The heart has its reasons … … …

Exploring the contribution of four published works to the understanding of spirituality, health and contemplation.

Stephen G Wright

This thesis is submitted for the degree of PhD by published works.

The University of Cumbria: Institute of the Arts.

April 2024.

Word Count (excluding references and title pages): 45874

Abstract

The heart has its reasons… … …

Exploring the contribution of four published works to the understanding of spirituality, health and contemplation.

Stephen G Wright

This account draws on over four decades of personal spiritual inquiry and related publications, culminating in the four books examined here - *Coming Home: notes for the journey*; *Contemplation: an introduction; Burnout: a spiritual crisis;* and *Heartfullness: the way of contemplation*. The introduction explores the methodology and issues leading up to their creation. Each is considered separately to illustrate how it has contributed to understanding the interface between health, spirituality and contemplation. It is also explored how they may stand as a whole in their direction of travel, seeking to be a coherent, contemporary, practical guide to spiritual exploration. They are autoethnographic in drawing on personal experience and data from over three decades of work as a spiritual director. They also include evidence from empirical research and literature documenting the spiritual life, stemming back over two millennia and over many traditions. *Coming Home* offers a framework for supportive spiritual exploration as well as evidence for the connection between spirituality and health. *Contemplation* summarises some insights on its nature as a dimension of spiritual development; as a condition rather than a practice and coherent with mysticism. *Burnout* explores the, arguably, little discussed spiritual perspective of this condition, offering evidence for and a guide to its inclusion. *Heartfullness* draws on a twelve-step framework with a set of values and practices that support spiritual emergence and maturation. In each of the works it is contended that, through synthesis and integration of a broad spectrum of perspectives, new ideas may have emerged for practice and research. In so doing, it is suggested that they contribute to the continuing conversation on the connection between spirituality, contemplation and health. The study offers evidence of how the works have been disseminated and further contribute to ongoing deliberations on their themes.

Contents

Declaration

I declare that this thesis, submitted for the purpose of the application of PhD by published works, has been composed entirely by myself. No part of the content is the product of A.I. and the work presented is entirely my own, except where stated otherwise, by reference or acknowledgment. It has not been included in any other report or dissertation or previously submitted, in whole or in part, to this or any other institution. The resources to produce this report are entirely my own and not subject to funding, influence or support from any other persons or organisations.

Signed:

Date: 24th April 2024

Acknowledgements

My deep appreciation for their wise guidance and infinite patience, and sense of humour, goes to my supervisors throughout this process, Reverend Sue Williams PhD and Professor Robert Williams PhD. I am grateful also to the library, graduate school and research student admissions teams at the University of Cumbria for their gentle support of this technophobe. I am hugely indebted to Helen Gørrill PhD for her fine proof reading. I am especially thankful to Ian, for endless cups of tea and help, and to Jeannie, Betty and Brian for their encouragement.

“The heart has its reasons which reason does not know.”

Blaise Pascal *Pensées* (Trotter 1947:78)

Introduction part 1: A brief background to this study

> *They all agree that the 'more' really exists; though some of them hold it to exist in the shape of a personal god or gods, while others are satisfied to conceive it as a stream of ideal tendency embedded in the eternal structure of the world. They all agree, however, that it acts as well as exists, and that something really is affected for the better when you throw your life into its hands.*
>
> William James (1902:511)

The four books[1] offered here essentially offer a set of teachings rooted in personal experience of the mystical, transmission of teachings from many teachers both living and dead, and the foundation of principles tried and tested down the ages yet offered and expressed for this time and interested persons. It is posited that they offer a contribution to that genre of literature that seeks to balance deep immersion in the spiritual life both outside and inside the superstructure of organised religion, in a social media and internet age when so much is available at the press of a button.

The aims of this study are to set out the background methodology of my approach, summaries of the four books under consideration, and support for the view that they have contributed to the wider conversation about the nature and practice of spirituality, its application in the current times and the connection to health and wellbeing.

James (above) suggests that life is "affected for the better" when the deep plunge into the spiritual life in exploring the "more" is undertaken, and "you throw your life into its hands." Both in the books and in these pages, I explore some of the consequences of being thrown into the hands of the "more". I include a personal account of that experience.

It boils down to this: I had experiences from childhood, and still do, that did not fit with the reality that everyone told me was real. As time went by, I verified or otherwise these experiences by testing them in discernment against the wisdom of respected teachers, against the words of those who have gone before me, and against the wisdom in the holy books. Out of that a path of service emerged to that Beloved, that "more" which included

[1] For simplicity, and to reduce repetition, throughout this text I have often referred to this group of four books as the *works*.

sharing what I had learned in these books, suggesting guidelines for our own authentic development, participating in a variety of teaching milieu – conferences, media presentations, social media, retreats and courses. The books formed the first part of that sharing, with the intention to support the spiritual work of others.

In this study I therefore propose to set out some of that experience, show how it can be supported by empirical studies and other deeply explored sources in the literature, and consider some options of the impact beyond publication. To provide a framework for this study and the books, I have drawn on an autoethnographic approach, using the qualitative to support the *works* and further the conversation contained within the books[2]. However, the limitations of this approach are recognised and therefore all four books, and this study, offer a personal story while simultaneously seeking to strengthen the arguments by reference to other reputable and objective sources.

Personal experience can be illuminating and interesting (to the experiencer), but it is contested here that this is an insufficient scaffold to support the books and this study, and their subsequent impact. Autoethnography is more than personal biography and requires other elements to strengthen its approach.

Autoethnography: in Appendices 1 and 2, I explore some of the background to my introduction to research at university. At that time, in the 1970s in the nursing department of a medical school, the emphasis was very much on the requirements of quantitative research.

[2] Autoethnography and autobiography are not the same thing. The content of the latter offers a subjective personal account requiring no external validation, of possible interest to writer and reader, but of limited value as evidence to support further general application. Autoethnography, as suggested above, refers to a research strategy to illuminate and add depth to a study by providing personal examples that can then be tested against other accounts and empirical data (Ellis et al. 2011, Poulos 2021). Without this testing the works would be of limited value to others save as possibly interesting stories. Throughout the works, extensive use of referencing to other evidence strengthens the autoethnographic approach, it is argued, by assisting easier accessibility to scholarly evidence for both the general and academic reader. In the case of the works, use is frequently made of my personal accounts, but only to illustrate a general point, or to provide a platform from which to compare and contrast other relevant data and perspectives. Thus, it is argued that the autoethnographic approach in these works enhances their validity and relevance beyond the works themselves, and supports further study and practical application, because such stories are supported by empirical evidence both qualitative and quantitative. The intention behind all the works, being thus grounded in lived experience as well as empirical evidence, is to provide trusted handbooks for spiritual practice.

This was to the exclusion of other possibilities, and certainly the inclusion of accounts of personal experiences was not considered acceptable. However, since that time,

> Qualitative approaches have become accepted and indeed embraced as empirical methods within the social sciences, as scholars have realised that many of the phenomena in which we are interested are complex and require deep inner reflection and equally penetrating examination. Quantitative approaches often cannot capture such phenomena well through their standard methods (e.g., self-report measures), so qualitative designs using interviews and other in-depth data-gathering procedures offer exciting, nimble, and useful research approaches (Hill and Knox 2021:vii).

Autoethnography offers a milieu in which personal experience can be integrated in the exploration of phenomena, while at the same time being tested against authoritative sources such as empirical studies, including the quantitative. An example of this occurs in *Coming Home* where I explore the relevance of the spiritual life to health and healing. Autoethnography may be summarised as an approach to research which,

> draws on and analyses or interprets the lived experience of the author and connects researcher insights to self-identity, cultural rules and resources, communication practices, traditions, premises, symbols, rules, shared meanings, emotions, values, and larger social, cultural, and political issues (Poulos 2021:4).

I would add to this definition the subject of spiritual issues, and in the books and this study I offer definitions as to what this might be. In this approach, spiritual experiences and insights are explored but set against a backdrop, indeed arguably tested against the studies and experiences of others. In doing so, a dynamic is set up which may permit the critique of the personal experience and the cultural milieu in which it takes place. Through this, the value of personal experience and relationships with others and events can be acknowledged (as opposed to dismissed as in my early experiences; see Appendix 2). Such an approach also demands deep self-reflection and reflexivity, in order to validate or otherwise any experience. In this study and in the *works*, I offer a model for how this can be undertaken, briefly subjecting any experience to the reflexivity of personal reflection, submission into supervision, dialogue with other groups and comparing and contrasting with that which has gone before in order to

sieve out the wheat from the chaff, the true from the false. This testing process, as will be considered in this study and found in the books, might then permit the offering of any works to others who might be interested. In the latter case, within this study I propose examples of how some aspects of the *works* have been taken up and tested by others. Poulos, again, summarises this process succinctly,

> Autoethnography, simply put, is an observational, participatory, and reflexive research method that uses writing about the self in contact with others to illuminate the many layers of human social, emotional, theoretical, political, and cultural praxis (i.e., action, performance, accomplishment). In other words, autoethnography is an observational data-driven phenomenological method of narrative research and writing that aims to offer tales of human social and cultural life that are compelling, striking, and evocative (showing or bringing forth strong images, memories, or feelings)" (Poulos 2021:5).

Thus, within this study and in the books on which the study is based, I have sought to combine the subjective with the objective, specifically in the realm of spirituality. In so doing, I offer a contribution to the ongoing millennia old conversation about the spiritual life and its practice and relevance to this time and place.

Introduction part 2: Variations on a theme

> *Those who are familiar with the different developments of Mysticism will not need to be reminded that there is hardly any soil, be it ever so barren, where it will not strike root; hardly any creed, however stern, however formal, round which it will not twine itself. It is, indeed, the eternal cry of the human soul for rest; the insatiable longing of a being wherein infinite ideals are fettered and cramped by a miserable actuality; and so long as man is less than an angel and more than a beast, this cry will not for a moment fail to make itself heard. Wonderfully uniform, too, is its tenor: in all ages, in all countries, in all creeds, whether it comes from the Brahmin sage, the Greek philosopher, the Persian poet, or the Christian quietist, it is in essence an enunciation more or less clear, more or less eloquent, of the aspiration of the soul to cease altogether from self, and to be at one with God.*
>
> Edward Browne (1927:136)

Connecting the Works

Browne's words, written in the language customary for a man of his time, nevertheless may offer a foundation for the four books explored in this text – a sense of the universality of the mystical experience and the search for it. It is the "twine" Browne describes that binds the books together and gives form to them and this document; the possibility of teasing out the common binding of the mystical or contemplative experience, while acknowledging the myriad ways in which that experience is manifested (Underhill 1911; Katsaros and Kaplan 1969; Vardey 1995; William Davies 2021). It is the search followed by millions down the ages for the "direct encounter, knowing and apprehension of the Beloved" (Wright 2022a:37).

In the discussion which follows, I propose to review each text and explore how each arose from practical experience. Each of them encapsulates something of their creator, which is why I wrote them. While they are rooted in my experience, it was always necessary to go backwards into the long history of writings about spirituality, both to support and refute that experience. In doing so, I will endeavour to show that they each offer: -

- helpful, practical guidance to contemporary spirituality – theory and practice;

- reflections upon the core value of the Christian mystical tradition in the current spiritual supermarket (that is, the availability of an enormous range of options that has emerged in recent decades, in contrast to the monolithic options available until the post-World War II era)

and how finding meeting places across faiths is possible while remaining true to and undiluted in that core;

- evidence drawn from empirical studies and the long history of documented works by those elders who have walked the spiritual path down the centuries;

- distinctive frameworks or models, emerging from these writings and experiences, for thought and action in the spiritual life, both personal and collective;

- further contributions to the ongoing conversation about the connection between spirituality and health.

While each of the books seeks to express a particular dimension of these myriad ways, it is intended that they are part of a whole and an emerging direction of travel. It is suggested that this 'whole' arises through a gradual accretion and development of ideas expressed in both personal experience and the support of evidence in many forms, drawn from sources ancient and modern. In writing the books, they offer my experience and the need to go backwards in time to the works of others to seek verification or refutation, and laterally into recent evidence in both thinking and research. Furthermore, this was never a solo journey. In the interests of 'walking the talk' stressed in the *works*, the journeying required personal testing in subjecting myself to ongoing spiritual direction and various reflective communities. Thus, it may be seen that there is a cross fertilisation of ideas between the books and personal experience, out of which distinctive patterns and maps may have arisen to guide spiritual enquirers.

At this point I offer a short diversion into an earlier work, now out of print. It does not form part of the *works* examined here, but it represents a connecting line which may illustrate the evolution of thinking and praxis that preceded them.

Reflections on Spirituality and Health – a précis.

I offer a brief report on *Reflections on Spirituality and Health* (Wright 2005a) as this may be regarded as forming a bridge between one phase of published works and another, indeed one phase of my life and another. It was in this time that a continued shift from "terrestrial gravitation to the field of celestial gravitation" (Anon 2019:309) was under way, commonly reported by those following the spiritual life; a shift of orientation, values and attachments

from that of personal identity, ego and worldly norms, to that which is beyond the personal, the Divine. The initial experiences of mysticism, the fall into 'normalisation', then the process of reawakening is outlined both in *Coming Home* and *Burnout* and briefly summarised in the first two appendices. This was manifested as a shift in what I was writing about while in my 'conventional' professional phase (until approximately 1992) and then into exploring spirituality and its impact on health for good or ill. *Reflections* brought together many already published papers as well as new material.

I have not included *Reflections* among the four *works* in this account, in part because it is long out of print and in part because it stands now outside the particular corpus and their common ground in the four books under consideration here. The latter represent a focus on the practical application of spirituality to everyday life. Before that time (approximately 2010) my writing was concerned with explorations of spirituality and health and their application, if at all, to the wellbeing of patients and their carers.

This required among other things, that I kept up to date with current research on that subject, but by 2010 that interest had waned and attention to the practical application of spirituality waxed. In the run up to *Reflections*, two other co-authored and related works were published – *The Theory and Practice of Therapeutic Touch (*Sayre-Adams and Wright 1995) and *Sacred Space: right relationship and spirituality in health care* (Wright and Sayre-Adams 1998). Although the subjects (healing touch and spirituality) were not without controversy in mainstream health care at the time (Salvage 1997), they seemed to be part of a growing body of interest among health care professionals. They were also, even with any controversy, quite 'safe' in that they did not require any sharing of personal perspectives or my inner life. That changed with the publication of a series of papers in the late 1990s (Appendix 2) and the establishment of the journal *Sacred Space* (later to become *Spirituality and Health International*, published by Wiley and Sons, Chichester - see Appendix 3).

Space here does not permit a detailed discussion of the differences between health and healing. Briefly, they are derived from the same root word, the Teutonic *haelan*, (Sayre-Adams and Wright 1995:12) and are often used interchangeably. Historically, health has meant a focus on freedom from physical or mental disease. Thus, a person whose fractured femur has reunited, or someone with depression who has moved to a state of feeling happy and able to engage socially, might be considered healthy. The most broadly accepted definition of health

is that established by the World Health Organisation (WHO): *"*A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity*"* (WHO 2022). Over these last three decades, at least nine efforts have been made to persuade the WHO to add 'spirituality' to its definition, albeit so far unsuccessfully (Peng-Keller *et al*. 2022)

Health is a noun; healing is both noun and verb. Healing suggests that a broader spread of phenomena is at work, such as the emotional response to illness and the subjective individual experience. While healing can refer to the physiological processes that resolve injury or sickness, it also embraces notions of stress relief, acceptance and adjustment, meaning and purpose, hope and possibility, transformation and fulfilment. In healing, the emotional and spiritual dimensions are part of the process (Sayre-Adams and Wright 1995).

My early professional life in nursing (Appendices 1 and 2) fitted a fairly conventional approach for its time (1970 onwards). Nursing by that model was largely about restoring health, that is, helping minds and bodies to function again, followed by discharging them from care. A shift in my perception of what healing and health care might be began during a radical Masters' degree programme at Manchester University in 1979-81. After that, a decade followed of rethinking what nursing was all about, and encouraging changes from outmoded practices (to some degree of acclaim, see Appendix 3); a process coterminous by chance with the spiritual awakenings documented in *Coming Home* and summarised in Appendix 2.

Reflections was a culmination (for myself) of the writings of that period. It expanded the conversation about health and healing by documenting evidence of further possibilities for health care by integrating the spiritual dimension. Topics discussed to contribute to the innovative healthcare conversation included concepts of: -

spiritual awakening
awareness of soul and ego
burnout
altered states of consciousness
the relationship between 'feeling better' and 'getting better'
death, dying and bereavement
the power of forgiveness
the nature of healing relationships
definitions of spirituality
eldership
suicide
euthanasia

sacred space
spiritual direction

…and many more. Extending over 24 chapters and citing an extensive list of studies supporting the link between spirituality and health, the book explored the differences and commonalities between health and healing.

The above and other issues were given greater depth of treatment by collating many previous papers and expanding on them. They represent a bridge between the personal and the professional, the interest in health into the interest in healing. I was asked by publishers to update this through the *Therapeutic Touch* and the *Sacred Space* books in the early 2000s, but I declined to do so. In part this was because I was no longer following the emerging studies on the connection between spirituality and health, therefore any updating would have felt inauthentic and reference chasing. This was also because I was following a calling into the deeper and more consistent application of spirituality into my own life and in the role of spiritual director. Nevertheless, these three earlier books helped to form the foundation for the more in-depth work on spiritual praxis to be found in the four books covered by this study.

Evolution into four more books

Many threads run through each of the four texts, offering different relationships and commonalities. For example, the notion of purgation - of becoming free of the ego's grip - is common to the exploration of all four texts, and contained within much of the literature on spiritual life. Likewise, the health impacts, specifically improvements in physical and mental health that are 'side effects' of fulfilling spiritual needs. Another issue is the possibility and quality of grace, that persons may experience an impression of divine support - even intervention - that contributes to the sense of awakening from one way of seeing self and the world to another. Further, the weaving of psychology, arguably one of the greatest gifts to the modern understanding and practice of spirituality, touches every aspect of each book.

Indeed, there are parallels between terms used to describe awakening and liberation from the power of the ego structure along with the deep plunge into relationship in the Divine, and terms used to describe the grip of addictions to substances and the strategies to get free of them. These parallels may be seen as striking, as are the support suggestions in *Coming Home*

(Wright 2017). James notes, “if we genuinely throw ourselves” upon a “higher power” (James 1902:103) we may find the strength needed to pursue the spiritual search in the face of the immense power of the ego, the functional personality, to keep us stuck. James seems to have been one of the first to use the term ‘higher power’ as a euphemism for God, a term now taken up widely in various de-addiction twelve-step programmes (Anon. 1991).

The points of intersection between spiritual awakening and the twelve step programmes is perhaps remarkable, and this provided a model for the development of ideas in *Heartfullness* (Wright 2021b). Parallels may be further drawn in *Coming Home*, how the need for supportive persons, communities and practices is advocated (Wright 2017); in *Burnout*, how the break from the addictive qualities in moving to another way of being can be profoundly challenging (Wright 2021a); and in *Heartfullness*, how fierce engagement with inner reflection and a change of centre of gravity (in the sense of a realignment of beliefs, priorities, values and world view opposite to that experienced hitherto (Anon. 2019) draws on twelve dimensions of the spiritual life (Wright 2021b). Furthermore, as is emphasised in all four books, the notion of the pursuit of feel-good spirituality as an end in itself is rejected – the fierce work undertaken in deep spiritual inquiry leads to an equally deep encounter with those shadowy, challenging and avoided or disliked aspects of the self. They are transformed by bringing them into full awareness and embraced with equanimity, the person coming to terms with those aspects of self that may be deemed ‘negative’ and not just clinging to that which is deemed desirable. The shadows of self, in the approach adopted in these *works*, are not extinguished, but lived with differently, with loving awareness, but from which their unhealthy influences are disempowered. McCabe, writing from a Jungian perspective, sees the admission of powerlessness as a form of death of the “false, material ego” and rebirth

> of the supremacy of the true spiritual Self over the ego. During this process, the ego does not die, it realises it is not God and submits to the greater wisdom of the Self. This descent and ascent are a *necessary transformative part of the individuation process*” (McCabe 2015:71, my italics).

This notion of death and rebirth is a stream running throughout the *works* that are the subject matter of this text; as is the underpinning acceptance of the reality of the “Wholly Other”

(Underhill 1930:ix), both immanent and transcendent, simultaneously personal and beyond the personal. While "the result of this spiritual awakening will be greater 'God-consciousness'" (McCabe 2015), this may occur across a broad spectrum of perceptions and relationships. To some it is deeply personal, they may "find God" and/or simply enjoy a greater appreciation of what it is to be alive in a "wondrous Universe" (Sacks 1985:26-30).

However, it may be seen that to a degree, the direction of travel in the books parts company with some of the de-addiction models. In the latter, there is an emphasis of terminology where the person with an addiction must admit to aspects of self as 'wrong', in need of 'confession', face up to 'bad things', take a 'moral inventory' and 'remove defects of character' (Anon. 1991). The models emerging in the four books propose that spiritual development does not respond well to a negative, that spiritual crisis is not a result of moral failings. Rather such phenomena are signs of a healthy movement towards freedom (Wright 2017:377; 2021a:41; 2023:85) in which the fullness of this journey encourages a sense of integration, of acceptance of self, and of seeing the grace in the suffering that is "a necessary transformative part" (McCabe 2015:71). There is perfection in the pattern of a life story when viewed with the eye of the heart, from the perspective of the witness, as judgements like 'right' and 'wrong' become problematic (Wright 2021b:175).

Thus, what follows is a kind of conversation between my material and the wider world; between that found in the *works* and the arguments put forth in this thesis, and the many discussions concerning the relevance of the theory and practice of the spiritual life and the contemplative way to wellbeing, both personal and collective. In this sense, the *works* are offered as case studies in the construction of knowledge to further those conversations; a contribution to the wider discourse which is a continuous one, a mighty timeless dialogue.

Since publication of the *works*, much new material has arisen on the themes of spirituality, health and contemplation in the form of books and research papers. I draw upon these to suggest areas where the assumptions in my work are supported or challenged. At the same time as exploring new works, I travel backwards in time to the many authorities on the spiritual life who have influenced the thinking and practice of myself and countless others. In doing so it may be useful to set this discussion in context – that it is a small part of a discourse that has proceeded since humans first started to come to consciousness of self and the world. Perhaps the biblical writer (Ecclesiastes 1:10) is right when he or she asked, "Is there anything

of which one can say, 'Look! This is something new'? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time". There has often been a sense, in my decades of teaching and writing, that I may not really be offering anything at its core that is new, rather that it is being merely reinterpreted, reformulated, and reordered for its time; participating in an endless recycling of truth, necessary for its age and circumstances in order to be relevant and participatory.

On this premise, if there really is "nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9) when it comes to the spiritual life, then it could be argued - why bother writing books of guidance at all? The answer may be of course, that while truth is unchanging, the form and context in which it is revealed does indeed change. Those who read the works of St. Theresa of Avila or St. John of the Cross, or Pseudo-Dionysus or countless other mystics, will perhaps recognise that they wrote embedded in the cultures of their times. They did not have to deal with the threat of weapons capable of global annihilation, an ecological crisis, the relentless tentacles of social media, changing social mores around sexuality or the roles of women, or anxieties about their cholesterol levels. If truth is to be heard and explored, then arguably it has to be done through the fog of the influences of the time – and demands language and concepts that can match the language and concepts of the era.

Auden suggested that "a poem is never finished, only abandoned" (Auden 1970:432), and similar words are ascribed to author Esther Kellner in relation to books (Kellner 1971). The *works* offered here are abandoned, in a sense, once the point of publication is reached. Even preparing this document has taken me down new avenues of thought, led me to the works of authors hitherto missed, and some of them obscure. I found the latter especially so in discovering a rich seam of wartime (World War II) authors who explored contemplation and whose works are hard to acquire, yet they offer precious treasures. Indeed, sometimes it has been hard to contain what follows and not get into rewriting what is already in the books, or pursue threads of discussion that the discovery of new (to me) writings led. I have never finished a book and thought "that's it". Rather, "that's it – *for now*." In preparing what follows, I have been blessed by the writings of so many who are new to me, and continue to enrich my life and my small part in this mighty conversation.

Meanwhile, in this introduction, I explore briefly some of the background to the books, why and how they arose, and some of the principal issues – such as the understanding of the contemplative life, altered states of consciousness and the connection between spirituality

and health. The intention here is to provide an introductory demonstration of the *works* and then to proceed to greater depth as each book is discussed in its own chapter.

