as communities. We need to rewild our selves, we need to remember that we truly belong to this world, that we are part of it all. This needs to run deeper than a conscious decision, we need to feel this in our hearts. We need to rewild our souls.

That is the new story we need to tell ourselves. It's not a “once upon a time...” sort of story. Or it might be one day but those myths take time to grow and the story we need just now isn't some green-propaganda/return to a time of harmony fable. We need to find our own stories, the personal stories of our own connectedness. That's what Sacred Animals does. In these pages I offer ideas, activities, patterns to explore that could help you build your own story: find, renew, refresh, your own connection with the world around us.

Let us remind ourselves of wonder. Remind ourselves that we live in a world worth celebrating.

And biting? Hopefully not from an actual wolf but in our work here, being bitten means you're doing well: you have progressed to a moment when Those Others have noticed you and come to find out who you are, what you're doing. What you taste like...

A NEW EDITION

Sacred Animals was first published in 1997. This new edition contains the original material, revised and updated and some new sections.

CHAPTER 1

Hop, Crawl, Slither, Fly and Swim

This is a book about animals. Not always animals to see or touch or run away from, but animals to see with the eyes of your mind, to feel with, for, about, to encounter in the other ways. Animals to wonder over in the Otherworld and in this, the physical, world. For me, heart of this book is a spiritual adventure into contact and friendship with the animal world. Partly, this is my story as examples, ideas and misadventures come from my experience. It is also a story that draws on ancient knowledge, surviving traditions, memories of other customs and the simple imagination that helps fill in the gaps. Hopefully, this might also be your story. This could be the start of your story and the chance to shape and grow your own connections with the spirits of the animal world.

I am Pagan and I write this book from a Pagan perspective: seeing a world that is all alive, where the energy that we call “life” and “spirit” moves through all things, animate, inanimate, “living” or “dead”. A Pagan world is one of endless connection and communication between the individual and the inter-related, growing, changing, always-evolving world that that person lives in.

It is also a world of many “worlds” where one can shift perceptions from the everyday physical world that we are all familiar with to the spirit worlds where the life-forces of the other occupants of the physical world have their speaking awareness - worlds of stone, of water, of wind and storm and the space between the stars. From its simplest state of life in a living, dynamic conscious world, a Pagan life can suddenly unravel itself into endless unfolding complexity as one world leads to another and another and we start to experience a universe that is so varied, such a kaleidoscope of diversity, that we want to leap into it at once and sail away into the worlds we meet through our minds...

And of course, for you that may be all a lot of rubbish. This is not a problem: we all have the right to live in the reality that calls most strongly to our spirit. I would hope that this book and the activities it contains would have something to offer people of all manner of persuasions. I will write it as a Pagan - you can read it as you will and translate my terms to suit your own way of looking at things. My world of spirits and presences external to myself might become your world of archetypes contained within your subconscious or might feed a creative perception of the patterns of ecology and evolution. But I’ll write as a Pagan. For “full disclosure” I should also say that I am a zoologist, with a degree in terrestrial ecology and a lifelong involvement in environmental education and conservation. That scientist’s need for accuracy and precision is also here in my work: understanding the animals we talk about is important to me

Looking at the world as a place where we can build relationships with other-than-human awarenesses may give us a chance to step aside from human concerns and explore our human activities from a different set of perspectives. I would hope that however you read and use *Sacred Animals*, it can offer you a chance to look at and relate to the world around us and heighten the respect with which we should see and support the rest of that living, vibrant world that we are all part of.

