

# Journey into Imagination



**Each door from the room says,  
this is not all. Your hands will find  
in the dark.**

Archbishop Rowan Williams



## Starting the journey: what is imagination?

This is a somewhat different chapter, in which the sense journeys we have undertaken are pulled together in order to understand the creative worlds our minds are capable of, and how these creative worlds relate to our spiritual lives. The journey into imagination also allows our spiral journey to intersect with the visionaries and dreamers of the Christian tradition, who have helped us to think more deeply and imaginatively about God. All the information we receive from our senses tells us directly about our world and our place in it, but beyond this, we have mental worlds which are capable of using that information as a foundation for the imagination.

Within our own heads, we have the capacity to create and control stories of our own. We can construct, images, narratives, we can wonder and dream. Our mental world is not limited by our physical capabilities, nor by our physical location in space and time. Through acts of the imagination we can travel and journey to anywhere we want to go. The imagination opens doors in our mental worlds to all kinds of possibility, both good and bad, where we can explore who we are and test out what we want to be. Children unselfconsciously dramatise and act out the worlds of their imagination; as we age, we tend to lock up our imaginative experience and keep it to ourselves, unless it is released by means of hobbies, past-times, or giving ourselves permission to play with our children and grandchildren. Imagination can be stimulated by creative entertainment – books, TV programmes, films, computer and console games, and pop videos can all stimulate the imagination – although we need our critical faculties to separate out the gold from the dross. Imagination is the safe-keeper of our identity; people who are deprived of sensory stimulus, for example in extreme hostage situations, will call on the imagination and memory for the means to confirm who they are to themselves and in order to stay sane.



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### ACTIVITY POINT

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**Make a list of 10 things that would keep your mind active on a tiny desert island. Choose favourite books, films, music or games.**



**Why are these special to you, or what's so good about them?**  
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Our imagination needs to be fed. We need experiences which are fed into memory, reflected on and then added to as we call them up and examine them or incorporate them with other elements. We need ideas which stimulate the imagination and provoke our mental faculties to

speculate, analyse, wonder and dream. We need emotional responses which colour and shape what our imagination does.<sup>1</sup> Our imaginations enable us to explore hypothetical situations, ‘what if?’ scenarios, but that does not mean that acts of imagination only deal with fictions or dreams, like what our life would be like if won the lottery (best case scenario?) or our loved one was run over (worst case scenario). Acts of imagination can also reveal the truth of situations more clearly. If, after a blazing row you revisit in your imagination what was said and done, you can usually see more clearly what the problems were and what now needs to be done to heal the rift. Or, in other cases, you may need imagination to allow you to remove your rose-tinted spectacles and see some situations are not all they appear. Imagination offers us bounded possibilities of creativity and enjoyment, but used with our critical faculties, imagination is a gift that ties us more clearly to an understanding of the world and our place in it.<sup>2</sup>



Our imagination also plays an important part in our response to God and in the way we walk our spiritual journey. The way we read scripture, the way we worship, the way we pray and reflect – all these things are subject to our imagination acting on our experience of the Christian faith. It should not be surprising to us then, that more and more people are today experiencing God in dreams, in mental images and reflections and within imaginative exploration of some other spiritual pathway. Further, people are also using their imaginations to explore the spiritual and to set it against what they understand as the traditional hold the Church has had on images and ideas of God. In many cases, those acts of imagination are understood by Christians as hostile witnesses to our faith. But is that really the case?




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### ACTIVITY POINT

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**Stop reading and allow yourself two 15 minute daydreams.**

**First, imagine the best possible scenario you can think of, no matter how self-indulgent. A holiday? More money? Freedom from illness? All your stress and worries being magically solved? Let your imagination go where it likes, no matter how impossible and improbable.**



**Secondly, imagine your worst nightmare. The death of a loved one? A time of pain and suffering? A war? A divorce? Being charged with a crime? Imagine fully the emotional quality of this scenario. What are its consequences and how do you see yourself within it?**

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## Moving out: imagining God in our time

### Dreams

**The dream is the small  
hidden door in the  
deepest and most intimate  
sanctum of the soul**

Carl Gustav Jung, *The Meaning of  
Psychology for Modern Man*, 1934



Scripture tells us a great deal about the way God can move within our minds and hearts. In the world of the bible, dreams and visions are part of the stuff of spiritual life, but also may need others to sort out what the dreams 'mean'. Because imagination is so powerful and so wide-ranging, we may sometimes need help to sort out what is going on in our heads. In bookshops today, we can sometimes find books or 'dictionaries' on dream or vision interpretation which offer particular correspondences between dream images and what you are really supposed to be exploring. For example:

**To dream that your eyelashes are growing, signifies  
that good health and fortunes will be with you.**

<http://www.dreammoods.com/dreamthemes/bodyparts.htm>

Fun though they may be, these crude tools unfortunately add very little to our understanding of the imagination at work. Indeed, the development of psychoanalytic technique and spiritual direction in our own times has demonstrated the need for much more complex and empathic relationships in dealing with people's imaginative worlds. Sharing and talking about such experiences requires careful analysis of psychological implications, symbolic structures and the personal mythology and interpretative capability of the dreamer. And, quite simply, you might dream about your eyelashes because you have a fallen one sticking in your eye.

Scripture, however, makes it clear that the way we deal with acts of imagination has to be more complex and sensitive than this. For example, in Genesis 40.25 ff Joseph talks to Pharaoh about the troubling dreams he has been having.<sup>3</sup> First, Joseph contextualises the dream by indicating that Pharaoh is imagining a future which is under the sovereignty of God. His imagination reaches out to that future in terms of his responsibilities towards his people and their welfare. He must determine right action in response to the promptings of his imagination.

Our imaginative acts, dreams and wondering have the facility of calling our attention to situations we must resolve, decisions we must make and actions we must take.<sup>4</sup> Joseph (Matthew 2.13) is warned in a dream about the danger to Jesus and so changes his travel plans; Peter's dream (Acts 10.11) opens up access to the world of the gentiles (Acts 10.45; Acts 11.1-18).

This is not simply a matter of reacting to evil omens and portents or the employment of psychic powers. Actions which point to salvation come about from creative imaginative engagement with situations and environments in which we seek to discover what God intends for us. Moreover apocalyptic writing, as in the book of Revelation, shows the immersion of a Christian imagination in searching for, and finding, a vision of God's intention and purpose for our future.

We have to engage seriously with the world of sleep-dreams and day-dreaming, because an increasing number of people believe that God has spoken to them in dreams and some people of other faiths

have converted to Christianity following dreams about Jesus. What are we to make of this phenomenon and how far do we understand the role and function of dreaming in our own lives?<sup>5</sup> How do we walk with people who are dogged by nightmares and reach past the dreamcatchers to understand and relieve their pain?