Although the most recent editions of the books have been submitted, they did not arise in the sequence that the current dates suggest. *Coming Home* - in the first (2008) edition set the scene and contained some autobiographical material, including a description of childhood mystical experience followed by a gradual acclimatisation to cultural norms and suppression of the mystical inclination. (I have wanted to revisit some of those stories which are spread over the *works*, but not wishing to repeat what has already been printed, I have provided a summary in Appendix 1.)

In my working-class Manchester childhood milieu, there was little language, understanding or acceptance of the mystical life, except to have it described by parents and others as a retreat into fantasy or a sign of mental illness (Barker 2009; Powell 2023). The pressures to conform to norms of what was deemed socially acceptable or unacceptable was a powerful force in such a context. This "normalisation" process, as someone grows from child to adult, sets the scene for the development of a personal identity, so that mystics tend to edit themselves into 'normal' roles and functions in a society that "demands imitation" (Jung 2009:209). Such normalisation flies in the face of the mystic experience, for it does not fit easily, if at all, with the way many people seem to experience reality, not least the experience of myself even as a small child (Wright 2017:18; and Appendix 1).

The reason of the intellect is not the same as the reason of intuition, of "the heart" as Pascal (1947:68) suggests. It is a different way of knowing, interpreting and participating in reality (which question the very notions of what reality is); a condition of "participatory knowing" (Ferrer 2002:3); a way of knowing that includes yet transcends the five senses, but also fosters a deeper engagement with life. It suggests, as Merton (1953:14) posited, a way of knowing as faith "in the heart", a level of consciousness that does not depend upon intellectual processing. Indeed, Merton and many other mystics often suggest that the intellect or spiritual cleverness can get in the way of deepening the plunge into awareness of both self and that which is beyond the self.

It is in the exploration of these, often challenging in the sense of conventional understandings of intelligence and knowing, that the *works* are directed. Throughout the literature on the

spiritual life, and repeated in the *works*, there is frequent reference to the essential unknowableness of the Divine, how whatever words, genders or labels are applied then they fall short in their attempts to describe that which may be felt and experienced but cannot be put into words, although many may try. In order to guide others in their spiritual search, an effort at description, explanation and theoretical underpinnings is part of the process. However, this is only, it is argued, for purposes of providing the raft that enables the participant or reader to sail into their own knowing of self, and the possible many layers of reality. A numinous and inexpressible reality upon which "even the mystics are silent" (Johnston 1995:215). It is that quality of being that left Pascal (whose voice gives title to this document) after his night of breakthrough (Kelly 1943; Royal 2016) from his mathematical and scientific worldview into such life-changing astonishment, that he kept the brief note of his experience on a piece of parchment in his jacket for the rest of his life. The note gives one line to a single word "*feu*" (fire) (Kelly 1943:50); something that burned away all thought and speculation, and left him with a profound sense of certitude (Royal 2016; Penseesdepascal 2023).

"Fire" is commonly used when mystics have documented their experiences. From St Catherine of Sienna to de Chardin, from Rolle to Eckhart, from Climacus to Underhill (Wright 2022a:81), fieriness is expressed, not so much suggesting pain and suffering (although that is often reported) but rather it is as the fire of transformation, the "intolerable shirt of flame" (Eliot 1944:42), the nature of which paradoxically is also universally described as love. A love that is so utterly transformative that it burns off all previous normalised perceptions of self, of "Who I am", and all that gets in the way of a relationship, a oneness with the Divine (Underhill 1915; Murray 1942; Merton 1949, Nicoll 1950; Johnston 1995; McColman 2010; MacCulloch 2013). Across traditions, a common tenet is that spiritual work is the medium through which persons get free of attachments to roles and identities as the way of being in the world. Rather, there is something other that lies at the heart of what it is to be human (explored in detail in the *works*), that there is such a thing as essence or soul that is the true self. It is the liberation of this true self from the false or small self of ego identities and roles, that lie at the heart of the way of contemplation (Merton 1966). At the same time this something other is more than individual, more than personal, it is transpersonal and transcendent, it connects all persons, all beings, "linked to each other by a real bond only because in another dimension they are

linked to something which transcends them and comprehends them in itself." (Marcel 2008:194)

For the purposes of this dissertation, which is principally to contextualise the *works*, certain definitions and assumptions that underpin the discussions are drawn, and explored in more detail within each section. Briefly here it is suggested: -

1. Mysticism and contemplation are embraced and explored as the same phenomenon. The way of contemplation, often hereafter referred to simply as the *Way*, is the unifying theme of the *works*. The word *Way* suggests a movement, a route, a direction of travel, a journey, a *Coming Home*, and it used intentionally here to suggest a specifically spiritual movement of intention, inquiry and engagement, perhaps over a lifetime; a pilgrimage towards closer comprehension, relationship and union with the Divine or Ultimate Reality, however that is experienced. Yet, throughout these four books, I make explicit that while embracing truths and points of commonality across traditions, the roots of the *works* and this author's *Way* lie embedded in the Christian mystical tradition.

2. Contemplation, as both a verb and a noun, explored in the *works* by leaning into the emphasis of it being a condition rather than a practice; an innate quality that cannot be learned, arguably in all human beings. This quality may be drawn out or cultivated through certain techniques or teachings, or perhaps arise naturally through life experiences, or which may never have been suppressed in the first place. In other words, a person does not have had to read and be taught the practices of one of the well-known mystics to live this quality. Such readings or practices may merely draw out that which is already there – the essential divine heart of each person, often referred to as 'soul' in the Christian tradition, and the capacity for that soul to be at-one with the Divine and to fully manifest its nature once the grip of the ego or functional personality is loosened. The 'methods' of the *Way* are the 'tools' by which the power of such grip is loosened. As is argued in the *works* and following discussions, there is no guarantee that everyone will 'awaken' and break free. Pascal, a scientist and mathematician of renown, experienced his whole rationalist world view set aflame by a night of profound transformation. A night in which he saw that his mind's use of

reason was too limited a medium to understand what his heart knew (Royal 2016). And 'heart', it is contended, lies at the core of the spiritual life and the *Way.*

3. God is referred to by many names in the *works*, such as Ultimate Reality, Source, the Absolute, the Beloved or the Divine - for reasons to be made clear in the discourse. It is not a response to trends (Worshipforward 2023) for the de-gendering of the Divine, rather expressing the limitations and risks of putting into words, reifying, making a 'thing' of that which is beyond definition. Words for God can only be metaphors for that which is ultimately mysterious and numinous. Here, Underhill, among many others, recognises the symbolic nature of the words used and the gifts and limitations of this, where,

> Because mystery is horrible to us, we have agreed for the most part to live in a world of labels; to make of them the current coin of experience, and ignore their merely symbolic character, the infinite gradation of values which they misrepresent. We simply do not attempt to unite with Reality. But now and then that symbolic character is suddenly brought home to us. Some great emotion, some devastating visitation of beauty, love, or pain, lifts us to another level of consciousness; and we are aware for a moment of the difference between the neat collection of discrete objects and experiences which we call the world, and the height, the depth, the breadth of that living, growing, changing Fact, of which thought, life, and energy are parts (Underhill 1914:7).

Thus, it is posited that all words fall short to express this "Reality" (Underhill 1914:8), yet are the grist to the mill in the dance of the relationship between the personal and the transpersonal, the human and the Divine; utterly other yet also the self.

4. I draw on definitions of spirituality as a way of "seeing" (MacQuarrie 1972:125), our capacity to "look religiously" (Beard 2018:117), again explored in detail in the *works*. The *Way*, it is argued, nurtures a shift in the way of seeing self and the world; in turn stimulating a shift in ways of thinking, feeling, doing and being. The notion of a shift of vision occurring either spontaneously, or through the teachings of the *Way* or through trauma or through other options is explored throughout. One or more of these takes the person out of one perception of self into another (*pace* Pascal [Royal 2016], again,

as an example). Words such as ‘asleep’, ‘blind’, ‘vision’, ‘wake up’ or ‘awaken’ pepper the language of the many writers of the *Way*. For the purposes of this discussion, this is defined as the transformation from one view of self and reality to another, from acceptance of ‘ordinary reality’ based on the perceptions of the five senses, to perceptions of non-ordinary reality, dependent upon intuition and ways of knowing that transcend the governance of the five senses. It is a shift of a centre of gravity of self and awareness, from the finite to the infinite, from material to non-material, from temporal to eternal. Yet, even dualistic notions of ordinary and non-ordinary reality, time and timeless, begin to break down in what becomes, for the person entering deep contemplation, a nameless whole. Furthermore, it is suggested in the books that the change in the way of seeing is not a static condition but one of dynamic unfolding, the possibility of endless expansion of awareness in an infinite Divine where infinite relationship may therefore be possible.

5. Transformation suggests a move from one way of seeing and being into another. It brings with it profound shifts and experiences, many of which are challenging and are part of the natural process, it is argued, that cannot be avoided if this *Way* is followed. This transformation is the move from the normalised self, through a process of individualisation that arises after birth and continues to adulthood, and which, for some, shifts into individuation as awareness and ‘seeing’ of soul and the Divine is experiences along the *Way*. This shift of being invariably brings with it changes in the way of doing – a shift of consciousness that affects work, relationships, values, priorities, spiritual practices and the path of service.

6. The *works* draw on an inclusive approach to spirituality and contemplation, yet it may be noted that ‘merging’ into one approach is avoided; I differentiate between unity and uniformity. This is rooted in experiences, assumptions and teachings that it is quite possible, indeed preferable, to adhere to one path along the *Way*, while honouring and learning from the truths, common ground and teachings of others. In this and throughout the *works*, the anchor is the teachings of and relationship with Jesus as the master contemplative. This is not grounded in assumptions that this *Way* is superior to any other, but simply drawn upon as the source in which I have been

nurtured; a source that permits voyaging into other territories, provides a reference point for comparison and integration, looks for points of meeting rather than separation, and encourages unity within diversity. This inclusive, singular-multiplicity approach is a significant value in the *works*.

7. The 'tools' of this transformation, in the way of seeing and doing, are found across traditions, and throughout the *works*, and are rooted in the model offered by Jesus – parable, prayer and practice; shifting understanding by the spiritual trickster quality (Cooper 1995; Hyde 2008) of storytelling and inner reflection that flushes out foolishness and hypocrisy, and reveals truth. These properties, it is posited, encourage cultivation of the direct and personal relationship in the Divine, and attention to the spiritual works such as withdrawing for prayer, retreat and immersion in scripture.

8. Changing the way of seeing arguably affects every level of what it is to be human, passing through the 'doors of perception' (Blake 1988, Huxley 1954) from individualisation to individuation. It is the recognition that union is not loss of identity but the fullness of it, union thus paradoxically differentiates. There is some evidence, as will be explored, that this shift also affects health and wellbeing. Much of modern nursing and medicine had, by the 1980s, shifted towards an emphasis on high-tech interventions compared to the high-touch, separating mind and body (Lanara 1981). Spirituality in this paradigm had become marginalised, if included at all, to the realm of the hospital chaplain, despite an abundant body of evidence suggesting its essential contribution to health and wellbeing (Wright and Sayre-Adams 1998; Lerner 2000; McSherry 2000; British Medical Journal 2001; National Health Service 2003; Koenig 2008; Dossey *et al.* 2010; Wilkinson and Pickett 2010). At a personal and professional level (Appendix 2) I found it increasingly difficult to hold the contradictions, not to say the weaknesses, of this reductionist paradigm; a significant factor in "the hand brake turn" (Wright 2017:14) towards a different direction in nursing specifically, and life generally. My early writings on spirituality sought to explore the connection to health, perhaps inevitably because of my 'real world' experience as a nurse working in the British National Health Service. My daily encounters with thousands of patients down the years stimulated questions about the relevance of spirituality to the everyday

suffering of persons whose minds and bodies are in crisis of one form or another. Indeed, some of the early challenges I faced in the published explorations in professional journals (q.v.) could be summarised as "What's the point of spirituality to someone who is sick?" In *Burnout* and *Coming Home,* the arguments are extensively explored, as well as in earlier published papers summarised in the book *Reflections on Spirituality and Health* (Wright 2005a.). I draw on that material in the discussions in the appropriate sections. I also offer a précis of the *Reflections* text (page 13) because it forms a bridge between my earlier writing and explorations, and a shift into material explicitly concerned with spiritual guidance. It was a pivotal point in the shift from writing and teaching on the connection between spirituality and health as objects 'out there', and across to the personal experience of the spiritual life, the subjective 'in here' and what it might have to offer others in their search.

9. It is contended in the books that there are different experiences of reality, indeed that there are different realities, yet one within the whole. In this, to explore the mystical-contemplative, it became necessary to explore concepts such as 'ordinary' and 'non-ordinary' reality – expressions found in many discourses on spirituality and theology, and the works of psychiatrists such as Grof (Grof and Grof 1990) and Powell (2023) for example.

On awakening, transformation and the mystical experience: underpinnings in the books on ordinary and non-ordinary reality

In all four of the books, I have included short passages of personal anecdote (summary reports are included in Appendices 1 and 2) exploring childhood and then later adult experiences. I draw on these to assist in setting this account and the books in context, for the one informs the other, because witness as author and participant as spiritual traveller are inextricably linked. Both perspectives may offer some useful insights into the "twine" as Browne suggests (1927, above) that binds not only the published accounts, but also those more hidden motivations, an autoethnographic approach where inner and outer life are inextricably linked.

Throughout those stories, and the emerging *works* here presented (and many others not included) a shift is perhaps discernible in one person's story that seems to match in many ways that of the classic mystical awakening. While suggesting as above that the *Way* of the contemplative or mystic may be a universal (Torkington 1997; Bourgeault 2004; Sinetar 2007; Rohr 2009), and it may be possible to "proletarianise" it (Murray 1939:119) to make it more accessible to all. It "is within the reach of every man, being the fruit of nothing more than the silent and humble adoration of God", wrote Shorthouse (1881:269) in his fictional account of a 17th Century mystic. Such adoration seems not to need intellectual processing, it being a heartfelt relating – supporting the view of Merton (1949) and many others - of its universal potential and the very root of faith itself. At the same time, many contemplative sources cited in the *works* (Underhill 1911; Underhill 1925; Woods 1981; Teasdale 1999; Wright 2022a) at least infer that it is an approach to the spiritual life only accessible to more rarified individuals (in Western Christian mystical accounts especially) for "most of the literature on mysticism has been written by celibates for celibates" (Johnston 1991:27). In these *works*, I have inclined in my writing to follow the first assumption, of potential in all persons, and to write in such a way to be both scholarly and authoritative, while also seeking to make them accessible to all, regardless of previous experience or interest in spiritual inquiry. Appendix 3 lists evidence for the success or otherwise of the dissemination this approach.

It may follow that merely writing or thinking about or philosophising about God creates and relies upon conceptualising that which is essentially numinous and difficult to express accurately, if not impossible, in words – and indeed so many writers seem to agree with this (James 1902; Underhill 1914; Murray 1943; Laski 1961; Woods 1981; Schuon 1993; Smith 1999; Johnston 2000; Kingsley 2018). While these authors are influenced mostly by the Christian tradition, that same sense of the essential unknowable-ness of absolute reality permeates other traditions including Taoism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. In the Tao, for example, it is asserted that, "The Tao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name" (Lao Tzu 1994:1). Then there is the *neti neti* of Hinduism, the "not this, not that" explored in the Upanishads (Easwaran 1988), again rejecting any notion of conceptualising the Real. While these and other works across religious traditions offer very different perspectives on the nature of reality and how to attain the Reality, what seems to emerge in these works is the

shared understanding that the Absolute is an essence beyond formula or words (even Absolute) yet paradoxically it is felt as personal, 'real', in a loving relationship.

Whether it be the ecstatic Sufi love poetry of Rumi (Barks and Green 1997) or the impassioned prayers of St Teresa of Avila (1995), there is found in these a merging of the possibility not only of an unknowable, transpersonal Divinity, but a deeply personal relationship as lover to lover. What seems to emerge clearly, from the Western Christian mystical tradition, is how the mystical-contemplative experience exemplifies a lurch from an experience of the Divine as 'a thing out there' to a 'thing in here', and then a deeper plunge to where there is no 'thing' or 'there' or 'in' or 'out' at all, except in discourses where from time-to-time efforts are made to make sense of it all. 'God' subtly shifts in this circumstance from being a noun and becoming a verb (Cooper 1998) – a quality of endless becoming, possibility and relating rather than a fixed goal, event or entity. What we do not have in writings about these two experiences of reality is the accounts of those, perhaps many millions, who never wrote or spoke about this. In that sense, any survey and reliance upon the literature must always have its limitations.

Browne's definition of mysticism, cited above, offers a template for the exploration which follows, and a basis for the development of the argument that contemplation and mysticism are one and the same – an argument to be developed in the *Contemplation* chapter.

If it is accepted that mystical or contemplative states expand consciousness and draw the follower out of conventional ways of knowing, then views of reality, assumptions about beginnings and endings, and birth and death seem to follow. Once this is experienced, and more importantly followed through, it is a universal among writers rooted in this tradition that life is never going to be quite the same again. Perceptions of time and space are radically altered, profoundly affecting awareness of what was once seen as 'normal' reality. Linear time, for example, becomes only one way of making sense of and finding order in the world. There is another possibility that, out of time in eternity in which time is contained, "all time is unredeemable" pointing to one end which is "eternally present". (Eliot 1944:7). Not only does the perception of time change, but also the perceptions of the material world where place-space are subverted by touching the infinite. The re-orientation, the shift of a centre of gravity from ordinary reality to "the Real" (Underhill 1914:6), has irrevocably changed what it is to be "me"; affecting work, relationships, action, every aspect of self in what was once deemed

normal and is now seen, if not abnormal, then at least too small, too narrow a grasp of what is now seen as real, the Real.

The essence of the *works* submitted for this dissertation is found in the age-old questioning of what 'reality' is. Underhill and all the contemplative-mystics offer, essentially, two perspectives.

On the one hand there is the view of reality, known as 'ordinary' or consensual reality – that can be observed, weighed and measured. It is the tonal or surface reality that is explicate – experienced through the five senses of touch, smell, sight, sound and taste. It has, arguably, been the dominant force in Western philosophy and science since the Cartesian age of Enlightenment (Underhill 1914; Murray 1939). It is through these senses, where that function of the brain known as 'mind' helps to find a way through this perspective of reality. In many fields of study and belief, anything (such as religious belief) that did not fit this paradigm could be rejected as false or not real (Grof and Grof 1990; Barker 2009; Powell 2023). Its gifts have led to immense scientific benefits to humanity - treatments for diseases (once seen as the result of demonic forces, for example), telecommunications, space travel and the abundance of material benefits, and some arguably more questionable 'benefits' such as weaponry for mass destruction, industrialised agriculture or unlimited social media.

Much of spiritual inquiry and practice initially fell outwith the rationalist approach as it could not be weighed and measured by empirical scientific studies and randomised, double-blind, controlled trials. More recent studies using scientific methods have sought to pin down spiritual experiences, although remaining largely within psychobiological frameworks and rejecting any source other than that which could be objectively measured such as DNA (Hamer 2004) or changes in brain electromagnetism (Newberg *et al*. 2001; Newberg and Waldman 2009; Newberg and Waldman 2016) or other biochemical measures (Pollan 2018). Given the tangible benefits of the rationalist approach, Jesuit scholar and mystic William Johnston charged, "It is hardly surprising if the scientific mentality spread to the masses of the people, creating a new culture and a new consciousness that, abhorring abstract thinking, adopted a practical, empirical approach to life" (Johnston 2000:13).

It is not argued here or in the works in question that the empirical, rationalist way is wrong, rather that it may be limited in its capacity to grasp the possibility and potential beyond the

receptors of ordinary perception; a realm where science and mysticism seem to have some common ground (Bohm 2005; Wright 2005a; Koenig 2008; Dossey 2013). This reality is in fact very real within its own parameters. While many mystical texts describe the illusory quality of ordinary reality as "unreal", anyone who falls and breaks a leg will know through pain, discomfort and the required reordering of life and expectations that this reality can be felt most intensely. Pain is an example of that which may take us into our ego body, along with other pressures such as class, genetics, national histories, socialisation, beliefs or education, which are inclined to set perceptions of 'what it is to be me'. At the same time, the experience of pain and suffering may unleash deep questioning of 'what it is to be me' – one of the main propositions spanning the works; that a crisis of health, occupation or relationships, for example, can be a catalyst for radical shift in values, self-perception and a sense of place in the world, and perhaps the Reality.

I also dwell at length on definitions of spirituality across the *works*. Vast amounts of discourse down the generations have been devoted to this theme. For the purpose of discussion here I simplify it to that capacity of being human where we seek meaning, purpose, connection and love in life and (for most) reaching out to the possibility of a transcendent 'other'. Such a drive, if explored, may take us into a different vision of what it is to be human and what reality and the eternal might be. For this reason, I am often drawn back to the simplicity of MacQuarrie's definition of spirituality as a way of "seeing" (MacQuarrie 1973:125) a way that demands the cultivation of "spiritual vision" (MacQuarrie 1973:126) to overcome the impaired vision of everyday life – not vision with the physical eyes, rather through the inner eye of insight, intuition and awareness.

Ordinary reality has its own purposes and gifts, not least the science that permits this document to be typed and transmitted. However, the possibility of the "Wholly Other" is instinctively found in "the latent recognition of a metaphysical reality, standing over and against physical reality, which men are driven to adore and long to apprehend" (Underhill 1941:4), and this can be drawn out from the writings of many mystics, including Underhill, who went beyond the natural and toward "the Supernatural" (Underhill 1938:xiv). Indeed, it is mystics' nature not to be limited by the five senses, but rather to explore that which might otherwise be dismissed as delusion. Thus, it might be considered that human beings are not

just governed by these five senses, but are also (or at least some are) innately inclined to metaphysical speculation (Newberg *et al*. 2001; Hamer 2004; Pollan 2018).

In the life of the Christ, arguably the master contemplative as well as other identities, the possibility of something wholly "Other" (Armstong 2022:61) is found when He says (quoting Deuteronomy) "Man does not live by bread alone. Rather he lives on every word that comes from the mouth of the Eternal One" (Matthew 4:4). Founders of other great (in the sense of their number of followers) faiths and traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Daoism, express similar ideas. The quote from Jesus, above, is loaded with spiritual precepts, including the possibility of a non-material reality that is outside of time and yet fully present and available to enrich human life, and for which we are "homesick" and expressed "in our desire to be recollected to what is first or deepest in life" (Newell 1999:11). A homesickness that is paradoxically closer to us than our own breath, is to be found in a deeply close relationship in the beloved (Newell 1997).

Thus, it is suggested that it is not that 'ordinary reality' is not real, rather that it is not the only perspective or fullness of reality which is the only real. Instead, as will be explored in the other chapters, it can perhaps be part understood as an aspect of a continuum of possibility of consciousness that is not bounded by what the five senses might interpret.

In Western thought, the brain was once thought of as the only repository of consciousness (especially in the post-enlightenment era) and the human body as a mechanical, albeit very intricately mechanical, biological machine (Newberg *et al*. 2001). This view was never the case in Hindu thought and spirituality for example, consciousness being seen as not just in the body, but the body in consciousness (Ram Dass 1970; Forman 1999; Pollan 2018) or Daoist and Buddhist notions of the essential 'emptiness', illusoriness or impermanence of things (Geismar *et al*. 2022). Western Christian mysticism (barring differences with Eastern Orthodox Christianity, where arguably the mystical life remained integrated after the Great Schism from Roman Catholicism (Markides 2008)) seems to have continued its way, perhaps through possible cross-cultural contacts with the Orient, evidenced in the writings of luminaries such as St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross, and before them the mediaeval mystics such as Margaret Porete, Mother Julian of Norwich, Walter Hinton, Hildegard of Bingen, the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and many more (Underhill 1911; Underhill 1925; Woods 1981; Teasdale 1999; Wright 2022a). They appear to be deriving their mystical

insights from personal experience and a deep study of scripture. Yet they also seem to reach some common ground of the essential truths of the *Way*, including understandings between body and soul, and (such as St John of the Cross) pierced the conventional veils of reality to cry out "*nada, nada, nada*" – "nothing, nothing, nothing" (Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 2017:150). The paradox of the *Way* is perhaps here illuminated, in the *via negativa*, the willingness to give up all, including definitions of God or attachments to persons or things, in order to dis-cover all. It is the effortless effort, the desireless desire (Wright 2010a), where the words of St John of the Cross from *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* are taken up again in Eliot's (1944:20) text: "to arrive at what you do not know, you must go by the way of ignorance" and "to possess what you do not possess you must go by the way of dispossession". Arguably, any Zen Buddhist immersed in the Dhammapada, or any Sufi enamoured of Rumi, or Hindu schooled in the Upanishads might echo the same sentiments. There are, however, not only profound differences in theology, as is asserted in the *works*, but a difference in the basis of Western Christian mysticism in that the driving force behind and in this union of God and persons, is not nothing, but "no thing" (Wright 2017:29; Wright 2021b:42). That is - at the risk of making something profound seem banal by the act of writing it - love.