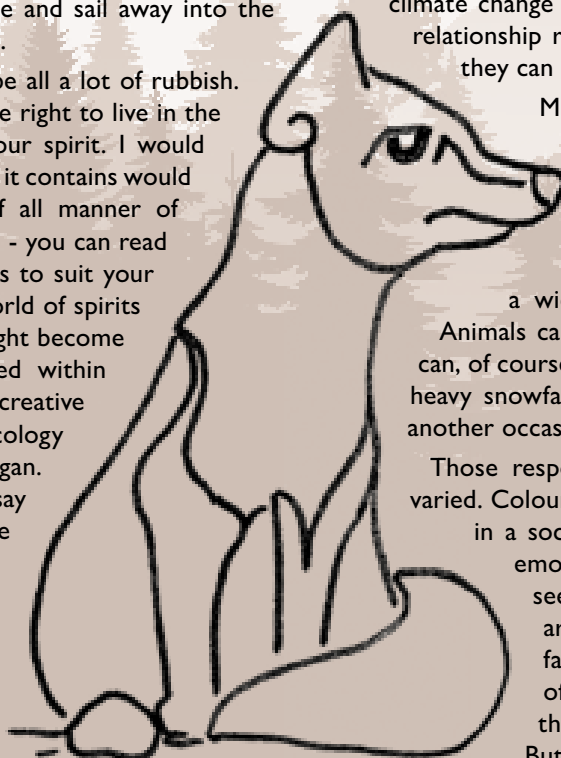
Life is wonderful. To be alive is a wonder. To be a conscious part of the endless, spreading web of connections that links everything together is a celebration. For me, “magic” is working within that awareness, with a knowledge of being a part of all that is, touching threads that also weave into all that has been and reach, unravelling, into what might yet be. That netted web of connections may be the energy and dynamics of physics or the remorseless wave of evolution, it may be Wyrd, the Old Gods or the Hand of God. Whatever it is, to work in it, with it and for it makes all of life a ceremony and a celebration. At the heart of it all is joy.

Living in the wonder of this world has its problems and it can be very easy to become so drawn into the problems that we forget that life may be just about living and that perhaps celebrating the life around us, relating to it and fitting ourselves into some sort of harmony with it might offer its own solution to those issues that beset us. Running through all the ideas presented here is simple respect. If we can build (or rebuild?) our respect for the world around us, a lot of the other changes we need to make: changes of lifestyle, energy consumption, pollution, reducing biodiversity loss and climate change become obstacles within a respectful relationship rather than the all-consuming horrors they can seem at other times.

Most of us can relate to at least some members of the animal world, even if others may send us shrieking onto a chair. At least that gives us some sort of a starting point for reaching out to a wider, non-human set of relationships.

Animals call out responses in people. The same can, of course, also be said about trees, flowers and heavy snowfalls but they will have to wait against another occasion. *Sacred Animals* is about animals.

Those responses we make to animals are very varied. Coloured by preconceived ideas, brought up in a society that ascribes human desires and emotions to animals, we are very good at seeing them as small furry humans. These are often the furry ones: the “aaah” factor is a strong one and it is taking a lot of work to win public sympathy over to the causes of snakes, fish, bats or beetles. But it is happening, people are becoming





much more aware of ecological issues and the importance of the interconnectedness of things. We need it all, we need them all, even the wasps. In recent years, successful campaigns have raised the plight of honey- and bumblebees (it can be argued that they are still “furry”). Amphibians attract significant amounts of positive support (hold a lot of “cute” factors without furriness!). We’ll know that relationships are really changing when it is hagfish and pycnogonids that are attracting enthusiastic support!

In *Sacred Animals* we will set out to build personal relationships with animal spirits, to reach out beyond the physical world and beyond our interpretations of “what animals think or do” to what the spirits of those animals themselves have to say. The spirits we meet (or just think about) may be those of individual animals or may represent groups of animals or the collective awareness of a whole species.

To start with it may all feel a bit strange, or just downright silly, and it is very hard to know what is “real” and what is “just imagination”. There are no easy answers here. Initially, a lot of what we experience now is shaped by what we knew or encountered in the past and you may find that the spirits you meet behave very like the animals of your childhood stories or films. This does not necessarily mean that this is all “just imagination”: spirits will talk to you through the imagery you offer them and if that is all you have to work with, that is all the language they will use.

As time goes on, as you and the spirits become more used to each other and to working together, the shapes of your experiences will change as you move deeper into the spirits’ world and into their perceptions of the worlds we live in.

