



Living Spirituality Connections
Resources for the spiritual journey

LIVING SPIRITUALITY CONNECTIONS

Spring 2017 Newsletter

Contents

Introduction	I
Good Friday Meditation by Revd Lucy Winkett	2
The Cosmic Christ by Richard Rohr	3
Cosmic Easter Celebration by Heather-Jane Ozanne	5
Reflections on Creation as the Becoming of the Divine Nature by Professor Lisa Isherwood	6
Interview with Alison Woolley by Terence Handley MacMath	7
Responses to <i>The Gift of Years</i> by Joan Chittister and <i>Old Age</i> by Helen M. Luke by Linda Courage	9
The Watching Loft Residency: A year of transformation by Sarah Mark	11
INTERESTING BOOKS	
<i>Doughnut Economics</i> by Kate Raworth	12
<i>The Life-giving Path</i> by Helen Warwick. Review by Dr David McDonald	13
<i>Britain's Holiest Places</i> by Nick Mayhew-Smith	14

www.livingspirit.org.uk

INTRODUCTION

We begin this newsletter by focusing on meanings of the events of Good Friday and of the resurrection of Christ, followed by an account of **Mary Jo Radcliffe's** Cosmic Easter celebration at Emmaus House attended by **Heather-Jane Ozanne**.

Lucy Winkett has a gift for making a close connection between Good Friday and our everyday experience and we feature extracts from a Radio 4 talk she gave on Good Friday.

Father Richard Rohr brings a very broad perspective to the significance of Christ's resurrection:

“Jesus dies, Christ rises. If you prefer a different language, the small identity must surrender its ego boundaries to fall into the Larger Identity.”

We then have theological reflections by Professor Lisa Isherwood, Director of the Institute for Theological Partnerships at the University of Winchester, in response to excellent recent talks there by some of the most adventurous female theologians. The topics are *A Political Theology of the Earth* and views of the divine feminine.

We are pleased to be able to reproduce an interview with **Alison Woolley** who has set up an encouraging new project with national relevance in Bradford to respond to the need for accessible ways to experience practices of silence, particularly for women who are tied down by various responsibilities.

Linda Courage gives her response to books by **Joan Chittister** and **Helen M. Luke** on ageing in a conscious way. **Sara Mark** reflects on a transformative year as artist-in-residence in a SE London church.

Finally we bring your attention to three books that may be of interest:

- *Doughnut Economics* by **Kate Raworth**, who George Monbiot has described as being the John Maynard Keynes for our times
- **Helen Warwick's** *The Life-Giving Path*
- *Britain's Holiest Places* by **Nick Mayhew Smith**.

With best wishes,

Petra Griffiths
Coordinator and Newsletter Editor
Living Spirituality Connections

GOOD FRIDAY MEDITATION

by **Revd Lucy Winkett**

The following extracts come from a BBC Radio 4 Good Friday meditation given by **Revd Lucy Winkett** on 14 April 2017. A part of the talk was held in dialogue with **Leah Hoskin**.



Revd Lucy Winkett

LUCY: And so this Good Friday afternoon, I'm taking a moment to consider a theme of our modern society – loneliness – in the light of what Jesus when through on that day.

I've been discussing loneliness with Leah Hoskin.....a member of my own congregation.....

LEAH:if you've lost something that is the most important thing to you in the world, then you have to be alone. There is no person who can enter into that with you. It's just not possible. You're alone.

LUCY: You sound like you know what you're talking about.

LEAH: When my husband died, there was a terrible loneliness. The loss, in some ways, for his daughters and for his family was also very great and we shared it. It was different for me and I was alone. But when my daughter Sophie died, I was – and am – in that, completely alone.

“ Maybe loneliness isn't so much about the physical state of being alone, but the gap between the relationships we have and the relationships we want

No one can enter into that loss because no one else was her mother.this is very difficult It means that when I talk to God, which sometimes I do in my head and sometimes I shout out as if God were deaf – I do at times feel very very strongly that I'm being heard and understood. And God is not going to say to me as very good friends do: 'Oh, it'll all be alright.... and Sophie wouldn't want you to feel like this.' There won't be any of that stuff. I'm broken hearted.....I am alone and I am lonely and I'm angry and sad....wishful and all those things....and I can just say it all and it's heard. I do believe it's heard.