Meanwhile, in more recent scientific studies (Newman 1986; Talbot 1991; Sayre-Adams and Wright 1995; Benson 1996; Pert 1999; Hamer 2004; Dossey 2008; Koenig 2008; Newberg and Waldman 2009; Dossey *et al*. 2010; Childre and Martin 2010; Cowan 2016; Kinross 2023), authors appear to be edging towards a more contemplative-mystical understanding of reality. For example, those approaches to healing indicating that human beings do not end at the skin (Childre and Martin 2010), or that individual body organs have their own consciousness, memories and ways of communicating with each other (Cowan 2016; Liester 2020). Furthermore, the groundbreaking studies in quantum physics offering a worldview where the difference between the eye of the mystic and the eye of the scientist may be increasingly wafer thin (Talbot 2007; Dossey 2008; Polkinghorne 2012).

Thus, attempts to define the *Way* suggest that the five senses are inadequate to experience what Underhill (1914:8) has called "the Reality" - an expanded condition of awareness that in modern terms has come to be called "non-ordinary reality", derived from a purgation of the egoic/functional personality definition of self, an illumination of deep insight or seeing a bigger picture, and a quality of union/unity consciousness in relation to the Divine - this

relation being founded in love. Further exploration of this classic model of mystical awakening (purgation, illumination, union) is included in different ways across the books, to illustrate its veracity, but also the possibility of added dimensions hitherto alluded to or not explored at all in earlier mystical works. In the direction of travel through the books I seek to explore those added dimensions, offer a novel approach and new perspectives in order to enrich the discourse, practice and understanding of the following of this *Way*.

Whether by gradual accretion of mystical experiences, or a sudden lurch into an awareness of "non-ordinary reality" where "in a supportive environment, and with proper understanding, these difficult states of mind can be extremely beneficial, often leading to physical and emotional healing, profound insights, creative activity, and permanent personality changes for the better." In coining the term "'spiritual emergency' … both the danger and opportunity in such states" are emphasised in a play on the words 'emergence' and 'emergency' (Grof and Grof 1990:1). Anecdotally, after 40 years in nursing practice, I might also add that this has been my experience. Often, very often, patients were not only dealing with a physical or mental health emergency, but were also asking questions ("Why is this happening to me?", "What will happen if I die?", "Is mum still there even with dementia?") or using the process to evaluate what was important in life and where they did or did not find support other than with persons.

Grof and Grof (1990), rooted in the transpersonal psychology movement and philosophy, offer a modern perspective on the age-old phenomenon of the mystic experience. Evelyn Underhill's detailed study points to the possibility of a world of "the Real", pierced by mystic after mystic down the ages, where "with extraordinary unanimity, they have rejected the appeal to the unreal world of appearance which is the standard of all sensible men: affirming that there is another way, another secret, by which the conscious self may reach the actuality it seeks" (Underhill 1911:26). Underhill's perspective was deeply rooted in her Christian beliefs, yet she edges outward in this and later works, for example in her introduction in *Tagore* (1915) to the universality of this experience.

This entry into an altered state of consciousness, an experience of non-ordinary reality, appears to be a more common factor than might be generally realised. Studies such as those of the Alister Hardy Trust (2023) in the UK and those of the Pew Research Center (2023) in the USA, explorations of the perennial philosophy (Huxley 1970; Ferrer 2002), understandings of

the common ground of religious experience (James 1902), and supposition of a unified or cosmic consciousness (Bucke 1880) all demonstrate a bridge joining the earliest writings of the mystics with those of the modern era (Ram Dass 1970; Dossey 1999; Hamer 2004; Hammarskjöld 2006; Baring 2013; de Barros *et al.* 2022). Such connections posit that the experience of non-ordinary reality - the mystical experience – may be far more common than is generally realised or as documented in the works of the well-known mystics.

However, while the work of these writers and researchers has much in common, it appears there is no guarantee that moments of such breakthroughs necessarily lead to a permanent transformation. It seems that a glimpse of the absolute does not necessarily lead to a permanently enlightened state (Longaker 1997) and that the trajectory from one condition of awareness to another is not linear progression, but oscillation; a back and forth between the push and pull of the demands of ordinary reality and "the Reality" (Underhill 1914:8). However, Underhill, like many others on the theme of mysticism, refutes the notion that those who seek and experience authentically the mystical state (a condition of unity consciousness, as suggested, between ordinary and ultimate Reality, which for many embraces experiencing a reality of the Divine) are in search of a *fugit mundi*, a mystical escape route from the pain of existence and the constrictions of worldly demands. Rather, they seek ways and means of integrating the two worlds - the countless identities and roles of everyday living and the functional personality with their deepest experience of that which is not 'of the world'. Underhill again, is quite clear on this point. The authentic mystical experience "is not a special career, involving abstraction from the world of things" (Underhill 1914:ix), but a deeper engagement with it, in service, in some way. Indeed, many writers on mysticism/contemplation would probably agree that such a spiritual relationship fuels more not less action, for "If possessed of the grace of contemplation, it is possible to do more in one month both for oneself and for others than without it one could do in ten years" (Lejeune 1924:27).

In much of the 'developed' world, adherence to a particular religious model is being questioned more than ever. Recent surveys (Zohar and Marshall 2000; Tacey 2004; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; British Social Attitudes 2017; Office of National Statistics 2021; Booth and Goodier 2023) suggest a decline in attachment to the Christian religious tradition in some sectors of the population, a willingness to cross religious boundaries to fulfil spiritual needs,

and/or there are those who define themselves as “spiritual but not religious” or “Nones” (Mercadante 2016) with a decline in religious affiliation. For example, the Pew (2023) study noted that 27% of the USA population self-defined as non-religious. A 2021 UK census (Office of National Statistics 2022) found 53% of the population declared themselves to be non-religious ‘Nones’, out of whom a significant portion (80%) still believed in some notion of God or Higher Power.

The *works* underpinning this report address this notion of participation, or otherwise, in the ‘spiritual supermarket’ (Wright 2005a; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Redden 2016) – a term I first heard at a meeting with the Dalai Lama in 1997. He suggested that ‘pick and mix’ spirituality was prone to commodification and shallowness. A theme running across the *works* suggests support for the view that ‘less is more’, that it is on balance better to follow depth with discipline and avoid syncretism (Jung 1974). Underhill and many other mystics, in further exploring the mystical challenge of the dance between unity and duality and how to live with it, draw upon the gifts and challenges of seeking depth in one rather than surface rewards of tasting many, and thus nurture a condition of the possibility of unending transformation and variation. Yet it may be attested that they are variations on a theme, held and birthed by the benefits of deep exploration in one rather than risking superficial insights from many. Although there is widespread insight in Christian mystical writings of the enrichment that comes from other faiths and philosophies, it is suggested (Johnston 1995) that differentiation feeds rather than starves depth and unity, an approach that underpins the work in *Coming Home*. It is an approach that advocates the benefits of the pursuit of the spiritual life through delving deep into a tradition rather than attempting to mix and match. All four books are rooted in this premise. While each does not preclude drawing on the truths of traditions other than the Christian mystical, the emphasis on finding the common ground, the places of meeting, does not reject acceptance of places of difference – and the dynamism and deepening of the spiritual life that can emerge from such a creative force. Other ‘*Ways*’ are not judged as good or bad, simply where difference is food for the soul rather than shoring up separation, dogma or rectitude.

I have further argued in the *works,* informed by the writings of so many teachers I have cited above, that the pursuit of depth in the spiritual life is not to be undertaken lightly. In

Contemplation I draw an analogy with the hikers heading for the Lake District fells where I live,

> on a warm summer's day most look well rounded and inviting, suggesting a short stroll might be all it would take to reach the peaks and enjoy the views. That impression is deceptive, for the paths are steep and often treacherous. Pleasant, warm sunshine in the valley may betray a climate ten or more degrees cooler on the tops…Cliffs and ridges, so picturesque from below, are riven with unexpected gullies; sheer precipices plunge hundreds of feet… Unwary and ill-prepared walkers can quickly find themselves in serious trouble and each year many are lost and injured and some die…Walking the Lake District fells, with all the attendant joys and risks, mirrors to some degree the pleasures and challenges of the spiritual life. A wise traveller on the *Way* sets out properly prepared - has map, compass, food and water for the journey and knows how and where to get help and advice both before and while en route…Getting involved in spiritual practice is its own form of mountaineering (Wright 2022a:23-4).

Across the *works*, I have suggested ways and means that offer guidance through the very varied landscape of the spiritual life. Taken as a whole, a pattern may be seen in these *works*, for they are essentially practical guidebooks. While rooted in evidence from research, theory and experience, the intention is to offer suggestions, a series of new perspectives that serve others, while at the same time contributing to the wider age-old conversation of what spirituality is and how to pursue it. What follows is a précis of each text to draw out salient points, before entering further discussion.

Coming Home (Wright 2017) includes a personal account of "awakening" to a different "way of seeing" (MacQuarrie 1972:124) and maps out a possible approach to encouraging such awakening for others; an approach encouraging depth and discernment amid the risks of the shallowness and commercialism of the spiritual supermarket (Heelas 2009). I have sought to document a detailed guide to practical spirituality, a comprehensive summary of the basic essentials for the spiritual seeker[3]. In this text I draw on two of the main themes arising from that work, and I will endeavour to explain the main conclusions and on what basis they were reached. Specifically, this includes evidence drawn from and summarised in earlier works

[3] I have used the term 'seeker' here and throughout, for simplicity, and to refer to those who are pursuing the spiritual life, and intentionally committed to deep inquiry and spiritual practices, following the prompting to seek "something greater" and "God's gracious Presence itself." (Kelly 1966:viii).

(Wright 2005a) for the connection between spirituality and health (The Four 'F's, Wright 2017:76). Secondly, through a synthesis of ideas from across different religious traditions, a particular paradigm for nurturing a healthy approach to spiritual exploration is suggested: the four 'Soul' themes (Wright 2017:132-4). I recognise that such a search is not without risk, for example through ego inflation, the seductions of superficiality or falling under the spell of cults. Some of the essences of this journey 'home' are reflected upon; how 'home' depicts a shift in the quality of consciousness rather than a movement in place, a shift in *relationship* to Ultimate Reality, the Beloved. Each idea may not be new on its own, but perhaps it is in their synthesis and realignment, form and direction that innovation arises. Thus, it is argued, that this book furthers conversation and practice in the authentic pursuit of the spiritual life amid the multiplicity of choice in modernity. The book emerged from a series of papers that had their origins mainly in the nursing press in the 1990s (most were later summarised in one text: Wright 2005a, see also page 13) and then found its first published edition in 2008 and its second edition in 2017. In the *Dissemination* summary in Appendix 3, papers and events are listed to show how this book and its teachings, emerging in the world of nursing, found a wider audience down the years.

Contemplation (Wright 2022a) may be seen as the second guidebook in this quartet and, while recently revised, was first published in 2010. If *Coming Home* was a practical, broad-brush guide to spiritual development, *Contemplation* addresses in further depth a particular dimension of the spiritual life that - as I explore - is often misunderstood. This book arose largely - like *Coming Home* - out of personal study and experience and extensive work with students and retreatants involved in various courses, conferences, workshops and retreats - mainly under the auspices of various NHS Trusts, academic settings, my role of spiritual director (since 1996) with a charity (the Sacred Space Foundation[4]) and a programme for those interested in contemplation founded in 2017 by the Diocese of Carlisle (the St Kentigern School[5]). *Contemplation*, like *Coming Home*, originated in initial enquiries and advice and information 'handouts' given at the time (1991 *et seq*.) In this work I sought again to set out a practical guide. The thesis here draws mainly (but not exclusively) on the writings of Christian mystics from almost two millennia, as well as modern understandings from many different

[4] www.sacredspace.org.uk.
[5] www.kentigern.org.uk.

authors, many of whom are cited in the book. And while it may be thought that no book is ever truly finished, I refer to many others who have added to and supported this work as further readings and experiences have been embraced. Perhaps nowhere is the saying that 'we have a grand view, because we stand on the shoulders of giants' seemingly more applicable, than in the ongoing expansion of possibility and awareness in spiritual development. Nevertheless, the discussion in this review, echoing that in *Coming Home*, looks at how contemplation may be considered from being a practice to a condition, sets out a case to merge the notions of contemplation and mysticism as being essentially the same phenomenon, and how such a unity of consciousness (between ordinary and non-ordinary reality) may lead to a path of service. The latter, described as "social passion" (Kelly 1966:3) is expanded beyond the social to the environment and all of life (Macy and Brown 1998; Bendell and Read 2021; Wright 2023). I further explore how this work thus contributes to the field of knowledge of contemplation and may have guided others, furthering the forever conversation of spirituality in the human condition.

Burnout (Wright 2021a) is the third of the guidebooks and details the possible consequences of not living from a place of deep truth and authenticity. Much of the writing on burnout cited in the general and scholarly media has focussed on its relationship to stress, varying degrees of lack of personal resilience, and organisational failures. In *Burnout* it is asserted that stress is not the only cause and indeed may be more a symptom than a cause. The object of scrutiny in the thesis is the track taken towards burnout as a spiritual crisis. As yet, as both the book and this text seek to show, this is arguably a relatively little explored dimension. I draw on the evidence in this approach to support the inclusion of the spiritual dimension in the response to burnout, and suggest that stress-adaptation models might be easier to comprehend because they point to observable factors, such as inadequate staffing levels or a bullying culture, or 'weaknesses' in the person who burns out. Further, the work explores how efforts to prevent burnout in the workplace can lead to victim blaming is stress reduction is the only option offered, e.g. the individual is criticised for not being mindful enough or responding to being 'managed', when what may be going on may not respond to such approaches no matter how well resourced and meant. Perhaps, also, as is discussed in the book, there is a long history of wariness of spiritual matters in health services in particular, beyond the role of the chaplain, or of not seeing spiritual care as part of health care (McSherry 2000). Within the text

a series of recommendations for supporting persons and organisation through burnout are offered, again presenting a practical guide in the spiritual life that might otherwise, it is contested, seem esoteric and irrelevant to everyday realities. It is suggested that acceptance as a spiritual dilemma might bring new possibilities in addition to current ways of helping. I discuss how the spiritual approach as envisioned and evidenced in the book is now shared in other studies, and (Appendix 3: *Dissemination*) how it has been adopted in courses (especially for healthcare professionals) and writings. The current text is an extended development of a booklet commissioned by the journal *Nursing Standard* and delivered to all (approximately 100,000) subscribers (Wright 2005b) and more widely the membership of the Royal College of Nursing.

Heartfullness (Wright 2021b) is the fourth guidebook in this quartet, again building on the practical opportunities and actions for the seeker looking for further teachings and deepening. It marshals the evidence in the three previous texts and other works into a pattern for development for those drawn to deep spiritual contemplation and inquiry. The content relies heavily on practical exercises. Drawing on models from addiction programmes (while also considering possible limitations of such models), a twelve-step approach is envisioned whereby the participants or readers (the text is used currently in retreat and course programmes, while some work is under way developing online methods) are taken through a series of tasks around key themes of the spiritual life, such as compassion, authenticity, discernment and service. It has much common ground, to some extent, with many widely available spiritual development programmes, but none (as far as is known at the time of writing) embody the twelve steps approach without the link to substance addictions (using the qualities of adhesion by the ego or functional personality to identities and roles as analogous to addiction). While rooted in the Christian mystical tradition, the text seeks to find the common ground that is inclusive of the mystical paths of others - the birthing of the 'I Am' by getting free of duality and ego perceptions, for example, is seen as key to the approach and offers a different perspective in the spiritual life from the Cartesian 'I think, therefore I am' and into 'I Am, therefore I think' (Wright 2021b: 274, 363). A distinctive model may have arisen as a result. The title, *Heartfullness*, was chosen to suggest a central quality of the *Way* across traditions, and to denote a different centre of gravity in the spiritual life than the theological or intellectual, and to differentiate it from what might be perceived as the contemporary

reductionism and commodification of mindfulness to solve various mental, physical and social dilemmas (Chiesa 2012; Purser 2019).

The Conclusion draws together all the above sections and their significance is examined. The common theme of spiritual awakening is reiterated and it will be shown that while there are variations on this theme both within and beyond the *works*, the theme is a constant. It will be clarified how this constant is a presence down the ages. Variations there are according to time and circumstances of the age, but are simply variations on the central theme – of expanded possibilities of reality, of awakening to that possibility, and of the transforming effects of that possibility into service in a world in "permacrisis" (Bushby 2022). The contributions of these *works* to developments in modern spirituality will be brought together to show how they have added to furthering the conversation on the various themes in the literature, other media and in conferences and courses.

……

In the first editions of these *works* (*Heartfullness* excepted), the language I used to refer to the Divine was relentlessly masculine. In part, I was challenged to change this by a feminist theologian on the basis that such language denies the effects upon those for whom masculinity is associated with abuse and oppression. I was challenged by others who suggested that such masculine language is in any case historically inaccurate and based on weak translations. Drawing on the insights of so many mystics down the ages, it may be contended that God, after all, is beyond anthropomorphic human labelling and that includes gender, no matter how scriptures are interpreted. I made changes in subsequent editions to explore these options. I thought it would be difficult, but the rephrasing of a sentence proved remarkably easy, as was the adoption of gender-neutral words such as the Beloved, the Real, the Presence or the Divine. A more important motive was to bring the language more in line with the contemplative perception of the Divine as being beyond gender or conceptualising, and, in relation to Christian scripture, the groundbreaking work of Neil Douglas-Klotz and the revelations that come from his application of the gender-free original Aramaic language to the Gospels (Douglas-Klotz 1990, 1999, 2003, 2006, 2022). This continues to be a source of discord, not to say conflict, in the wider world among those who adhere to traditional interpretations of scripture as God being gendered masculine, not least in recent times as the

Anglican Church has suggested a review (to much controversy) of the use of words such as “Father God” (Taylor 2023).

Coming Home

Inward! aye deeper far than love or scorn,
Deeper than bloom or virtue, stain of sin,
Rend thou the veil and pass alone within,
Stand naked there and feel thyself forlorn!
Nay! in what world, then, Spirit, wast thou born?
Or to what World-Soul art thou entered in?
Feel the Self fade, feel the great life begin,
With Love re-rising in the cosmic morn.
The inward ardour yearns to the inmost goal;
The endless goal is one with the endless way;
From every gulf the tides of Being roll,
From every zenith burns the indwelling day;
And life in Life has drowned thee, and soul in Soul;
And these are God, and thou thyself art they.

Frederic Myers, *A Cosmic Outlook*
(*in* Johnston 1955:395)

Coming Home offers a practical guide to spiritual exploration. For thousands of years humanity has sought to answer four key questions (explored in *Coming Home* and developed further in *Heartfullness*) expressed in many ways and explored by different means. These questions, which I first heard from George Harrison during an interview with the Beatles in the 1960's, appear to be a universal: "Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? How do I get there?" (Wright 2017:73). The book draws on evidence from across traditions, some recent scientific studies especially in relation to health, and the accounts of religious seekers going back over three millennia. In so doing, I have sought to provide a scholarly yet accessible framework for those either inside or outside a religious tradition; a distinctive map for authentic spiritual inquiry amid the shifting landscape and many possible routes of modern spirituality. At the same time, the book offers a bridge between my earlier and other works, which in the mid-1980s was part of an unusual movement in research. The literature, now more generally accepted, began to demonstrate the direct connection between spiritual wellbeing and

mental and physical health. Both these conversations continue and the book may be seen as a contribution to this growing body of work.

Myers' poetic words reflect Pascal's awakening into a new way of seeing (Penseesdepascal 2023; Royal 2016). Such an awakening, either sudden or gradual, brings with it a transformation of consciousness, a shift in understanding, of "seeing" (MacQuarrie 1972:125) different planes of reality and relationship in the Divine, however perceived. Poets like Myers, or mathematicians such as Pascal, and countless mystics down the ages who have documented their experiences, offer similar reports in different words. At the same time, it is perhaps worth remembering that what is found in written accounts can only be a tiny representation of the mysticism of many others, millions, perhaps billions, who never documented their stories.

'Home' is a recurring theme among those who did bother to put pen to paper, a sense of having arrived at something after a journey, a place associated with peace, familiarity and rootedness:

> Coming Home is what happens when the thought that we are separate from God is just that – a thought. Separation is an illusion. Coming Home brings us to that truth. How we 'get there' requires us to address some serious questions about what we think life is all about, whether life as we know it is the only life, who or what is God (if there is one), why we bother to ask at all, indeed who is the 'I' that is doing the asking? Assuming we get some answers, then how do we live our lives with these truths? These and other questions lie at the core of our spiritual search. The essence of this book is to offer guidance in that quest (Wright 2017:11).

The book concludes, drawing on and further explored in *Contemplation*, that this journey persuades through a sense of incontrovertible truth into a quality of unity consciousness, of the personal and transpersonal, into the Divine encounter, and to an assertion that there is no endpoint, rather a condition of "always coming home" (Wright 2017:405). Home then becomes not a place or a practice, but a condition, a state of being simultaneously settled and forever expanding in possibility.

This condition of perennial "becoming" does not fit easily with much New Age spirituality discourse and activity. Or, come to that, with Old Age spirituality, which, arguably, can be equally focused on immediate spiritual gratification (Tacey 2004). In this cultus, there is often

an implicit if not explicit assumption that there is an “end point”, that seekers can become complete, enlightened and serenely present in the world (for examples see Chopra 1996; Myss 1997; Tolle 2010; Bloom 2011; Smith 2017; Haig 2021). Such a claim, seductive as it might be and generating considerable income for those who can offer such teachings and expense for those who seek it, represents to some the nadir of spiritual enquiry; reducing it to a commodity within capitalist cultures where everything has a price (Carrette and King 2005; Heelas 2009). In *Coming Home* (2017:92) it is noted that, “In the free-market system that now dominates the world, spirituality has been privatised, reducing it in many quarters to a product ideally packaged and oven-ready marketed to the consumer society.”

Coming Home, being informed by old and new sources, but integrated, synthesised and developed is presented as a characteristic model of engaged spirituality. In this sense it is contended that a peculiar (meaning different or distinctive, rather than strange) map emerges for the spiritual inquirer. Along with it is a rejection of the commodification of the spiritual life and its consequent reduction to an egoic feel-good prescription; a debasement of the “spirit of the depths” in favour of the “spirit of this time” (Jung 2009:119). This depth of spirituality is not, it is contended, about strengthening notions of self and self-power, but a wholesale questioning of “Who I am” and the structures needed to both hold and liberate the person in the quest to answer that question - not as a self-regarding pursuit with an end in sight, but a profound transformation of awareness into the nature of self and Self, and material/non-material reality. It is proposed in *Coming Home* that this is not a self-congratulatory or self-satisfying pursuit, but a radical surrender of self into something “Wholly Other” (Underhill 1930:ix) leading to not only a gravitational shift in perception, but also one of action and service in the ordinary:

> The density of ordinary reality, of ego consciousness, has a gravity all of its own. Soul Work sets us free, gradually (if we are careful) of this pull in giving up to a new centre of gravity so that astronaut-like we can soar to new levels of reality, become aware of All-that-is and not just the bit that first held us in its thrall (Wright 2017:390).

The longing for depth rather than the superficial (as experienced by the writer; Appendices 1 & 2) led to a questioning in the book of many modern texts on the spiritual life, such as those

cited above, where 'personal growth' and the satisfactions of personal wellbeing are sometimes ends in themselves, rather than being concurrent or aligning with spiritual maturation. Commodified as 'feel good' practices, they may no doubt be helpful in a world full of challenges. In this they may have benefits, but they do not seem to fit the art of *Coming Home* to the depths of relationship in the Divine and transformation of consciousness (and later the offering of self in service) that *Coming Home* suggests; both the personal and transpersonal are encouraged in tandem rather than offering one or the other independently, in isolation. In this the limitations of personal development bypassing spiritual development, and spiritual bypassing (Ram Dass 2012; King *et al.* 2018; Picciotto *et al.* 2018) to avoid personal development are both taken into consideration. At the same time and despite this critique of these possible bypassings, it is acknowledged in the book that "You never know" (one of the favourite sayings of my teacher, Ram Dass during our many meetings). It can never be certain quite how an experience that might initially seem superficial can play itself out in the longer-term project of coming home. For example, on observing a new age retreat on the island of Skyros, it was noted that "experiences may have lacked depth, but they were still 'getting something'. Doors were being opened for people who might otherwise not even knock. My initial reservations were misplaced. The participants certainly got a feel-good stress-reduction factor - worthy in itself. But who is to say that a peep through the crack of the door of perception does not eventually lead to a walk through?" (Wright 2017:312).