### Feelings and emotions

A number of studies have shown that people today increasingly are willing to admit to spiritual experiences which often begin with a physical sensation which is then read in imagination as having significance beyond that person's experience of the 'ordinary' physical world. For example, in David Hay and Kate Hunt's work *Understanding the Spirituality of people who don't go to Church*, they cite the case of 'Tom' whose experiences included leading ghost hunts and sensing 'atmospheres' in people's houses.<sup>6</sup> Yet when Tom was waiting in hospital for news of his seriously ill father he experienced 'a sudden rush of warmth and a sense that someone was telling him not to worry, that everything was going to be all right'. This was an experience quite *opposite* to the cold and spooky world of ghosts and 'atmospheres', a quality of hope and optimism overlaid on Tom's feelings of anxiety and unknowing. Significantly, Tom kept this experience to himself, locked away within his imagination and memory. One of our important tasks in moving out along the double spiral of our spiritual life is to find appropriate ways of releasing these experiences and affirming the movement of God in people's lives.

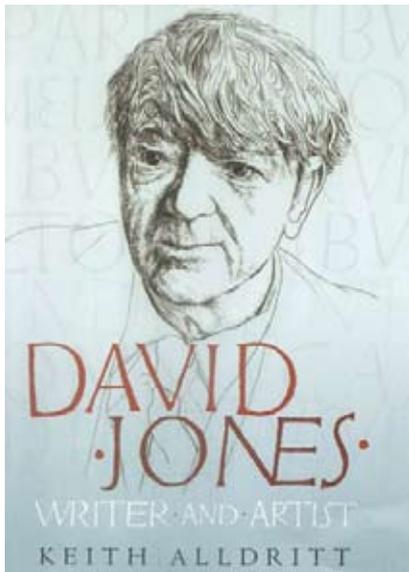
### Stories and parables, hermeneutics

Jesus was also aware of the power and importance of imagination and urged those who came to hear him to use the gift of imagination to focus more clearly on God. In the parables, for instance, Jesus tells stories, but stories which take the daily experiences of people and draw out new forms of imagining. For example, in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Matthew 20.1-16), listeners are required imaginatively to enter into the lives of the first labourers and to empathise emotionally with their dismay when their labour has no more reward than the last to be hired. This empathic and imaginative response is required, otherwise the point Jesus wants to make about equality and God's justice will not be transforming of minds and hearts. There is a confrontational element to the narrative which requires the commitment of imagination, not just uncritical acceptance. Similarly, the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15.11-32) includes the brother's outraged reaction and the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10.30-37) carries the shocking revelation that the hurt man's 'neighbour' is his hated enemy.



### Worship and imagination

The writer and artist David Jones once wrote that in worship you could think of a million and one things in the time it takes for the priest to pass from the epistle to the gospel side of the altar. By this he did not mean that you can sink into a little daydream (though that can happen...), but that participation in worship incites our imagination to focus more deeply on God's world and our part within it. Because the Eucharist



includes *anamnesis*, a making present of the past in expectation of the future, so acts of worship open up our imagination both to history and to the hope of heaven. In his writings, David Jones tried to show that creative writing is also like that, imagining new narrative is also a form of *anamnesis* and as such is irrevocably related to the creative acts of God. So, in his long poem *The Sleeping Lord* David Jones imagines a Eucharist in which the priest reaches that part of the Roman Catholic liturgy when he recalls to mind all those who have died. In the poem, that memory branches out to all those other Christians who have worshipped God before this present time, in all kinds of different situations. His memory extends further into the rites and ceremonies of pre-Christian times, finding echoes of Christ and Eucharist even here and thinking of people unknown and long gone yet who are still loved and longed for by God. In that short space of time, he holds up a vision of the way we all belong to one another in the Body of Christ, until his vision encompasses 'the departed/of the entire universal orbis/from the unknown beginnings/unguessed millenniums back/until now:/ FOR THESE ALL/he makes his silent, secret/devout and swift memento'.<sup>7</sup> David Jones himself derived a great deal of inspiration for his poetry and painting from worship and the cycle of prayer within a religious community. The discipline of that life of prayer allowed his imagination to develop and to flourish.

Worship then, should be the enabler, not the stifler of our spiritual imagination. This requires to think more carefully about what good worship is, since truly creative worship opens up our imaginative response but worship which is merely superficially attractive or entertaining has the capacity to distract us and actually prevent us from furthering our spiritual journey.

Many Christians enjoy the worship traditions within some expressions of Celtic spirituality<sup>8</sup> or enjoy Taizé worship, for the capacity it has to allow the imagination to soar.



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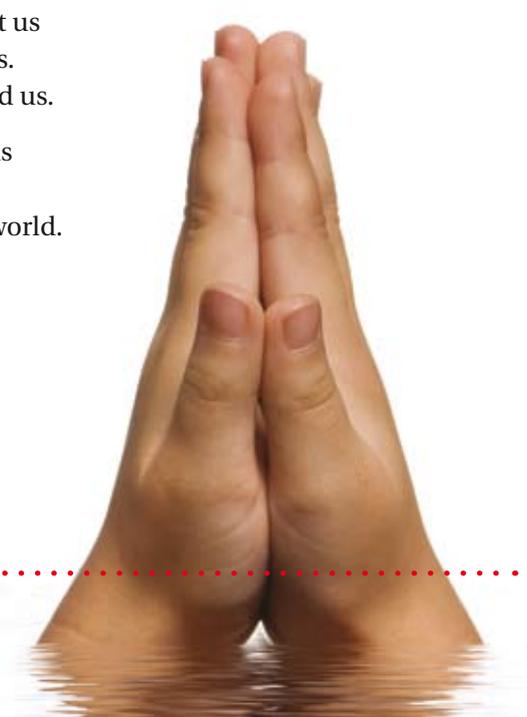
### PRAYER POINT: A PRAYER OF ST PATRICK

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May the strength of God pilot us.  
May the power of God, preserve us.  
May the wisdom of God, instruct us.  
May the hand of God protect us  
May the way of God direct us.  
May the shield of God defend us.

May the host of God guard us  
against the snares of evil  
and the temptations of the world.

May Christ be with us.  
Christ before us.  
Christ in us.  
Christ over us.  
May Thy salvation, O Lord,  
be always ours  
this day and forever more.  
*Amen*





## New imaginings about God, the mystical tradition

One of the wonderful things about the Christian tradition that we draw on is the imaginative response of other Christians who have left us their own dreams, wondering and visions about what it means to walk with God. In her *Revelations of Divine Love*, for example, Julian of Norwich (1342–c.1416) leaves us images of God as mother as well as father, expanding our imaginative capacity for exploring and wondering at the nature of God and our spiritual journey in relationship with God. By means of this imaginative exploration of God's nature, we may find ourselves better equipped to explore and share faith with those who have difficulty with, say, exclusive images of God as Father.