LUCY: Letting our distress be our prayer and trusting that this prayer is heard by God is a huge challenge especially when it seems that God is far away. A Norwegian prayer asks God: "Hold us through the age long minute when you are silent and the wind is shrill".

..... Loneliness can strike not just in the dark night of the soul but when the sun is high, at midday, when all seems to be as it should be. Even when it seems to everyone else that your life looks great - after the birth of your first child for example, the isolation of being a first time Mum can be very tough to deal with

So maybe loneliness isn't so much about the physical state of being alone, but the gap between the relationships we have and the relationships we want. And often our shame in not being able to express this loneliness to anyone else in case they think we're a failure.

The yearning we can feel is powerfully expressed in Antony and the Johnsons's song about facing not only our own life but our own death starting "Hope there's someone who'll take care of me, when I die, will I go?" (See www.youtube.com/watch?v=8b5HHRT8xvw.)

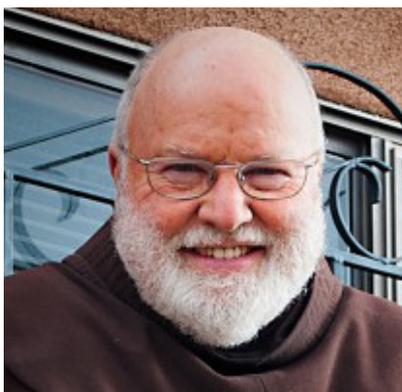
Please click here for further extracts from the talk and for details on how to obtain the full transcript, please click here - www.livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/lucy-winkett-talk.pdf.

Revd Lucy Winkett is Rector of St James's Church Piccadilly.

Leah Hoskin arranges dramatic presentations as part of the St James's liturgies.

THE COSMIC CHRIST: THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST IS MUCH BIGGER THAN CHRISTIANITY

by Richard Rohr



Richard Rohr

The mystery of Christ is much bigger than Christianity. And if we don't make that clear, we're going to have little ability to make friends, build bridges, understand, or respect anybody other than ourselves—and finally not even understand ourselves. Jesus did not come to create an elite country club with an arbitrary list of requirements for who's in and who's out. Jesus came to reveal something that has always been true everywhere—for

everyone—and for all time. Otherwise it is not "true"!

JESUS-ODOLOGY VS CHRISTOLOGY

It seems to me that we've had more Jesus-ology than Christology. The first 2000 years of Christianity have largely dealt with Jesus—and even that not very well because we did not recognize his

“corporate personality” which Cynthia Bourgeault and I will try to explain. Jesus came to reveal the larger mystery of the Christ; Paul “demonstrated that Jesus was the Christ” (Acts 9:22). For Paul that was the exact implication of the new Risen Presence that he perceived in creation itself (Romans 8:19-23), in humans (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), and even in elements symbolized by bread and wine (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). The resurrection of Jesus was the symbolic way of saying his presence was beyond any limits of physical space and time. Jesus was historically bound; the Christ is omnipresent.

Franciscan philosopher and theologian John Duns Scotus (1265/66–1308) taught that Christ was the very “first idea” in the mind of God. In other words, God wanted to manifest the Godself externally, so an eternal love affair could begin between matter and God who is spirit. This divine love affair, eventually called “the Christ,” has been unfolding and manifesting for personification a mere 2000 years ago, I guess when human consciousness was mature enough for a face-to-face encounter.

This has been reproduced with kind permission of the Center for Action and Contemplation. To see how to subscribe to the daily emails from Richard Rohr and for details of an online event this July, please click here - www.livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/richard-rohr-cosmic-christ.pdf.

Father Richard Rohr is a globally recognised ecumenical teacher bearing witness to the universal awakening within Christian mysticism and the Perennial Tradition.

COSMIC EASTER CELEBRATION AT EMMAUS HOUSE, WEST WICKHAM WITH MARY JO RADCLIFFE

by Heather-Jane Ozanne



Our beautiful Easter Morning table

I was pleased to spend an unusual tridium Easter retreat facilitated by Mary Jo Radcliffe. Each day Mary Jo presented us with a beautifully adorned Easter table relevant to the day's ceremonies. These were a focal point for the liturgies we shared together.