In the *Introduction* it was suggested that an altered state of consciousness, an experience of non-ordinary reality, may occur quite spontaneously as an aspect of the human condition. In *Coming Home*, this understanding is extended in recognising such conditions can be induced through trauma, spiritual practices such as prayer and meditation, or through consumption of drugs (Pollan 2018). Writers on mysticism suggest two distinct pathways – that of acquired contemplation - through prayer, for example - or infused as a gift of divine grace (Underhill 1911; Johnston 1995). Henceforth and to limit confusion I use the term 'contemplation' to include mysticism. Such a conflation is not without controversy and my reasons will be explained in the discussion within *Contemplation*.

Dionysius, in the *Mystica Theologica* (Pseudo-Dionysius 1987), offers a template for this phenomenon in describing an encounter between Moses and God. Moses enters into the cloud (Exodus 24:15-18) on the mountain where he cannot see God in such darkness, but

however he feels God's presence and 'hears' God speak. This darkness in the cloud, later informing what is arguably one of the greatest treatises on contemplation - *The Cloud of Unknowing* (Anon. 1978), by a mediaeval English author - is symbolic of the altered state of consciousness of the contemplative where the mind is emptied of rational thought and conceptualising. Free of such inner ratiocination, the contemplative seems to receive information in ways that transcend reason. What is common to this altered state is the almost universal 'feeling' by which this is described – that of love. There is a deep appreciation in this cloud that the contemplative is being gazed upon with the profound and unconditional love of the Divine, to which the only response is an awestruck love toward the divine. This mutual "gaze of love" (Beckett 1994:42) creates a sense of only one gaze as both lover and Beloved are drawn into unity, a quality of intense union or at-one-ness with and within the Divine consciousness. A condition that is "an experience of the soul, of union with the Divine, of the lover reuniting with the Beloved. In surrender we become saturated in God, in the bliss that is beyond mere happiness" (Wright 2017:130).

This sense of union also raises the paradox that the person experiences being at one and separate simultaneously. It is a condition of non-duality or *advaita* as it is termed in the Hindu tradition (and from which word the 'dual' has found its way into the English language). The "Soul Care" suggestions in *Coming Home* are mapped out to encourage a drawing out of such duality and break through the ways

> we can find it relatively easy to 'be spiritual' when we are away on retreat, or during our quiet time at home when the family is away. On the other hand, we can 'lose it' when we are caught up in the pressures of getting on with life…the suggestions in this book guide us to a different plane of consciousness, no splitting of the 'spiritual' from the 'other' but a recognition, a re-cognition, that it is all one in Sacred Unity. This is the mind of the mystic, the contemplative and the non-dual witness-participant (Wright 2017:221).

Entering this 'cloud of unknowing' and merging with a sense of "the Presence" (Underhill 1947:14) does not remain constant. Rather, the contemplative may oscillate between unity and separation (a subject considered across the *works*), and different states of consciousness. The 'purgation-illumination-unity' model of Underhill's 1911 *Mysticism,* or the 'seven mansions' of St Teresa of Avila's (1995) *Interior Castle*, are examples of maps developed down

the centuries to guide the seeker safely through the experience. This is an experience that commonly includes a painful sense of being lurched back into ordinary reality, particularly in the early days of following (or being pushed into) the spiritual life. One of the justifications for this book and the other *works* might be seen in the context of time, as suggested in the introduction – the idea that truth has to be expressed in its own ways to fit the times. Neither St Teresa nor Evelyn Underhill lived in eras with benefits and dangers alike unto the present – no threat of global annihilation, ecological meltdown, national health services, the same social mores and opportunities for men and women, artificial intelligence and countless other options that mark the contrast with the milieu of now with that of these mystics. Language may be seen as a kind of map, not only illuminating the way to truth through a particular time, but also the way in different landscapes.

Such maps are necessary, it is argued, because,

> not all mystical states are delectable. Some are filled with anguish and pain; some are turbulent and stormy; some are described in terms of dereliction and abandonment. Some are even dangerous and treacherous and are called 'false mysticism' – not because the state itself is false but because it leads in the wrong direction and may bring the hapless mystic to destruction (Johnston 1985:19).

Arguably, any pursuit of the spiritual life has its risks not just when bliss evaporates, but also the pain that comes with a sense of disconnection and dualism – those moments commonly reported, when the seeker realises "after the ecstasy, the laundry" (Kornfield 2001:7) after a period of connection in times of prayer or retreat, for example. Experiencing such altered states of consciousness, the seeker is plunged back into ordinary reality and all its peculiar challenges - challenges that are themselves "grist to the mill" (Wright 2017:135) of the spiritual life as we learn to break the false dichotomy of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). In this Gospel story, Mary appears to be sitting in contemplative bliss with her Beloved Jesus, while Martha her sister is complaining about having to do the housework. A deepening of the spiritual life, it is suggested, may draw us away from such tension and into a condition not of being Mary *or* Martha, but Mary *and* Martha simultaneously – the breaking of dual consciousness whereby "now I'm being spiritual" (while meditating for example) and "now

I'm shopping" are quite different realms, and into a sense of "now I'm meditating *and* shopping" at the same time – as non-duality (Wright 2017:220-222).

Addressing the tension of duality, *Coming Home* depicts a long menu of possibilities, practical 'how to' suggestions that have been tried and tested often down many centuries, to support integration and deepening in the developing spiritual life (Wright 2017:277-317). Invariably seekers have a sense of "I know where I want to get to, but *how* do I get there?". "Methods" are needed, and offered in this work, that over time "we are encouraged into sole attention upon the Beloved" not as a separate activity, but as a lived experience moment by moment, "nudging us into ever deeper humility and service" (Wright 2017:277).

The book acknowledges that this "nudging" may often be fierce in what sometimes can feel like a struggle to live in what seems like two worlds; the initial conflict between the world of ordinary reality with all its "joyhorror" (Wright 2023:19), and the moments of touching eternity. Holding this balance and living fully in ordinary reality appears to be a fierce stretch, yet the evidence from those seekers and contemplatives who have lived in the midst of immense danger and despair. For example, in the European, indeed global, turmoil of the 1930s and 1940s, there emerged amid great suffering, arguably some of the most profound mystical works of the time - Anker Larsen (1924); Spens (1937); Murray (1939); Kelly (1943); Ancilla (1955), Frankl (1959); Hillesum (1996); Laubach (2011); and Underhill (1938, 1941, 1943) among many others. Such authors suggest that it is indeed possible to "keep our hearts open in hell" (Ram Dass 2023:1).

One of the main themes of the book is how such suffering can be embraced, which on the surface may seem counterintuitive, as grist to the mill for ongoing transformation. It is a theme revisited many times in the *works*. Thus, the challenge of suffering, in whatever form, need not necessarily be avoided, rather it is argued in the texts that what is important is to examine how it may be held and acted upon to further spiritual development. Nick Cave, modern writer, musician, poet and artist, and whose writings suggest at least a contemplative inclination and spiritual searching, supports the view among many others that crises and suffering are opportunities for transformation, "suffering is, by its nature, the primary mechanism of change, and that it somehow presents us with the opportunity to transform into something else, something different, hopefully something better" (Cave and O'Hagan 2023:165). While such assertions about suffering have much validity and in some

contemplative treatises suffering is both invited and encouraged, in the *works* there is an emphasis on a different and arguably more powerful force for change – the experience of divine love and love for the Divine. Opening to love as a prime source of transformation underpins the work of *Coming Home*, while recognising the risks of such opening and thereby creating the template for nurturing and creating a safe 'structure' around it.

Carl Jung is perhaps an example of the spiritual searcher who walked with feet in both worlds – the "spirit of this time" and the "spirit of the depths" (Jung 2009:119), holding the contradiction and the complementarity of ordinary and non-ordinary reality that can project some into madness (Grof and Grof 1989). Murray (1939), a contemporary of Jung and deeply embedded in the Roman Catholic mystical tradition, is one of many who identifies the tensions produced where a distinct line between worlds exists; where seekers either see and act only from the realm of time and place, or from the realm of eternity and infinity. Jung records how he continued his normal duties and how his family and profession "always remained a joyful reality and a guarantee that I was normal and really existed" (Jung 1995:214). Jung further described how the mystical experience may carry with it the urge to know what it means and where it may lead to "deepen and validate the discovery" (Jung 1977:231).

The various forms of suffering associated with spiritual development are explored in *Coming Home* and therefore seen as grist to the mill, as containing grace, not to be avoided but used as fuel to burn off the bonds of the ego that keep the soul in check and freeing seekers "from the constant need to shore up the defences against pain and fear" (Wright 2017:198). The perception that the fears and hurts associated with "walking through the cloud" are seen as opportunities and a universal among contemplatives; not to be avoided but used for transformation helping breakdowns to become breakthroughs (Wright 2017:60). This is an underlying theme in the *works* and veers away from some aspects of spiritual explorations, both new age and old age, that spiritual inquiry, if it is to be authentic is not about seeking states of bliss and hanging out with beings of light, but arguably about entering the cloud of unknowing, facing personal shadows and bringing them into the light of loving awareness with the possibility of maturation, holding the many light and dark aspects of being with equanimity, and transformation.

In this sense the *Way* in *Coming Home* finds common ground with approaches to the authentic spiritual life tried and tested over time and attested to by many authors. What may

be noted in this particular work is the reliance upon the author's personal experience and then the comparing and testing of it against reputable sources. Further, in this work it is admitted that the insights received could easily have gone awry, not least to the detriment of the writer's personal physical and mental health (see Appendix 2, Wright 2017:87). There was also the risk of any transmission, any calling, any teaching of others would be colonised by unresolved ego agendas and corrupted without the discernment that these were authentic - and indeed the steady drip of discernment throughout this process (suggested as a lifelong process) is emphasised. Thus, it was that by chance, if chance it be, the encounters with wise, older and living persons (for example Ram Dass and Jean Sayre-Adams, and many others mentioned in the text) as well as the gifts of teachings of the dead in the books they have left behind, both ancient and modern. Many of whom are cited; from Dionysius to Underhill, from Mother Julian to Merton, from Aelred of Rievaulx to Alan Watts – these and many more deeply challenged, informed and supported the composition of the *works*. In doing so it is maintained that they strengthened the emerging model, maintaining that spiritual inquiry, for most people, is not to be pursued alone, not least in view of the risks mentioned above, and requires certain forms of guidance to be in place if it is to be pursued safely and fruitfully.

Throughout these *works* and this 'journey' I plunged into many experiences, reported in the book and with some points summarised in Appendix 1, where ideas would seem to surface apparently from nowhere. They became sources of reflection and templates against which the veracity of inner experiences in non-ordinary reality could be compared against authentic application in the ordinary. This process and value of discernment (explored in more detail in *Heartfullness* and posited as one of the twelve essential values in spiritual development) is embedded in the emerging model of *Soul Works, Soul Foods, Soul Friends* and *Soul Communities*. An early trusted teacher told me, "Just because you think it, just because you feel it, that does not make it true". In preparing this report, I have been reminded personally of the value of receiving spiritual direction. By chance, if chance it be, I have been blessed with the guidance of three elder women, wise in the ways of spiritual development, for over three decades. The meetings with the three occurred at least twice a year when this 'young' man was challenged and ordered to give an account of himself, his spiritual development and his path of service. There has arguably been a glut of male teachers in many religious domains although it may be attested that it has been in the realm of Christian mysticism that the voice

of women has been heard more than any other (de Jaegher 1935; Woods 1981; Wright 2022a), while the work of women is often less cited because of the "imbalance of men in the groves of academe" (Woods 1981:3). The synchronicity, of meeting these three women along the *Way* is not lost on me, and these *works* and my past and current path of service would not have happened without them.

While individual authors prescribed certain aspects of spiritual support (such as the need for one or more spiritual directors) *Coming Home* seeks to offer a synthesis and cohesion of these approaches to identify four key themes, themes that have been used by retreatants engaged in the work of the Sacred Space Foundation, and other individuals and organisations (Appendix 3). They arose initially from the commitment to ensure that seekers participating in retreats or studying elsewhere, were followed through and not abandoned to their own devices for reasons of spiritual wellbeing. And in part, this was prompted by the need to answer the question of how to let go of dualism when not on retreat or not explicitly engaged in spiritual practice, or to "go back" to home or workplace where the spiritual life may not be understood or accepted. At one conference a participant asked, "How do I go back when my heart and soul are not welcome there?" (Wright and Sayre Adams 1998:166). The book advances the view that various processes need to be in place to sustain seekers when they are away from locations where spiritual engagement is explicit and supported, perhaps reinforcing the view that the spiritual quest is best not taken alone.

Thus a 'menu' emerged to support the holding and moving through the transition from 'here' and 'there', and into the non-duality of simply recognising the power and difficulty of *being* at-one with the Presence wherever and whenever. The emerging framework drew upon personal experience of the *Way* (over two decades of 'seeking' by the stage of the first edition in 2008), centuries of available teachings from those who catalogued their stories and suggestions, and the personal guidance of contemporary wise elders who had themselves worked and published extensively on the themes of spiritual support (many of whom are cited in the book and referenced here).

It is the nature of the work with the many seekers in retreat at the Sacred Space Foundation and/or group retreats held at other sites (accounts are often cited as evidence in the *works*) that seems to support Bennett's (2004:109) notion of passing on what is not possessed by the

teacher. Knowledge gained in this model is not owned, but only temporarily held before passing it on. And further in the book, the view put forward that such teachings do not follow a simple linear, hierarchical flow one to another, but also an awakening in the seeker to that which is already possessed. As is pointed out in so many works of contemplatives and summarised in the book,

> When we seek and find another kind of Home, even while we continue to participate in the world as usual, we discover something very special. And note it is to dis-cover, to remove the cover from something that by implication is already there. Indeed, it is worth noting at this point that so many of the words we use on the *Way* are repetition words – dis-cover, reveal (re-veal, take the veil off), remember (re-member, join again) and recognise (re-cognise, know again) (Wright 2017:51).

A model emerged from this synthesis to support the teachings of the spiritual life, and which provided the framework on which to hang the major content of each chapter. It is therefore posited in the text that four main supports need to be in place for each seeker. These four themes provide a template, it is maintained, against which seekers can check that they have the necessary support in place: -

i. *Soul Friends*. The deep dive into the spiritual life, as has been suggested, is not an easy journey alone. What is needed is the support of one or more wise spiritual directors, counsellors or mentors who are accessible for guidance. These teachers, mentors or guides are people who have already walked the path ahead and done the emotional and spiritual work. Douglas-Klotz (1990) likens this to being part of a camel train – the wise elders are ahead guiding the way, while the novices follow, but some also bring up the rear, ready to catch those who fall and need to be put back on track. I am blessed to have met many in my life who knew how to challenge and guide lovingly and also fiercely. To summarise: such guides exhibit a kind of fierce love, holding the seekers with deep compassion and understanding, yet not letting them get away with their illusions and delusions. Through shared spiritual practice and loving, but challenging dialogue, the Soul Friend is seen as an essential adjunct to spiritual development, encouraging spiritual maturity, guiding the seeker away from the risks of ego inflation, self-gratification, distortion of truth and spiritual abuse. Throughout the book it is stressed that one of the common values of the contemplative life is that it is not about making

'*me'* feel better. If that happens it is a side effect, albeit a pleasant one, but it is held that the intention of the *Way* is always towards divine unity and purpose, not ego satisfaction. It is further argued that Soul Friends knows others are going astray, for they have long since worked on themselves to become alert to and free of ego agendas, and have acquired map and compass of the landscape of spiritual seeking.

ii. *Soul Communities.* These are defined as groups of fellow seekers, people with whom participants feel safe and 'at home' and who lovingly nourish and challenge each other's ongoing spiritual awakening. It is suggested that this might be a fellow group of meditators, sangha, mosque, temple or church group - there are numerous possibilities. It is further advanced that this might be more than a permanent community, such as belonging to a religious organisation. It might also be a temporary community, such as a course or retreat where seekers share with and relate to others for a while. The Soul Community is suggested as a further essential adjunct for support, for it is maintained that it adds to the checks and balances that can keep seekers safe in the sometimes disorientating, not to say almost crazy time when one "way of seeing" (MacQuarrie 1972:125), one perception of self and reality is replaced by another. The evidence suggests from the writings of many seekers down the ages that that such a paradigm shift may be full of joy, but can also be cataclysmic (Underhill 1911; Ram Dass 1970, 2012). For example, the spiritual awakening that occurs in a spiritual community such as a monastery, convent or modern-day well-run retreat centre, may be compared to that which takes place in unbridled freedom – such as unsupported weekend or other courses without follow-up or even temporary 'holding' communities. Both traditional and 'New Age' programmes, it is argued, require discernment for all may fall into abusive, cultic behaviour (Parsons 2000; Johnston 2000; Purcell 2009; Jenkinson 2023). Thus, it is held that the holding and nurturing quality of the healthy Soul Community enables participants to pass through the transformation and the maturation work with greater likelihood of coherence, safety, integration and wholeness and avoid the risks of emotional distress and abreactions of all kinds such as confusion, isolation, anxiety or ego inflation.

iii *Soul Foods.* This is the inspiration of scripture, poetry, music, art, nature and so on that refresh, renew and revitalise seekers. This is the third pillar of the model that is posited as essential for healthy and safe spiritual awakening. It may also include, literally, good food that nourishes the body e.g. many organisations offering spiritual support stress the need for a

healthy diet and a lifestyle free of toxins. It seems to be a truism, accepted in the writings of many contemplatives, that as seekers become more spiritually refined, they become less tolerant towards unhealthy things - be they foods, drugs, situations or people. Things that 'feed' the spiritual life, in every sense of the word can be included here, such as being within environments of peace and beauty, with people who are loving and nurturing, listening to words and music that have heart and meaning, having access to complementary therapies and healing approaches such as the laying on of hands and the deep relaxation that comes from bodywork such as massage.

iv. *Soul Works*. The journey 'home' includes developing spiritual practices which sustain and enhance the spiritual life and foster deepening insight – meditation, prayer, yoga, retreat time, sacred dance, tai chi, exploring the Enneagram, labyrinth walking – there is an enormous range of possibilities and many of these are listed and explored in detail in the book. However, one – contemplation - prompted the need for a text of its own and the book *Contemplation* followed as a companion to *Coming Home*. Soul Works are the practices, put forward as the fourth essential pillar of the model, alone or in groups with Soul Communities, that help to keep seekers centred and at home in themselves while also potentially moving them ever deeper into awareness of Truth on the journey Home.

These four elements are placed at the centre of the *Coming Home* approach and are examined in detail in the text. And, at a practical level, they are offered to retreatants to provide them with a 'menu' of options to pursue in everyday life. Evidence and experience suggest that these age-old patterns - here gathered in a particular model - assist seekers in two distinct ways – safety and depth. The latter, it is argued, fosters more integration of unity consciousness when not engaged in overt spiritual practices. Thus, the seeker, if he or she 'does the work' may come to a condition where a sense of unity consciousness and full awareness become more a more a norm of everyday life.

Coming Home seeks to continue offering a 'bridge' between earlier studies summarising the connection between spirituality and health, especially *Reflections on Spirituality and Health* (Wright 2005a, see also page 13). If the wellbeing effects of the spiritual life, the "fruit of the spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23) as it were, such as "love, joy, peace", then apart from reaping the

spiritual benefits of “meaning, purpose and connection” (Wright 2017:77), it can be shown that there are general health benefits as well, almost as ‘side effects’. An extensive and expanding body of research suggests that there is something very powerful occurring that supports healing and wellbeing, coterminous with a healthy spirituality, and which arises from the quality of relationships embodying trust and belief. Often dismissed as the placebo response (Dossey 2000; Peters 2011), this relational quality seems key to both deepening of the spiritual life and health simultaneously.

Hence, it may be asserted that “how we *feel* affects physical wellbeing” (Wright 2017:75), supporting the immune system and reducing stress levels as feelings of relaxation, happiness and peace benefit physiological processes (Pert 1999; Wright 2005; Koenig 2008; Dossey 2013; Aris *et al*. 2023).

The roots of this book lie, in part, in earlier studies in nursing and health care, and it seemed possible to draw together a number of stands to summarise some of the key points of the connection between spirituality and health. If the root and trunk of the book is a guide to spiritual development, then one of the branches, intimately connected, is that of health. I have explored this connection in detail elsewhere (Wright 2005) and through many other published papers and presentations (Appendix 3). Perhaps suffice to say here that in taking a broad sweep across the research, it seemed important to sustain that connection in this book in the interests of an holistic approach. Spirituality and health seem always to be connected. Therefore, it may be suggested that people with the following in their lives, depicted in this framework and taken up elsewhere, experience an alleviation of fear and nurturance of love (which is arguably the essence of the spiritual life (Wright 2017:76). They are therefore more likely to be happy and healthy in body, mind and spirit: -

i. *Faith*: (not necessarily in a God, but simply having faith in something that gives meaning to life). For most people this is some perception of the Divine, but it could equally be politics, philosophy, sport, the goodness of humanity, life-as-lived, as well as faith in the goodness of health practitioners or the effectiveness of medicines.

ii. *Fellowship* – family, friends, community – trusting relationships that prevent isolation and loneliness, with whom persons can share authentically their feelings (such as not being afraid to talk about fear) and with whom arguably the most powerful of healers may be experienced

– that of love. Feeling loved, being trusting of and connected to others when afraid and/or ill has been shown to improve health outcomes. Indeed, loneliness has been shown to undermine health.

iii. *Fulfilling work* – bringing meaning, purpose, rewards to life. Places of work where there is a sense of locus of control and decisions affecting working lives.

iv. *Free Giving* – volunteering, parenting, opportunities to help and express compassion without expectation of reward. There is mutual benefit in helping relationships.

In *Coming Home,* it may be noted that there is a crossover occurring that moves the conversation on, from the initial influence upon the author of awakening to the spiritual life, on into the exploration of its connection to health (such as in the four 'F's above), and then a desire to express what has been learned about the gradual development of spiritual awakening and how to support and encourage it. It is posited that such models and mnemonics appear to help the learning process, for example in retreats and workshops. They also provide frameworks on which to hang complex ideas, for example in conference presentations and social media (Appendix 3).

In *Coming Home* I sought to synthesise experience and evidence, and past and present variations of spiritual support. I was working to add to the broader understanding of spiritual development and questioning how this can be applied in the modern era, especially embracing the needs of the 'Nones' and the 'SBNR's' (Mercadante 2016; Office of National Statistics 2022; Pew 2023). Meanwhile, it is argued, insights are offered that can be considered in religious and non-religious organisations as evidenced in the research. The book therefore provides a map which attempts to provide support for the enquirer who is with or without a tradition, embrace truths from a broad spectrum of directions and many eras, as well as making the link with wider aspects of wellbeing.

Contemplation

The body is not bounded by its skin;
Its effluence, like a gentle cloud of scent,
Is wide unto the air diffused, and, bent
With elements unseen, its way doth win
To ether frontiers, where take origin
Far subtler systems, nobler regions meant
To be the area and the instrument
Of operations ever to begin
Anew and never end. Thus every man
Wears as his robe the garment of the sky –
So close his union with the cosmic plan,
So perfectly he pierces low and high –
Reaching as far in space as creatures can,
And co-extending with immensity.

John Charles Earle *Bodily Extension*
(*in* Nicholson and Lee 1917:510)

Contemplation set out to add to the centuries old conversation about what contemplation is or is not, correct perceptions that it is merely deep thinking, suggest a distinguishing unity with mysticism, and draws on the evidence from over 2,000 years of documented evidence, principally from the Western Christian mystical tradition. In so doing, it is an acknowledgement of some of the elders in the *Way* on whose giant shoulders later generations like myself may stand, and see the view - perhaps observing a little more of it. At the same time evidence from other traditions was offered to show common ground, as well as a refutation of the current confusion with and commodification of mindfulness. This book is premised as a contribution, an added dimension, to a guide for practical spirituality.

Earle's notion of "bodily extension" that merges or "coextends with immensity" captures something of the contemplative experience; an experience not bound by material reality but a quality of deep unity with the eternal. The word 'contemplation' is both a noun and a verb, and the notion of contemplation as something that is 'done', is explored in the book, for its limitations. I sought in this book to offer a contrasting contribution to contemplation as 'doing' into contemplation as 'being' – a healing, wholing response into a quality of unity consciousness.