Or, for example, St John Chrysostom (347–407) has left us his nineteenth homily which is a commentary on the Lord's Prayer. In this, we are asked to shut the doors of the mind so that we cannot be distracted and to send our imagination towards God in heaven. In purifying (not destroying) our passions we can make this very earth a heaven for ourselves and others, and through gentleness and forgiving others we become more like the Father.<sup>9</sup>



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### MEDITATION POINT

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**It is God's will that we have three things in our seeking:**

**The first is that we seek earnestly and diligently, without sloth, and, as it may be through His grace, without unreasonable heaviness and vain sorrow.**

**The second is, that we abide Him steadfastly for His love, without murmuring and striving against Him, to our life's end: for it shall last but awhile.**

**The third is that we trust in Him mightily of full assured faith. For it is His will that we know that He shall appear suddenly and blissfully to all that love Him.**

Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, chapter 10.



## The imagination of God

When we move out into the spiral of our spiritual journey and use our minds and bodies to encounter God's world, it is worth reminding ourselves that everywhere we meet the fruits of God's own imagination. Thinking about God as the imaginer of all things in the act of creation, allows us to begin to explore 'the mind of God'. In the book of Job (ch 38 ff) there is an exposition of God's creative power, leading Job into the whole mystery of the creation within which the breadth of God's imagination is revealed. The creation is the ever changing world of God's imagining and is available to us not just as the experience of our world now, but in what we know of the past and what we can guess of the future.

Consequently, when we learn about the history of human culture, the geological past of our world with its many ages of biodiversity and the maths and physics of the early universe, we are not just accruing more knowledge but being given more insight into God's imagination. So we should not assume that knowledge of God is only confined to the





disciplines of theology and philosophy, because these are only part of the exploration of the places God is. The world of mathematics for example, seems extraordinarily complex and abstract to non-mathematicians, but many people who are gifted in this discipline have found that the study enriches their understanding of God and causes them to be amazed with wonder at the richness provided by research into their discipline. So in order to understand the imagination of God, we need to learn as much as we can of each other in community because this enables links to be made across knowledge disciplines and to find connections and bridges where the Holy Spirit has inspired women and men to join up new areas of thought and understanding.

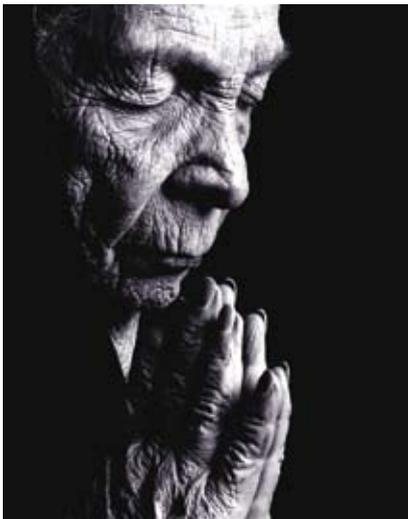
This does not mean we have to become academic experts in all kinds of different branches of knowledge, but it does remind us to be open to different kinds of learning experience. Joining an art class, learning how to do basic DIY, reading popular history or science books, all of these things can open up worlds for our imagination to work on. There is a tremendous variety of material on the television and on the internet for us to journey into and discover more of God's works among us.




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### MEDITATION POINT

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*Great are the works of the Lord,  
studied by all who delight in them.  
Full of honour and majesty is his work,  
and his righteousness endures forever.  
He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds;  
the Lord is gracious and merciful.  
He provides food for those who fear him;  
he is ever mindful of his covenant.  
He has shown his people the power of his works  
in giving them the heritage of the nations.  
The works of his hands are faithful and just;  
all his precepts are trustworthy.*

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*  
Psalm 111 2-7; 10

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### Beyond imagination: mental illness



We may realise what a tremendous gift our imaginations are, when we encounter people whose mental worlds are damaged, uncontrolled, distorted or destroyed. We need to understand what happens to the lives of people suffering from mental illness such as schizophrenia or psychosis and to the lives of people who have sought mental expansion or euphoria inside mind altering drugs, but who have then fallen prey to addiction and the mental hell that that entails.<sup>10</sup> Many of us will encounter people among our family and friends who fall victim to Alzheimer's disease or to other kinds of memory loss and dementia.



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## ACTIVITY POINT

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**Have a look at *Iris*, starring Kate Winslet, Judi Dench and Jim Broadbent, based on the lives of Iris Murdoch and John Bayley as they coped with Iris' Alzheimer's disease.** 

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Mental illness either distorts and fragments the imagination so that its coherence is lost and its actions are painful and frightening, or the imagination is lost altogether so that the person searches for who they are or simply becomes 'dead' and cold, light a light gone out.

The gospels tell us that Jesus was particularly moved by people with mental illness and that his healing ministry included helping those people to recover their 'right mind' as in the case of the Gerasene demoniac. Mental illness requires sensitive and careful assessment and treatment but Christian prayer and support can be absolutely essential in hearing what God still wants of people with such illness. Particularly sensitive listening is required, because people who are mentally ill may have difficulty communicating their spiritual needs and insights, but that does not mean that they do not have real and significant stories of God to tell and share. Including people who are mentally ill within the fellowship of wayfarers means that we must summon up all of our own imaginative engagement in order to allow those people to trust us with their stories, to find in us a means to cohesiveness and a path through confusion and mental darkness. Here, for example, is a story of depression:

**I am having a hard time writing what I'm feeling – even while writing this, I feel that my story is 'not good enough' – but I want people to know that this feeling is a symptom of your depression, and that it is not your fault. I struggle daily with self-acceptance, trying to see myself as bright, pretty and kind. Often, I see the opposite – dumb, ugly and mean. The energy that I spend trying to feel 'normal' is huge, but it is what I want more than anything in the world – to be mentally healthy and emotionally stable.<sup>11</sup>**

For many people then, all their available energy goes into imagining themselves as people worthy of stepping outside and taking part in society. When imagination fails, they see themselves as worthless, hopeless, pointless and may try to harm themselves or commit suicide. Our spiritual journey carries with it a duty to help such people in our lives and communities around us by re-imagining them as the people God wants them to be, the people represented by Jesus' healing actions.

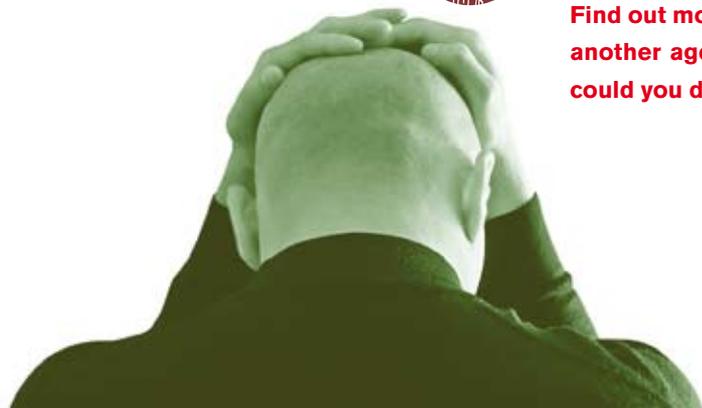


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## ACTIVITY POINT

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**Find out more about the Samaritans' 'Extreme Listening' or find out about another agency helping people with mental illness, such as MIND. What could you do to help or support people in your own family or community?**





## The double spiral: what do others imagine?

There is evidence all around us in our society of people using the power of imagination and there is evidence too of exploration of the spiritual journey in fiction, TV and film, in music, poetry and dance. That exploration however often leads people to see a conflict with the Church, which is perceived as having a stranglehold on the story of salvation in such a way as to prevent 'magical world' of wondering and dreaming from emerging and changing people's lives.

