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# REACHING OUT



The Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies

AUTUMN/WINTER 2017

**T**he Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies (QFAS) is a Listed Informal Group of the Religious Society of Friends. QFAS aims to explore evidence for survival of death, to provide a forum for discussion on this and related subjects and to learn from and support those with psychic gifts and experiences. It aims to do this within the Quaker movement, and in society in general by liaising with other groups with like aims.

**Website:** [www.quakerfellowshipforafterlifestudies.co.uk](http://www.quakerfellowshipforafterlifestudies.co.uk)

Our website offers a discussion forum as well as news, events and publications. QFAS members should contact the Web Manager for a password for the forum.  
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**Contributions** for future editions of *Reaching Out* (including photographs etc for cover) should be sent to the editor preferably by email but, if that is not possible, by post. Please include your name and, if sending by post, your postal address or telephone number. Please also say whether you are happy to have your name included with the item in the magazine or would prefer your contribution to be published anonymously.

*Reaching Out* is produced twice a year in May and November. The deadlines for receiving articles and other material are the end of March and end of September.

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**We aim to record all the talks given at conferences if the speaker is willing, and these are eventually available as CDs. More information and full list on the website or from David Arundel. The full text of talks, when provided by the speaker, appear on the website under "Newletters and Talks". Summaries appear in *Reaching Out* and offers to write summaries are welcomed.**

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## SUBSCRIPTIONS REMINDER

Subscriptions for the year 2018 are due on 1st January. The rate is £10.00 waged, £7.00 unwaged or retired. Please send your subscriptions to our Treasurer, Cherry Simpkin (see contact details inside front cover).

It helps to keep down administrative costs if members pay by standing order so please consider arranging to pay your subscription this way if you do not already do so.

Standing Order forms may be obtained from the Treasurer or can be downloaded from the QFAS website at [www.quakerfellowshipforafterlifestudies.co.uk/contacts](http://www.quakerfellowshipforafterlifestudies.co.uk/contacts) (scroll down to the bottom of the web page).

They are also included with this copy of Reaching Out.

Membership is important if we are to continue to publicise the QFAS message. It is quite possible to access the website and attend conferences without being a member, but if the number of our members falls too low we shall not have sufficient funds to continue, and shall not be a credible group. Thank you for your support which is very much valued and needed.

*Cover Image: This picture was stored in the editor's file of possible front cover pictures for Reaching Out. Does anyone know the identity of the artist?*

**Dear Friends,**

Feelings of isolation was a common theme for Friends meeting at the conference at Woodbrooke. We always greatly value the chance to meet up and talk with like-minded Friends because in our Local Quaker Meetings we often feel that our ideas and interests are not shared or even understood. So, how to tackle this? Not everyone can attend conferences and they don't come round that often. One way is by meeting each other through the pages of *Reaching Out*, and in this edition some short personal pieces appear; the responses received to a request in the last edition.

In David Hay-Edie's piece he describes his wish for more inclusion of life-forms other than human in our discussions of the afterlife. He writes:

"Descriptions of the afterlife dwell almost solely on the human aspect, with our guides, loved ones, or angels. But what of the myriad non-human living beings which accompany us on this earth - the animals, trees and countless other life-forms?"

Very true. As a small contribution to extending our thinking in this direction, I have put together a few stories about psychic experiences involving animals. I had already started on this, and had chosen the cover picture when I read David's piece. Synchronicity? Maybe others would like to continue the theme? There are a huge number to be found in books and on the internet.

May I also draw your attention to the compiling and publication of the new Anthology which will be a major undertaking for the committee. Contributions are welcome. Please see page 8.

Thanks to all our contributors.

*In Friendship, Angela Howard*



**QFAS WOODBROOKE CONFERENCE 2018 WILL BE HELD  
SEPTEMBER 21st - 23rd**

This will be announced in the Woodbrooke brochure due out soon, so book early.  
30 places.



## **QUAKER FELLOWSHIP FOR AFTERLIFE STUDIES AND FRIENDS' FELLOWSHIP OF HEALING RESIDENTIAL CONFERENCE, 2017**

*An Overview by Elizabeth Angas*

Over the weekend of 29th September - 1st October a joint conference was held at Woodbrooke and greatly enjoyed by 40 Friends. It was the third to be held on alternate years, since 2013.

For the first time since we have been holding conferences, it was part of the Woodbrooke core programme with the bookings and some of the organization undertaken by the Woodbrooke office and a tutor.

Clement Jewitt and David Mason ably assisted with the microphone and loud speaker system. This did not work perfectly, but we managed - room for improvement there. As well as recording the talks, so they can be made available on CD, many of the sessions were filmed by David Mason. This was a bit experimental and it remains to be seen what will result. CDs of the talks given by Maggie Jeffery and Vivian Barty-Taylor may be ordered through the CD Secretary, David Arundel.

There were 4 speakers providing a varied and very interesting programme and coming from widely differing backgrounds.

The following section draws on the speakers' notes which were available to those at the conference:



### **Maggie Jeffery: Mental Illness or Spiritual Crisis**

Maggie is a member of Thornbury Meeting. She practises Therapeutic Touch, Counselling and also teaches and facilitates small local groups exploring holism.

Maggie's inner journey began when she was 40 and challenged by an intractable back problem. Desperation finally led her, albeit reluctantly and very sceptical, to a Sanctuary of Healing in a Spiritualist Church. The results were startling and baffling and triggered a search for understanding that continues to this day. Witnessing clairvoyance and comparing unseen communication with earlier encounters with schizophrenia baffled her as did her own powerful inner experiences in a healing development circle.

Maggie believes that we are living at a time of great evolutionary shift, not physical but one of consciousness. More and more people are reporting incidences of NDEs,

memories of apparent past lives, pre-cognition and other anomalous experiences. Yet a deep sense of groundlessness seems to pervade our culture with a loss of meaning and purpose and even hopelessness particularly in the case of our young people. The incidence of so called mental illness is increasing. Indeed is Mental Illness sometimes being confused with Spiritual Crisis?

In this session, Maggie will draw on Psychosynthesis theory, concepts underpinning Therapeutic Touch relating to quantum science and her own studies, to consider psychological and spiritual awareness and wellbeing in our changing world today.

Maggie recommended *Mend the Gap* by Katie Motram described as a transformative journey from deep despair to spiritual awakening (available on Amazon), and the work of Stanislav Grof, psychiatrist and researcher into non-ordinary states of consciousness – details of his books and talks can be found on the internet.



**Vivian Barty-Taylor: Consciousness and Death, not Mutually Exclusive.**

Vivian Barty-Taylor is a member of The Hague Monthly Meeting, but is originally from Edinburgh. He is a composer of music, a pianist and a teacher.

“As humans, we live our lives consciously, imagining that consciousness is connected to our physical form. That form is temporary, and so we imagine that our consciousness will end when the form degenerates (we die.) As with many people who have had a near death experience (NDE) I have learnt that that is not the case. I will describe some of my own experiences on a 25 year journey with an incurable illness, and also outline some of the theoretical framework I have used to place my experiences in a rational framework.

I will refer to the growing collection of research into NDEs and outline some of the connecting features of these experiences.

I will draw on philosophical and religious texts as well as current understanding of neuroscience and astronomy to suggest how consciousness might be a universal property of matter. I will also suggest how creativity and intellect are connected to consciousness and are essential elements of our consciousness, here and in the hereafter.”



**Rebecca Hubbard: Gardens and Words, Growing and Healing the Deep Self.**

Rebecca practises a silent meditation of the heart and sits with the Quakers at Watford Meeting.