In *Contemplation*, it is argued that contemplation is "not a practice, it is a condition" where "we seek to be at one with the Presence, to let God be God, naked of all our expectations, occupations and imaginations" and it requires "not so much theological or intellectual explorations, but more of what Plato called *nous* – the direct encounter, knowing and apprehension of the Beloved" (Wright 2021:37). It is the drawing towards "Sacred Unity" (Wright 2021:39) through the "psychic gateway" into a "spiritual marriage" of "unity consciousness" in the Divine (Wright 2021:42). Exploration of the contemplative *Way* infuses the *works*. It is a particular pathway in the spiritual life, but it is not the only one. Indeed, some schools of thought would reject the whole notion of mysticism, union or a heartfull way in preference to the intellectual or theological. This is perhaps summarised best in the "thirst to be one with God – the supreme aspiration of many mystics – is alien to the biblical man." (Heschel 1962:356) where notions of union with God would be a blasphemy. In the *works*, in deep pursuit of the *Way*, other approaches are not excluded, rather a particular deep dive in this *Way* is offered for those who feel summoned to it.

Underhill, who among many others conflates mysticism and contemplation, and who has probably contributed more research and publications about contemplation than anyone else, as well as being a living embodiment of it, was "a legend in her own lifetime" (Cropper 1958:ix) and "one of the most widely read writers of spirituality in the first half of the 20th Century" (Wrigley-Carr 2020:18). She overcame immense barriers to women of her time in education, publication and the church (Loades 1997) to become the first woman "acclaimed in her own time", "acknowledged as writer and scholar", "the recipient of many honours" and the "first woman to be chosen as an outside lecturer at Oxford and the first laywoman to give retreats within the Anglican Church" as well as being the writer of "39 books and more than 350 articles" (Greene 1991:2). Underhill saw contemplation-mysticism as "the art of union with Reality. The mystic is a person who has attained that union in a greater or lesser degree; or who aims at and believes in such attainment" (Underhill 1914:3). She goes on to see it as the pursuit of a "single vision" (1914:13) and such pursuit is akin to MacQuarrie's expression of spirituality as "seeing" differently (MacQuarrie 1972:125). She goes on to see mysticism as the ascent "from thought to contemplation" (1914:18) and "to the contact with truth" and "contemplative consciousness" being the union with the Reality (1914:26).

Such an undertaking and experience can be seen as of immense magnitude affecting every level of what it is to be human, and the way of being and doing in the world. Of all the hundreds of mystics-contemplatives cited in *Coming Home, Contemplation* or *Heartfullness*, not one veers from the view that following the Way is tough work requiring immense commitment and stamina - physical, psychological and spiritual. And while most suggest that this *Way* is a potential in all persons, at the same time there is often the suggestion that this is a quest for the relative few; this quality of at-one-ness with the Divine is ultimately not something that can be achieved by personal effort (acquired), which can only prepare the way, and is instead infused as a gift of grace (Underhill 1914; de Caussade 1921; Lejeune 1924; Murray 1939; Merton 1949; Garrigou-Lagrange 1952; Baker 1977; Anon 1978; Keating 1994; McColman 2010, and many others).

If a spiritual awakening concerns a "way of seeing" (MacQuarrie 1972:125) then arguably there has never been a time amid global climate catastrophe (Bendell and Read 2021), multiple simultaneous crises ("polycrisis", Tooze 2023:1) that seem never to abate ("permacrisis", Brown *et al*. 2023:4). Therefore, a case can be made that humanity *en masse* needs to be seeing itself and its place in the world differently, more harmoniously. At the time of writing, the predicted collapse of multiple global systems (Servigne *et al.* 2021; Bendell and Read 2021; McGuire 2022; Wright 2023) seems to be under way whereby there is no 'big bang' - a sudden and complete disintegration of economic, belief, social and political systems, not to mention the environmental. Rather it seems less likely to be an event and more an evolving process. And if it is a process then it may be possible that there is time to interject ways of seeing that support humanity through it – ways of seeing that encourage the best qualities rather than the worst in persons when confronted with fear, crisis and widespread collapse of systems. This is one of the principal arguments in the *works* and in the closing chapter of *Contemplation*. The evidence from the writings of the many contemplatives cited suggests an inclination towards worldly concern, humanitarian values, care for the environment, social action and non-violence, as well as an integral and ever-transforming and deepening relationship with the Divine. The *Way*, it can be argued, is at least one route that might bring "re-enchantment of our world view, a re-spiriting of relationships with each other and All-that-is, which will help us to transform such crises" (Wright 2022a:129).

Gestalt Psychology was a reaction, in part, to what Wertheimer saw as reductionist trends; breaking human beings, human consciousness, into parts (King and Wertheimer 2005). In the books I have suggested that the Way is the spiritual counterpart. In the trend towards seeing the essential oneness of things, of seeing the Absolute as One, then it may be speculated that the *Way* offers a parallel pattern at wholeness and avoidance of reductionism in relation to spirituality. Historically and across many traditions, this Divinity, as explored in the introduction, cannot be captured in words. Seen or known only "in part" (1 Corinthians 13:12), the human mind or intellect cannot grasp the totality of the Divine, who is always "Wholly Other" (Underhill 1930:ix) yet knowable only through the heart, in loving relationship. It is this relationship, the exploration and encouragement of it, that forms the focus of *Contemplation*.

In *Contemplation*, I thus explore the historical roots of this *Way* and argue for its quotidian relevance; a way of finding a spiritual centre to guide and sustain persons through the miasma of worldly suffering. In the survey of the works of contemplatives cited in all four books, I could find only one whose mystical inclination and initial awakening was corrupted into adding to suffering and violence. The 16th Century English monk Father Benet of Canfield's rich spiritual works (Benet 1987) belie his later involvement in the murderous power games under his master Cardinal Richelieu at the court of Louis XIII (Huxley 1943).

Father Benet seems to have been atypical, whereas it can be argued that the *Way*, if encouraged, might provide a counterbalance to the collapse process by providing an opportunity to connect with the "Wholly Other" (Underhill 1930:ix), out of which there may arise a sense of meaning and purpose in life other than the material. Such a crisis is arguably a spiritual crisis to which spiritual solutions are required (Macy 2021; Bendell and Read 2021; de Oliveira 2021; Wright 2023).

Although this book was primarily spurred on by requests from students and retreatants to say "what contemplation is, and what it is not" and seeking "map, compass, food and water for the journey" (Wright 2022a:24), it also arose from other promptings about which a degree of personal reluctance comes into play when placing them in the public domain.

I hesitate to write this as it is a subject I have rarely committed to print in full, and shared with few persons with whom I have a spiritual direction relationship. Throughout these *works* the

value of discernment and ways of discerning are given centre stage. Thus, I have tended to avoid being explicit (Wright 2017) about personal inner experiences for several reasons – firstly that they are personal and making them public affects the intimate quality of my relationship in the Beloved. Intimacy, by its nature, is confounded when the experience is exposed for others outside that relationship to see. Secondly, in writing a personal story, depending on the level of awareness of the reader, it may be that it can set readers up for unhealthy disappointment or competitiveness (I certainly experienced much of the latter in my 'early days' in workshops and retreats where there was a tendency to seek to outdo each other in the richness of our stories. That in turn set others up for disappointment who were not having such experiences). Thirdly, seeking to express the essentially non-conceptual, the numinous, in conceptual and rational terms can never fully capture it. Such descriptions are often best expressed, it may be argued, in rich prose, poetry, music, art and dance – the ways the heart tells its stories, through its own "reasons" (Pascal 1947:78). Lastly, following Grof and Grof's (1990) elucidation of the risks of revealing inner experiences and being considered mentally ill, it is better to be cautious about what to reveal and to whom. In one milieu the dream or vision is received as a blessing and wisdom, in another it may lead to referral for psychiatric help. As a child I learned quickly to be careful who to talk to. The *works*, in the interests of authenticity arose primarily from a 'calling', an 'inner voice' which, with due discernment was followed, but has an impelling quality like that reported by so many engaged in the *Way* that it *must* be followed.

Apart from seekers' requests, there was a desire to follow two threads in this exploration of contemplation and thereby offer a new perspective on two issues. Firstly, whether contemplation was different or not from mysticism and secondly whether this condition is applicable to all. The resulting discussion, by drawing on the works of authorities both ancient and modern (some initial words from Underhill have already been offered above), sought to illuminate that the contemplative and mystical experience were one and the same thing – variations on a theme, but a common theme nonetheless.

The second impulse again drew on that experience of an ordinary small boy (Wright 2017) in a working-class, not to say impoverished, background. If it could apply to him, could it not apply to all or is contemplation, as is so often perceived, merely a special gift for special people

at special times and in special places? (Murray 1943). And if it could be thus proletarianised, what would then be needed to make that happen?

A third question then arose that, if the contemplative condition is a quality in all humans, although perhaps not often developed or possibly suppressed, how can this be cultivated? This in turn may beg the question, "Why"? One reason in response to the last question, is the aid it might bring to the current perma-poly crisis, a subject dealt with at length developing from *Contemplation* in a later publication and extension of this work (Wright 2023). At a more individual crisis level – that of burnout (Wright 2021a) – the question arose as to what contribution the *Way* could have to the healing of that particular wound; a subject explored in more detail in *Contemplation,* while *Heartfullness* takes up the theme in more detail of the 'how' to foster contemplation.

In exploring contemplation *versus* mysticism or contemplation *as* mysticism, some themes emerged, not least the term 'mystic' as developing an almost pejorative connotation as the centuries passed. When it comes to the development of the contemplative life and movements: -

> Their founders were met by bitter hostility on the part of entrenched conservatives who saw them as dangerous, even heretical deviants from established traditions, to mention only the Buddha, Isaiah, Jesus, Sankara, Kabir, al-Ghazali, Eckhart, the Baal Shem Tov, Teresa of Avila, George Fox, Bernadette of Lourdes and the inevitable Gandhi. And yet in most cases the mystics were in fact retrieving the most cherished and fundamental values and beliefs of those traditions. (Woods 1981:7).

Furthermore, it is perhaps worth noting how contemplation may have come to be seen as a verb, something to *do* in contrast to the apprehension of a profound *condition*, to be part of an exercise in *lectio divina* suggesting deep reflection (*contemplatio*) (Wright 2022a:38). Arguably, the inclusion of *contemplatio* as a stage in *lectio divina* practice may have contributed to a reductionist perspective, making it a something which is done, a type of deep thinking and reflection. The direction taken in *Contemplation* is that contemplation is not a *part* of something it *is* the whole something, a "condition of complete simplicity (Costing not less that everything)" (Eliot 1944:44) as the poet opined. It is "a thing-in-itself" ("*das Ding an*

Sich") in Kantian philosophy (Blumenau 2001) suggesting a state or condition of a thing that is complete, but essentially unknowable through division or conceptualisation. While some who have followed the *Way* down the ages have sought to analyse it and describe its components (Underhill 1911; Lejeune 1924; Merton 1949; Anon 1978; McColman 2010), others seem to have remained silent about such exploration and urged abandonment of analysis in favour of immersion in the experience and the action which flows from it (Murray 1942; Nicholl 1950), the kenotic experience drawing them out of any inclination to define or conceptualise.

The roots of the word 'contemplation', however, may provide further insights, being related to the Latin *con-templum*, suggesting a quality being (rather than action) at-one in the 'holy of holies', the temple, the presence of God. It draws on further linguistic roots in the Latin *contemplari* suggesting an intense, unified gaze that is mutually returned (Beckett 1994:42; Wright 2022a:37). There are further connections with the Indo-European *tem*, meaning to stand or cut out (from the ordinary) and the Greek *theoria*, suggesting a union with the Divine.

It is argued in the book that conflation of the two does not necessarily diminish the vast literature and experience of both, but it does permit, as is argued elsewhere (McColman 2010; Wright 2023) a readier acceptance of something which might appear to be of relevance to the current unprecedented global crises (Wright 2023). The history of the *Way* shows signs of being accepted and repressed at various points down the millennia. Without repeating the content of *Contemplation*, it might be worth revisiting some of these points and the underlying assumptions here, and offering the main points of the emerging model that infuses the *works*. It is perhaps worth noticing at this stage that one of the benefits to modern spirituality is psychology (Wright 2017, Kingsley 2022) especially Jungian psychology, which has enabled a refinement of understanding of the inner life and is explicitly part of the contemplative model in this book and others in this series. That is not to say that in this book or the others an expertise in psychology is professed, rather that it is recognised that the fields of spiritual direction and development, and the profound insights of psychology - and of mind - intersect. Margaret Guenther's role as spiritual director or "midwife" asserts that "the fields are compatible and frequently share raw material" (Guenther 1993:3).

Contemplation sets out to explore the classic contemplative experience, described in three phases: purgation, illumination and union (Underhill 1911), but in this, and to a degree in *Coming Home* and *Heartfullness,* it is argued that further subtleties arise, which psychology,

in part, guides and which in turn supports the spiritual director, for example, in guiding the directee along the *Way* when difficulties may arise. The exploration of these possible dimensions may further the discourse on contemplation and sustain its value, especially in materialistic times or in the face of the "marketing" in an almost competitive way, of the sister concept of mindfulness (Wright 2022a:46-8). In distinguishing mindfulness from contemplation, and later offering the concept of *Heartfullnes*s to support this distinction

> the Way of the contemplative…is not about going up into the mind to the spacious realities of many elevated planes of thought, but a descent into the very core of our being. It has been symbolised down through the ages as the heart, beyond notions of the physical heart, and at the core of what it is to be a fulfilled human (Wright 2021b:27).

One of the reasons for expressing this distinctiveness from mindfulness is the possible risk of reductionism. In part this may be seen as what happens when spirituality becomes commodified and marketed in the spiritual supermarket. Complex ideas requiring depth of attention and commitment are reduced, in this model, to simple feelgood recipes or quick fixes for personal, social or economic problems (Wright 2005a; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Redden 2016). For the follower of the Christian contemplative calling - a further, arguably fundamental, element is present - the reality of the Divine. If there is purpose (and it is argued that being goal-orientated is suspect in contemplation and one of the issues of which the student must be wary) on this *Way*, it is to enter into deeper relationship in and service thereof. In this there is the explicit search, and indeed lies at the core of my approach in the *works* and others, for that "Beloved…immanent and transcendent, personal and transpersonal" (Wright 2022a:13). Elsewhere, in a related text of poetry, I take the Christian cross as symbolic of this search, for in one sense it can be maintained that the inquirer can 'have it all'. The horizontal beam may be seen as symbolic of the remote, transpersonal, unknowable, transcendent reality utterly beyond conceptualisation and human ken. The vertical beam "is the direct line of communication from above to below, the immanent God, personal, knowable, the one in and with whom we can have a relationship" (Wright 2014:7). At the centre is the intersection of transcendence and immanence, perhaps this is the "still point of the turning world" to which Eliot (1944:9) alluded; that inner stillness amid movement, the resting in the Presence, in the world but not off the world (John 15:19 and

17:14), no longer gripped by the addictions of the ego's perception of reality, to which the follower of the *Way* may be guided.

Other conditions within the condition thus come into play, of which it is attested that account needs to be taken in any programme of teaching or further development. *Purgation* involves stripping away accepted notions of self and indeed all of reality. *Illumination* of wider truth arises from this and there follows a sense of being at-one or *union* with the Divine.

However, it is advanced that there has to be a self to be purged in the first place. Thus, the *works* all suggest a number of additional perspectives or patterns, and it may be noticed that across them a more nuanced perception of the sinking into the *Way* is suggested. In the next few paragraphs, I seek to draw out some of the threads from across the *works* all of which, at base, are rooted in an exploration and application of the *Way*.

For example, if it is accepted that there is such a thing as 'soul' (as discussed elsewhere, Wright 2017:98-103) and if this is so then that opens up the possibility of *Incarnation*, that is, the soul to be born into material reality. Sometimes even in early childhood (as in my account in *Coming Home*) there are contemplative insights of being more than the limited perceptions of self, that the world is feeding the child (Appendix 2, Quinn 1995).

For purgation to happen, it stands to reason that there has to be something to purge, and thus following incarnation it may be seen that a process of *Normalisation* gets under way as the roles and identities of the functional personality are formed - the functional personality or ego; the 'who I think I am, told to think I am, is who I am.' The ego having a powerful, not to say addictive, grip (as explored at length in Wright 2021b) it is conjectured that some may live and die in a condition of *Forgetting* whereby the original possible intent in incarnation is lost as soul and personhood split off, the latter becoming all-embracing and suffocating the sense of connection to the Beloved. Yet, somewhere along the line there may be moments of sudden breakthrough (such as that produced by a burst of insight, a cosmic experience or the effects of trauma such as burnout (Wright 2021a) or induced by drugs (Pollan 2018) and/or following Soul Works such as during a retreat or a programme of spiritual exploration.

Whatever the cause of the stirring, it may be that the person knows an *Awakening* whereby there is a sense of accepted perceptions of self and reality being shattered. This may be accompanied by intense inner *Questioning*, perhaps as a form of resistance as "the functional

personality, the ego, the *ahamkara*" (Wright 2021b:43); attempts to hold onto the ego's integrity and power.

If the ego does not secure full re-grip, then the challenge to 'normal' perceptions of self and reality may persist, and then it may be observed that *Purgation* advances. The joy-pain as the ego's power is broken and realisation dawns can be times of extremes – bliss and terror, numbness and wonder, fear and love. A kind of inner crucifixion or purification seems to be taking place; the ego's power and control of the person's life, the sense of self, are being shaken and broken. The remaking of personality is under way, the fermentational-alchemical shudder seems to be shaking out the very essence of what it is 'to be me'. All the contemplative sources cited in *Contemplation* have this in common – the extremes of physical, spiritual, emotional and mental pain that may arise as the power of the personality and self-perception is shattered.

In the classic contemplative literature this is *Hesychasm*, the emptying out of self, concepts, definitions, ideas and thoughts "that get in the way" of truth and relationship in order to awaken to, connect with what Merton (1966:140-2) described as the dichotomy between the "true self and the false self" – the Soul and its purpose in tension with the ego or functional personality. Falsehood of self and reality gives way to authenticity and humility. This may be somewhat related to the Buddhist *nirvana* – literally 'blown out'. The traps of identities are made visible; an emptying out not just of identification with roles, but also an awareness that breaks free of their power, a non-attachment to them while inhabiting them. The person is emptying out, but may enter dark nights as the fear of the abyss, the emptiness, the *nada* (nothing) (Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 2017:655) sets in, in which, paradoxically, in becoming nothing there may be a sense of knowing *todo* (all). This, again, is the all illuminated by Eliot (1944:44) as, "A condition of complete simplicity (Costing not less than everything)". In the *works*, it is put forward that freedom from "Who I think I am" brings with it the *Fear* of "Then who am I?" if no longer gripped by the certainties of "What I am supposed to do" according to the norms of material-temporal reality. In that sense this process is not only transformative, it may also be seen as countercultural and revolutionary. To the contemplative, there is a bursting free of ego definition and shifting to a different gravitational centre of consciousness (Anon 2019:309) – from ego to soul (Wright 2021b:264; Wright 2022a:131).

This quality of *Illumination* can be observed as if someone has switched an (inner) light on. There is a sense of release from the crude image-making consciousness and a bursting though into a sense of ecstatic knowing, seeing, feeling Truth about self, the Beloved and Reality. It is a Truth that has a deep incontestability to it. The veil of the temple is torn. *Nirvana* - blow out – has happened to clear the way.

Thus, it is posited that another quality may be experienced - that of *Regeneration*, literally a sense of re-birthing - an alchemical transformation of lead into gold, dark into light, shadow into luminosity (Wright 2017:385; Wright 2021a:93). The functional personality is being remade, wherein there may be experiences of being overwhelmed by awareness of the boundless love that lies at the heart of all things; of the realisation that what was being sought was in turn seeking, in an expanded awareness of self and all-that-is, the Life force, God. It may feel like a resurrection, a quality of liberation, of being set free from the shackles of the old personality that has served its time.

However, it seems that such a regeneration may sometimes be accompanied by *Oscillation* as the illumination and bursting through of truth has yet to embed itself. There seems to be a veering back and forth between remembering and forgetting, bliss and terror, love and fear. However, it seems that as the work progresses, there may develop an inclusion or integration of the personality into *Co-habitation*. Here the ego moves to the position of servant to the soul as it loses its fear of attack and annihilation (some writers suggest that the ego has to be destroyed; Wilber 1995). However, Wilber's perspective seems contrary to the love of the Divine, a continuation of 'dualism', 'God here, but not here'. In all the *works* the ego is not seen as the enemy but as sourced in the Reality too, and it comes to be accepted and embraced.

If the seeker continues, a condition of *Immersion* may arise when the person is overwhelmed by the enormity of the love of the Beloved. This may also be accompanied by its twin condition of *Infusion,* in which every aspect of the seeker's being partakes of and is consumed by this love, sometimes experienced as "fire" (Wright 2022a:81) or being "drowned" (Wright 2022a:83) as it may feel so fierce and overwhelming. Out of or with this fire or drowning, the person may come to live a transformed life and, according to some authorities, may lead some individuals to exhibit paranormal traits such as translocation or stigmata.

Union arises in the sense that the person is so immersed and infused in the Presence that there is no differentiation any longer between ordinary and non-ordinary reality, life may be perceived as a prayer, a lived prayer (Wright 2022a:92), a continued ecstasy, in the true sense of the word as being free of the *stasis* condition of ego-entrapment. This is the condition of "ingatheredness" and of "recollection in the highest sense of the word, through a concentrated recalling of ourselves to ourselves" (Marcel 2008:75); a unification of self in Self. In *Union* there is a deep plunge into unified consciousness, a oneness, a Christ consciousness, a divinisation of the whole self. This is the *contemplum*, the fulfilment (for Christians) of Paul's words, "Not I, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

However, it is further suggested that the person is not 'cooked' yet. For there may be a further element towards full-fillment that takes contemplation out of the commonly held perception of the contemplative as detached from worldly concerns. *Service* emerges as being immersed in the love of the Divine, a sense of drowning in something yet still breathing, overwhelmed by love, yet functioning more effectively in the world. There arises the second of two qualities that arguably differentiates Western Christian mysticism from some aspects of the oriental – the first being the overwhelming nature of divine love, the second being service. Personal spiritual bliss of union with the Divine does not suffice. The contemplative feels called to carry that experience of unity out into the world, share it, in compassionate action - great or small, indeed where great or small become meaningless (Kelly 1966).

In this book and others, as suggested above, I sought to draw out further insights beyond the oft-quoted, almost adamantine linear paradigm, of purgation-illumination-union. The *Way* seems more subtle and oscillatory that this. Each of the concepts listed above then raises further questions for exploration and commentary that may inform the understanding of the intricate simplicity of this *Way*. For example, those involved in spiritual direction may find the insights helpful in the process of discernment for the directee. Such points may also assist in discerning the level at which the *Way* is approached in different persons. Is there a tension, for example, in suggestion that this way is the "birthright of all" (Wright 2017:16) while also recognising that individuals with different intelligence, inclination and other background factors - not to mention incarnation - process spiritual information in different ways, if at all (Murray 1939)? There seems to be a challenge in proletarianisation, making something available to everybody and yet not reducing it to the least common denominator or assuming

that it can be grasped in the same way by all. That is why there is emphasis in the *works* (for example Wright 2022a:286) of starting where someone is, of seeking "the level the level of him to whom you speak" (Nervo 2021:16) so that the *Way* can indeed be accessible to all.

Thus, it is posited that this work and the conceptual bridges into the other *works* includes some suggestions for practical application and deepening in *Contemplation.* This offers a development of traditional understandings of contemplation, and possibilities of application in and beyond the Christian tradition, together with further avenues of reflection and study. In addition, as will be explored in the *Heartfullness* chapter, there is already some dissemination of this model into other teaching programmes. It may be that it fits with the contemporary rise in interest in contemplation (Mitchell and Van Gordon 2023) that is not bound by religious denominations, and yet is rooted in and perhaps applicable to them. For many people it seems to be a natural course after immersion in their conventional religious path, where it has become dry, or after "swimming the length and breadth of the New Age river" (Wright 2017:94) and purchasing different options in the spiritual supermarket. Sometimes it may be, as Ferrer points out, that a good deal of wandering is necessary before being ready to take the deep plunge:

> It is only after traveling through the tremendously rich, complex, and multifaceted spiritual waters that we can, I believe, afford to immerse ourselves in the profound ocean of this more open, fertile, and relaxed universalism: a universalism that calls to be realised, not so much isolated in individual inner experiences, grandiose visions, or metaphysical institutions, but through intimate dialogue and communion (Ferrer 2002:191).

with the wider world, all of life as well as the Divine.