### Fiction

#### *Chocolat* 🌐

For example In the novel *Chocolat*, by Joanne Harris, which was made into a very successful film, the main female character 'stands for' spirituality, while the repressive priest 'stands for' the Church. On one side of the street, the people of the village go to church during their Lenten fast, on the other side of the street, Vianne, the non churchgoing pagan, full of life and love, opens up her chocolate shop full of alluring treats. Gradually, the villagers drift from one side to the other, entering the chocolate shop and receiving a more vital and complete kind of pastoral care. Vianne feeds them chocolates which speak to their needs, listens to their troubles, rescues people from their oppression and sets them free. In the end, the priest too crosses the street determined to smash up Vianne's pagan festival at Easter, but succumbs to the temptation and ends up seduced by her sweets. So is the patriarchal oppression of the Church overcome by the restoration of the female spiritual power that has been refused by the Church.



#### *The Da Vinci Code* 🌐

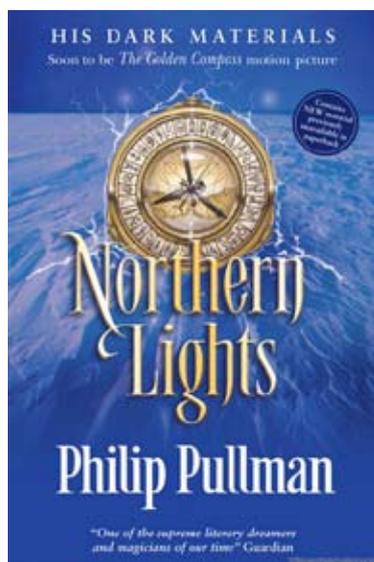
Similarly, *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown, has also become an international best seller. A thriller novel much in the style of the film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, it too suggests the Church has been part of a huge conspiracy to cover up what really happened to Jesus: he got married to Mary Magdalene, had children and lived happily ever after. According to the myth promulgated by this book and other recent 'theories' about Jesus, the proper balance between male and female elements in Christianity and the presence of sexuality, were removed by the Church for the purpose of keeping and wielding power. The grail legend keeps this hidden Christian message alive and has to be recovered as patriarchal and oppressive Christianity is overthrown.



These kinds of fictions sometimes raise issues in the media about the indictment of the Church and Christians end up being first of all tarred with the same negative brush and then put in the position of having to defend the Church against accusers and detractors. But this is an invitation to close our own imaginations rather than explore with others. For example, *Chocolat* is an interesting novel, precisely because it has much to say about the power of listening, about appropriate and gentle pastoral care, about the importance of giving, and, in the recovery of Josephine, liberation of the oppressed and abused into their true identity. Instead of fighting for the Church *as it is portrayed in the novel*, we could simply enter imaginatively into the world of the chocolatier

and say what it teaches us about love and neighbour. We do not have to 'buy into' her pagan beliefs or practice to do that, nor sell out our love of the gospel, but rather what the book tells us about being human.

### ***His Dark Materials*** 🌐



Similarly in Philip Pullman's trilogy *His Dark Materials*, much has been made of his anti-Church stance. In these novels represents 'God' (the 'Authority') and the 'Church'. These represent a kind of overarching parenthood whose oppressive regime reaches down into the world of the child and seeks to suppress imagination, exploration, change. The hound of heaven is not a sweet stalker but Fr Gomez, tracking the main character Lyra to prevent her from falling into sin and fulfilling the prophecy which will enable humans to be truly themselves at last. The overthrow of Metatron, the oppressive Regent and power who has held 'God' in thrall, allows liberation into a 'republic of heaven' in which no power, lordship or sovereignty holds sway. Yet this egalitarian vision is constantly suppressed by the Magisterium and by the theologians who do not want the children to pursue their own story and who will disable or kill them to make sure they present no threat.

Yet throughout Pullman's works are themes which resonate strongly and make sense within our own spiritual journey.<sup>12</sup> The creation is amazing, beautiful and diverse and Lyra and her friend Will are able to go from universe to universe discovering ever more extraordinary and amazing characters and animals. There is a creative energy within the universe which blows where it wills and that cosmic 'dust' must be allowed to flow freely or the world will stagnate and disappear. The worlds are themselves marked by betrayal and sacrifice and include not only the wonderful daemons as diverse and changing aspects of the children's selves or even souls, but also a liberation of the dead into an expansive reality of indwelling the creation. These kinds of themes mean something to Christians, but if we spend all our time apologising for 'criticism' and defending the indefensible manifestations of 'Church' in the novels, we cannot engage our imaginations and explore the spiritual journey laid out in the material properly.

### ***Science Fiction***



Similarly, the popularity of science fiction and science fantasy novels and films allow the creative imagination 'to boldly go where no man has gone before'. SF allows the exploration of all kinds of spiritual and metaphysical themes as we see in *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, the *X files* ('the truth is out there') and other forms of the genre. In fiction, there can be very complex investigations of spiritual themes, from the wealth of the *Dune* material to the 'Culture' novels of Iain M Banks. To take just one example, in his Culture novel *Look to Windward*, Banks explores the nature of love and bereavement, guilt and revenge. In a universe in which heaven is not in doubt, a creature is sent to save those who cannot be admitted to heaven by sacrificing himself in an eye-for-an-eye act of revenge. His target is a godlike 'Mind' which cares for the lives of billions of sentient beings. The Mind takes pity on the creature sent to destroy it whose heart has been wrecked by the loss of his mate. It suffers with him and chooses to die with him, having taking upon itself the pain and the pity of the mad human urge to destroy others for power. It saves



everyone – but it also exacts judgement on those who have used the creature's suffering to manipulate and betray him. In another of Banks' great science fiction explorations: *Excession*, a sign is sent from heaven, but technologically supreme humans and their sentient computers are so obsessed with conspiracy theories that they fail to perceive what it is. Against this story is set another narrative of infidelity and betrayal which has to be redeemed and restored. There is a moral lesson in that particular story for us all.



## Abuse of imagination

### Rescue us from the tyranny of our thoughts

In Alain Robbe-Grillet's novel *La Jalousie* (1957) the story is told as through the imagination of a person who suspects his wife is having an affair. This doubt and suspicion corrupts everything he sees and creates a sense of intense mental strain. As readers of such a story, we are drawn into a world which is undermined by paralysing and destructive emotion. The imagination becomes twisted and corrupted until we cannot understand the 'truth' any more.