Rebecca Hubbard is an experienced creative writing tutor and a published poet. She teaches creative writing classes for Buckinghamshire Adult Education and runs inspirational day workshops and residential courses. Her work has included homeless projects and life writing for carers.

She worked for twelve years as head gardener at a Camphill Community for adults with special needs and often draws inspiration from images, myths, gardens and landscape in her teaching and writing.

*The Garden of Shadow and Delight* is Rebecca's collection of prose poems on gardens ISBN: 978-1-909077-37-9. Published by The Cinnamon Press, 2014. She will talk about the potential for healing and exploring the deep self through gardens, gardening and writing. She will read a handful of poems from her collection to illustrate her talk and tease out some of the ways that plants and gardens mirror, nourish, inspire and hold us.



**Anne Simpson: Homeopathy and Trauma.**

Anne Simpson is a member of Rochester Meeting and works as a Registered Homoeopath and QSH healer. She also offers Mindfulness Coaching to enable people to consciously work with their healing process. Anne regularly facilitates healing courses and has recently started writing stories for healing.

All of us experience some form of trauma during our lifetime. It may not be serious, it may be a one-off episode, it may be pre-verbal, but whatever it is and whenever it occurred, it continues to affect us. The effects of trauma can be misunderstood - not when they are extreme, perhaps, in the case of those suffering with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, but in my experience most of us do or have suffered this condition, albeit mildly, without detection and it can manifest as mental or physical health issues. The memory of trauma is held in our cellular body and can be a contributing factor to all sorts of dis-ease. As a homoeopath I have seen this as a recurring theme in my client base and also how it can act as an obstacle to healing until addressed.

Homoeopathy is a holistic system of healing that goes back to the Greeks. Like acupuncture it works on the energy meridians in order to bring the body into balance. During a homoeopathic consultation the practitioner takes into account the medical

history of the client as well as the family medical history and also looks at how the client resonates with their world. We particularly examine causes of dis-ease in the client's history as these offer the clues as to how an individual is susceptible. For example, many teenagers become ill with Glandular Fever when taking an important exam; so how they view examination pressure and how it affects them may be a cause to their being susceptible to contracting the virus. As Louis Pasteur said – 'it is not the germs we worry about but the inner terrain'. I see how the inner terrain is affected by trauma; over the twenty years or so I have been practising homoeopathy I have been made aware of how important trauma is as a causation for dis-ease in the client's unfolding history. Sometimes it presents at the first session as the reason why the client attends my clinic, but on most occasions it is hidden, forgotten, or unknown. Once it surfaces and is healed the results in the case can be dramatic - homeostasis is regained and healing happens.

This talk will address this issue in depth using case examples and will also explore and discuss trauma in the various ways it can present.

An important part of our conferences are two periods for informal small group discussion. This allows folk to talk about their own experiences (often considered 'weird' in the wider world) in a safe and healing environment.

On the Saturday evening, we always provide our own entertainment which proved to be of the usual high standard. This was organized and introduced by Rhonda Riachi.

Our Meeting for Worship on the Sunday was a deeply gathered silence with some profound ministries, one of which was beautifully sung.

A Plenary Session, a forum where the speakers answered the audience's questions, rounded off the conference.



## **QFAS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The 2017 AGM was held on the afternoon of Saturday, September 30th, at Woodbrooke. Here are the main items of interest.

### **Appointment of committee and officers.**

Committee and officers as agreed at the AGM. Elizabeth Angas (outreach), Fee Berry, Angela Howard (clerk and editor of *Reaching Out*), David Mason (technical outreach), Ros Smith (membership secretary), Cherry Simpkin (treasurer). All were thanked for their service.

### **Finances.**

The treasurer, Cherry Simpkin, circulated the accounts for the year ended 30 June, 2017. She said that there is a balance of £1,853.37 in the bank. QFAS received donations totalling £605.00 this year which has helped considerably. Subscriptions were slightly down. Another edition of *Reaching Out* has to be paid for this year. There had been a drop in the number of copies of *Reaching Out* being sent out as those not paying their subscriptions, despite reminders, had been removed from the list. Cherry was thanked for her work.

### **Quaker Recognised Body Status**

The Special Interest Groups of Britain Yearly Meeting are being laid down, but instead groups are being invited to apply for Quaker Recognised Body Status. QFAS has put in an application and we hope to hear shortly that this has been approved by Meeting for Sufferings.

The QRBs are intended to be part of the structure of BYM, and will have a designated staff member at Friends' House with whom they are able to work on issues of importance to Friends. The committee see this as a welcome step forward. (QRB status was given by Meeting for Sufferings meeting on 7.10.17.)

### **What is the purpose of registration as a Quaker Recognised Body?**

Any group, including groups who were Listed informal Groups, will be asked to go through the same registration process. The purpose of registration is to:

- establish clear relationships
- recognise benefits and responsibilities
- promote the visibility of groups in the Society
- support a community which celebrates its mutual richness and upholds the accountability of its members to each other and the Society in ways that are explicit yet fair and transparent
- recognise the Britain Yearly Meeting staff member who will act as a Staff Link for the group

- acknowledge and uphold the Quaker ethos of the group's activity
- confirm the nature of the group and their participation within the Quaker Recognised Body structures. (*From information sent out by Friends' House*).

It was agreed that it was time for a new updated anthology of Quaker spiritual/psychic experience to be produced. We now have a wealth of inspiring and uplifting examples of such experiences, many of which have been printed in *Reaching Out*. We hope this will be a major new initiative for 2018.

The title **“The Life That Never Ends: An Anthology of Quaker Spiritual/Psychic Experience”** was chosen by the AGM from a list of possible names. The quotation is from the writings of William Penn.

Possible contributions to the Anthology to be sent to the clerk, please.  
Around 300 – 500 words.



## CONSCIOUSNESS AND DEATH, NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

*Talk given by Vivian Barty-Taylor to the Woodbrooke Conference, 2017, summarised by Angela Howard*

Vivian began by saying how delighted and honoured he was to have been invited to speak at the conference. He made reference to the fact that, at the age of 33, he was a lot younger than most other people present!

He is a composer and teacher of music and this has given him the strength to live his life in the way he has. He has always had a passion for music, and a passion to make himself heard and to share something of the divine in music with others. He is the father of two girls, Ilana and Adira, who are six and four. His wife is Dutch and they live in the Netherlands and are all bi-lingual.

Vivian joined the Society of Friends when he was 18. His mother is a long term attendee at Edinburgh Meeting and he went there with his parents as a child. He was married to his wife, Anneke, in Edinburgh Meeting in 2007.

The 'difficult' part of his life has been that he was diagnosed with a brain tumour when he was ten. On his tenth birthday he had his first brain scan and was told 'Yes, there's something growing there right in the middle.' It was in a place where it couldn't be removed but could be reached very carefully. It has forced him to live his life differently. It's benign and is not going to spread through his body, but when first discovered the doctors didn't know what the prognosis was going to be. Vivian is the only survivor of a benign 23 year old brain tumour.

It grew very slowly throughout his childhood and until the end of puberty. And then it stopped, except for cysts which have kept popping up. His whole brain has just grown around it because they were both growing at the same time. So his brain works in an entirely different way to anyone else's on the planet. When his scans are being looked at, junior doctors come into the room to see. Everyone is amazed – his brain is so different! This has had an influence on who he is but it hasn't *made* him who he is. It has always been a challenge, something to push against. Elizabeth Kübler Ross said that the steeper the path the more we grow. He feels he has met the challenges quite well, and is happy with what he is achieving in his life.

Vivian began by talking about his hypothesis about death. He described his near death experience which he had when he was 27. This was before the birth of his first daughter.