“What is “real”? The trite answer is “whatever you want to be”, which does not help a lot. The test and its proving lie inside you. When you have reached out and made contact you will know it. When you feel the touch of an awareness that is not your own upon your life, nothing is ever quite the same again. Working with animals is one way of dropping some of the barriers we build around our human-centred world. We realise that there are other presences in this world, other beings who look at and act upon the world we live in, whose awareness, needs and perceptions may be very different from our own, who put us into perspective, who put us in our place.

In *Correspondences*, we look at the preconceptions we carry with us into this work - what animals are nice, which nasty, fast, slow, brave, cowardly and so on. Or perhaps, which ones we already associate with particular spiritual or mythical attributes. It is worth saying now that *Sacred Animals* tries to work without using such preconceptions.

This journey is one of discovery, the chance to learn what the animals themselves may have to teach us, not to reinforce the image systems of any particular mythology. You may be used to thinking of lions as symbols of fire, bravery and majesty, wolves as thinkers and teachers or the nightmare in the woods, salmon as old and wise. But really, we can learn as much about bravery from a mouse, elegance from pigeons and wisdom from beetles as anything else. Set out on this adventure with a sense of discovery and try to leave those assumptions as far behind you as you can.

One term might need clarifying right at the start. “The Otherworld” is a collective name for that diversity of worlds not perceived with our everyday senses. For our purposes here, think of “the physical world” as being our everyday one, the world that most of us are used to working with, experienced through our five senses and which we are generally familiar with. (Of course, the physical world that most of the animals you may encounter will be very different from yours, but let’s not get too complicated just yet). “The Otherworld” is the world where you may “see” and meet with the spirits. You may enter it by going inwards, by opening the doors of your mind and imagination but it is not a product of your dreams. Your dreams, those images from books or films or pictures all help give it shape to start with but the Otherworld has its own reality and sooner or later, you will find, entering it, you are stepping out into a new world, one that has gone beyond your first imaginings and is unfolding new and unexpected sights before you. The Otherworld corresponds approximately with the physical world - a feature that exists in one may be found in the other but it is not a fixed world and it changes all the time, much more quickly in some ways and slower in others than the world we are used to.

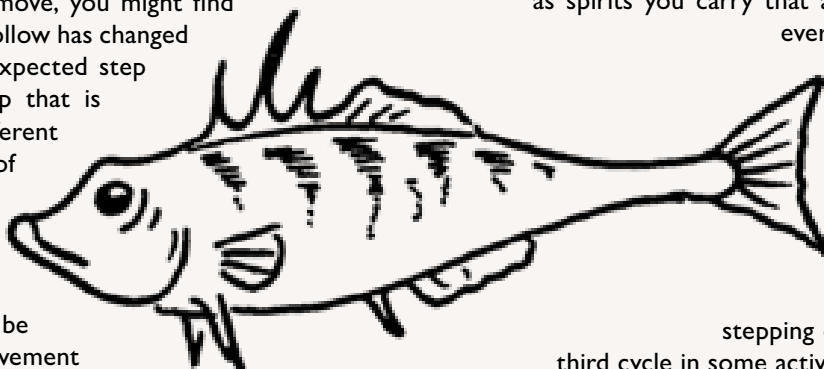
You might call it “my imagination” or “my subconscious” if that makes you more comfortable. Me, I will just call it the Otherworld, and know that for me it is also the Spirit World, where bounds of physical size, shape, species and habitat are no longer barriers to communication.

USING THIS BOOK

I work within a system that tends to rely more on intuition and instinct in planning than on carefully structured and rigidly pursued patterns of learning and development. Consequently, this book does not present a necessarily ordered study sequence. Working with spirits is very like developing friendships: you cannot plan it all or you may stifle the growth of the relationship, while at the same time you need to walk carefully and not rush ahead, assume too much and damage things with your presumption.

You can, however, sort your intentions out into some sort of order, and there are definitely some things here that you really ought to do before attempting others. Rather than discrete lessons, think of these as cycles, paths that you may move along and as you move, you might find that the spiral path you follow has changed and is leading to an unexpected step in this adventure, a step that is taking you onto a different path through the woods of the world. Spirals are useful shapes to work with here. Our paths through the activities in *Sacred Animals* can be seen as spirals, as movement in two directions simultaneously -

an inward path that may lead from the world around you into your heart - a path of self-discovery - and another that runs from the centre of the spiral outwards, from your heart out into the world, a path of involvement in your physical and spiritual environments. With the activities in *Sacred Animals*, you should hopefully find that you are moving in both directions at once: in exploring the worlds around you,



you find new understandings of who you are and in reaching into yourself, you build a greater awareness of the world.