The liturgies themselves were developed through a collaborative process with those present offering scriptural readings, poems, prose and music often related to our place in the Cosmos, issues of peace and justice and especially care for the Earth. In this way the Easter story was interwoven with the story of the earth, humanity and our own stories and work in the world. We

also used Teilhard de Chardin's Mass on the World.

There were some deep and moving moments as well as some inspiring videos such as Cosmogogenesis and ones which celebrated our home, mother Earth.

Heather-Jane Ozanne is Chief Executive of Spirit of Peace - www.spiritofpeace.co.uk. She is a member of the Living Spirituality Connections' Working and Discernment Group and Coordinator of LSC's *Towards Human Flourishing Special Interest Area*.

Mary Jo Radcliffe runs Cosmic Easter Celebrations every year. Info from maryjoradcliffe@icloud.com.

REFLECTIONS ON CREATION AS THE BECOMING OF THE DIVINE NATURE AND A CHRISTOLOGY THAT EMPOWERED A DISCIPLESHIP OF EQUALS

by Professor Lisa Isherwood



The Institute for Theological Partnerships: Home of the Cosmic Walk

I am still fizzing from the amazing lecture delivered here at the University of Winchester's Institute for Theological Partnerships by Professor Catherine Keller entitled *Political Theology of the Earth* on 7 March 2017.

Catherine Keller's work takes us back to the early pages of Genesis and to the words the Poet used to describe the pre-creation condition – 'tohu vabohu'. These words signify the depth and the possibilities found in that 'before time and space'. Keller has shown that 'tohu' is for the Hebrews the unformed wilderness, while 'vabohu' refers to the Canaanite goddess Baau, the goddess of primal night and mother of all. Together these words often refer to the becoming of things from chaos.



Professor Catherine Keller

For Keller the creation then, was not from nothing nor did it erupt from the masterful words of an almighty God, rather it flared forth from perhaps a shiver or a sigh in which 'let there be' is a whisper of desire not a command; a desire for incarnational reality to embrace itself in all that lives. Keller suggests this is also found in the writings of Paul who speaks of the God who is All in All, the Enegeia in all creation.

Keller's work frees women from the consequences of creation out of nothing and a story of disobedience and allows all creation to be understood as being the becoming of the divine nature itself. She does not, despite challenging the male dominance over all things in creation, go down a feminine divine route.

Our speakers at the University of Winchester in the following months have decided to investigate this route and indeed to understand their spiritual lives within a feminine divine paradigm. As a Christian theologian, I simply want to remind us that the notion

of the feminine divine is not a new age fantasy or one that can be left to theologians alone but has ancient roots - some of which are reflected in Christianity itself.

To read the rest of this article and to get links for talks by Professor Catherine Keller on Politics, the Earth, and Theology, please click here - www.livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/lisa-isherwood-article.pdf.

Professor Lisa Isherwood is a liberation theologian and is Director of the [Institute for Theological Partnerships](http://www.livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/lisa-isherwood-article.pdf) at the University of Winchester.

INTERVIEW WITH ALISON WOOLLEY OF SEEDS OF SILENCE by Terence Handley MacMath

“... Today’s world feels more precarious: politically, environmentally, financially. It is not surprising that people are seeking ways of living that help them to feel more grounded, more connected with one another, more in touch with their own being in the face of the individualisation, disintegration, and fragmentation within society.”

“A discipline of silence is demanding work, and often requires sacrifice on some level”

I’m certainly no expert on silence. But I bring to it my own daily practice of silence over a decade and my twice-yearly silent retreats to the Llanerchwen hermitages.

Seeds of Silence (SoS) is a response to the comments made during my research which investigated the value and impact of chosen silence in the lives of contemporary Christian women. They repeatedly talked about how little support there was for women in developing and sustaining a practice of silence. They felt that many clergy lacked experience or knowledge about practising silence as a spiritual discipline, and that churches generally have very little space for silence.

Women are often unable to go on retreats because they still bear much of the responsibility for caring for children, or for elderly relatives, and for running a home — on top of their working lives. Going on retreats can also be difficult financially, especially for women with children, or who are disabled, unemployed, or retired.

SoS encourages and supports Christians in developing a spiritual discipline of silence. It’s an ecumenical project, offering “Exploring Silence” workshops for Christians anywhere.

A Christian charity funds this work in the Bradford area for one day a week, and I offer these, and additional workshops and courses nationally as freelance work.