He was facing a major operation. At the time he could have said that he had had a good life and was prepared to let go. Now he has children things are different because of the great parental love he feels. The operation was to remove eight drains from his head – pieces of plastic tubing, or shunts, which take fluid down into the abdomen. The first had been placed in his brain soon after his diagnosis at the age of ten. This was an extremely delicate operation as the brain was by now adhering to the tubing. It could have gone terribly wrong.



He was lying in his hospital bed the night before the operation and he was terrified. He went to sleep and woke at about three in the morning in a state of complete terror. He was shaking, unable even to cry. He found the will to pray to whatever energy there was around him. 'I asked for help to get through whatever was to come.'

He had a most extraordinary experience because he felt a warm, yellow energy pouring into his body. It dissolved the fear. The fear lessened progressively until it was gone.

'Since that night, I've not been scared of death. I lost my fear of death that night, aged 27. I've got a lot of life to live, I hope. And I've got the energy to live it. But when I die I know I'll go back to that light. It's waiting for me, and I'm not scared.

'I feel very privileged to have had that experience. Hardship makes us grow. My hardship helped me grow to that point and further. I want to say to you that there's nothing to be scared of. We're going to go back to that warm place, and it's absolutely fine. This physical structure will disintegrate but we're all right.

'I've always had a strong belief in the afterlife. As a child I saw spirits. I saw my grandfather when I was four. He'd been dead twenty years and he was walking up the stairs in the house where he'd died. A lot of children see these things. They're closer to the start of their lives and have much less rational processing going on. This changes in the teenage years.

'I saw other spirits as well. A couple of years after the diagnosis of my tumour I became aware that I could feel the presence of spirits, could feel energies around me. This progressed to the point where I could access the spiritual, or third eye. Buddhists achieve this through years of meditation, progressing up through the chakras. They progress gradually towards this end. With me it was different. It was egotistical. I had a problem in the centre of my brain, near the pineal gland, and I had to force my consciousness into the centre of the brain to try and deal with it.'

Vivian had an opening of the third eye in his teens. And it made him a very difficult teenager. It was as if his spiritual progress had been kick started and it made him very egotistical.

He's come to think of the body as a kind of sensory input/output system. We have our senses which feed into our consciousness, which we can perceive with. This can feed into our emotional systems and our souls and this allows us to bring something back to the world. To make a difference! To talk to a conference. To chat to a friend. To mow the lawn. To create art.

So, he has a belief in an eternal part of ourselves which doesn't come to an end with this body; a sort of blueprint, the plans from which this body is built, which is connected to this body and allows us to be conscious while we're here on Earth. He believes our mind, including our memories of this life, remain intact after our death.

The huge question: "What is our mind? Where is it located?" Because Vivian's brain is so different and according to all the theories of neuroscience he should not be able to

function as he does, he has had to come to the conclusion that his mind is somewhere else. It may be partly in his brain but definitely also somewhere else as well.

'I think the mind must be an interaction between the physical and the spiritual worlds: a sort of resonance or connection between those two.'

Vivian said that all religions had a version of an afterlife. It's been talked about for thousands of years. It's only in the last two hundred years or so, when rational thought has become so important, that the idea of the afterlife has been pushed under the carpet. It doesn't fit in with the current scientific paradigm. But maybe the current scientific paradigm is wrong.

Vivian then spoke about two writers who had influenced his thinking a lot in the last ten years. They are Elizabeth Kübler Ross and Pim Van Lommel.

Pim is a Dutch doctor, and one of only a few in the world who has done research into Near Death Experiences. He describes NDEs as a "reported memory of a range of impressions during a special state of consciousness including special elements such as out of body experience, pleasant feelings, seeing a tunnel or a light and deceased relatives, a life review, or a conscious return to our body."

'These are all experiences which people have when they're in a state of altered consciousness close to death. And I think that what unites those elements is that they all point to another world, another state of existence. It's not proof of an afterlife. Many scientists have tried to prove that they're caused by lack of oxygen or other things going wrong with the brain at that time, but there's been no satisfactory explanation, which is what Van Lommel himself says. You can't explain away these experiences which occur in all countries in the world, in all cultures and all religious backgrounds. This is something fundamentally human.

'Van Lommel has developed a theory of non-local consciousness. Of course, we can't explain what consciousness is. I've given you my version of it but he believes that it is something greater than ourselves and is everywhere. My theory is that consciousness might be a property of the universe and our bodies are able to tune into that signal. And of course that might be true for other things. I have a very strong connection with trees. I talk to them, because I think they may in some way be able to hear me with their consciousness. You may feel a connection with other things, animals, nature generally. We don't understand consciousness because we're here in this physical body.

'A quote by a survivor of a near death experience, like myself: "It is outside my domain to discuss something which can only be proven by death. However, for me personally, this experience was decisive in convincing me that consciousness endures beyond the grave. Death turned out not to be death but another form of life."

'I also want to talk about the work of Elisabeth Kübler Ross. She was a Swiss-American doctor who was one of the founders of palliative care. One of the first to treat the dying as having a real message for us. She listened to the dying patients and found out

what they needed. She wrote her seminal textbook for doctors and nurses, *On Death and Dying*.

'Death is a part of life. Every day we live is, in a way, a preparation for death. You can see it in a positive way or a negative way. Actually, if you see it positively it is a process of gathering all the energy we need, and all the experience we need in order to live a good death.

'This is how I see it. It's unusual for a person of my age, which has made me quite isolated from my generation. There are few people of my age that I can talk to about this. It doesn't bother me. I live my life with my love of music and of my children and my family and my passion for life. But I live it in a different way.

'Kübler Ross recognised the five stages of grief which we go through in preparation for death. I relate to them very powerfully. Because I've long had what you might call a 'dance with death', I've been through them. In a way I feel quite ready for death, though I hope it doesn't come yet because I feel I have things to do! I've got young children, I've got music to share, I've got conferences to talk to at which I can tell people that death is nothing to be scared of. But if it happened tomorrow, I'd say "O.K... that was the way it had to be." This acceptance gives life a different dimension.

'The stages are, Denial – I experienced that very strongly. In the years after I got my diagnosis I was determined I was not going to die, I was going to do this, that, and the other! You're very much a toddler when you're in denial. That develops into Anger. I was a very angry adolescent. My parents will tell you what an angry adolescent I was; not only experiencing all the changes in my body but fighting this thing in my head. The next stage is Bargaining. We all experience this. We start talking to the powers that be, God, the Angels, whatever. We say if I can do *this* maybe *that* won't happen ... It's a stuck position, Bargaining. And then when patients realise that the bargaining hasn't worked and they are going to die they go into a state of Depression. They realise that yes, death is going to happen to me. Well, it hasn't happened to me yet and I hope I've reached a place where it's not going to happen any time soon. But I don't know! And sometimes I feel depressed but I know how to deal with it. It will pass.'

Finally, Vivian said that patients who are going to die reach a place of Acceptance. And that's what he felt when he had his near death experience. The light dissolved the fear and he went into the operation the next day calm and happy, though knowing that the operation was extremely risky. He might have died or come out of in a state he didn't want to be in.

'There's no certainty for any of us! If you can accept that then you can live in the Now. That's a message spiritual teachers through the ages have given us.

'So what is the Now?

'We have a feeling of consciousness while we're alive. I'm conscious that I'm here,

now, talking to you. You're sitting there listening to me. There's a feeling of connection. Wikipedia describes consciousness as "the state of being aware and responsive to one's surroundings". During my growth and development I've become very much aware of two elements of consciousness which I call "awareness and intention". And these relate to a lot of other teachings, but I made it personal. I thought of it as an input sensory system, "awareness", and a way of sharing it with the world, "intention". I always gave those two things colours. I always thought of the awareness as red and the intention, blue. That was instinctive. I've had those colours with me since I was 11 or 12.