Sacred Animals is divided into three cycles of activity:

- first cycle: *identification* - meeting for the first time, developing skills, building connections
- second cycle: *connection* - exploring friendships, working with power objects
- third cycle: *transformation* - deeper levels of connection with masks, and dance work, fusion with the totem

Finally, there is a fourth cycle that makes the pattern complete, that supports and is supported by the other work. That cycle is *action* - inspired by and involved with animals as spirits you carry that awareness over into your everyday life and work with or for the animals and the world that we share.

To some extent, try to follow this as a set of stages. The first and second cycles will overlap a lot and you will find yourself stepping over the hazy edge of the third cycle in some activities from the second. Do not push it, have patience and trust in the growing bonds between yourself and spirit, and be honest about your own development using that to guide you into deeper waters when you are ready.

Overall, do not plan too much, or predict, do not command or control. Accept the unexpected and step out on this journey. Celebrate the lives we share - a rainbow profusion of spirits in a myriad of bodies.

CELEBRATING NATURE

I may as well apologise in advance. *Sacred Animals* is essentially a practical book: a collection of exercises and activities for you to experiment with. While these should stand on their own several feet, one of my other books, "*Celebrating Nature*" contains a lot of other activities that could prove useful. *Celebrating* looks at the process of creating structured celebrations with groups mixing theory with lots of hands-on

activities from techniques for pinning leaves together to making flags, lanterns, masks and stories. Rather than repeating all those activities, there will be occasions in book where readers are referred to *Celebrating* for other ideas. Those activities are not, however, essential to the journey that we will pursue in *Sacred Animals*. They might supplement activities or offer but *Sacred Animals* should stand alone.

ENDPIECES

Throughout *Sacred Animals* there will be endpieces inserted between chapters. Extra bits if you like, asides that pick up on an idea from the main thread of that chapter and expand it a bit: a sort of detour, a chance to settle down beside a pool and have a think.

TREES OF THE FIRST FOREST

Let's sort out a bit of geography

Throughout *Sacred Animals*, I'll talk about this world, the physical world – our everyday world of trees and cars, mountains, rain and houses. I'll also talk about the Otherworld (sometime the Spiritworld when I get tired of saying “the Otherworld”). This is the world that “lies as near and unknown to us as the back of a shadow”. It is a world of non-physical realities, but at the same time it often mirrors the landscapes of the everyday world. In the Otherworld, you can walk along paths that echo the ones you know, you can sit by streams you know in the everyday world, but often houses, cars, and other human additions to the world are not to be found here. Here, we can interact with the other-than-human residents of both worlds. This is their world. We can meet the spirits of the animals we want to build relationships with (they might not want to listen). In meditation, we can walk along the paths of the Otherworld and feel the life, the vibrancy, of the world around us, an awareness we hope to carry back to the everyday world. The Otherworld is our main stop on the bus route of these adventures. The Otherworld looks a lot like this one with extra bits: animals we have lost relatively recently still walk there because the land remembers them (in UK think “wolves”, “bears”). The faeries move through both worlds but are perhaps more likely to be met “over there”. The Otherworld is a place of enchantment.

But there is also the dream. And the Dream. Not a deep-sleep, REM “dream” but an idea. A daydream? In the “dream” of a particular species we meet the world as that species would like to live in it. So, a toad-dream might be experienced at what, to us feels like, a very low-lying level: the important aspects of the world are to be met at ground level. In that world, we follow gradients of humidity and darkness invites rest. Here, Grandmother Toad sits on a stone by a pool and listens to the singing of her children.