Burnout

Between the probable and the proved there yawns
A gap. Afraid to jump, we stand absurd,
Then see behind us sink the ground and, worse,
Our very standpoint crumbling. Desperate dawns
Our only hope: to leap into the Word
That opens up the shuttered universe.

Sheldon Vanauken (1977:113)
A Severe Mercy

The distinctive premise which is offered in this book is that burnout is more than a stress problem, that it may have deep spiritual roots, and that it thus demands spiritual responses. Relatively few sources, as summarised in this chapter and explored in more detail in the book, have taken up this perspective. Here I further outline some of that background and the reasons behind it. As with the other texts in this series, the book is intended as a map, a practical guide, practical spirituality, to assist readers in finding their way through and beyond burnout.

In the book it is argued that the advantage of drawing on a spiritual perspective helps to shift the approach to burnout from the a purely health-illness approach seeking a cure. Including spirituality suggests additional possibilities, a response rooted in a healing-wholeness approach embodying transformation. It may offer perspectives that take the burned-out person from a position of being a victim of circumstances, to one of agency, of hope and change; within the crisis there is potential to discover meaning and purpose, a shift into a different way of being that is more positive, authentic and heartfelt.

The topic of burnout appears to have surfaced more in the general media in recent years, highlighted by the pressures on key workers during the Covid pandemic (for example, Grover 2021; Moss 2021; Bryant 2023; Cocozza 2023; Mental Health UK 2024). Burnout is portrayed in these instances as almost entirely a product of extreme stress, rooted in the seminal work of Maslach (1982) among healthcare professionals that have portrayed burnout as a psychological phenomenon creating physiological effects.

A recent survey (Mental Health UK 2024) reported on experiences of burnout among 2,020 adults, of whom 1,132 were in work. Although the report emphasised that 20% of workers reported needing to take time out from work because of stress, and that burnout was essentially a workplace problem that could be resolved by workplace solutions, it is perhaps noteworthy that there seemed to be a willingness to expand the possibilities of the source of that stress. There is growing recognition that global challenges around issues such as economic and social breakdown, climate change, conflict, artificial intelligence, population change and mass migration (Mental Health UK 2024, Aldern 2024) are creating other potent causes of powerlessness, hopelessness, stress and anxiety than individual and local problems.

The psychosocial roots of burnout and psychosocial solutions suggested seem to be rooted in a paradigm that, despite the willingness to look beyond the workplace, do not yet seem ready to embrace the possibility that at least part of the difficulty is a possible loss of that sense of the non-material, the non-worldly, the "Wholly Other" (Underhill 1930:ix) that is part of what it is to be human, providing an anchor when "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" (Yeats 1991:124). This sense of "Centre", of connection to and relationship in that which is other than the self, of something more than being body and mind in which meaning and purpose is found, is the essence of spirituality. As suggested earlier in the chapter on *Coming Home*, it is almost seen as a side effect that it has mental and physical health benefits, such as resilience against illness and added longevity; a pattern consistently reported in many studies including those cited in the *works*, and touched on by Pascal in his "wager". He noted (in *Pensée* 233) the "gain in this life" by belief in the infinite (God) because of the reassurance that it might bring (Pascal 1947:68).

The volume of books, chapters and papers on burnout as a psycho-social problem is immense. A Google search at the time of first publication of *Burnout* (Wright 2005b) revealed over 150 million hits, and one million when linked to spirituality. A Google search at the time of writing revealed the former figure now stands at 372 million[6], and the latter has now increased to 11 million[7]. This may indicate the possibility of a rising exploration of the connection between spirituality and burnout.

[6] https://www.google.com/search?q=Burnout. March 2024
[7] https://www.google.com/search?q=spirituality+and+burnout. March 2024

Yet, as has been explored in *Coming Home* and *Contemplation*, it may be seen that burnout is one of the consequences for some people when the inner impulse from the ordinary ways of seeing and being in the world; the longing to be free of the "dead forms" and towards the "Eternal Reality" (Underhill 1933:21), can no longer be contained in the desire to "open up the shuttered universe" as Vanauken (1977:113) poetically expresses it. This long-suppressed, hidden longing, may be kept bottled up, but the energy required to do so can be immense (Weiss 2018), and it may therefore be that exhaustion is manifested in the particular spiritual emergency that is burnout – the premise of both the earliest and most recent publications of *Burnout* (Wright 2021a).

A friend, who works as an actor, told me that actors often burn out: "They get so stuck in their roles that they forget who they are and become exhausted". I thought after this conversation that it is not only actors of stage and screen who may burn out. Arguably, in view of the nature of spiritual awakening outlined in *Coming Home*, *Contemplation* and *Heartfullness*, it may be thought that everyone is an actor to a greater or lesser extent, addicted to roles and identities that require a de-addiction expanded way of seeing, a coming into a new plane of awareness, if their grip is to be lost (Wright 2021b). This quality of acting seems to produce a relentless pressure to fit with personally and socially accepted norms. It seems interesting that one of the most common words arising from the many case studies cited in the book, is 'pressure'.

Thus, it is posited that "burnout is what happens to the ego, the little self, the functional personality, when that soul, that heart, that essence presses through demanding change. What burns out is only the everyday self, the soul cannot burn out" (Wright 2021a:40). In possession of roles and identities of the functional personalities, some people may continue to live thus, some get inklings of something more, but keep it pressed down, others heed these wake-up calls and follow through with spiritual inquiry and personal transformation. It is therefore argued that it is the construct that is the functional personality that burns out. The spiritual dimension offers the possibility that there is another aspect of our being, the soul, the "I Amness" (Wright 2017:80) that is not burned out, but is moving towards freedom.

For the purposes of this discussion, it is proposed that burnout may be seen as something that happens to the functional personality and is the

> desperate cry of the very essence of who we are, our highest selves, our souls, to break free. It is symptomatic of a longing to be liberated, no longer defined as who or what others say we are. It is the struggle to be in the world in which we find and give love and compassion. We are reaching out for work and relationships that have heart and meaning for us. We long to be free of old wounds and other unconscious processes that limit our definitions and understanding of ourselves. We hunger for the freedom to be fully and authentically who we are (Wright 2021a:41).

This struggle for authenticity among those in burnout seems to contain common features, from mental and physical exhaustion and a stuckness in it while wanting out of it, through to a deep restlessness and a search for meaning and purpose, and connection to Source or Ultimately reality however perceived. Without it, a condition of "spiritual aridity" that is burnout may overwhelm the person as

> the energy of the we-who-we-think-we-are, the functional personality, the ego invests enormous energy in trying to keep things 'normal', under control, the same. The demand for such energy keeps going up. We become increasingly depleted, exhausted and heartsick with the effort. The greater the exhaustion the closer we get to an almost complete state of mental, physical, social and spiritual collapse (Wright 2021:42-3).

The inclusion of the spiritual dimension, seems to have had relatively little attention in the literature until recently, and this text has been one of those drawing attention to what might otherwise be considered lacking. Yet the roots of disenchantment with the way economic, social and political structures dehumanise persons are long and deep, and reflected in the recognition that a kind of "decadence" emerges the source of "which is purely spiritual" (Ortega y Gasset 1957:149). Like Murray (1939), Kelly (1943), Ancilla (1955), Marcel (2008) and many others writing of the spiritual life amid the cataclysms of the early 20th Century, they saw risks emerging when persons are reduced to biological machines in the mechanistic and systems-model ways of organising societies. Thus, *Burnout* not only addresses how individuals may respond to burnout, but also raised questions about the ways organisations do or do not provide nurturing environments.

Although this work comes third in this series, in a much smaller, but widely disseminated form, it preceded the other three being circulated to the membership of the Royal College of Nursing and to the readership of the annual congress edition of *Nursing Standard* (Wright 2005b). If the driver for these *works* was the personal experience and exploration of the mystical since the earliest years (Appendices 1 and 2) then this strand illuminates how that peculiar spiritual crisis known as burnout was a personal test-case of spiritual emergence-emergency.

Copyright of that 2005 booklet being given to the author in 2010, it was possible to flesh out the study. This included expansion and refinement of the questionnaires, based on the responses of the experience of burnout among several hundred retreatants at the Sacred Space Foundation. The vignettes of personal experiences (anonymised) contained in the book came largely from reports sent to *Nursing Standard*, written correspondence and reports before and after sessions of spiritual direction while on retreat. They appear to attest to the spiritual nature of burnout and perhaps helped to flesh out the reality of burnout as lived suffering and not just a subject of journal interest.

The energy taken to 'push down' the inner life and to live inauthentically can be immense (Vaughan 1996), especially if that relates to spiritual awakening where there is a conflict between normalised life-as-lived, with its instilled values and identities in opposition to a different way of seeing reality and the heart's desire (Wright 2017) or "soul purpose" (Wright 2021a:67). At one (functional personality or ego) level such entrapment may be judged as 'wrong' because of the conflict, not to say suffering it elicits. However, from a wider perspective it might be seen as quite perfect preparation for a particular reason arising out of incarnation. The latter would be the direction towards which this work veers, not least because it lifts the person out of the suffering of victimhood, which conventional stress models tend to entail i.e. the person is burned out either because of systemic failings in the workplace or managerial dysfunction, or it is the person who is blamed as having the problem. The burnout models where personal or organisational 'weaknesses' may be seen as the driver, then may consequently adopt a technocratic solution: 'something is wrong, and such and such needs to happen to fix it'. A spiritual model is more inclined to see within "in all suffering there is a grace" (Wright 2021b:73), perhaps even a summoning up from the unconscious or a part of the person that is no longer willing to tolerate what may have come to be seen as an inauthentic life.

Locking burnout into work-based stress/mental health models, it is argued in this work, while prevalent and providing some relief (i.e. the person may be able to take legitimate sick leave, or find another occupation or relationship), may place too much restriction on wider options for a response – omitting the reasons of the heart that long for attention and action. The problem may also be compounded by pushing the burned-out person into victim mode, whereby it is 'others' who are the cause, or the repressing quality of shame where the person absorbs the messages of personal failure where there is "something wrong with me" (Wright 2021a:59).

Jung seems to support the spiritual perspective when he further proposed that 'illness' (mental or physical) could also be seen as an inner longing for meaning. He showed how methods that seek only organic causes for disease and dis-ease are reductionist based on a dubious set of assumptions of what it is to be "normal" (Jung 1960:396). He further described the "subsoil of the collective unconscious" (Jung 1977:231) whereby a person is not only affected by their own dreams and inner dilemmas, but also by those of all others in the collective.

Burnout as a spiritual dilemma seems justified from this perspective and stands distinctive yet complementary to stress models. Drawing in the spiritual dimension may therefore permit a wider range of 'treatments' than psychological or medical therapies that tend toward diagnosis and something 'wrong' with persons (Wright 2021a:59). Instead, it suggests that there is nothing wrong or diseased any more than pregnancy and giving birth is a disease, an analogy with which may not be out of place here as burnout by that parallel is seen as a natural process requiring only "midwifery" (Guenther 1993:ix, Wright 2021a:64) to let that process of rebirthing (transformation of self and emergence of soul) come to its ineluctable conclusion. Some of the features of this approach may be summarised as: -

1. Self-assessment through tried and tested symptoms enables the person to identify the nature of the challenge, to recognise that it is a phase which can be passed through, and that there is ultimately a grace, possibility and transformation to be found through it no matter how dire it may seem at the time. In other words, it is not a medical model of disease, but an optimistic spiritual model of emergence and possibility.
2. Those accompanying persons with burnout see the potential it contains and are able to functions not as 'fixers' of a problem, but as midwives of transformation (for

example Snow and Willard 1989; Guenther 1993; Vaughan 1996; Dossey 2008; Borysenko 2012; Glouberman 2012; Watson 2020)

3. Attention is drawn to the needs of those family members, work colleagues and friends who may themselves be challenge by the person in burnout, and need insight and guidance so that they can offer healthy support and themselves be supported.
4. The stress-health models tend to see burnout as a problem requiring treatment and solutions. They assume efforts at prevention are needed and not just to help the person toward healing, but also contain organisational costs (or perhaps provide the organisation with an opportunity to be seen to express its compassionate values). It is asserted that the spiritual model assists the person in seeing this not as a problem to be fixed, but a 'gift' to enable transformation. In that context, and if the outcome of resolved burnout is a happier and healthier person, then arguably and controversially burnout might not need to be prevented, but drawn upon as a catalyst for making the life of the person more fulfilling and bringing benefits the organisation (if the burnout is work-related) as well.
5. When not treated as a disease but a dis-ease, further possibilities of response arise described as the 'R' words suggested as a guide: – *Retreat* (withdrawing from the situation, stopping fixing), resting, re-energising, recuperating – taking care of self and getting out of the toxic situation. *Reconnection* to Source, the Higher Power, the Beloved however experienced (this in turn connects to the work that connects, getting free of the 'addictions' of the functional personality and which model is integral *Heartfullness.*) *Recollection* wherein the person reflects and re-envisions life, dis-covering their heart's reasons. *Recovery* into right relationship with self, others, the world, the Absolute, which is a lifelong process. Burning out does not mean that it cannot happen again, nor does it mean that re-ignition is not possible.

This process where a spiritual perspective is adopted, it is argued, is essentially an optimistic model of re-birthing and the work cites other voices who have come to similar conclusions, for example, Glouberman (2012) and Borysenko (2012), as well as the particular insights that this text offers. It connects with the other *works* in this series, for spiritual development is supported by perspectives offered in the other three books. Further, it is put forward that this

model edges into a contemplative perspective where the process of burnout is not unfolding solely within ordinary reality, but part of the bigger picture of non-ordinary reality in which there is evolving meaning and purpose, rather than just events which are judged to be either good or bad.

Heartfullness

Within the depths I saw ungathered,
bound by love in one volume,
the scattered leaves of all the universe;
substance and accidents and their relations,
as though together fused, after such fashion
that what I tell of is one simple flame.
The universal form of this complex
I think that I beheld, because more largely,
as I say this, I feel that I rejoice.

Dante Alighieri
The Divine Comedy: Paradiso 33:85-93.

Heartfullness takes the principles of the *Way* and wraps them around a pattern of exercises and reflections designed to cultivate the quality of union, and from that, service. It is a distinctive approach where the attachments to existing ways of knowing of self and Reality are seen as comparable to addiction, and like addiction requires tried and tested steps to get free of it. It provides a characteristic map, a handbook for practical spirituality to challenge existing ways of seeing self and the Reality. It uses, primarily, many in-sight exercises and readings designed to provoke deep reflection and shifts in the "way of seeing" (MacQuarrie 1973:125), encouraging the person into a deep relationship in the Beloved, loving awareness, and service. The book is not a stand-alone, although it can be used as such, for it is part of a series, intended as a progressive development of ideas and practices intended to be a practical guide to an ever-deepening spiritual life.

Dante (above) offers an almost universal perspective – that while persons are locked into perceptions of time and space, it is difficult if not impossible to grasp the nature of this unity, this "universal form" bound in the "one single flame". Getting free of the limited perceptions of ordinary reality is widely described as challenging, to say the least, across a broad swathe of contemplative literature (Wright 2022a). To break the attachment to one way of seeing, and enter another, requires nothing less than the fierce challenges that arise similar to those twelve steps in a wide range of de-addiction and de-compulsion programmes, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Food Addicts Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Clutterers Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous (Recovery Village 2024). Throughout the text,

embodying steps through twelve principle spiritual values or concepts, the exercises may be used to shift the veil that separates one reality from another, one way of seeing to another, and to overcome those things, those addictions, that get in the way of union with the Divine. This joining together seeks to make us "kindred in nature" for "if we are not conjunct, then it is hard to see how any revelation of Him could be made which would mean anything to us" (Jones 1906:30).

It may be clear from the discussion in the introduction, that there are some possible parallels and common ground between spiritual development-awakening, and those processes identified in de-addiction programmes such as Alcoholics Anonymous (Anon. 1991). In *Heartfullness* I develop the theme in the earlier books that the power of the functional personality, the *ahamkara*, in our lives has an addictive quality to it. Getting free of that addiction and "seeing" anew requires some similarities of approach, such as receptivity to the Higher Power, questioning perceptions of self, the need for a supportive superstructure (for example in the form of the Soul Works, Soul Foods, Soul Friends and Soul Communities model embodied firstly in *Coming Home* (Wright 2017)) and flowing as a guiding principle through all four books. However, the use of such parallels is limited.

Firstly, as suggested in the *Introduction*, a contemplative perspective that is more circumspect about judgements of "right" and "wrong" as persons in addiction programmes are invited to own up to their mistakes or make amends. Along the *Way* such judgmental words "eventually fall away because from the depths, from the soul's perspective, it is all perfect" (Wright 2021b:175). Secondly, while 'twelve steps' offers a useful framework and mnemonic, those in addiction programmes are invariably required to remain forever 'in recovery', required to remain attached because of the addiction to the notion that, for example, "I am an alcoholic.". As the works suggest, attachment/addiction to *any* identity or label is questionable, if the intention is to get free of them, and issue explored at length at many points in the works if the concept of "I Amness" is to be taken to its full depths.

The twelve steps framework can also now be found in many approaches, not necessarily in relation to addiction, such as a set of Christian theological teachings (Uncommon Pursuit 2023), recovery from childhood trauma (Kathleen and Friends 2022) or developing personal power in choice-making (O'Neill 2004). 'Twelve' figures in a Jungian individuation model in relation to alcohol addiction (McCabe 2015), a course in Christianity (St Romain 2010) and as

a construct for the cultivation of a compassionate life (Armstrong 2011). However, as is set out in the *Heartfullness*, it is not so much about steps in a linear sense, but also about a set of spiritual values (such as the quest for union with the Beloved, and a depth of discernment or offering of service), an endeavour towards completion, in which each demands commitment into depth be taken through a series of exercises. In this pattern the book is probably closer to that set out by Armstong (2011) in her suggestions for cultivating compassion, being a set of related themes with their individual suggestions for action, and which together form a coherent whole.

This book was a long time in the composing, for it could not emerge without the work expressed in the other three books, and the accumulation of almost four decades of teaching (and being taught), enriching experiences and the gathering of numerous examples from those I have worked with on retreat and in spiritual direction (several thousand down the years). In part it arises from that work, the gifts of wise teachers and perhaps a touch of grace.

It may be worth briefly exploring a little more of the background. Working with the Sacred Space Foundation, an extensive programme of retreats on and off site evolved over three decades. A detailed account of how such work arose is beyond the scope of this text and is found in the other books, many press reports, on-line sites[8] and reports submitted annually and available on-line at the Charity Commission (2023). Perhaps it would suffice to say that a group of people coming together, by chance if chance it be, eventually created an organisation to foster and further the *works* discussed in this text.

The Heartfullness programme preceded the book and was a culmination and cohesion of decades of spiritual activity. To some extent the teachings, or at least parts of them, were well under way in diverse settings. However, motivation for the next stage came in part from a wariness at the way mindfulness and other spiritual programmes were emerging in the UK amid the spiritual supermarket, and secondly after an approach by the team leader of the Fresh Expressions group in the Diocese of Carlisle in 2016, and of the then diocesan Bishop.

[8] www.sacredspace.org.uk and www.kentigern.org.uk.

Conversations with individuals in the diocese at the time led to a recognition that the *Way* did not fit easily in some respects in the Anglican protestant tradition[9]. Auden, for example, in his introduction to Fremantle's (1964) survey of the protestant mystics argues that the

> Anglican Church has laid the most stress upon the institutional aspect of religion. Uniformity of rite has always seemed to her more important than uniformity of doctrine, and the private devotions of her members have been left to their own discretion (Auden *in* Fremantle 1964:28).

There is some suggestion that while that position may be softening, the institutional churches retain a degree of misunderstanding, wariness and even hostility towards mysticism (Fremantle 1964, Woods 1981, MacCulloch 2013). Meanwhile, an approach to the contemplative life may be bracketed within the "private devotions" aspect as it is essentially, at least at first, an individual pursuit of unity with the Beloved. Yet, over time, institutions such as monasteries or programmes, for example those developed around Ignatian spirituality[10], have furthered a deeper acceptance of this *Way*. However, an aspect of this particular diocesan project called the 'God for All' initiative, had to respond to how far the diocese offered (or did not) an open door, a welcome, for those of a more contemplative nature, and what schooling and community was needed to support such persons.

All this is not to say that *Heartfullness* rejects the superstructures of religion, rather it is a call, as in the other *works*, for them to adopt their full potential as Soul Communities to foster the awakening and the relationship in the Divine of their participants, rather than place them in an "iron cage" the "*stahlhartes Gehäuse"* (steel-hard casing) described by Weber (1992:123) - in this case of those aspects of organised Christianity which embody inflexible hierarchy and dogmas. For:

> In every form of social life and in society as a whole two currents are invariably present, the 'organisational' and the 'mystical' or ideal, one tending to conservation, to practical constructions that perpetuate the established order, the other to renewal, with sharpened awareness of present deficiencies…" the distinction between them is "never absolute" being made up of human individuals whose complexity interweaves these entities, "yet they come together only to part anew" the conflict between them being "between the letter that kills and the spirit that quickens" (Sturzo 1939:6).

[9] In conversation with the then Bishop of Carlisle, I noted in my [unpublished] journal his words, "It can't be easy being a mystic in the church".
[10] https://jesuitinstitute.org/ and https://www.beunos.com/ for example.

The "superstructures" of religions, may, it seems, offer binary options to the *Way* – either one of embracing and fostering, or tightening and excluding (Ferrer 2002). It was my personal experience of church during my youth and as an adult, which had suffocating, excluding and abusive qualities to it. In later life this was affirmed by working with many others who were wounded by similar experience. In total, this formed part of the impulse to write these books, to express that personal story and through it offer avenues for spiritual practice that could avoid such abuses, and in addition offering possibilities of fulfilling the longing for spiritual depth and relationship in the Divine that got past any disconnections created by false perceptions or distortions arising from personal experience.

From the beginning of the work of the Sacred Space Foundation (1986), it was recognised that the inner inquiry is not a solo project, hence the development of a charitable institution – with persons, buildings and educational programmes to provide the milieu for the necessary support in spiritual awakening. This of course is not new. Throughout history an important function of religious institutions, or at least some of them, has been to provide

> a 'safe' mental and emotional environment for a process of disintegration and reintegration of ideas and value systems on the part of society's most sensitive and original members. The process of mystical development itself can be interpreted as just such a systematic recasting of the elements of the experience (Woods 1981:5).

The model explored in *Coming Home* is intended to create just such a womb-like space that safely holds the seekers while they seek. These principles apply both to ancient and modern spiritual communities and teachings. Regarding the latter, a contrast may be drawn between settings where community and support is strongly advocated in the process of spiritual inquiry (e.g. the Iona Community[11], the Esalen Institute[12] or the Findhorn Foundation[13]) and more loosely gathered centres where 'doing your own thing' can lead some persons to be caught

[11] https://iona.org.uk/
[12] https://www.esalen.org/
[13] https://www.findhorn.org/

up in chaotic and dysfunctional personal searches and be at risk of mental health problems and spiritual bypassing (Ram Dass 2012; King *et al*. 2018; Picciotto *et al.* 2018).

The latter evidence is supported anecdotally. I worked with a group of community nurses in Somerset in the late 1990s. Glastonbury, with its abundance of spiritual and self-development programmes, was, and still is, a gathering place of seekers from across the globe. In the freedom and expanse of its opportunities was also the fallout – of, in some instances, unregulated teachers, unstructured courses with lack of follow up and absence of Soul Communities and Soul Friends to provide ongoing support. As a result, there were many examples of individuals who had gravitated to this centre of New Age spirituality, only to experience severe mental health and social problems without the structural support to protect them.

Another factor considered was the complexity of developing a contemplative programme, firmly rooted in the Christian tradition and which was not only ecumenically Christian, but also a pluralistic willingness to embrace truths across traditions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this was received with some doubts and hostility within the diocese once the programme reached the advertising stage, while on balance the support was much greater than the opposition.

Space here does not permit a full explanation of the development of the School and the *Heartfullness* teachings in which it is grounded. Arguably that is worthy of exploration of a doctorate in its own right. The purpose here is to suggest how the School emerged not out of the blue, but out of decades of spiritual inquiry and the support of thousands of others, tried and tested, before it was all funnelled into one specific School. This is not an unfamiliar pattern; a ”twofold path” of inspiration arising in the founder(s) and the “spiritual training” that precedes it (de Guibert1986:10). Consequently, and to cut a long two-year conversation very short, the St Kentigern School for Contemplatives was established. In practice things fell together very quickly and (arguably for the church) with surprising speed. I was asked to set out a vision of why such a School could be needed and how it would function and be funded. In view of the other *works* reviewed in this account, it may also be clear that my roots lay in the Christian contemplative tradition, that Christ stood at the centre of that approach as the “master contemplative” (Wright 2021b:46).