'Another part of my journey relates to angels. Angels are not to everyone's way of thinking, and they didn't relate to my way of thinking either, until they burst into my life. At the time that I was so ill and was going to have that operation, my wife got in touch with a woman who said she could talk to angels. You may say "that's mad", but that's what she said. She said that she'd talked to my angels and that everything was going to be all right and that I needn't worry. And she gave my angels names. She said "they're Metatron and Sandalphon and their colours are red and blue." That was too much of a coincidence for me. The fact that I'd been talking about those colours for the whole of my teenage years, and then someone comes along and talks about angels which happen to have those colours! Oh, yes, and one of them is the Angel of Music! Another coincidence which was too big. And Metatron is supposed to be the angel who is nearest to God (the Scribe of God). Well, I'm quite a fiery person, I like to get out and do things. That seemed to fit as well.

'Well, that was all too much for me. I had to accept angels. I now talk to them and thank them for what they do for me. I also understand them as part of a spectrum. If God is all powerful, like white light, then the angels are like the spectrum where the light divides into different colours with different qualities.

'And I think that the different parts of the spectrum work together to balance our consciousness while we're here in this body. Our body is a tool of our consciousness. And I see our consciousness as an oscillation between our body and our soul, as I said earlier. So where is consciousness? Pim Van Lommel says that non-local consciousness is everywhere. It always has been and it always will be. This is a doctor who has had to change his way of thinking because of the experiences that his patients have had when close to death. He's not a way-out hippy.

'Another thing which has been important to me in my life and has given me the drive to continue, is beauty. We all experience beauty and feel when something is beautiful. And we have no definition for it. We don't understand what beauty is. It's not a fixed thing. Some people find one thing beautiful, some another. It's universal, like us. Obviously there are some things which everyone finds ugly or has an aversion to. It seems to be related to our physical senses. People love different colours, and find different colours stimulating. Some people find the sounds of nature beautiful, some

people find electronic sounds beautiful. It's as wide ranging as we are.

'But when we experience beauty we have a sense of a door opening in ourselves, of relating to something which is beyond ourselves. And I think that that's when we become aware of that consciousness within ourselves, of that uniqueness that we all possess. It opens the door in us which says, "Oh, yes, I'm beautiful too." And we are all beautiful, although people often have difficulty in seeing that in themselves.

'Everyone is a child of God. "There's that of God in everyone," as Quakers would say. And I think that's the beauty in us, the light of God in us. That's the balance in us. Balance is another word which has been incredibly important to me. For me, God is balance. That's my definition of God.

'Whether it's balance in a group, as in this group here, the sense of God here, or whether it's the balance in a settled Quaker meeting. Whether it's balance between the elements in nature, or in a mathematical formula. When there's balance between two people individually they feel love.

'And so I've developed that sense of linked consciousness. We experience ourselves as being separate; my perception is coming in through this body, your perception is coming in through that body. But actually all those perceptions are linked to a central pool of consciousness. I think this pool of consciousness is linked to this Earth as well. Scientists have developed this Higher Gaea theory, that the Earth is also a sentient being. And it seems to function very much in that way. We're at a point now, at the end of a two thousand year cycle, according to many spiritual sources, where the Earth is changing again. And the Earth will have to change if it's going to support the amount of life which it has to support at the moment.

'Some spiritual writers have said that the Earth is changing in order to do that, and we will discover that the Earth is capable of more than scientists in our current paradigm have thought it was able to.

'And finally, I'd just like to say thank you for asking me to come and talk to you about these things which have inspired me for a very long time and kept me alive. Which have led me on an interesting and wonderful and crazy and sometimes scary spiritual journey.

'I'm happy to enter into email correspondence. Here is my email address.'

vivbartytaylor@yahoo.co.uk



## HEAVENS OF KINGDOMS AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: LIFE AND MAPS OF THE AFTERLIFE

*The second part of a talk given by Rikky Rooksby to the QFAS Conference at Launde Abbey in 2016. Rikky has also written this summary.*

For many people in the West, until quite recently, thinking about the afterlife tended, when it happened at all, to use terms derived from Christian theology. This has never seemed to me to be clear. The stress on leading an ethical life, on sin and salvation, discourages much thought about the afterlife. At its least subtle, its map of the realms beyond was characterized by the crude binary of hell and heaven, with, in the case of Catholicism, the addition of a third state, purgatory. I hope most readers of this journal will not need persuading that hell is an absurdity, and a vicious and corrupting one at that. It may be that the afterlife contains hell-like states, but they are likely to be either self-projected, from an individual's suffering (and therefore subject to amelioration) or places aside from the usual territories of human spiritual evolution.

No map of the afterlife is worth serious thought if it is grounded in the projection of some of the lowest impulses of human vindictiveness.

Christianity has tended to be ambiguous about whether the soul rises immediately after death, or goes to sleep until the Last Judgement which brings time itself to an end. Confusion also arises with the notion of a soul which is somehow separate from the conscious self, and also whether it needs a material body in which to express itself. This in part can be linked to different understandings of the significance of the physical resurrection of Christ. Was this event to show that there was a consciousness beyond death and a triumph over the physical? Or that such a resurrection could only be into the body again? The latter I feel leads to an unsatisfactory and materialist conception of an afterlife.

But Christianity's stress on loving relationship does include one simple and powerful argument for some kind of personal immortality for the deepest parts of the self. If we take the notion of God's love at face value, since none of us would willingly accept that someone we loved would pass into non-existence – how therefore could God permit this to happen to a loved soul?

The popularity of Eastern religions does not always lead to necessarily clearer maps. Currently there is some interest for the visions of the afterlife set out in texts such as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (alluded to in the novel *Lincoln in the Bardo*). Afterlife concepts in Buddhism are complicated first by the belief in rebecoming / reincarnation, which sometimes suggests that there is hardly any in-between state between lives, and second by the doctrine of no-self in Buddhism which undercuts the whole notion that there is any self who can experience an afterlife at all. In the Tibetan afterlife state, the post-mortem self must negotiate many illusions and hope to be able to seize the opportunity of grasping reality when the moment comes and thus escape the wheel of

becoming. This does not sound very easy to do.

In the present time the increasing awareness of Near Death Experience, as published in thousands of accounts, has provided a more hopeful and inspiring sense of life beyond this plane. Many hundreds of books have been published on this topic since Raymond Moody's ground-breaking *Life After Life* in 1975. NDE accounts often include encounters with deceased relatives and also a being of light who radiates intense love and compassion. Some NDE accounts describe the experience of a Life Review where the emotional effect on other people of one's actions, both positive and negative, is experienced. This underlines the notion that the best definition of purgatory is not some form of externally-imposed suffering but a fully awakened conscience facing its actions during life. It is striking that many people who have NDEs find it terrible to come back to physical life because the spiritual life they experience is so much better.

I believe NDE accounts have powerful implications for Quakerism. First, because of what they suggest about who we are, where we came from, and in terms of understanding the different levels of consciousness and human potential. Second, as a way of tempering various kinds of unbelief within the Society which can lead to intolerance of anyone who talks about spiritual experiences which stand against such unbelief.