In the Dream (definitely with a capital letter), we meet the world that the landscape around us would like to be, or maybe remembers once being. It's a bit like genetics. In genetics, we talk about a subject's

genotype: the blueprint contained in that individual's genes. But what we meet is the subject's phenotype: the result of the genotype meeting the forces of the world around it: food, landscape, climate, all the external influences that modify the expression of the genotype. In the Dream, we step into the world that the land is trying to become, or would like to be, or remembers being. Or remembers that it might have been. It gets tricky. In much of western Europe, we step into a sort of Wildwood but not the Wildwood of popular fiction. Nor is it the wildwood sometimes spoken about in environmental terms. Whether there was ever an oak-dominant woodland sweeping across the lowlands of Britain, reluctantly giving way to conifer woods in the north and birch trees on the heights is debatable. And whether Robin or Little Red ever got a chance to shake their fetching hoods there is equally dubious. That isn't this wood. This is the First Forest. These trees may never have grown, may always have been a wood's ambition of what it might become. This is the wood of the Grandmother Trees, where the spaces under the canopy and between their trunks are vaulted by branches like cathedrals. This is the wood where the willow by the stream lifts trailing branches and twists to watch you pass by. This is the wood of the waking trees that holds our deepest mysteries. You won't go there very often! But sometimes one of those Trees from the First Forest will appear in the Otherworld. Often, they then connect worlds or are there to challenge an assumption. Their memories are ancient. They are not gods, not divine, but they remember more than any tree growing and are worthy of respect. Think about Yggdrasil, the World Tree of Norse mythology, growing through the Nine Worlds, connecting them. In the UK, go and visit some of our veteran trees. We have thousand year old (and older) oaks and yews and coppice stools that have been growing and regrowing for centuries. Go and sit beside one of them and you'll get a sense of the First Forest.

O, and Grandmothers? There are Grandfather Trees, too, and Grandfather Spirits: often the gender isn't really relevant. It is finding a term that invites respect and recognises age and knowledge and wisdom.



On the Beach

*On the beach, at dawn:
four small stones clearly
hugging each other.*

*How many kinds of love
might there be in the world,
and how many formations might they make*

*and who am I ever
to imagine I could know
such a marvellous business?*

*When the sun broke
it poured willingly its light
over the stones*

*that did not move, not at all,
just as, to its always generous term,
it shed its light on me,*

*my own body that loves
equally to hug another body*

RETROSPECTIVE

2001 – 2003

We launched our first magazine in Spring 2001 highlighting the work of artist Adam Boulter in the feature FAITH AND THE ARTIST. Since that time the FAITH AND THE ARTIST feature has remained a major component, along with a focus on poetry, sacred texts, religious icons, rituals, and the architecture of places of worship, in fulfilling the aim of the magazine to promote the beauty and colour of religion, and

individuality of faith. Sadly, the files of the first 10 issues of the magazine have been lost due to a change in technology, and only a few hard copies remain. We are therefore very conscious of their absence on our website and so we are now paying tribute to five artists who so kindly contributed to the magazine in those early days, all have gone on to expand their creativity in many different and rewarding ways.

ISSUE

1

ADAM BOULTER
Painting as an Act of Faith



Padha Yathra

My faith is Christian, a mixture of Quaker and Church of England, the latter being what I was brought up with and am still happily involved with. The Quakers being where I have sought spiritual companionship at various points in my life. In Quakerism, we have no separate clergy, and we all minister to each other, meeting in silence, we wait for God to call us to speak. For me, painting has been my calling to speak. I hope that what I make can help reveal the divine in the world around us, both to myself and hopefully to others too. How this happens (or not) is a mystery to me. All that I do know is that when I have honestly engaged with the world around me and thoughtfully made work about what I see – in the landscape, people, ideas, or events – then I have felt it has the quality of true ministry. I hope my work speaks to others, helping them in their relationships to God.

It is my belief that God is much greater than religion, let alone any one religion, so I have always expected to find God in many unexpected places. As a result, I have been interested in different ideas about God. But I have also found that by staying rooted in my own tradition and yet seeing God as greater than this, I have been able to accept that I do not and cannot fully understand what God is, while still holding on to my faith. I also think that my position as a Christian who thinks God is greater than Christianity's understanding of the divine, has made me open to other forms of wisdom (as a man who knows he is lost at sea accepts all the help he is offered).