SoS also facilitates local groups who meet for regular, silent prayer, and offers support and resources to those who want to set up similar groups in their locality. More than 500 people a month visit our website, which carries signposts to the many organisations, blogs books, websites, and retreat centres that can help them to explore a discipline of silence.

This interview is reproduced with kind permission from *The Church Times*. For subscription enquiries, email subs@churchtimes.co.uk.

The full interview can be read at www.livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/alison-woolley-interview.pdf.

Alison Woolley is Director of Seeds of Silence – www.seedsofsilence.org.uk – and a music therapist with children with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties.



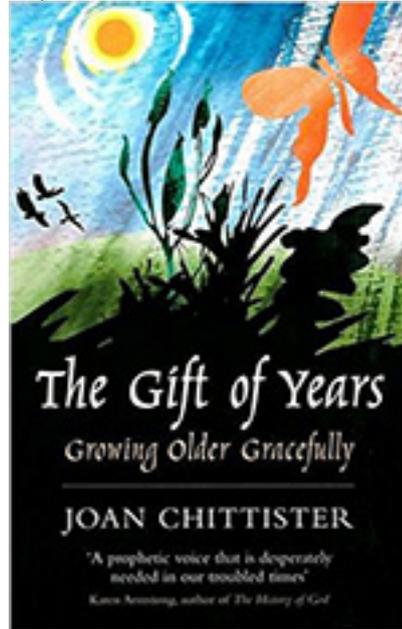
Seeds of
Silence

finding space with God

RESPONSES TO *THE GIFT OF YEARS* BY JOAN CHITTISTER AND *OLD AGE* BY HELEN M. LUKE

by Linda Courage

I have just reached my 60th birthday, noticing cwwwhanges in my body and my ways, some subtle and some not so. I am an avid reader, so it is time to take a look at what other wisdom is out there, to see if it is instructive, to see if it resonates with the deeper parts of myself.



A friend and wise woman in the Abbey of the Arts (www.abbeyofthearts.com) community recommended Joan Chittister's book *The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully*. It's the first book I've read by Joan and I learn from the back cover that she is the executive director of Benetvision: A Resource and Research Center for Contemporary Spirituality.

These words touch something - particularly the reference to fear:

'It is a time for us to let go of both our fantasies of eternal youth and

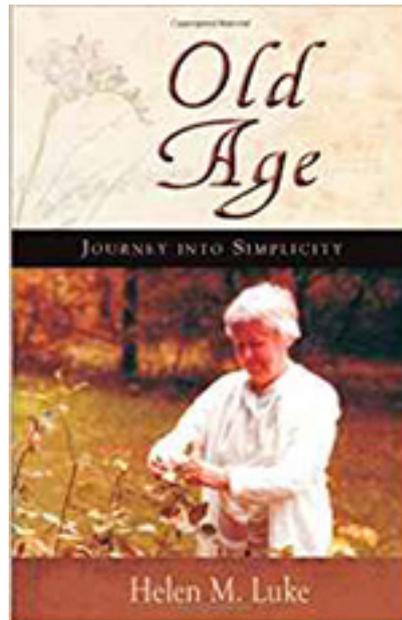
our fears about getting older.'

For me, the book locates and instructs. It is made up of bite-sized chapters on topics that interest me: regret, fear, joy, newness, possibility, mystery, relationships, religion, freedom, and many more. Each chapter ends with two points to ponder, about the burden, and the blessing of the issue being discussed.

It is positive, but not sentimental, and it rarely uses religious language. Its structure lends itself to being dipped into at any point, although I couldn't resist reading it all. I would recommend it to anyone wanting to explore this new land of ageing and how it touches just about everything.

The second book came as a recommendation from a friend of a friend in Living Spirituality Connections who had said it was the best book on the topic of ageing she had read. The back cover tells me that Helen Luke is a renowned Jungian analyst who reflects on the final journeys described in Homer's *Odyssey*, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, and T.S. Eliot's *Little Gidding*, as well as devoting attention to suffering.

I enjoy authors who use stories to instruct us, and was heartened to read a recommendation by the author of *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, Clarissa Pinkola Estes, on the back cover.



I was drawn to the title *Old Age: Journey into Simplicity* and set off to find that the Foreword is written by Thomas Moore, another favourite author who wrote *Care of the Soul* and other helpful texts.