I continue to feel that the accounts of the dimensions beyond physical space-time given by Theosophy and summarized by A. E. Powell's books *The Astral Body*, *The Mental Body* and *The Causal Body*, are remarkably subtle in conception and inspiring in effect. These books contain detailed information of how consciousness develops gradually after death, coming to terms with the life that has just closed, and slowly raising its attention to higher realms of meaning and purpose. In the process Theosophy describes, at death:

- Consciousness leaves the physical body
- Consciousness inhabits the astral body and works to purify it, gradually ascending levels. The astral body contains all the emotional experience of a lifetime.
- When completed, consciousness passes from the astral body at the second death to the heaven worlds
- Consciousness is then on the Lower Mental plane
- Consciousness eventually touches the Higher Mental plane (Causal plane) and the Higher Self. This level is the edge of Christ consciousness

Even in the earliest stages of the afterlife Theosophy states that:

- All pain and fatigue have passed away
- Desires and thoughts increasingly express themselves in visible forms



- The deceased can see the astral bodies of friends and therefore what they are feeling if not the events of their lives. Thus, although the living often suppose themselves to have 'lost' the dead, the dead are never for a moment under the impression they have lost the living
- Life on astral more active than on physical, astral matter being more highly vitalised than physical matter, and form being more plastic
- Possibilities of enjoyment and progress much greater, but of a higher class and require intelligence / awareness to take advantage of them
- Someone whose life and interests are of a higher type may be able to do more good in a few years of astral existence than ever could have in the longest physical life
- Astral life can be pleasant, restful and free but also purgatorial
- Astral body is familiar to us through emotional life and sleep, but now experienced fully
- During first stage of the afterlife consciousness is purged one astral level at a time according to how much stimulation has been given to different parts of the astral body during life
- It begins a period of withdrawal back towards the Ego [Higher Self / Individuality]

At the second death:

- The self goes straight to the appropriate level for it.
- The separation of mental body from astral is sinking gently into a delightful repose at the transition. Period of unconsciousness – gestation for mental plane
- The awakening is to 'indescribable bliss and vitality, a feeling of such utter joy in living that he [she] needs for the time nothing but just to live'
- At this level no separation in space or time – far closer communion, soul with soul, than was ever the case in earth life

Powell writes, 'Such bliss is of the essence of life in all the higher worlds. Even astral life has possibilities of happiness far greater than anything that we can know in physical life, but the heaven life is out of all proportion more blissful than the astral. In each higher world the same experience is repeated, each far surpassing the previous one. This is true not only of the feeling of bliss, but also of wisdom and breadth of view.'

'It is a world in which every being must, from the very fact of his [her] presence there, be enjoying the highest spiritual bliss of which he [she] is capable, a world where power of response to his [her] aspirations is limited only by his [her] capacity to aspire.'

I believe the Theosophical map and its model of the different levels of the self / Self sheds much light on such Quaker writings as:

*Wherefore, O Friends, turn in, turn in, I beseech you! Where is the poison, there is the antidote; there you want Christ and there you must find Him; and blessed be God, there you may find him ... now you come to be Christ's indeed, for you are His in nature and spirit, and not your own. (W Penn 1694 CF&P)*

And

*'and in the resurrection the vile body is changed unto his glorious body; and in the resurrection they are spiritual and Mortal puts on Immortality, and Corruptible puts on Incorruption, And so as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.'* (G. Fox CF&P 2:188)





View from the Azores. Photo by David Hay-Edie

*Death is not an end; but a beginning. It is but an incident in the 'life of the ages', which is God's gift to us now. It is the escape of the spirit from its old limitations and its freeing for a larger and more glorious career.....*

William Littleboy, 1917.  
Quaker Faith and Practice, 21:54

## PERSONAL PIECES

*Received by the Editor from QFAS members*

*From Isobel Bracewell who had two out-of-body experiences when in hospital in 2003. She was suffering from Anaphylactic Shock due to multiple drug and food allergies. These were brought about as a result of being on statins and Aspirin 75mg for a short time. On several occasions her husband had been warned she might not recover.*

On the 25th March 2016, we had a long fascinating talk on the phone after I sent you a small article for *Reaching Out* about the Ministry of a Dying Friend in our Meeting. (This appeared in the Autumn/Winter edition, 2016.)

I promised to share other instances with you and apologise for taking so long to follow this up. How I wish I could attend the Conferences of QFAS.

Having been a member of the Friends Fellowship of Healing for many years, upholding others in the Divine Light, and having been embraced by loving thoughts and prayer of others, by many unknown to me when I have been so ill, has been a positive experience. We are all wounded healers. Some of the following may be of interest to you or other members of QFAS.

On every occasion when experiencing an OBE I have never had a sense of going through a dark tunnel, but immediately have found myself to be in a place of great Light. I have seen friends I have known, loved and supported whilst they were on Earth, and who I had walked with during their final illnesses and been privileged to be present at their passing over from this life to the next. I found them all there in welcome. They were all bathed in glorious Light, looked young, about 25 – 30, and their real spiritual presence was totally recognisable. Beyond them was such a Radiant Light, words cannot express it. I felt totally unworthy and unable to look into this Light which surrounded me, but experienced such feelings of love and acceptance coming towards me.

There was not a "full Life Review" only brief glimpses of certain events that had occurred on Earth. I felt sorrow for misdeeds and for hurting friends and family and full of gratitude for having had a good home, family, life and friends.

I most definitely did not want to return to Earth and occupy my Earthly body. (I am quite disabled due to Multiple Sclerosis, Osteoporosis, and have severe swallowing problems, living mostly on artificial nutrition as I refuse to have a naso-gastric tube or a PEG fitted.)

The sense of joy, expanded consciousness, a feeling of wholeness, awareness of realities one could only get glimpses of and wanting to learn more, was quite overwhelming.

The last OBE occurred when I was being resuscitated in Casualty one Sunday morning in 2013 just before Quaker Meeting for Worship was about to start. Michael, my husband, phoned a dear Friend and elder in our Meeting, to say I was very ill. The

Friend asked Meeting to uphold Michael and myself in the Divine Light. All I knew was that I was high up in a beautiful cloudy sky, surrounded by Radiant Light, looking down on the hospital. I was drawn to the body on the bed being resuscitated. There was an Indian doctor on one side and a senior staff nurse on the other. Seeing the way they were taking such care of this 'fitting' body filled me with compassion and gratitude. It took some time before I realised the body was mine, the one I inhabited whilst on Earth. Not wanting to leave my husband alone (we have now been married 44 years), and sensing my time had not yet come, I 'jumped back' into my body. How angry I was with the doctor and nurse when I regained consciousness and felt so ill again! I did apologise later.

This sense of what some people might describe as 'being nearly dead' left me with a strong impression that who I was on Earth, what my social standing was, who I was related to, was totally unimportant. There was a wonderful sense of knowing that I was a complete spiritual being who was part of something greater.

Plato saw the soul liberated at last from the body in which it had been imprisoned, and returning to the realm of pure ideas. This links up with the words of T.S. Elliot, when he writes of the full circle of life:-

*"In my beginning is my end –  
In my end is my beginning."*

Living with life threatening conditions, we see life going on all around us, people going about their normal business as though they would live forever, whereas 'normal' for us is feeling physically and mentally often more and more tired and living in a parallel universe. At such times, especially after diagnosis, it is as if we walk into a glass wall and realise that nothing is the same anymore. Our bodies can become quite strange and alien to us, as though they are not really ours. We can help others so struggling to remember that they are still whole and unique individuals. I often say, "I am not my body."

Pat Pilkington, co-founder of the BCHC (Bristol Cancer Help Centre) uses the "Hero's journey of myth", as an archetype of metaphor for the cancer experience:-

*"The Hero leaves all that is familiar, comfortable and companionable, and in the dark before dawn, rises alone and sets off to journey to the far country. It takes consummate courage and faith to face the 'dragon Fear' and rescue the 'Maiden': the true Self. The Hero returns, changed by the experience."*

What do I feel I have learned from the OBE episodes? I am not afraid of death although naturally concerned about what I may have to go through during the dying process. In particular there is a fear of becoming totally dependent on others, a burden to those I love, and loss of dignity. A common fear of many.