The creative and thoughtful exploration of religious ideas from all traditions, and in reference to each other, is crucial for the forming of a peaceful word, where the love of God can be seen in action. I hope that, with God's will, my painting is part of that process.

Spirituality in the Wilderness was a project painted in 2000 for the Anglican Church in Bermondsey, London called St Hugh's. The church and its various meeting rooms are used by a range of religious traditions that are represented in the paintings.

website: www.adamboulter.co.uk



Landscape

After gaining her BA, Tessa moved to London, where she worked to make ends meet, painting when she could. Her lucky break came in an unusual form. “I was made redundant. I got out of London, moved to Cardiff, and took work anywhere I could; restaurant work, shop work, whatever, so I could go on painting”. She also decided to take an MA course at Cardiff College of Art. By then, she was “already casting around to understand various aspects of life” when she met a practising Buddhist. Although she had not been specifically seeking a spiritual path, she readily took to the primary activity of chanting “*Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*”. It was on her first solo holiday on a Greek island that she started to take her own practice seriously and use it to “challenge the negativity in my life... face the darkest side as it were... that negativity which also made it difficult to believe in myself as an artist. *Nichiren Daishonin* teaches that we all have the possibility to reveal the Buddhahood within ourselves. That it to say, that we can find the qualities of the Buddha; courage, wisdom, compassion, and life-force, within ourselves. I wanted to reveal that in my work too.”

Initially, this inspired Tessa to make works about her father, who had died when she was ten. “I never grieved properly at the time. But now I worked through it, initially concentrating on my relationship with him, but then using that to become much more exploratory in my images. Looking back, I can see these pieces are indicative of my feelings – powerful, strong, but at the same time delicate.

A year later, Tessa went on a pilgrimage to Japan as a member of the Soka Gakkai International, a lay Buddhist organisation. En-route, someone told her that as an artist she would never lack inspiration: her Buddhist journey gave her the means to transform all life’s challenges into sources for growth, which could surely affect her work. This insight proved to be true. “But I didn’t consciously make Buddhist statements in my work because I hope that all my pieces are implicitly Buddhist. That is, I hope they express the qualities of the Buddha I mentioned earlier. The inspiration, in a way, comes also through the understanding why the practice is also known as the Buddhism of the Lotus flower. The Lotus flowers and seeds at the same time. This reminds us that all the causes we make, good or bad, contain within them their effect. It makes it both exciting and exacting.”

In the mid-nineties, Tessa was awarded a bursary to participate in an artists’ exchange to Rajasthan. “The trip had an immense impact on me. It reminded me that people in other parts of the world experience life completely differently from us in the West. I don’t just mean in the obvious ways. Rather, I think we were the impoverished ones here. We have such low expectations for our inner world because we are taught that life’s all about what we can get, rather than just being. I would like to be able to express that in my work as an artist and as a mother: that the faith to be and to be oneself, is vital.”

instagram: @waitetessa and @tessawaitedraw

As a British-born Gujarati Indian, I consciously use Hindu imagery to express my Christian faith. I draw on the Hindu belief, and the Quaker teaching, that there is 'that of God in everyone' to create an all-embracing, inclusive theology. This manifests, not only in the way that I live my life, which constantly involves moving in and out of cultures, but in the way that I develop my creativity.

My paintings, predominantly of women, capture moments of spirituality in action: women working, cooking, dancing, or praying – rituals and practices that cross boundaries of culture and religion. By painting Indian women in a variety of settings and moods, I convey the message that Indian women are intrinsically multi-layered, multi-faceted, and skilful individuals.

Attending Quaker Meetings over the past five years has been a particularly enriching experience for me, specifically because of the silent togetherness. I find a connection between

the creative silence in Meeting equal to the solitude in which I enter into dialogue with paint and canvas. Each painting is a silent prayer and the vibrant colours serve as a language of celebration of my rich religious and cultural heritage and chosen spiritual path.