The School and its content appear to conform to what many authors on the contemplative life have urged, namely as expressed succinctly by Underhill on the need for "an educative process; a drill, of which the first stages will indeed be tough…the new undertaking will involve the development and the training and…the acquirement of a method you have never used before" (Underhill 1914:28). Such a "drill" she argued throughout her teachings, is best and most safely undertaken through the tried and tested soul community of a religious foundation.

The word *Heartfullness* was chosen in part to support the view, not least in recent scientific studies (Childre and Martin 2011; Cowan 2016) where the heart is not simply a biological organ, but both actually and symbolically a centre of consciousness, the seat of the soul that "requires the heart" (Zukav 2007:73). In part, also, because the heart is referred to time and time again in contemplative literature (Wright 2022). And in further part as a possible alternative reference point to the perceived colonisation of mindfulness in western spirituality, or more accurately, its debased forms where spiritual insights become reduced to stress adaption and/or commodified as another item in the marketplace of consumerism, especially that aspect of the human need to find ways to make 'me' feel better (Wright 2022a:46-48). Mindfulness, arguably like any other authentic spiritual path, is not about comforting, strengthening or rewarding the ego-functional personality, but in diminishing its power (James 1902; Underhill 1939; Merton 1959; Ram Dass 1970; Jung 1974; Wilber 1995; Vaughan 1996; Kornfield 2001; Anon. 2019). This suggests a shift away from the current cultural trend towards 'mindfulness' as a catch-all and fix-all solution (Chiesa 2012; Wright 2013; Purser 2019).

In some contemplative traditions, and certainly that of Western Christianity, the heart is a powerful symbol representing far more than feelings or mere sentimentality, rather it is seen as the conduit between the Divine and human. The *Way* is not so much mindfulness, rather a hesychastic mindemptiness, a clearing out of the conceptualising demands of the functional personality, a getting out of the way in order for "the Way to take" the seeker (Wright 2021b:65).

The ’getting out of the way in order to discover the *Way’* is an aspect of the contemplative life, the breaking free of the attachments to the demands and limited awareness of the functional identity, the false or small self (Merton 1966). This begged the question as to what the key themes of the programme needed to be in order to encourage this liberation, through experiential exercises and study of contemplative works. How could this be developed in a church, which, at the time of writing, had no other such explicitly and intentionally contemplative programme? Could a School and community for ‘mystics’ be formed?

Several factors influenced the foundational steps, that of the decades-long personal spiritual inquiry, the contributions of fine teachers along the *Way*, the lessons to be learned from other settings e.g. monastic organisations and the work of the emerging ‘new monastics’ (McEntee and Bucko 2015), and whatever could be drawn from the anecdotal efforts of others in my networks who had attempted integrating aspects of non-Christian traditions into a core Christian contemplative programme. Was it possible, without the risks of cherry picking, to build a programme that might stay true to its core, yet remain plural and inclusive? Finally, there were inspirations to be drawn from the consideration of the ego attachments as “addictions”; if so, then what de-addiction models were already available? My healthcare, counselling and spiritual direction work down the years had given me much experience in the twelve-step de-addiction programmes of Sex, Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous. These provided the hanger on which to develop the de-addiction approach, as well as teaching and working with the Enneagram and its nine ‘passions’ (Riso and Hudson 1999).

Support for the Heartfullness position is found not only in the historical accounts of the mystics, whom this book explored, but also the more recent works in the field of transpersonal psychology. Kingsley, for example, notes how “we are ancient, incredibly ancient. We hold the history of the stars in our pockets.” He further illustrates the views of many, not just transpersonal psychologists, in how a person in crisis has an opportunity for “taking them beyond themselves” into a wholly new transformation of understanding the self in the All-that-is (Kingsley 2022:190-1).

Thus, it may be seen that the work embodied in *Coming Home* and *Contemplation* becomes embedded in the praxis of a School within the established structure of the church. Further,

that the principles found in those works may be seen to be applicable across traditions yet not debasing or watering down the core Christian contemplative axis (Johnston 1995).

There are twelve steps involved - although the notion of 'steps' is somewhat misleading as in practice in the text and the course each overlaps into the other. In doing so, something different emerges. Maybe here can be applied that often misquoted maxim about the whole being greater than the sum of the parts (attributed to Aristotle, although more accurately translated as "The whole is besides the sum of the parts" (Gordoncillo 2021)). Gestalt psychologist Kurt Koffka suggests a more nuanced understanding that seems more relevant to the Heartfullness approach, viz: "The whole is *something else than* the sum of the parts" (Koffka 1935:176 my italics).

Heartfullness advances a series of 'parts', which, it is posited, fuse into something wholly other. These include themes and many exercises intended to encourage deep reflection and ultimately to translate them from study into practical action – into service.

Awareness – of self (and all the intricate layers of conscious and unconscious motives that drive the person) and that which is beyond the self, discerning between the essential nature, the I-Amness and the I-who-I-think-I-am of the functional personality.

Love – deep compassion for All-that-is, not excluding 'enemies' both internal and worldly.

Authenticity – truth speaking and 'walking the talk', fearlessly, even if the truth hurts, for authenticity strengthens a message rather than weakens it.

Transformation – a profound shift in the way of being and doing in the world, and finding ways to help others do likewise.

Unity – recognising the interconnectedness of all things, including the self and the Self.

Trust – in the essential goodness at the heart of persons, the capacity to transform, and in the deeper purposes and processes of the universe beyond the egocentric view.

Joy – even in the midst of sorrow, a reverence for life, an appreciation for simply being alive and what we can accomplish when compassionate action is offered.

Humility – awareness of the limitations of personal powers in the face of All-that-is, yet appreciation of significance in the creation and the capacity to serve when persons break free of egocentrism.

Peace – a deep inner quality in which there is deep rest, coming from a place of unified consciousness, even in the face of strife and turbulence.

Discernment – knowing the true from the false, when and how to act, from a place of full awareness and when and where to offer the person's particular and unique gifts.

Wisdom – seeing the bigger picture; knowledge, experience and intuition combining with a compassionate heart to know a place of service.

Service – deep engagement with life, where the riches of the contemplative way are drawn upon to illuminate right action.

The experiential quality is attested to be important, for it is maintained that love is not set free or formed through an intellectual or theoretical process, but through a direct relationship with self, others and that which is beyond the self. The exercises are designed to nudge participants into direct and loving encounters with self and the Self, the personal and the transpersonal, the soul and the Divine. While vast amounts of literature as theory and theology about this *Way* are available, and are a necessary part of the process, they arguably provide only a catalyst for the inner movement that is love. Indeed, without caution it is argued, 'ideas' can be seductive distractions away from the "difficulties of facing the inner life" (Wright 2021b:85). If *Heartfullness* weaves anything, as the name implies, it is about coming into the fullness and action of love.

A series of informal evaluations of the programme has been completed by the church, yielding highly positive results. As yet no formal piece of research has been undertaken – perhaps a project awaiting someone in the future.

An internet search as well as conversations with members of other dioceses suggests that this particular model has a distinctive, not to say unique formula, and may be contributing to a contemporary understanding of and practicum in the art of contemplation. Such a contribution, it is suggested, is part of the intent of the Heartfullness approach. Meanwhile the prime directive is quite simple, to help participants get to the Beloved, and a secondary

intention is to contribute to the ongoing conversation of practical spirituality and contemplation in the modern era.

…which reason does not know.

Conclusion

Tangled in time, we go by hints and guesses,
Turning the wheel of each returning year.
But in the midst of failures and successes
We sometimes glimpse the love that casts out fear.
Sometimes the heart remembers its own reasons
And beats a Sanctus as we sing our story,
Tracing the threads of grace, sounding the seasons
That lead at last through time to timeless glory.

Malcolm Guite (2012:1)
Prologue: Sounding the Seasons.

In offering an account of the place of the books considered in this study, I have sought to further illuminate the main themes discussed in the introduction by reviewing each text, exploring how each arose from practical experience, and summarising some of their main ideas therein. Each of them encapsulates something of their creator, which is one reason why I wrote them, and while they are rooted in my experience, it was always necessary to go backwards into the long history of writings about spirituality both to support and refute that experience. In doing so, I have endeavoured to show that they each offer helpful, practical guidance to contemporary spirituality, both theory and practice. I have drawn reflections in the books and in these pages upon the core value of the Christian mystical tradition in the current spiritual supermarket, and how finding meeting places across faiths is possible while remaining true to and undiluted in that core. In revisiting the *works*, I attempted to offer evidence drawn from empirical studies and the long history of documented works by those elders who have walked the spiritual path down the centuries. Also, in this revisiting and in the acceptance that a book, any book, may never be finished, I have encountered new teachers whose works have not crossed my path before, and many have been cited here.

Each of the books presents what can be seen as distinctive frameworks or models emerging from these writings and experiences, for thought and action in the spiritual life, both personal and collective.

In so doing, I hope to have offered in the *works*, and in these pages, further contributions to the ongoing conversation about the connection between spirituality and health.

The deep dive taken into why "the heart has its reasons*"* (Pascal 1947:78 in *Pensée* 277) is the contemplative approach, of which this examination however thorough, cannot show the whole picture or discern all the detail. That is in the hands of the Reality (in this writer's world view) in whom this reality contained – there may only ever be a glimpse to "see through a glass darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12). But perhaps "For us, there is only the trying" (Eliot 1944:31).

Andersen's *Snow Queen* proffers an archetype of the opening of the heart. The boy Kay, his heart and an eye pierced by a cursed shard of the hobgoblin's mirror, comes to see only that which is fearful and ugly in the world. He denies love, especially for and from his dearest friend Gerda. In the fierce winter of his isolation, it is only love, manifesting fully in the person of Gerda, that unfreezes his heart and rescues him. "And yet everything felt different, for they were themselves - now bigger, braver and wiser than before. And from that day on their true love never failed" (Andersen 2017:31). This opening of the heart, as has been asserted in the *works*, is always transformative of persons and of their participation in the world.

Contemplation-mysticism might simply be considered as the *heartfull* quality offered down the ages and at all times as the Browne (1927) quote (p12) summarises. It may be true that it has to be reworded and re-expressed in terms accessible for its times, but it has been argued that it is a perennial quality, a perennial truth (Huxley 1970).

The search for this truth is aided by map and compass, a spiritual satellite device that can show the safe routes, the places of rest and sustenance, and the sources of help and guidance. For a while, seekers may think that they have some control over this journey, but it may be realised after a while that they had very little power. They may pilgrimage seeking home, or think they do, but a realisation may dawn that they did not take a pilgrimage, it was the pilgrimage that took them (Wright 2019). That it is not just us seeking, but it is "we who are being sought" - by the Beloved (Wright 2020b:8).

Perhaps this suggests a re-think of how much power the functional personalities possess, where there is far more at work in this process than individual wills, and where, perhaps, the

only power is the power to surrender. In the *works* I seek to offer a map for the route of that surrender. They form part of that multi-layered movement of spiritual renewal that is, arguably, needed now more that ever in a world of permacrisis and collapse (Bendell and Read 2021; Wright 2023). In the *works*, I have suggested rearrangements of thought and forms that arguably coalesce into something different and distinctive. Kaleidoscope-like, new possibilities may arise when the arrangements of 'what is' are turned around in the 'scope into new integrations, different patterns and perspectives. This 'difference', these differences, explored in the books and the sections above may be what serves. The essence of the *Way* is arguably universal and timeless, and becomes modern only in its presentation as befits the epoch.

The lurch from an almost predictable, professionally successful and worldly trajectory is forever a source of wonder, to myself, and yet, as I have explored in the *works*, it is far from uncommon. I had, after all, no initial interest or understanding of mysticism beyond those bypassed childhood experiences. The starting point for these *works* has been the "hand brake turn" (Wright 2017:14) that urged a new way of seeing self and the world, and which in turn led into deeper study of contemplation, theology and the roots of religions. Although I have not advocated the superiority of a particular religion or school of thought, perhaps the allegiance to that Source has become apparent, and the deep well from which that inspiration is drawn – being Christian Mysticism.

In my approach I have not sought to claim absolute truth of the veracity of the many suggestions I have put forward, while suggesting relentless inquiry, reflection and study. And all of this it seems (to myself and indeed to others of my acquaintance) to be driven by more than simple personal will. Something seems to have happened as a consequence, and not just the published materials. Some of the effects seem to be objectively verifiable. Some people's lives seem to have been touched by them. And like all creative projects, this and these *works* have their own unique qualities that feed into the uniqueness of the whole, add to it, make it just a little bit different, make it other than the sum of its parts.

I attended a recent fine performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony by the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. There was a moment I can only describe as 'purity'. A time when music and conductor, choir, orchestra, soloists and audience seemed to become One. The conductor, Domingo Hindoyan, and the Philharmonic choir and orchestra were ostensibly separate units with their own identities. The music seemed to gather and transform them.

The perception arose that the conductor was not so much conducting as being conducted; the orchestra not only playing, but also being played; the choir and soloists not singing, but being sung; the audience not passively listening, but part of the performance – all enjoined in the cocreation of something greater than, wholly other than its parts. When the boundaries seem to fall away, it may be that a perception of a kind of mystical union blossoms – a shift of consciousness into a wider and deeper reality such as I have argued in the introduction and which is a recurring theme running through all four books; that the perception of reality by the five senses is limited, yet it is through these senses that there may be a gateway to that which is Wholly (holy) Other. The Hebrew word *qaddosh*, which is translated in scripture as 'holiness', "means 'otherness', implying a practical separation from everyday reality" (Armstrong 2022:61). There was perhaps a *qaddosh* moment with the Philharmonic Orchestra. The *works* suggest, that with commitment to Soul Works, Soul Foods, Soul Communities and Soul Friends, *qaddosh* might become a continuous lived condition – separation and participation simultaneously; being in the world, but from the *qaddosh* centre of gravity, the soul, and not the power of the functional personality. The latter shifting from master to servant.

I hope it might be seen that within the apparent separate threads in the *works* is the completion of a pattern. Perhaps like a 'gathered' Quaker meeting, where individuals sit (this time in silence) there can be a moment when that silence congeals into an unspeakable unity (Kelly 1966).

That longing for unity, is rooted in the earliest of childhood experiences (Appendix 1), validated in later life emerging out of normalisation (Appendix 2), and subject to a calling - has been my intention in these *works* and the publication of them into the wider world.

In the end, where 'in' and 'end' become vacant, all I am left with to close this report is the wisdom of Pascal in which I find a certain confidence – the heart has its own reasons. Through the *Way*, the heart may be seen to remember these reasons, reflected in the opening poem to this conclusion, "that lead at last through time to timeless glory" (Guite 2012:1).

These *works* have sought to explore contemplation and spiritual development not as events, but as conditions arrived at through a process. A thing, which if it is a thing at all, is an art form that is constant, yet forever in trans-formation – "still and still moving into another intensity

for a further union, a deeper communion" (Eliot 1944:32). This communion is a costly joy-painful condition as self and perceptions of self, long acquired, are immersed in the timeless alchemical crucible of emergence; the soul as butterfly bursting from the ego chrysalis. I have maintained that it is a condition that commands a different way of knowing, a heartfelt "something much more serious…an act of love for this unseen Person who, in the very gift of love by which we surrender ourselves to His reality, also makes Himself present to us" (Merton 2003:44). It is a condition that is different from, but complementary to intellectual knowing, "two ways of thinking, not opposites, not antagonistic, but on different levels" (Nicoll 1954:14).

Such a process may be seen as a fierce grace, which it is hoped these pages and the *works* they have drawn upon have demonstrated, and, as I have proposed, are not to be undertaken lightly. Through these *works* it is hoped that it has been demonstrated how new insights and practice can inform the old in the manifestation of the perennial story of spiritual awakening, transformation and movement into service. While each person's story is inevitably unique, these variations may be seen as the core themes around which they evolve. It is hoped that the exploration of these *works* has gone some way to justifying their contribution to an expanded understanding of the *Way*, of practices therein, and how truth needs to be repeated in different forms and rhythms to fit the times.

Built on a lifetime's earlier exploration – both written and experiential – the *works* are embedded in a story that is personal and yet has sought to reach out into the common ground and progress into the path of service. In that sense, they may be seen as an outcome of a 'calling', most of the elements of which came from leftfield, affecting the author in ways in which if he had been told "This is what is required of you" would have been rejected out of hand, until a certain point of ripeness was reached in the shift from individualisation to individuation. Thus, in this account, I have sought to show how this particular cluster of *works* has been both a personal creative expression and a contribution, an offering of service to others.

In reaching into *Coming Home*, I have attempted to show how certain universal principles can be applied as a model to the path of spiritual awakening (Soul Works, Soul Friends, Soul Communities and Soul Foods) and how these in turn affect spiritual development and health and wellbeing of self and others. The path of the heart through connecting in community,

fulfilling work, faith, and engagements in life where 'it is better to give than to receive' promote wellbeing at every level – physical, social, emotional, psychological and spiritual. In so doing, I have sought to show how this and the other *works* further the conversation about the spiritual life in a way that is inclusive, practical and authentic amid the spiritual supermarket.

In reviewing *Contemplation*, I looked to furnish a view ranged across many centuries of commentary from (primarily) Christian contemplatives, examined the correspondence between mysticism and contemplation, and offered some exercises to nurture the condition that is contemplation. In exploring the nature of contemplation, and to some degree refuting simplistic understandings of it, I included exercises and reflections to support that deep plunge into the heart – a plunge to be taken even deeper in later works. I posited a proletarianised commentary on the possibilities of this *Way* – that while not everyone is ripe and ready for it, that potential is there in all human beings. In subsequent publications, I have explored how this perspective may be the saving grace in healthcare increasingly perceived as technically rich but spiritually poor (Lanara 1981; Dossey *et al.* 2010; Wright 2024).

In ranging over *Burnout,* I sought to explore the spiritual dimension, seen as radical compared to the almost universal reduction of the phenomenon to a psychological-stress model. The work is among an emerging body of evidence and discourse that questions this arguably reductionist approach and its limitations. I have sought to demonstrate how the embracing of a spiritual perspective is both novel and full of potential for the deepening of healing and transformation among those overwhelmed by burnout. This relates to healing at a personal level, but also containing the option for renewal of purpose and roles in life. An approach to burnout in this way (and I supported the evidence with case studies, other research and a personal account) might potentially provide an enhancement to the resolution of burnout.

In the consideration of *Heartfullness*, I sought to show how breaking out of the attachments of the functional personality can be likened to the de-addiction programmes such as those applied in organisations like Alcoholics Anonymous, while also arguing for the limitations of that model. I drew on the checks and balances suggested in *Coming Home* and *Contemplation,* to provide a platform on which to develop a structure for awakening to deeper contemplation and to 'seeing' self, the world and the Absolute differently, arguably more fully, through the deep immersion in the universal Christ consciousness (MacQuarrie 1972; MacCulloch 2009;

Bucke 2011; MacCulloch 2013; Beard 2018). In this work I have sought to show how the deepening of the spiritual life is possible through practical in-sight exercises that are part of a cohesive body of approach rooted in the development of the twelve virtues explored therein. In so doing it is possible that a model has emerged which expands understanding of the elements of contemplative awakening beyond the classic purgation-illumination-union paradigm (Underhill 1911), and which might be applied across and within different religious and secular traditions.

Thus, each text, while being a separate entity with its own models, might be seen as a coherent whole, rooted in both autoethnographic study, citation of many examples, research evidence and the long history of treatises on the spiritual life which is made available to those seekers looking for support along the *Way*. The motivation behind them, and other related works has been touched on in the appendices, but if I were to apply one word to it, then it would be a 'calling' – a subject explored at length in both *Coming Home* and *Heartfullness.* It is the urging of the "Hound of Heaven" (Thompson 1917:409) which inspires us to divine fulfilment and purpose and will not be gainsaid (as opposed to the hound of hell which terrifies). It is the "social passion" that arises from "true mysticism" (Kelly 1966:3). It is the powerful inner prompting that arguably cannot be suppressed (except at great cost) and in which the personal narrative evolves into a path of service; that inner urging found in so many followers of the *Way* to pass it on, even though they struggle with words and concepts, for little more reason than "pour encourager les autres" (although this is not expressed ironically as in Voltaire's original (Smollett 2019:64)). In Alan Bennett's (2004:109) play *The History Boys*, the teacher Hector exclaims, "Pass the parcel. That's sometimes all you can do. Take it, feel it, and pass it on. Not for me, not for you, but for someone, somewhere, one day. Pass it on, boys. That's the game I want you to learn. Pass it on."

On the principle of "knock and the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8), these *works* have endeavoured to pass on what has been learned by this author from a rich lineage of many teachers living and dead. In them I have attempted to offer more than superficial self-improvement and self-gratification approaches than can be found on both old age and new age pathways (Bruce 1996; Tacey 2004; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Heelas 2009). They have looked to dive into the spirit of the depths rather than the superficial and transient spirit of the everyday (Jung 2009). In the summary in Appendix 3, it might be seen there is evidence

emerging that the teachings are being taken up in other settings, in written materials, media presentations and courses. How far these touch the lives of others who have bought the books or attended on-line meetings, or immersed themselves in various papers and media reports, that is impossible to quantify. One of the beauties of awakening, of opening the heart, is that it is not possible to say how far through time and space such actions spread. Each little act of kindness, each offering of wisdom, each deepening of insight, has no limits as the effects roll on and out and to persons and times that will never be known.

Another of the threads through all the *works* is the notion of non-duality, the possibility that we do not have to live in a world where attending to the everyday and being contemplative are separate. It has been argued in the *works* that it is possible, through the long discipline of spiritual development, to attain a quality of being at One in the Beloved, inwardly connected and prayerful while being action-orientated at the same time. Otherwise, the dualistic, ego-driven consciousness by which so much of humanity exists, may be the primary cause that has led to the catastrophic condition of and prospects for our planet (Servigne and Stevens 2020; Bendell and Read 2021; Servigne *et al.* 2021; McGuire 2022; Wright 2023). Addressing the spiritual roots of the current predicament of humanity may be the force that draws out a sense of reconnection to and reverence for the world, and a break from the anthropocentric and egocentric exploitation that has brought it to the brink (Wright 2023).

Abundant attention seems to be given to what the causes are of our planetary danger – destruction of forests, use of fossil fuels, pollution of the environment, to name but a few. Great attention, rightly it can be argued, is given to these. But, with a few exceptions as cited above, little attention is given to the reasons why humans seem bent on destroying that on which life depends (Burgess 1996; Naess 2008; Macy 2021; Elgin 2022; Wright 2023). Thus, these *works* strive to address not so much the causes of climatic disintegration, but rather the cause of the causes – the root sense of disconnection at many levels from life and the very Source of life itself.[14] Without that connection, it has been a foundational proposition in these

[14] Secretary-General Antonio Gutteres has described the climate crisis as the biggest threat that humanity has ever faced (United Nations 2021), shaking economic, political and social systems at every level - a view now supported by the great majority of the world's climate scientists (Bendell and Read 2021). It may be asked, therefore, what is the relevance of the spiritual life as embodied in the works to such a crisis? Some personal connections in the Deep Adaptation (2024) and Extinction Rebellion (2024) movements asked that question and further work has been undertaken towards an answer. For

works that to be human is to be essentially alone; the consequence of that is functional personality driving itself for control in a fearful world of disconnection from the very Source of Life itself. Some call that God. Such disconnection becomes in the long or short term a destructive force to which the authentic, relational spiritual life, as has been argued in these *works*, is a counterpoint, a restorative, a unifier, a healer. Without it, so many contemplatives would probably agree that the result is a "barbarisation" (Murray 1939:113) of humanity, and drains "present life of all its value. We would say that a human life deprived of God is like a human body deprived of life" (Murray 1939:161). In such deprivation, I have attested, efforts at controlling and organising the world are in vain; the pattern persists where of continuously reorganising bits and pieces of reality, becoming exhausted and burned out in the process as 'we' do the work rather than let the work flow through as servants.

This is a thread that runs through all these books, an encouragement for seekers to find a way Home. The *works* are part of an effort to address the cause of the causes by encouraging deep reflection and practice in the spiritual life.