At times when I am really ill I am envious of others who have already returned to

whence they came. Generally I am more aware telepathically of events to come, precognition, intuition, not dreams. It is usually when I am doing something quite mundane like washing dishes when I just “know” something good is happening, someone is dying or someone urgently needs to be upheld in prayer, and I quite often know who it is, even if previously all has been well with them.

There is a greater awareness than before of “seeing” another’s pain, anguish, hidden trauma or anxieties. Sometimes I “see a new soul preparing to come to Earth”, a baby boy or girl, before the parents are aware of it. This happened when I saw a baby boy in the foetal position, head down ready for birth about the head of our Quaker Elder Friend’s wife, three months before she was pregnant.

I have also been aware when a soul has left its developing embryo, before the parents have realised this, and of souls exiting the body at time of transition. The last example was four Christmases ago when two young friends excitedly told me they were going to have another baby. This was when the mother to be was about nine weeks pregnant and they were not yet generally sharing the news. As they told me this after Quaker Meeting, I “sensed” that the soul of a baby boy had already left its body. Shortly after, the mother miscarried a son.

I believe that death is the next step in our pilgrimage, the gateway, the opening of the welcoming adventure of the next step we take when we leave our human bodies and enter the realm of pure spirit from whence we came.

This is a lesson we must all learn – letting go and being willing to let go, but also to continue the journey. We must not cling to life or seek to die, but live each day, each moment, knowing that as long as we continue the pilgrimage, we have something to give and something to gain.

How do we know? We do not know with our minds, but we believe in the depths of our hearts as we have complete trust and faith in the Holy Spirit, Divine Light, Source of all Creation, whatever you believe in which has enlightened your way. I believe so strongly that the soul of man or woman never sleeps and is never unconscious, however we may appear to others. Reincarnation too also helps to makes sense of what we undergo in this life as we walk or travel through Keats’ vale of soul-making; our spiritual journey on Earth.

We can only pray, God give us strength, strength to hold on and strength to let go.  
In Friendship, Best wishes to all in QFAS,

*Isobel Bracewell, Aberdeen.*



My Meeting recently held a "sharing group" after Meeting for Worship. They have these on a fairly regular basis. The subject for discussion this time was "why do people feel inhibited about sharing their spiritual experiences?" I didn't suggest it or introduce it, but certainly wanted to take the opportunity to say something. About a dozen people attended and at one point we touched on prayer and I briefly mentioned my article to *The Friend*. Two people expressed an interest in reading it, hence its appearance in our Newsletter.

I let everyone who wished to speak do so, and then said my bit. I don't think it would be disrespecting the confidentiality of the Meeting if I share with you what my contribution was, especially as I mentioned the QFAS/FFH forthcoming conference. I defined spiritual experiences, pointing out that many people world-wide experience mystical, psychical and paranormal happenings as a normal part of their everyday life. These are unsought and can include telepathy, intuitive knowing, seeing people's auras, or beautiful colours, hearing lovely music, feeling physical sensations, e.g. healers' hands getting hot, seeing spirits and/or angels and conversing with them, experiencing OBEs/NDEs, and nurses witnessing things with dying patients which they can't explain.

Went on to say these experiences may be welcome/unwelcome, cause puzzlement/anxiety, also mentioned there is a dark side to consider, e.g. schizophrenia and its voices urging people to harm others. Having established people don't talk about their experiences because they don't want to be thought a nutter/weirdo, mentally unbalanced/self-deluded, or don't want to meet with antagonism/ridicule/scepticism, I went on to say Quaker organisations such as QFAS and FFH do understand these experiences and can help people make sense of them and transform a psychic experience into a spiritual gift that can be used in love and service for others.

That week *The Friend* carried the first advert for the Woodbrooke conference so I held my copy up and read all the details out. I told them it's the 3rd joint conference and that joint conferences were also held with CFPSS and USPS, that CFPSS looked at things within a Christian context, that I'd been to their conferences with speakers drawn from science, medicine, theology, education, professional musicians, nuns and former nuns, and that CFPSS has been my "spiritual home" for more than forty years. Emphasised that for me psychical and spiritual belong together in the same way orthodox medicine and complementary medicine do. This can be so enriching, but unfortunately some people get hooked on one only and ignore the other, which is impoverishing. I finished by reminding them of *Advices and Queries* - "Do not be afraid to say what you have found and value, and be open to new light from whatever source it may come".

- from Susan Highwood. [highwood295@btinternet.co.uk](mailto:highwood295@btinternet.co.uk)



I've been interested in the "more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy" since childhood. Hard to know why because, to my slight sadness, I've never experienced the kind of awakenings and intimations that many of your readers will have been blessed with. I have my own counselling practice, focusing on the use of the Jungian, Myers Briggs and the ancient wisdom of the Enneagram. I have a background as a psychologist in science but that certainly doesn't prevent me from exploring every avenue I can in the world of the mysterious and mystic and spiritual. Angela, I have you to thank for introducing me to Paul Lambillion in particular and to further studies via your excellent and always eagerly awaited journal in general. It helps me feel part of a community of like-minded seekers which, as we know, our Meetings seldom do. With much gratitude and in Friendship to you and your readers,

- from Maggie Winkworth. [maggie.winkworth@virgin.net](mailto:maggie.winkworth@virgin.net)



May I first congratulate you on the latest edition of *RO*, which was quite excellent. I have to admit that I was discouraged by the lack of response to my article (*Ladybirds*, which appeared in the Spring/Summer edition of *RO* in 2016) and thought that perhaps my re-involvement with Friends, such as it was, was ill advised. However I was very taken with the issue, every one of whose articles (especially those by Jay Johnson, John Philips - loved the elemental! - and Rikky Rooksby) I found illuminating and relevant to my own concerns.

*James describes his experiences of joining, leaving and re-joining the Society of Friends over a period of many years. This was prompted largely by a feeling that there were no Friends who shared his interests in psychic/spiritual matters. Then he continues –*

Two years ago I discovered that there were Friends who would share my interests, and that ironically two of them (Cherry Simpkin and Elizabeth Angas) were well known to me as they were members of the same Meeting, where I had for a number of years served as Clerk. Not just that, but, just as ironically, QFAS (which I came across as much by accident as the previous connections with Quakerism had been) had been set up in the very year I had ceased to attend! It was concerned with exactly the areas I had assumed Friends would not so much as countenance. I am pleased to see that Cherry and Elizabeth have seized the bull by the horns and talked about it (successfully) after Meeting...

I am currently trying to write a book based on the two years of synchronicities experienced not just by me, but by a number of members of my family, a close friend, and students of a class I taught, first on Greek mythology and subsequently on Greek drama, at Wanstead in East London. In an attempt to understand the phenomenon of

synchronicity, and what it might mean for me personally, I submitted to six months of Jungian analysis, which led to what John Woolman might have called "further openings". I have by now extensively studied the phenomenon of synchronicity and conducted a supposedly scientific experiment on it which involved nine subjects, most drawn from said Greek class. Its results were rather unexpected, but much more revealing and interesting than the limited goals of the experiment had given any reason to expect, given shortcomings revealed in the methodology of the experiment as I had conceived it (I am by no means a scientist, either by temperament or training!).

My problem now is getting it all down. I expect it will end up as two books not one, as I have written 60,000 words of the first book, which corresponds to the first year. It will be called *Ravens in Full Bloom*.