Many of us may be able to sympathise with such a viewpoint, but we may not realise just how badly negative thoughts and emotions like jealousy, covetousness and pride can twist and corrupt our imaginations so that we mis-read situations and colour them with our fantasies. Once doubt and mistrust take hold in our minds, we may not be able to cope with situations adequately and so our imaginative wondering and dreaming becomes full of fears, anxieties and mental suffering which we then project on to others. The Christian mystic Walter Hilton, in his book *The Ladder (Scale) of Perfection*, puts it like this:

**All these stirrings will always boil out of thy heart, as water runneth out of the spring of a stinking well, and do hinder the sight of thy soul, that thou mayest never see nor feel clearly the love of Jesus Christ**

Shakespeare examined the destructive power of jealousy within the human imagination in his play *Othello*, in which Othello, fed false information by Iago, begins to imagine his wife must be sleeping with another man. Suddenly every little word and action seems to prop up the distrust in his tormented imagination and, as jealousy takes hold, sense and reason depart from him and he descends into a hell of raving and horror in which his wife, Desdemona must die.

The spiritual journey then, requires learning the ability to trust, to form open and honest relationships, to disclose our secrets, forgive our enemies and to give up our negative emotions. Within the Church, the act of confession and repentance has allowed Christians to examine the abuse of the imagination which can so quickly take hold in us and to let it go. But for many people inside and outside the Church, this process is seen as restrictive and guilt inducing, rather than equipping us with a language of liberation, freedom and new beginning. Our spiritual journey requires us to learn this language as a means of growing closer to God. Nor is this a spiritual discipline to be taken lightly – giving up fear, hatred, mistrust and guilt can be exceptionally hard, because these feelings actually feed our imagination and nurture it.



When they are gone, we may feel peace but also emptiness. What are the *good* feelings and emotions which expand our imagination?



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### ACTIVITY POINT

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**Think of a time when you felt intensely jealous, covetous, angry, guilty or mistrustful. Imagine telling the story of how you felt to another person, setting the scene or background and explaining your role within it.**

- ❖ **What details might you exaggerate, change or leave out altogether?**
- ❖ **What did that experience of negative emotion do to you and how have you/might you overcome it?**
- ❖ **What did the experience teach you?**



## The spirals entwined, imagining with others

### Films

Going to the cinema, buying or renting DVD films is an overwhelmingly popular activity in our western society.

*Cinema attendance: by age, 1984–2001: Social Trends 33*

The proportion of adults attending the cinema has increased over recent years. Frequent cinema attendance in Great Britain has consistently been highest among those aged between 15 and 24. In 2001, 50 per cent of this age group reported attending the cinema once a month or more compared with 15 per cent of those aged 35 and over. The success of ‘family’ films such as *Shrek* and *Cats and Dogs*, with the third and fifth highest takings in the UK box office in 2001, may have contributed to recent increases in attendance among those aged between 7 and 14. The type of films released through mainstream cinemas tend to be large budget blockbusters and the increase in cinema attendance may be related to the expansion and investment in multiplex cinemas across the country. In addition to the multiplexes, smaller independent cinemas cater for more specialist ‘art house’ audiences.<sup>13</sup>



Engaging with people about films may be one of the most effective ways of exploring imaginatively with each another about where we are in our spiritual journey.

Films such as *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *The Matrix* trilogy have generated huge amounts of discussion and debate about the themes within the films and if we do not become imaginatively involved in such debate, the discussions will simply go on without Christian input. Yet we have so much to contribute to films which emerge from an unarticulated Christian background and which deal with fundamental issues of theology.

But perhaps we should give people the chance to explore films other than those in which we might be seen to have a sense of ownership or vested interest. Why shouldn't people going to see *Donnie Darko* or M Night Shyamalan's films be offered the chance to explore their experience of the film with us?



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## ACTIVITY POINT

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Revisit your favourite film (it doesn't have to be a 'deep' or 'spiritual' choice).

- ❖ Why do you enjoy this film so much?
- ❖ Why is it important to you?
- ❖ How does the film engage your imagination or emotions?
- ❖ What would you say if you were to recommend the film to a friend?

Now imagine doing this activity in terms of your Christian life.

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## Imagining: journeying into Christian tradition

### The opening door

In C S Lewis' story *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the wardrobe famously opens into another world, a world in which the children in the story confront the forces of good and evil. We are called by God to open doors for people to glimpse another world, another way of life, another way of being, not to insist that they follow this path or that path within that world, but to explore it, wander where they will and come back to us full of questions and ideas about their experiences. They will have met Aslan, but it may be up to us to help them discover who he is.

So we have to be careful to make sure that people can get into the wardrobe in the first place and get a glimpse of that other world which is the world of our own spiritual journey. People cannot walk our spiral path of exploration if we keep putting obstacles in their way. What then can we do to provide such tantalising glimpses of our Christian life and to offer invitations to walk in our world?

### Reimagine your church

The poet George Herbert wrote poetry when he let his imagination be inspired by every part of the church where he was vicar. He was inspired by the shapes he found in his church – his poem *The Altar* is laid out in an altar shape, but also by thinking about and meditating on the experience of being in his church for the sacraments and festivals. In effect, he entered into the world provided by the church building and explored every part of it in prayer, poetry and praise. Today we have even more possibilities:

**Church of Fools is an attempt to create holy ground on the net, where visitors can worship, pray and talk about faith. The church is intended for people on the edges (and beyond) of faith, and for Christians from all church traditions.**<sup>14</sup>

When this 'virtual church' was set up on the internet, it was flooded with people coming to visit it. Only a few such people could enter as complete characters within the church, but other visitors could enter as 'ghosts' and wander round the building investigating its world and praying or praising as they felt the need. For some people, the attraction



seemed to be that the virtual church was rather like a computer game in which a new environment is explored and opens up to new worlds once you have completed a level and got to know it thoroughly.

How could we see our own churches imaginatively in order to provide people with hints of the world we would like them to explore? Once people enter our worlds, what do we have to engage their imagination and spiritual response? What else could we do to suggest that we want them to go further and experience the world of our worship, our community, our hospitality, our vision of kingdom?




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## ACTIVITY POINT

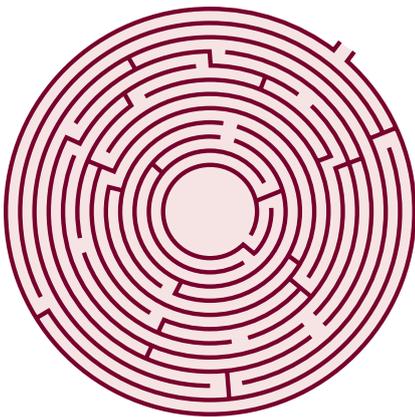
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**How much is there to explore within your church world?**

**What could be done to enhance the exploratory experience through the imagination?**

.....