Navratri depicts the autumn festival of Nine Nights. It was originally a custom observed by the farming community during the monsoon season. Its principal ritual is the Garba - an intricate circle dance using decorative sticks called *Dandias*. The painting shows woman captured at the point where the sticks meet to form a cross. In the background, Krishna is playing his flute. Krishna is one of the most popular of all the Hindu deities and is the eighth incarnation of the god Vishnu, the Preserver of the Universe.

website: www.mangomosaics.co.uk



Navratri



What Does the Future Hold?

In 1970, Peter travelled to India to explore an inner spirituality that had found no tangible nourishment in his life up until then. Through the guidance of a Hindu teacher, he began to read and explore other religions. In Peter's view, this was the beginning of his spiritual "growing up stage" in that it was a "testing of self and trusting in God's guidance". This period in India was pivotal, not only for Peter's spiritual development, but also his career development, as it nurtured in him a desire to travel the world and explore different cultures and religions. When Peter returned home to England seven months later – a changed person – he found that life among his friends had changed too. Some were moving within a drug context – a context with which he could not identify. Others had become Muslim and were moving with a spiritual context – with this he could identify. He naturally began to move within their circle, studying Islam and praying with them and, as time moved on, he became a Muslim.

Many religious people tend to take their faith with them to their workplace, where their faith becomes assimilated with the work they do. But, in Peter's case, it seemed to be the reverse that happened. He took his work to his 'faith place' and there he assimilated his work with his faith. His faith context became his work context, and he began squaring up images from the unfashionable spiritual scene, rather than the fashionable music scene, and thirty years on, his faith and work are naturally bound to one another. An on-going project of Peter's is the photographing of Islamic spiritual figures that are "often a hidden aspect of Islam" in our society. Though Islamic figures are portrayed in the media, they are often controversial figures, as opposed to spiritual ones. This negative imbalance is caused in our perceptions of the Islamic world.

Peter's faith and work have led him to travel extensively, photographing the diversity of Islam and its people.

website: www.petersanders.com

Faith and the Artist

I love to paint: to create a new and unique artefact following many hours of research, with painstaking attention to detail and complete absorption in my chosen theme. My inspiration is taken from a variety of multi-cultural sources in order to create mixed media pieces that are rich and complex.

I am intrigued by the symbolism devised by different races and societies, and the way in which objects, natural phenomena, birds, and animals are granted a special symbolic significance or imbued with magical qualities or powers. I investigate the ways in which rituals, religious events and myths have been categorised and recorded, and draw these common threads together to make artworks which combine ancient and modern, Eastern and Western factual and mythical as a coherent image.

My new series of works, *Creations, Myths and Mandalas*, gives me the opportunity to immerse myself in the rich cultural

identities of many different people. The Mandala is an aid to meditation, being made up of a series of circles and squares, each of which contain detailed images and decoration. I try to capture the depth of colour, the pattern and the symmetry which are intrinsic to the formation of a Mandala.

The Mandala composition provides a superb framework on which images can be placed, and I have adapted this traditionally Tibetan artform to incorporate a variety of cultural references.

Love Mandala draws further afield in order to gather its imagery, being an exploration into the ways in which different cultures represented the notion of love – ancient Greek figures, Klimt's Kiss, Matisse nudes, Chinese geisha, Raphael cupids, hearts and flowers all combine to create a united whole.

website: www.nikkiparmenterartworks.com



Love Mandala

Tide Marks

When I am young again I might tell you
why ivy ladders hang from every wall
and every window in the house, why
the hedge beyond is a fathom high
and further still there's a bank of clay
made fast with nets of knotted hemp.

When I am young again I might toast you
in beer we've brewed from land-locked hops,
mashed in water that's drawn no breath
since it fled the high cleft where it rose;
offer mountain moonshine shot with starlight
and explain why I shun your offer of salt,

When I am young again I might show you
the coracle fettled from willow wands,
covered close with roebuck hide, made fast
with peat tar and three gobs of spit,
one under each cot in tower and keep
on this plateau where no seagull smirks.

When I am young again I might let you ride
in that spindly cart there, wheel spokes woven
with roses and ivy; tell you it's sacred, fits
in holy boats, would help you flee waters
brown and green and high as oaks but
not til I'm safely senile and disbelieved.

Rebecca Bilkau