- from James Gordon [j.gordon33@ntlworld.com](mailto:j.gordon33@ntlworld.com)



I have been a subscriber to *Reaching Out* (and *Towards Wholeness*) for quite a few years, and have had my book *Fangold's Dream* reviewed in RO. In response to your invitation for contributions or short pieces, I offer some words below.

All life is on a journey. As I grow older - I am now in my 70s - I find myself thinking more and more about what lies beyond earthly life, and indeed what life really is. The experiences I read about in *Reaching Out* so often speak to, and echo, my searching.

But what I feel increasingly is that we too often frame our questioning from an exclusively human or anthropomorphic standpoint. What am I, as a human being, on this earth and what may lie beyond it? Occasionally we hear of animals, as in Jill Woods' interesting account of her neighbour's cat dying and then being seen by her psychic medium friend walking across her lounge! All too often though, beautiful natural sights or visions are mentioned only in relation to human experience. (As an aside, I can mention here that just after my mother's funeral, on the drive home, I saw vividly the mountains she loved as if she was looking at them through her own eyes, for the last time.)

Yet, as a well-known psalm says, "The Earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is". Surely we are kindred spirits to all the living beings in nature, and even perhaps inanimate matter? And if so, does not the natural world too have its life - with us - in the "other dimension", journeying into and out of it in successive and continual reincarnations?

Descriptions of the afterlife dwell almost solely on the human aspect, with our guides, loved ones, or angels. But what of the myriad non-human living beings which accompany us on this earth - the animals, trees and countless other life forms? As our ecological awareness of Gaia, our living planet, deepens in present times, so perhaps we should widen our spiritual vision to

include all our fellow spirits in the natural world as co-journeyers between the dimensions?

Our loves and lives on this earth are intimately linked with the natural world around us. It makes sense to me that this is also the case in our afterlife. If we hear little about this through mediums, writers, and other witnesses to life in the beyond, maybe it is because they are looking from too narrow a perspective? As so often, do we humans see ourselves as spiritually so much loftier than our natural companions that we generally ignore them spiritually?

If we saw the denizens of the natural world as our spiritual equals in many ways (even often our superiors) maybe we might also do better in meeting the great environmental crisis that is now upon us? Those spirits in the other dimension must be very worried about our crisis, and anxious to help. These very much include the nature spirits.

A final thought. Surely the "life" or "consciousness" of the other dimension, encompassing as I think it does the natural as well as human world, can be seen as vastly enriched and yet more wondrously beyond our imagining. So too, the joy about which so many who have stepped into that realm bear witness. The birds and trees know about it too, in their own way.

- from *David Hay-Edie*. [david.hay-edie@wanadoo.fr](mailto:david.hay-edie@wanadoo.fr)



## THE SPIRITUAL/PSYCHIC INTERCONNECTION OF LIVING THINGS

*Compiled by the Editor. Do you have your own stories to tell?*

'Mrs Deane has an unusual hobby for a psychic. She breeds St. Bernard dogs, and has been a well-known exhibitor at Cruft's Dog Show where some of her enormous pets have won high awards.

'St. Bernard dogs have very affectionate dispositions. Once or twice when I have visited Mrs. Deane, I have been almost too overwhelmed by their demonstrative greetings. When one of these huge, lovable animals has jumped on his hind legs to put enormous paws on my shoulders, I have nearly lost my balance.

'Spirit people, invisible to so many of us, have often been so clearly seen by these dogs that they have mistaken them for people of this world.

'My husband, as well as other people who have called on Mrs. Deane, has sometimes witnessed a strange spectacle. He has seen one of her dogs bound forward to greet an unseen visitor. The dog has jump up on his hind legs, and, when his front paws have passed through space without meeting the solid resistance he expected, the animal has looked most surprised and bewildered.

'There are scores of well-attested instances of animals having seen spirits. In *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, F.W.H Myers, the famous psychic investigator, recorded the case of a donkey who, apparently, saw the spirit of a child. The narrative was communicated to the Society for Psychical Research by Mr. E.A. Goodall, of The Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours.

'Whilst in Italy, the artist decided to move from a seaside coastal resort to another town. In order to facilitate his journey to Ischia he rode a donkey. In his report, Mr Goodall describes the animal as "one of the fine, sure-footed, big donkeys of the country."

'The painter goes on to say, "Arrived at the hotel, and whilst sitting perfectly still in the saddle talking to the landlady, the donkey went down on its knees as if he had been shot or struck by lightning, throwing me over his head onto the lava pavement."

'A few nights after the accident, which caused a certain amount of injury, Mr Goodall awoke from his sleep to the sound of an unrecognisable voice telling him that his youngest child had passed on. The disturbing psychic incident was followed by letters from his family in England telling him that his youngest child had suddenly been taken ill, and had died.

'As nearly as Mr Goodall could judge, the death of the child coincided with the time of the accident he had sustained by the donkey's fall.

'He believes that the sudden fall of this usually sure-footed animal, could only be explained by its terror at the unexpected appearance of the spirit body of the child'.

'Mrs. Florence Kingstone, besides being a great lover of animals, is also a very fine medium. ... She once held a series of séances which were confined only to clairvoyant descriptions of animals.

'Because so many people were anxious to know about their pets who had passed on, the medium would only concentrate on the "dead" animals whom she saw, in order that she might give comfort to their human friends.

'On one occasion Mrs. Kingstone saw many spirit forms of animals surrounding one of the sitters. She could not understand the reason for such an assembly of pets, until the woman explained that she was a veterinary surgeon.

'She told the medium that her own special pet was among the group of animals that had been described. Mrs. Kingstone not only singled out this favourite dog from the rest, but supplied further evidence by recalling the fact that this animal had met its death through being accidentally shot in the neck by a gamekeeper'.

*The stories above are taken from When Your Animal Dies by Sylvia Barbanell. This book was first published in 1940 by the Spiritualist Press. It is currently obtainable from the Spiritual Truth Foundation, and is the best book I know to turn to when experiencing the loss of a much loved animal.*

*It appears that the degree of individuality and self-awareness which an animal attains through contact with humans decides whether or not that animal survives as an individual after death. Herd animals and wild animals, it seems, are assimilated back into a kind of mass Mind. The classic books on psychical research which I have read and which mention animals all make the same kind of statement.*



*These words were channelled through a medium from the well-known Spiritualist, Arthur Findlay:*

'... never worry over the animals that come into spirit life, for they play, are happy and content, and they join with the ones whom they had joined with on the earth plane (members of families). They are quite content to wait until the one who was their master upon the earth plane passes into spirit so they can be reunited, and until the time comes for them to go back into the big sleep, so they can go back into the source of all life to be replenished and re-formed to come in another way.'

*More Truth communicated by Arthur Findlay by Eileen Winkworth. Harmony Press Ltd. 1985. ISBN. 0-946899-01-0.*

'(The) sense of oneness reaches its highest manifestation in the Indian medicine man. His training, longer and more intensive than that required for any graduate degree offered by our culture, is not completed until he can overcome the limitation of subject-object perception.

'Speaking to ninety leading scientists of this (the U.S.A.) and several other countries at the Interdisciplinary Conference on Voluntary Control of Internal States several years ago, Rolling Thunder, chief medicine man of the Shoshone Indian Nation, said that the medicine man must learn complete oneness with all forms of life.

"How can he understand life if he is not part of it?" Rolling Thunder said. "He must learn to live in the heart of the coyote. This is not a poetic gesture of imagining what the wolf or the owl feels; the medicine man must direct his consciousness within the animal, and understand himself as a bird, a coyote, and so on. He must actually see through the eyes of the coyote, hear through its ears, to think its thoughts....."