This book is about the internal and difficult work of letting go; of growing up into old age. How much there is to do! This is summarised well on the back cover:

‘... she elucidates the difference between growing old and disintegrating, encouraging the reader to grow emotionally and mentally during the culminating

stage of life.’

I confess that I didn’t get the structure of the book at first. I missed Helen`s subtle reflections on the emotional and spiritual internal work that were integrated into her telling of *The Odyssey*. Her valuable reflections were more explicit in the remainder of the book, and I found myself re-visiting *The Odyssey* chapter to avoid missing anything.

I think this is an important book that is accessible in a different way. It is about our internal worlds and the very real work it takes to recognise what is going on, and to move on, if we are to live, and die, life to the full.

Linda Courage relishes reading and is passionate about all things related to our development in the broadest sense. She was an academic in a former life and needed the arts to leap-frog her intellect and leave room for other aspects of herself to emerge and have a voice. She is a member of the Living Spirituality Connections *Working and Discernment Group*; coordinator of LSC’s *Art, Poetry and Spirituality Special Interest Area*; and LSC regional contact for the North East.

THE WATCHING LOFT RESIDENCY: A YEAR OF TRANSFORMATION

by Sarah Mark



Vernal, a project involving classical Indian dance and planting wheat – Sara Mark, March 2015

All Saints West Dulwich invited me to be artist in residence from September 2014 to December 2016. My brief included responding to Christian spirituality, engaging with the physical context and enabling community participation. My work often explores the themes of Transformation and Place using everyday objects, materials and poetry.



Red and Gold

At Equinox
she came wearing red and gold,
carrying grain.
Bearing child.

Like beautiful Pavarti dancing Lasya
with grace, henna-footed with silver
myriad bells, waking winter's sleep.
Rousing the furrow round Earth.

Vernal she came tender
with seed hiding harvest,
when night balances light.
Her solace crouched down over void.

For the Lord of the Dance, danced
all infinite love like our Mother Christ,
from whom we are endlessly born.
Love's wheat springing green.

Sara Mark, 2015

The wheat that was part of the initial Offering event was sown on the Vernal Equinox and its green blades sprouted at Easter. It was harvested at Lamas, winnowed by local school children, milled at Brixton Windmill, baked and shared at Harvest.

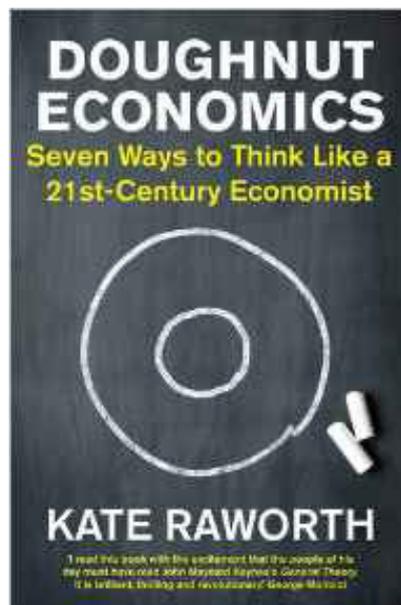
I feel that my role has been to manifest a series of ‘becomings’ and transformative encounters. I hope my work has been a ‘gateway’ through which we glimpsed the ‘Divine’ via the unremarkable. I found it inspirational to work for a welcoming and occasionally bemused community for 14 months. An important aspect was the fruitful relationship with the clergy that ensured that the work developed within a liturgical context.

Some of my most precious memories are: listening to sermons written in response to the installations; hearing that a woman with a sick husband had stitched the shroud during the night of Good Friday; and watching the profound wonder and delight as an Indian dancer offered and then planted the wheat in the church garden.

Sara Mark is an Artist and Placemaker. Her website can be found at www.saramark.uk.

INTERESTING BOOKS

1. **Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist** by Kate Raworth



Kate Raworth is Senior Visiting Research Associate at Oxford University’s Environmental Change Institute, and Senior Associate at the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership. Her website describes her as “a renegade economist focused on exploring the economic mindset needed to address the 21st century’s social and ecological challenges, and.... the creator of the Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries.”