## Labyrinth



One of the most imaginative projects for spiritual exploration in recent times has been the installation of labyrinths in different churches. The purpose of the labyrinth is to set out a prayer walk or pilgrimage within a small space.<sup>15</sup> People are encouraged to walk the winding route into the heart of the labyrinth, perhaps stopping at waystations for special moments of prayer and meditation. At the centre of the labyrinth is usually some marker or other reminder of God. Here, walkers are invited to pause, rest and reflect, before journeying outward again to rejoin the world. In this respect, the labyrinth is another version of the double spiral. When we walk this path, we are not all going in the same direction, but when we find people going in a different direction, then we have the chance of encounter. When we pause in our journey towards the centre, the spiritual heart, we may find others alongside us who have come in by another route.



In one church in New Zealand, a labyrinth was constructed outside to act as a place for repentance and healing. As people began their journey they were first confronted by an installation of human wreckage including scrapped cars. At the second station, they were invited to contemplate a cross covered in empty wine bottles and running with water, and finally they were faced with a huge volcanic rock blazing with flame. These intense images had a profound effect on people both inside and outside the church. One visitor found in the flaming rock an extraordinary vision of an almighty God.




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## REFLECTION POINT

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**What was the New Zealand labyrinth trying to say to people through its stations?**

.....





## Summary of the journey: where have we been?

This chapter has asked us to consider the role of the imagination in the task of exploring our own spirituality and sharing our faith with others.

- ❖ Imagination allows us to open up our mental worlds and to use our memories and experience to wonder and dream. Our imagination needs to be stimulated and fed in order to engage in creative exploration. Within our imagination, God can engage with us, provoke us, empower us, and challenge us.
- ❖ Scripture tells us about the role of dreams and vision in biblical times and dreams are still important to people today. Many people have powerful spiritual experiences which they treasure but may not repeat to anyone, least of all a Christian friend or minister. It takes special listening skills to access what has happened in their imagination. Yet Jesus told stories precisely to activate imagination and reflection in order to get people to focus on God. Imagination has an important function in worship and we should cultivate the imaginative response as a means of full and deep relationship with God. The tradition of mystical writing in the Christian tradition also teaches us about the power of imagination.
- ❖ We can also engage with the imagination of God by meditating on the extraordinary nature of creation and by broadening our exploration of knowledge and ideas, come to know more of the breadth of God's mighty works.
- ❖ People with mental illness often experience a breakdown of the imaginative function, leaving them frightened and confused. Jesus gives us models of healing for those who endure this kind of hurt and it is our task to walk alongside our friends and neighbours in distress and to receive whatever they can tell us or show us of their spiritual lives.
- ❖ Different kinds of popular fiction offer us models of imaginative exploration, but we can become bogged down with 'criticisms' of Church. Rather, through engagement with such writing, we can build platforms of imaginative interaction between ourselves and others and to find common spiritual threads and themes.
- ❖ The imagination can nonetheless become populated by negative emotions such as jealousy and hatred which distort spiritual exploration and drag us away from knowledge and love of God. Because all of us are subject to sin, we need to acknowledge ways of purging the imagination of such colouring and the need in all of us for restoration and healing.
- ❖ Films are an incredibly popular form of cultural entertainment. Through films, we can reach out to others and engage them in imaginative exploration of the stories we see on the screen.

- ❖ Through re-imagining our church to see its possibilities for wonder, awe and mystery, we can offer people a journey into a new world. But we must not stop there, because we want to offer even more worlds for exploration: world of worship, fellowship and community. How can we make those worlds even more attractive to the spiritual seeker?



WE NORMALLY have a Meditation point/waystation at the end of the Summaries??????





## Journey points for imagining

### *Purpose of the journey*

To learn about the power and possibility of imagination, wondering and dreaming; to learn more about the imagination of others; to encounter others creatively and to find ways to share faith.

### 1. Starting out: the never-ending story

Find a number of everyday objects eg a bucket, a cheese grater, a mousetrap a dog's lead etc, about twice as many objects as there are people in the group. Ask each person to choose an object and to spend five minutes thinking about it – what the object is, where it comes from, what might be done with it. Ask each person in turn to begin a story about his or her object. After about a minute, or sooner, if people begin to dry up, ask the next person to continue the story but to bring in their own object.

After everyone has told the story of their object, ask people how they felt about the exercise. Were some objects easier to deal with imaginatively than others? Did the group want to continue the story or to reach some sort of proper ending or conclusion? Was the exercise fun or hard work?

### 2. The game of the gift

Seat members of the group in a circle. You will need an 'unpleasant' object such as a bloody knife/axe from a joke shop or other toy store. The rules of the game are that each person in turn must hold the object. Beginning with the first person, each person offers the knife as a 'gift' to the next person. No one may refuse the gift but must treat the object as a gift from a friend, thank their friend for the gift and say what they might do with it before passing it on. This can also be done by miming or role play. Indicate at the beginning that there are no right or wrong answers.

Did anyone talk about using the knife in a violent way? If not, why not?

Another version of this interesting game is to use a 'magic' ring. In what ways might handling these objects and talking about them be uncomfortable?

[Christians in groups typically talk about washing the knife, putting it away, making it safe, transforming it, using it for useful purposes, or taking it to the police. It is extremely rare to address the violence that the knife may have done or which the person themselves might do. People outside the church often have no compunction about talking about violence in their own lives or in the lives of others. So where do we face our own anger?] *why is this bracketted so \_\_\_ and perhaps it needs rephrased in light of the current scare-stories of knife-crime??*

### 3. Other people's stories

Bring in a set of magazine/newspaper photographs of unknown people (eg advertisement models) or ask the group members to bring in a

selection of photographs which include a number of people in the background. A holiday video will do as well. Ask group members to concentrate on one person in the background and imagine what they are doing there. Build up an imaginary profile of the person –

- What is the person called?
- Who are they with?
- Why are they there?
- What are they doing?
- How are they feeling?
- What is their life like?
- What dreams do they have?
- Where might they be a year's time?

The purpose of this process is to explore what it takes to turn strangers into friends and to examine the empathic process.

#### 4. Making a labyrinth

Using pieces of paper or card as stepping stones, construct a simple labyrinth in the form of a spiral, ending at a central point marked by a chair. Ask the group to agree some simple images representing matters for prayer relevant to your particular church. Draw the images on to the stones.

Make some time for the group to walk the spiral one by one and pause for about half a minute at the chair before leaving the labyrinth.

Would it be possible to construct a labyrinth or other kind of prayer walk inside or outside your church? Could it be permanent, or a walk that is set out and then put away?

#### 5. Larger activities using 'imagination resources'

These activities are supported by materials on the website

#### 6. Start a film club

Organise a showing of a popular video at a given time and place with a discussion group afterwards. Resources for particular films are given on the MTAG website [www.spiritualjourneys.org](http://www.spiritualjourneys.org).

#### 7. Form a Reading Group

Organise a reading group to study a work of popular fiction. Give people at least a month to read the book.

Resources for study and questions for the group are given on the MTAG website.

#### 8. Imagining through Bible Study

Learn more about the *Godly Play* experience. How can the exploration of wondering and dreaming within Bible Study be used to make adult bible study in your church engage people's imagination?