'True understanding of life, according to Rolling Thunder, operates from a point within the mind itself, where there is understanding of oneness between what is Self and non-Self. This oneness assumes that nothing interposes between them. There is no memory, association, choice, or discursive thinking about the object. If one can experience such a thing in its nakedness, apart from any properties attributed to it, he can experience oneness with the object and the subject-object arrangement loses its significance. The undifferentiated vision is what awakens one to spiritual awareness, the medicine man said.

'This awareness is out of space and time, it has passed beyond both. With one's mind, one can reach toward an object and discover an identity. But the identification does not need to be made for it is experienced by the removal or stilling of that which intervenes between the two. Unity is experienced through being.'

From *The Psychic Power of Animals* by Bill Schul. ISBN 0-449-13724-4. Pub 1977, U.S.A and Canada. Ballantine Books, 1988)



## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **MAKING SENSE OF DEATH AND IMMORTALITY**

*BY PAUL BADHAM.*

*SPCK.2013. ISBN: 978-0-281-06458-8. 86PP. £8.99*

*- Rosalind Smith*

We live in an age when many Christians' belief in life after death, in the author's words, 'has simply evaporated'. We no longer accept in blind faith what the orthodox churches propounded for so many centuries, mainly because we have learnt to think for ourselves and to accept that aspect of ourselves with the respect it deserves. We have been given minds, and we have not only learnt to use them but also to understand the insights and conclusions we come to. While it would have been heresy in times past to admit to a non-belief in the resurrection of the physical body, along with other church teachings of equal strangeness, we have had the freedom to consider these things in the context of modern research, modern physics, astronomical findings, deeper knowledge of the formation of the universe as we think we know it, and truthfully related accounts from those who have had religious awarenesses, out-of-body and near-death-experiences.

We can now freely make sense of the idea of a life beyond physical death in which it is the soul which is resurrected, and not that old worn-out body that we carry around until we are released from it. And this book goes a very long way to helping us to understand the relevance of OBEs and NDEs.

Many of us, indeed most of us, can expect to live well into our 70s, 80s and 90s – and beyond. Yet not so long ago (and for some, these days) life expectancy was much shorter due to the various factors that existed at the time, and the expectation of a much better life beyond the grave was something which many held onto. Nowadays, with work and family commitments behind us and the enjoyment of a period of relaxed retirement, many folk are not so worried about what's to come – they've got it all now. At least, that's the explanation of the author for the 'evaporation' of belief in a life after death. And yet, he does go on to say that the longer life of retirement also brings a gradual deterioration in health and the 'fear of being kept alive beyond sense and reason...The stock nightmare of modern times is of doctors in possession of the power to keep us alive when our bodies are at least partly dead.' Basically it seems that these days we are not allowed to die, and not encouraged to be ready to die, because behind it all we believe that there is nothing further.

But although some have put aside the notion of the resurrection of the body, we have not discarded the immortality of the soul. We have rejected part of the church teaching on life after death, and kept the part which makes imminent sense. The soul, the consciousness of each one of us which is the spark of God within,



the 'That of God' in Quaker parlance, is the part which yearns to get away from the constraint of the, often, decrepit and painful body and find the freedom of eternity as promised in all the scriptures of the world. The Christian teaching of 'the life of the world to come' implies further opportunity for new experiences.

The book touches on the advances in scientific and medical understanding; Christian doctrine relating to life after death; how belief in God can be consistent with modern physics; the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, with a more relevant interpretation; the significance of NDEs; the horror of belief in hell as practised and taught by the churches in past ages; and a consideration of the concepts of heaven. All this in 86pp.!

The chapter on the evidence of NDEs will resonate greatly with those of us in QFAS, and he brings to our attention Eben Alexander's book *Proof of Heaven* (reviewed in *Reaching Out*, Spring 2013) in which he describes being totally comatose for a whole week. During this time he had a succession of transcendent experiences that convinced him of the absolute reality of God, the soul and the future life. Medical records proved that areas of his brain responsible for thought and feeling had completely closed down during the coma, and yet he had profound experiences which for him were 'proof of heaven'. There are other accounts of near-death-experiences, and while it is said that many doctors feel that NDEs are caused by physiological changes in the brain, in fact a hospital survey concerning the medical condition of dying patients found no correlation between having an NDE and oxygen starvation, drug regime, or psychological state.

Professor Badham is a vice-president of Modern Church and was formerly Director of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre at Lampeter. After all the research which has been done there, he is extremely qualified to speak and write authoritatively on the existence of life after death.



## QFAS PUBLICATIONS

### LEAFLETS

#### 1. End of Life Experiences 2. After Death Communications

A5 fold-over leaflets describing and giving examples of spiritual/psychic experiences.

Free copies sent on request. Please state number required and enclose s.a.e.  
Also available on the website.

#### **The Not Unfamiliar Country: Communication Beyond Death, An Anthology of Quaker Experience**

Free. Please send s.a.e.

Order from Angela Howard, Webb's Cottage, Woolpits Rd, Gt.Saling,  
Braintree, Essex, CM7 5DZ.

Also free copies of the QFAS introductory leaflet.

## BOOKS BY QFAS MEMBERS

### **The Forest of Now**

by Cherry Simpkin, illustrated by Jacky Piqué.

Hazelnut Books. 2014. 41pp. ISBN: 978-1-907938-83-2.

Obtainable from Hazelnut Books, 78 Courtlands Ave., London, SE12 8JA. £7.99.

At one level, the *Forest of Now* can be taken as a charming nature story about mini-beasts discovering the wonders of their forest environment. However, as hinted in the title, this book has a deeper spiritual side.

### **Only a Thought Away.**

A personal story of bereavement and communication beyond death,  
by Angela Howard. Pub 2010. ISBN 978-1-904446-28-6. £5.00 + £1.50 p&p

Please order from Angela Howard, Webb's Cottage, Woolpits Road, Gt. Saling,  
Braintree, Essex, CM7 5DZ. (A few copies still available).

Booklet: **Quakers and the Spiritual/Psychic Dimension** by Rosalind Smith

£1.20. Please enclose a stamp. Order from The Manager, Claridge House,  
Dormans Road, Dormansland, Lingfield, Surrey, RH7 6QH. Tel: 01342 832150.

Cheques to be made out to Claridge House.

## Leaving the garden

He went down to the tree where, in autumn, he'd hung the leaf door. He recalled painstakingly pinning it together with thorns. Now it was January. The door had slowly become disembodied, the leaves leached of substance. Once their autumn colours blazed in the sunlight, now only a tracery of veins and fragments of leaf blade persisted. These remnants trembled in the wind like a length of ghostly winter lace, a delicate outline that framed space and absence.

The leaf door had granted him access to the garden of gardens, but in this season he could only look through it to the cemetery and the garden of remembrance that lay beyond the garden. Soon the wind would erase even this, sweeping it aside like a veil.

He leant on the garden wall to look at the gravestones, the mossy plaques and pots of shrivelled flowers. Not long until the sap stirred, that unstoppable green avalanche waited below. He imagined a surge of growth ripping through the wintery cemetery. Damp patches of bluebells sprang up; grasses burst out and wagged feathered heads. Then dandelions, snapping out of buds; cow parsley cranking open lace umbrellas; foxglove spikes jostling pink bells with speckled throats. Drifts of golden pollen swirled along the aisles between the graves. It would soon smell sweet again, he thought, the scent of azaleas gusting in like honey.

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*The Garden of Shadow & Delight* (Cinnamon Press 2014)





Friends at the Autumn Conference at Woodbrooke. Photo: David Mason