George Monbiot reports in *The Guardian* (12.4.17) that Raworth’s redrawn model of the economy is

embedded in the Earth’s systems and in society, and shows how it depends on the flow of materials and energy, and achieves a clarity and decluttering of myths and representations we have been schooled in. The area between the two rings of her Doughnut model is “the ecologically safe and socially just space” in which humanity

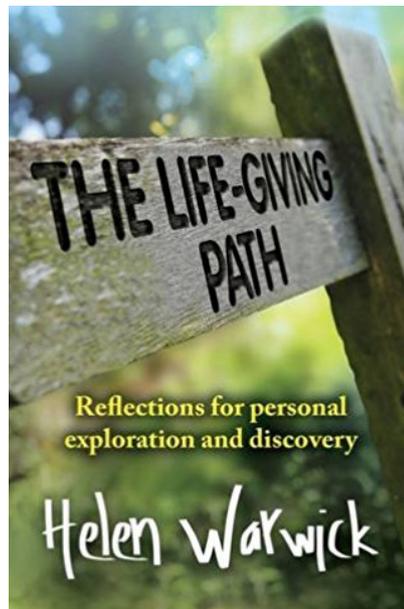
should strive to live. The purpose of economics should be to help us enter that space and stay there.

George Monbiot concludes: “Raworth allows us to integrate our specific proposals into a coherent programme and then to measure the extent to which it is realised.by reframing the economy , she allows us to change our view of who we are, where we stand and what we want to be. “

To see Kate Raworth’s Doughnut diagram, go to www.kateraworth.com/doughnut.

For a discussion of her ideas (along with Wendell Berry and Paul Kingsnorth) on Radio 4’s *Start the Week*, go to www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/bo8njtjg#play. The recording will be available until the end of May.

2. **The Life-Giving Path** by Helen Warwick. Review by Dr David McDonald.



Helen Warwick’s spiritual wisdom and personal experience shine as we are guided through rooms and spaces of retreat house and garden, rich with metaphors, symbols and stories, ancient and modern.

Theological, biological, and psychological gems are to be found everywhere, and they are thoroughly sound and helpful for making a soul-nurturing environment. It takes mindfulness to another level - becoming a responsible reflector and observer of life, with love for the world, for others, and vitally for self, one’s many different selves.

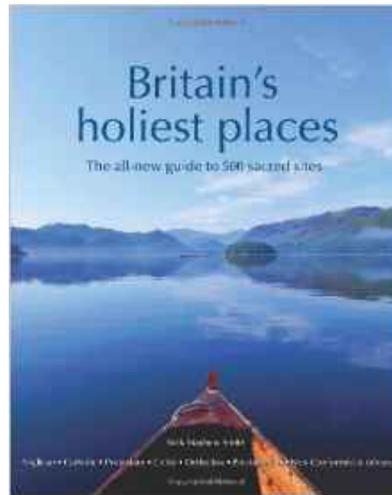
Creativity, playing and dreaming are developed as nourishments, and inspiring exercises and practical advice offer full care for mind and body, the home of spirit. One can savour almost every sentence as each page comes alive with divine and human love.

This book belongs with the classics, to be read and re-read as a spiritually uplifting and immensely practical daily companion.

Dr David McDonald is a Consultant Psychiatrist and Trustee to the [Guild of Health & St Raphael](http://www.guildofhealth.org.uk). We have reproduced the review with kind permission of the Guild.

Note: Helen will be one of the leaders at the Living Spirituality Connections weekend workshop at Holy Rood House from 9-11 June 2017. Go to www.holyroodhouse.org.uk/events.html.

3. **Britain's Holiest Places: The all-new guide to 500 sacred sites** by Nick Mayhew-Smith.



The official blurb tells us:

The result of a five-year journey from Orkney to the Channel Islands, it opens up a remarkable landscape shaped by centuries of faith. There is something to surprise and enlighten anyone with a sense of the sacred - from miraculous healing pools, astounding works of devotional art, mysterious natural features, world-famous shrines, grand cathedrals to the humblest of country churches.

It includes 500 places in England, Wales and Scotland. Each listing is illustrated and made easily accessible to the visitor, with much to inspire as well as much to challenge modern understanding of spiritual experience. The book encompasses the entire spectrum of church and even folk traditions: Anglican, Catholic, Celtic, Orthodox, Non-Conformist, Presbyterian, Quaker and many others. Written with a keen eye for the surreal as well as the sacred, the absurd as well as the serious, this book is the first complete survey of our island's sacred history. (Published in 2011.)