## 9. Working together imaginatively

Silvia Dimitrova asked Canon Graham Kings to record on tape the passage in John 20. She prayed, listened and painted. This is the result:



In response, Graham wrote this poem:

### *Rabbouni*

Who is this woman facing this man?  
Head lightly inclined,  
eyes wide open, gazing;  
Hands uplifted, palms upward, surprised;  
Gorgeously arrayed.

Who is this man facing this woman?  
Coming from the right,  
Profile clear, bearded,  
Hand outstretched, palm down,  
Gloriously appared.

Behind her, two angels hover  
Reflecting her shape:  
Behind him, scented trees lean  
setting the scene:  
Below her, a dark opening hints.  
All silent witnesses.

The eyes have it:  
focus of tension and attention.  
One word awakes her: 'Mary.'  
One word responds: 'Rabbouni.'

Their hands shape a triangle  
At the centre of meeting:  
Her two, shocked and suppliant,  
His one, blessing, calming, sending.

*Graham Kings, 11 September 2004  
on a painting by Silvia Dimitrova 'Rabbouni'*

How could you form partnerships with others to explore the Christian faith in imaginative ways?

(Endnotes)

- 1 2 So Walter Brueggemann writes about the 'prophetic imagination' – the way the prophets were able to bring God's word to bear imaginatively on Israel's situation and by that means confront the people with the need to change and conform to God's will.
- 3 It is just as well Joseph did not have access to the cited dream interpretation website where 'to see a cow with a skeleton face, suggests that your mother or motherly figure in your waking life is displaying a lack of emotions. She is being unresponsive to your needs' and 'To see a herd of cows, indicates your need to belong'.
- And there are also those practising Christian interpretation by means of biblical models, such as John Paul Jackson in the USA.
- 4
- 5 *Healing Dreams Triangle* 1993, and *Dream Stories*, BRF 2002 by Russ Parker include an examination of how God has spoken to his people in dreams and continues to do so today.
- 6 David Hay and Kate Hunt, *Understanding the Spirituality of People who don't go to Church*, University of Nottingham 2000, p 21.
- 7 David Jones, *The Sleeping Lord and other fragments*, Faber 1974, p86.
- 8 For example, see Peter Millar, former warden of the Iona community, *Our Hearts Still Sing*, Wild Goose Publishing, 2004.
- 9 For further inspiration on the modern spiritual search in relation to the wisdom of the Fathers and Mothers of the Church, see for example, Rowan Williams, *Silence and Honey Cakes*, Lion publishing 2003.
- 10 A helpful book is *Changing Minds, our lives and mental illness*, Gaskell Publications 2002, edited by Rosalind Ramsay, Anne Page, Tricia Goodman and Deborah Hart.
- 11 Erin's story at <http://www.dbsalliance.org/Stories/Erin.html>
- 12 And the Archbishop of Canterbury's dialogues with Philip Pullman have illustrated what it means to have generous and courteous discourse within the double spiral of spiritual engagement, providing a model we all could well follow in our own encounters with spiritual seekers.
- 13 Office of National Statistics at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>
- 14 Go via <http://www.shipoffools.com/church/> to see what happened to this experiment.
- 15 There are also online versions of the prayer journey. For example, <http://www.yfc.co.uk/labyrinth/online.html>

A photograph of a crowd at a concert. The scene is dimly lit, with a bright light source on the stage creating a strong backlight effect. Many people's hands are raised in the air, silhouetted against the light. The overall mood is energetic and celebratory. The text 'The continuing journey' is overlaid in the center-right of the image.

**The  
continuing  
journey**

# Why do theology like this?

## Religion vs spirituality?

The declining influence of religion – particularly Christianity – in western societies has been the chief topic of the study of religion for over a century, but in recent years the emergence of something called ‘spirituality’ has increasingly demanded attention. Survey after survey shows that increasing numbers of people now prefer to call themselves ‘spiritual’ rather than ‘religious’. Terms like spirituality, holism, New Age, mind-body-spirit, yoga, feng shui, chi and chakra have become more common in the general culture than traditional Christian vocabulary.<sup>1</sup>

This book has to do with the mission of the Church in the world, our world. But why on earth should the Church bother with its mission, if the trend is towards not only decline of its traditions, but multiple expressions of spirituality outside the Church are spreading like wildfire through our communities? Surely the apologetic tradition has failed and the self-defined spirituality of the current generation is overrunning a Church whose options have run out? This book has sought to show that this is a false view. The phenomenon we observe has to do with the theological and spiritual languages available to people in our western society, which have diverged and grown apart. When we fail to speak each other’s languages gaps and holes start to appear in the way we can offer, share and make sense of our experiences of faith. We can already see this divergence in our own Christian languages, if we care to look, in the way we have steadfastly ignored the fresh expressions of Christian understanding coming into the western tradition from the missionary experience of other cultures and peoples. So instead of celebrating when the Holy Spirit dances, we become spiritually deaf, blind and dumb to what God is doing in our world.

Yet God speaks *everyone’s* language, so we should not be surprised when people respond to the work of the Holy Spirit outside the Church and signs of spiritual search and spiritual journey spring up everywhere around us. The Pentecost experience is one of joining in with God’s own ability to flood people’s minds and hearts with his presence ‘in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power’ (Acts 2.11). When the apostles receive the Holy Spirit they are given surprised and grateful insight into how God speaks into every person’s situation. Our own task, then, the Christian story and our story, grows out of this Pentecostal understanding, but have we forgotten the God of surprises? The Church exists to speak and be spoken to by every community, in recognition and exploration of God’s ‘deeds of power’. If we seem to have forgotten this, then we need to re-learn it. Once again we have to be the people of Pentecost and not only repeat Peter’s words, but understand their importance in our own society: ‘For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him’ (Acts 2. 39). The Pentecost experience undoes the chaos and confusion of Babel, but not by imposing one common language; instead it gives us a picture of mutual intelligibility, deep understanding and mutuality within diversity. Pentecost does not annul Babel but God redeems with diversity. This, then, is our task, to journey with all kinds of different and diverse people, and speak God’s language, the gracious speech that overcomes all barriers, to them and to receive that language from them. Once again we must recover the prophetic witness of the early church, when Paul and the apostles stood among the manifestations of spiritual quest all around them.

Within the double spiral, we walk our own journey and meet those who worship at the altar of the unknown god. It is true that in doing

**Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god'. What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being... Acts 17. 22-28**

so we also meet people who worship idols, but then that is just as true of some Christians. In this midst of this searching, in the blind alleys and the roads to Damascus, our faith requires us to make the connections which enable us to affirm the spiritual search in people and to enable them to encounter, recognise and name Christ for themselves. The double spiral should enable us to meet again and rejoice with Dionysius the Areopagite and Damaris, but also to continue to walk with those who scoff (Acts 17. 32-34). In some ways there is not enough 'scoffing' at us; perhaps our greatest danger is that other wayfarers claim *already to know* what Christian life is about, and view with benign indifference what they see as a quaint and old-fashioned variety of vaguely spiritual searching. In a strange way we need to teach other wayfarers *to scoff better*. We need to be a model not of 'religious experiences' which everyone can smile at, but of sensual lives, transformed and deepened by God's healing touch, which challenge, inspire and disturb those who travel with us.

The double-spiral does not mean that we encounter other spiritual languages uncritically. Our journey through the senses has told us that the facility of attention is especially important. As Christians, we enter into a pattern of discipleship, but that doesn't mean we have nothing else to learn. We have to learn a new kind of listening, so that our encounter with the spirituality of others may nourish and sustain, but also challenge and change us. That listening should also help us to identify damaged and damaging languages, which themselves need challenging or are in need of healing and repair. One of the special tasks of Christian evangelism is not to *force* people to speak our language, but to help them transform their own languages in ways that they themselves acknowledge they need. There are gaps, hesitations and silences where the spiritual journey has not provided enough of the grammar people need to feel they have found what they seek. As Christians we believe that God transforms not only words, but also changes silences into encounters with God. There is always more to say to God, about God, to each other, and that may mean more talk or it may mean more attentive silence. God's eternal Word in the person of Jesus, can literally 'make sense' of what people have been searching for, so that at last they can say it for themselves, say 'yes' to the God who eternally says 'yes' to them.

## Body languages

### Isn't it funny how we don't speak the language of love?

Robbie Williams,  
*Misunderstood*, 2004

It is tempting to think of the language of the body as the first common language we have with every other human being; it seems so basic to being human. As human beings, we experience the world through our senses, so our sense-making takes place through a 'grammar' of body experience that coincides with that of others in a fundamental way. Yet we have seen how body languages are *languages*, with meanings, nuances and associations. Not all body language grammars are alike. What we have done is to try to show how these experiences connect with people searching for faith outside the church and how those connections form bridges through which new languages of mutual learning may themselves be learned. Ours is a sense-making faith.

When Irenaeus says that 'the glory of God is a living man', he is making a Christological statement. When we explore our body languages we do this not only in awe and gratitude towards the Creator, but also because our sensate male and female bodies can become living memories of Christ's own body, that was born, experienced our life, was crucified, died, was buried and rose again from the dead. In this sense, our particular Christian body languages show themselves as a fascinating bodily dialect. Our task is to show what *difference* that makes within the double spiral of spiritual journeying. Our own exploration of these body languages, these 'grammars' of sense experience should not simply melt into the pool of shared experience, even 'religious' experience, because our own sense-making, which propels us in our own journey, takes place within the knowledge of the Easter experience. Walter Brueggeman argues that Jesus' resurrection is the 'ultimate energising of a new future'. It is that energy that informs the way we learn our body languages and transforms them. We are not just spiritual people investigating the wonder of nature; our particular spiritual experience as Christians is transformative. The grace of God permeates our world in ways which affect our spiritual perceptions and reactions. So we understand in mission that the Christian commitment, sustained by Word and sacraments, must result in real change within the world. Our journey is not aimless, but directed towards God's purposes.

So we can move from the contemplation of Jesus as God's son incarnate in a real physical body to the understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ. St Paul indicates that Jesus's physical human body was limited to a particular period of time and space, but that his Body continues to exist in community. Moreover, every aspect of Jesus's ministry is part of that Body and must work to transform the world to become as God intends. Our body languages then are the medium through which we make it known that the Body of Christ is not an abstract concept, but an organic witness to the work of God in the world. The Church in its final and best form, in all its range and diversity, is the Body at work, glorifying God by being alive and by using its sense-making faith to change brokenness into beauty.

The theology of the physical body and of the Body of Christ is important because of its relation to the brokenness and fragmentation we see around us. We have had to acknowledge the shadow side, the

fact that we live in a broken world contaminated by human disobedience and sin. In the journey chapters we have reminded ourselves that we can abuse our bodies and use our bodies to abuse others in so many different ways. Many people outside the Church are aware of the presence of evil or brokenness in the world around them -and their spirituality struggles to take account of it – yet their perception of the Church is that it is obsessed by a negative, condemnatory language of sin. Our exploration of our body languages should enable us to share the understanding that through Christ we have access to redemption, reconciliation and transformation of that brokenness into healing. These are the ‘grammars’ which people more readily understand and which we must now explore with them, replacing the language which has been misunderstood with that of love.

**Not the senses I have,  
but what I do with them,  
is my kingdom.**

Helen Keller

### **Journeying together**

Our spiritual journey then, as it spirals out into the world around us, carries the stamp of Christ’s uniqueness and distinctiveness. We are Christ’s people, Christians, and that marks and shapes how we grow as spiritual people. But that distinctiveness is more than a set of identifiers; living in Christ means that we cannot help but be infected by the mission of God in Christ. What is recognisable about us is that we live and grow in this particular life. At the same time, how does this journey allow us to find out what ‘bad grammars’ we have in our Christian discourse, to free ourselves from a language that prevents us from sharing honestly and openly with others and which then permits us to speak the language of love?

### **The double spiral, where could we find ourselves?**

Another important function of doing theology in this way is to give permission for missionary apologetic to be set within the context of wonder, exploration, play, dreaming and imagination. Too often, the way we are nurtured, taught, trained within the Christian faith, locks us into a model of faithfulness that brooks no experiment, no looking outside the box, no flirting with anything difficult, baffling or dangerous, and quite possibly no fun.

In the *Godly Play* sessions, the heart of the experience is when the precious gold box is opened to reveal the elements for journeying into a story of God. Those elements are the same for each telling of that particular story, but how the story is told depends on the ability of those present to be seized with wonder at what would or could happen next. We hope this book and the accompanying website is the start of just such a way of sharing faith and involving others in that experience of wonder, gratitude and delight. And our journey, indeed our whole Christian life, is participation in a never-ending story of God’s gracious deeds. This language of love is one of endless possibility....

### **Finding ourselves in worship**

‘Sense making faith’ implies more than a set of intellectual arguments or even equipping ourselves with a ‘grammar’ of spiritual insight and understanding. All Christian activity, searching and exploration finds its

way inevitably into worship. But we will not 'end up' in worship, but find that worship is the means to open up and to pass through, equipped for God's mission and our work in the world, led by the Spirit. What we offer to God in worship is our souls and bodies, and this worship equips our physical human lives as means of witness and transformation in the culture around us.

In the experience of Eucharist, all the aspects of our sense making faith come together<sup>2</sup>, as we have described through the chapters. The Eucharist holds the spirals of our spiritual journeys together and reaches out to touch and heal the journeys of those who are still seeking. The Eucharist provides powerful images of brokenness: bread that is broken, wine that is poured out and turns these into images of healing, for the bread and wine is Jesus: 'only say the word and I shall be healed'. The Eucharist reaches out to all our senses and requires us to make the words of Jesus among his friends at the Last Supper, words of affirmation and assent which resonate far beyond the confines of Church: This is my Body.

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(Endnotes)

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