In a sense I have written books to speak to myself. To ask the question in a kind of inner testing, "Is this true?" I have written them in some hope that their words might go out and touch the lives of others. I have done so for all kinds of ego reasons, such as the need to create or achieve or fulfil old impulses. I have done so for heartfelt reasons such as an inner longing to play a

---

example, an experimental 6-month on-line programme, *Keeping Your Heart Open In Hell,* is currently under way, based on the works, for members of the Deep Adaptation movement. It has 24 participants and is subject to forthcoming evaluation. A programme with the Diocese of Carlisle explores the role of the church in supporting parishioners with climate anxiety and is being tested with several parishes (with myself as facilitator, Jenkin and Wright 2022, Roberts 2023). A book describing the relevance of spirituality to the climate crisis, *Fugue* (Wright 2023), and a documentary based on this (Wohlmut 2024) was made public in July 2024. These seek to continue the outreach work based on the evidence in the original works. It is contended that spirituality has been given relatively little attention in the climate crisis, the emphasis tending towards practical interventions such as carbon reduction (Bendell and Read 2022). A deep exploration of the "cause of the causes" (above, and Wright 2023:1): the sense of spiritual disconnection described in the works, is considered in the context of the climate crisis. These latest publications, events and courses may be seen as examples of developments seeded from the works and their practical application in the face of impending catastrophe (Servigne et al 2021, Eisenstein 2020).

part in restoring where something seems broken, guiding where something seems lost, helping where something seems stuck.

My experiences of the books are that they are like messages in a bottle. I add the note and put it out to sea and can never be sure where it goes or when, or who finds it, but I trust somehow that it has gone where it is supposed to be.

In his novel *The Glass Bead Game*, Hermann Hesse describes a future civilisation where learning and the way of contemplation are held in high regard. Here "everything actually was all-meaningful, every symbol and combination of symbols led not hither and yon, not to single examples, experiments and proofs - but into the centre, the mystery and the innermost heart of the world" (Hesse 1970:119). In this world, as in some of the worlds of the contemplatives I have explored in the books, and in my personal story, reason finds its place in the "spirit of the depths" rather than the "spirit of this time" (Jung 2009:119). In this paradigm, reason is not proscribed, but it is subsumed into a deeper understanding of Underhill's (1914:8) assertion of "the Reality" that lives over and against ordinary reality. It is put forward that this is not a case of either-or, but both-and, for as Murray (1943:65) summarises, the reason of the intellect alone is short changed and "robbed of its spiritual nature and the supreme faculty of the soul, in which all wisdom and all perceptive understanding is of necessity included", and what it is to be fully human without the depths of the heart's reason.

One of the gifts of working through this study has been the opportunity to look at my long list of publications from the vantage point of ageing. At close to 75 years now, I recall that I began writing in the professional journals 45 years ago. A picture of writing and life emerges for me that kaleidoscope-like, shifts and is still shifting with time and memory. The books, these four books under consideration, seem less separate now as things unto themselves. Indeed, it seems false in one respect to attempt to separate them at all.

The Glass Bead Game offers a perspective, in fictional form, of a different perception of reality and how to pursue it. The beads are the knowledge and experiences of life, the wisdom of humanity, that is constantly being explored and reappraised and realigned. The game of integration is, has to be, played to acknowledge the reason of the heart as the fount of all wisdom, otherwise the pathway is into the folly of experience for its own sake, the dead ends of anthropocentric and egocentric pursuits. When the beads are gathered in searching for that

which has heart and meaning, then new integration, synthesis and possibility emerges. Perhaps, as Ecclesiastes (1:9) offers a reminder, “What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.” Such a perspective is not to sink into fatalism or nihilism, but to recognise that truth remains forever true, and is enriched like a great painting emerging as it is added to, embellished, refined and represented for its time and place. It is my hope that, in these *works*, many ideas have been offered in anticipation of creating conversations and patterns of comprehensiveness, possibility and service for their time - and perhaps beyond.

Appendix 1

Up close and personal

A small boy is sitting in the front room of his home. It is a council house on a working-class estate north of Manchester. It is not a happy family, but he does not know that yet. This is just the way it is. He has no reference points to the contrary. He's sitting by the window just watching the clouds pass by, behind an old sycamore tree across the road.

Once there was a farm there. Only the tree is left. Beyond, the forest is now one of smoking factory chimneys.

The armchair is threadbare, but comfortable enough. It holds, while he watches. The sky and the tree and the chair are outer images of what is taking place within. An awareness of life, of the flow of life, of deep peace, of being held in something soft and comfortable. He is watching what is outside. He is watching what is inside. And there is no difference or separation.

'Grandma' Walmsley (she is old, ancient to him, and like most elderly ladies on the street forms a circle of 'grandmas') comes to the back door.

"Where's our Stephen?" He hears the question, and is unmoved because the sound is just part of the picture.

"Oh, he's gone again," comes the mother's reply. "Off daydreaming."

He hears and thinks silently, "It's not a dream."

At junior school they were marched down the hill, a long column of pairs, from school to 'Radcliffe Baths' – the local public swimming pool. Mr Sharples and Miss Fletcher kept them in line for the weekly swimming lessons. The goal was to learn safety in water and to swim the length of the pool. He still has that certificate, the first certificated achievement, he had swum the full 25 yards.

Once he took a deep breath and dived to the bottom, turned over, and just for a moment lay there looking up and listening. He was maybe nine years old and awestruck by the sense that everything above and around him was a different real than what he was used to, how there was surface noise but he lay briefly in deep silence. It mirrored some inkling he had always had, that things, including himself, weren't quite what he was being told they were. His reverie

was short lived when the instructor plunged down to pull him up and give him hell for disobedience.

He felt perfectly safe at the bottom of the pool. In some ways that same feeling interrupted everyday life from time to time as the years passed. He still feels like he's there to this day, while surface life continues. It's not that it's a duality, it's just that he came to sense that he exists, it all exists, in many planes of reality. Three decades later one of his teachers told him of 'breathing while drowning' (and nothing to do with water). That's still there; that sense of breathing while drowning, a quite fearless drowning.

At the secondary modern school, the direction of travel for all the kids was to the factory floor. Then headmaster Marshall summoned the boy, after one year in this brutal school, "You are too clever for us, lad, I'm transferring you to the grammar school."

There, teachers Thompson, Goss and Longstaff opened windows to music, art and literature. Yet still the direction of travel was towards engagement with the world as-is, this time to university or office.

The moments in the moments were not lost entirely. Like that time when he stood next to Nicky in the school choir and they hit the high 'C' of the Amen chorus and they looked at each other and wept.

Three decades follow in which the world has nothing to teach, but "This is all there is." While the efforts of the church, in his experience, offered only unbelievable fantasy.

Art entranced the child. Mrs Goss said he had "outstanding ability". Dad, through the fog of smoke and alcohol, said, "No money in bloody art." Or further education for that matter.

The indoctrination was almost complete. He was becoming his identities. The glimpses were lost. Almost lost. In the fall into work and relationships, of the grip of ordinary reality, it was all almost lost until those glimpses returned in a snatch of song, or an embrace, or that time on a beach at night alone in Gibraltar, or during that brief escape from the factory life, into long hair and idleness and the possibility of dreams…

…Dreams nulled in the firm grasp of the dimensions of reality that only the five senses would permit – and the deep plunge into career, marriage, children, house and car. But when his son

came out of the womb and his blue in blue eyes locked on his own, and his tiny hand grasped his fingers the son 'said', "Don't give up." And he knew You were looking at him.

Professionalism came with soaring success by any measure. A man in nursing was rare and advantaged.

A real fantasy follows. Imagine a time when someone says, "You've got more to offer. Instead of the usual diplomas, how about this one? Manchester University?" Two years, full time, salary paid, expenses paid, fees paid. Dream on (today).

The advantages were added to. More glittering prizes and seductive opportunities followed even in the midst of the agony of divorce and opening up to the joysorrow of discovery hidden aspects of his functional personality.

The seductions, ah yes, how they entrenched the forgetting in the pleasure of drowning in the applause of the audience, or the TV appearances, the hover in the courts of power. If it wasn't Armani, he wouldn't wear it. If it wasn't champagne, he wouldn't drink it. If it wasn't Porsche, he wouldn't drive it.

Somewhere along the line he'd stopped dreaming. Somewhere along the line he'd completely given way to the voiceover in the time when the little boy was told that it was only a dream after all. That that there was no space to be "gone again." In fact, no other space at all but this and this and this.

Invitations came and were ignored.

Like the man who looked at him with sorrow and said "Who's taking care of you?".

Like when he fell drunk and alone into the back of a taxi and somebody fastened his seatbelt for him.

Like that moment of danger, and she was stood behind him crying, "No!" and he turned to find only empty space, and walked into the light.

Like the prestigious conference when Vassiliki pressed her book into his hand. She looked him in the eye and said, "This may be your way." It was full of philosophical and spiritual nonsense but he didn't like to say so. And dismissed it until stuck on a train and read it with nothing better to do. Then the jaws of death opened and there You were again.

Not long after, when the usual conference keynote speaker role beckoned yet again. He finally gave way. In front of an audience. Something said in an inner silence, “Enough now. I will stop you.”

Forced into absence from the real into the Real. Listening was the only option. Something was given and something was taken away. In the disintegration of a way of being, the cracking of the shell, a voice said, “This way.”

There were many points of attempted resistance. But a hand break turn is irresistible. The old fell away, only to be returned to but from a completely different place in himself.

It was not a straight line into a new journey. There was oscillation between the old ways and the new; still are. The seductions of time and place are strong; as are those of the power of the unconscious and the functional personality. He had to learn them in order to unlearn them.

Nevertheless, as he did so, he started to have babies.

The babies are all different, but difference is only surface deep.

Like a fugue, when the voices take off in many directions and look and maybe sound different, really there is a common thread that binds them, draws them back constantly to that from which they have extemporised.

Yes, like a fugue. All that life might seem to be, that surface life, is really just a relentlessly unfolding of rhythms and cadences around a common theme of incarnation and fulfilling itself.

Appendix 2

A professional backdrop

I offer here a second personal perspective, set beyond the childhood years. Much of this material has not been included in the four books herein explored, but these stories may serve to flesh out the background to their appearance. There is a trajectory that led to these *works*, and might be helpful to say how the one interwove with the other – the shift in the personal and the professional, that is most easily demonstrated in both the subject matter and the style of writing that occurred from about 1989 onwards.

Until then, "I" was fully invested in my professional identity as 'a nurse' and by conventional measures, in terms of research and other publications, practice innovation and assorted awards, was successful at it. In 1986 I had created and was appointed to the first consultant nurse role in the NHS, was seconded to advise government and the Kings Fund on nursing development, and had become a prolific writer and conference speaker nationally and internationally. However, this was accompanied at that 'peak' by a pattern of certain inklings, summarised in one of my (unpublished) journal entries in 1990 wherein,

> I began to realise that I am not who I think I am, and a sense was growing that so many of my life's actions – work, family, relationships, perceptions of the world – were distorted, inauthentic and superficial. Often this frightens me, or makes me think I am going mad. Everybody else seems to see the world differently from me. All my professional and personal achievements are praised and rewarded, yet to me they seem empty. I am faking it. I'm very good at it, acting, but I'm still faking it. I feel most of the time like I'm caught up in some big soap opera, and I've got a part in it, but I'm watching myself playing the part and wondering who the hell is watching, playing the part? Still doing what I have always done with probably even more intensity, but I am exhausted by it all and just want to run away. To say nothing of a sense of a presence (dare I call it God?) who, if it is real, is calling to me, pressing me, sometimes in a voice that is almost audible, saying 'This way'. But 'This way' is the complete opposite of everything I'm supposed to believe in, have believed in. And if the way I am now is the wrong direction, then who am I without all that? If that's not success, what is? And yet, and yet, that little boy and teenager, who was put to sleep a long while ago, seems to be awakened now and calling to me for a new direction.

This pattern is a common precursor to what was to follow, identified in the book *Burnout*. Thus it was that these early inklings and the encounter with a spiritual director as described in *Coming Home*, led to an about turn, a shift in my centre of gravity, in what was of interest, what was worth writing and speaking about. There was a gradual and growing expression of this in the publication of papers on the spiritual life, spirituality and health, the establishment of the scholarly journal *Sacred Space: the journal of spirituality and health* (initially published by the charity for which I now work – the Sacred Space Foundation - then taken over and published by the John Wiley company as *Spirituality and Health International*), to provide a medium for the author and others to express aspects of spirituality, health and research on the theme.

In short, I experienced the commonly reported change whereby our way of living is no longer determined by "terrestrial gravity" but "celestial gravity" (Anon 2019:313; Palmer 1908; Wright 2019). What was once completely invested in one understanding of reality – of time and place, was shifted into another – of eternity and infinity. A reverse polarity of awareness emerged, as outlined in *Coming Home*, whereby self and the world were no longer seen and known in the same way. Authenticity demanded a change of direction, a shift in what I was teaching and writing for example in relation to myself and my profession. It became intolerable to persist in the old way of thinking and doing, and feeling, when this transformation demanded that the Beloved became the centre of orientation rather than my self.

All this followed some early professional journal reports based on the "change in direction of this nursing guru" (Salvage 1996:30). This accompanied a request from the then editor of *Nursing Standard* to write a monthly column on spiritualty and health, which began in 1999 and continued through to 2013. On the way, this yielded a variety of other publications and requests for papers and presentations (Appendix 3).

The early experience in those days had a kind of confessional or "coming out" (Nursing Times 1997a; Nursing Times 1997b; Salvage 1997; Wright 1997a; Wright 1997b) – a tiptoeing into something that was hitherto little examined in nursing and medical literature or research, yet which produced a significant outpouring of interest and support (with a minority of instances of censure) especially from the half a million nurses regularly reading *Nursing Times* and

Nursing Standard and other journals (Nursing Times 1997a; Nursing Times 1997b; Horrigan 1998; Keighley 1998; Sayre-Adams and Wright 1999; Hampshire 2000). The experience of burnout was a catalyst for this "handbrake turn" (Wright 2017:15) in self-perception, professional life and the embracing of arguably that most difficult topic to articulate and explore, the relationship with what is commonly referred to as 'God' yet in later works was referred to as the Beloved (for various reasons as outlined in *Coming Home*), most specifically as is often expressed in mystical terms that 'God' is beyond concepts like God and does not have a gender. Expressing this non-conceptual, non-gendered understanding of the Divine became a major commitment in further editions of *Coming Home*, *Contemplation* and *Burnout*. By the time of *Heartfullness* it had become a 'natural' way to write.

In 2005 *Nursing Standard* not only published articles on spirituality generally, but also burnout in particular as a spiritual crisis (not without controversy - Kay 2005**,** and other letters to the editor). And in 2005, the first text in the UK on the connection between burnout and spirituality - specifically directed at health care staff - was distributed as a free booklet within 100,000 copies of *Nursing Standard* (Wright 2005b).

In addition, a series of co-authored works (Sayre-Adams and Wright 1995; Wright and Sayre Adams 1998; Wright and Biley 1997) were published, followed by numerous invitations to contribute chapters and papers on themes of spirituality and health, to other works (summarised in Appendix 3) and eventually to the works underpinning the approach in this text. The sequence, however, might be worth clarifying, *viz* the leap from writing about spirituality as an interesting and relevant thing "out there" (Lonergan 1974:39) to works that while seeking to be scholarly also included personal narrative.

One of the reasons for establishing the *Sacred Space* journal, first published in 1998, was the difficulty in the academic discourse and professional press at the time, in drawing both the personal and professional together in publications, and especially in relation to the subject of spirituality outside sociological, psychological or historical frameworks. Whilst at Manchester University as a mature student in 1979 undertaking a master's programme, a certain style of writing was 'encouraged'; it was my perspective, shared by others in our study group, that there was to be no room for the personal narrative and everything written had to be supported by references to previous works and preferably always double-blind, randomised

controlled trials. In addition, on that programme there was at that time no space for discussion of nursing matters outside sociological, psychological or historical frameworks. In later years there was a discernible shift as matters such as 'grounded theory' or explorations of Nightingale's early mysticism began to be considered in the curriculum.

While some tentative steps in the late 1980s had been taken with subjects and publications that might be seen as falling within the New Age paradigm (Sayre-Adams and Wright 1995; Wright and Sayre-Adams 1997) it was predominantly in the professional journals, especially *Nursing Standard,* that efforts were made to bridge science and spirit in these monthly papers which as the letters columns revealed, regularly garnered both support and opposition from the readership (see Nursing Times 1997b; Kay 2005, for example).

Although the first burnout booklet adopted, or at least attempted to adopt, a scholarly approach, it was an initiator into more personal works. Over the years papers and conference presentations gradually began to include more personal stories.

It is hoped that the above short commentary at this stage shows the interconnectedness, the "twine" of the *works* here presented. Each weaves into the other as part of a pattern, a thread crossing boundaries, of spiritual awakening and the expression of it in ordinary reality or normal life.

It has been said that a certain amount of courage is needed, if not ignorant abandon, to begin expressing what has become inwardly authentic that contradicts what friends, family and professional colleagues perceived me to be. Even when receiving professional acclaim in front of large audiences (long sought by my ego-self) and culminating at an award at Buckingham Palace and working at the highest levels of government both nationally and internationally, the sense of the impostor syndrome was an ever-growing presence. And a teaching that even in burnout it is possible to relapse and revert to type time and again as the 'false self' demands a return to control.

A further aspect of the "weaving" in this personal story was a back-and-forth movement of experience, then affirmation in reading the works of others, discernment with my spiritual directors, perhaps consigning to the written word. At the time some experiences seemed unique, and some, as a unique person as each of us is, remain so. Yet in such times a kind of

validation occurs when what has happened to others is explored (predominantly in the works of persons often long dead), which in turn strengthens and encourages the willingness to continue the journey of coming home (Ram Dass and Bush 2018).

I remember well the first validation. Adrift in crisis and struggling to make sense of what was going on with me and at that time having no access to sound guidance, my hand drifted to a couple of books in an Oxfam shop – Underhill's (1911) *Mysticism* and Caddy's (1971) *And God Spoke to Me*. I took them home and found one after another unputdownable. One standout quality I noticed was a certain elation of, "I'm not alone." Those books were well out of my interest zone at the time and I am still full of appreciation and wonder at the synchronicity. Another delight as the years unfolded was the finding of these books-teachers in so many second hand and charity shops, and apart from their content, was the sense of being accompanied and guided not just by the writer, but the previous readers (often with the comments in the margins).

The more personal story of opening to the "Reality" (Underhill 1914:8) and surrender "into obedience" to a different, divine centre of gravity (Merton 1949:114) began to be told in the case of these *works*, with the publication of the first editions of *Coming Home* in 2008, *Contemplation* and *Burnout* in 2010 along with other works of poetry (Wright 2010a; Wright 2010b; Wright 2014) and research reports involving a spiritual dimension (Appendix 3). If there was a tipping point for the move away from the 'successful' professional author role, with a long list of nursing books, reports and articles under his belt, it came with the crashing experience of burnout. The experience was largely kept hidden in 1989, and not 'confessed' in detail until the most recent publication of *Burnout* in 2021a).

It may be that such a point was reached as an example of spiritual maturation when the ego agenda finally gives way to the insistence of the heart in the greater importance of authenticity and service. While at the same time being wary of expressing personal stories - one of my most important living teachers at the time, Ram Dass, reminded me that his shift from a distinguished, then sacked Harvard Professor as Richard Alpert, to spiritual teacher after a sojourn in India could be traumatic. If "you are not careful who you talk to" and to not rush to print, and in any case to be patient as, "only took me ten years, so don't rush it" (personal journal entry 1992).

I am reminded of a time spent with someone who was one of my most important teachers, who had contributed in many ways (hidden) from his base in a Benedictine monastery and who never consigned anything to print, yet whose name was passed around until maybe one day he would 'turn up' in conversation with an 'invitation' quality to it. He was and remained anonymous as he insisted. Conversation flowed about the spiritual life, came to a natural conclusion and we sat in silence, probably for an hour or more, just looking into each other's eyes. I do not think either of us blinked in that time. A million words formed and disappeared. A silence in which everything and nothing was said. I do know that I felt completely loved by that man, and that I loved him, though I knew nothing of him as a person. After a while, there was a movement to the kettle and the tea. I asked, "What on earth just happened?" Brother X replied, "Earth had very little to do with it. That's what happens when soul talks to soul." A decade later, Ram Dass said those same words to me, after we sat in silence following his stroke – "Soul talks to soul" (Wright 2020a:25).

Also, I felt the universal quality of this Presence, this connection; that it is not neutral, there is a profound *feeling* quality to it (which is more than mere sentimentality or emotions) as I have sought to express in the *works* themselves and in the commentary above. It includes a deep inner sense of oneness or connectedness that is often described as something "Wholly Other" (Underhill 1930:ix) yet is simultaneously completely at one with the self. It also embraces both stillness and the movement, the power behind and within it all that it may sometimes seem almost banal to write it – love. It is the profound transformation of self and perception of self. It is over and against all these and more that it took me into that social passion that bridges realities and took me deep into service.

Appendix 3

Dissemination

As my pattern of service and perception of self shifted in the late 1990s (Appendix 2), one aspect was gradually reduced, that of conference contributions. I never bothered to count these, although a look through some of my diaries from the 1980s, some of which I have kept, while others were lost in a flood during 1996, suggest at my peak in the nursing world I was averaging a conference a week(!). In part for health reasons, to reduce travel and carbon footprints, and in the interests of personal authenticity and health, I largely withdrew from this way of working. I have drawn upon residual records, memory and help from organisers to summarise some of these contributions to suggest how the *works* were spreading out from the original sources. Until recently I have not paid much attention to aspects of my work on social and other media, but it has been a curious, not to say shocking, aspect of this exercise to see citations, quotes and other aspects of these and other works in many corners of the internet.

In the preparation of this account, I have experienced something of the sense of wonder which Kavafis (Cavafy) describes poetically in the *Ithaka* journey; one which does not need to be hurried and which has the benefit of hindsight, "so you are old by the time you reach the island, wealthy with all you have gained along the way" (Cavafy 1995:26). I have experienced a professional life, fifty years of it at the time of writing, of unexpected events, unlooked for treasures, of something evolving and changing out of all predictions. Part of this process has been a deep sense of surprise and humility as the extent to which things said and written, recorded and transmitted, have ended up in far off corners, spread across time. Surprise and humility as to how these things spread are shared, especially with the advent of the internet with little possibility of control: a sense of casting things out there down a (to me) long life without ever really knowing where they go. Ulysses' journey to Ithaka concerned primarily what he had accumulated along the way. I have certainly been given many treasures, but an aspect of this journey in over five decades of writing, researching and practice is to become more aware of just how much has been given away…and still is. There is a certain delight in the 'you never know' quality of where works go, including the four subjects of this report.

There follows a short list of various presentations and writings which may illustrate how these *works* have been disseminated into other areas of study and practice. At the moment my CV shows over 800 published papers of varying quality, from scholarly reviewed papers, to regular journal columns, 'vox pop' press reports and various podcast and other contributions on social media. I have included below only those papers and other contributions that have gone through independent peer review and/or have been invited.

That body of work, which continues to expand, seems to be a continued contribution to the conversation about the spiritual life, the connection to health, and especially to understanding and praxis in the *Way*. I have included here only those contributions specifically connected to the subjected matter of the four books both in their most recent publications as well as influences from other works which may help to set them in context as part of an unfolding development of thinking and practice.

It may be noted that the four books explored in this document did not arrive out of nowhere, but are part of a process which has evolved over many years, a story written and still being written. I have therefore included some features here that pre- and post- date the publication of the four books. I do so to suggest that the books themselves do not stand in isolation, but are a consolidation and continuation of what has gone before, and is currently evolving.

The following is a list of publications and other works which offer a background to the four books explored in this account. They indicate a timeline of works to be consulted if wished.

My intention here is to provide an overview of the wider context of some of the publications and events out of which the *works* emerged and into which they have contributed. While some of the entries pre- and post-date the *works*, I have included them to suggest a background pattern, to show that they do not stand out of context, but are part of a direction of travel, an accumulation of evolving thought and practice into the wider conversation about spirituality, health and contemplation.

In this sense they show some of the relevant work leading up to the publication of the four books here in question, and other developments leading out of them up to the present time. I seek to illuminate how these *works* have been shared, and encouraged practical application. I have included only those papers and other publications that have undergone peer and/or rigorous editorial review before publication. Furthermore, many of them are the result of

requests from publishers and journal editors to contribute, often based on related journal articles and reports, and radio, television and conference presentations. All of the following are related in subject matter to the main themes of this report – spirituality, health and contemplation.

Books and Research Reports

Wright S G & Walker A (1998). *A Needs Assessment for Palliative Care Education: results of a survey of cancer care education needs in the NW*. Lancaster. UCSM/Cancer Care. An invitation, because of reported interests in spiritual care, to research cancer care needs in the North West of England. Surveys were conducted over 12 months. On behalf of the University College of St. Martins (as it then was, shortly to be developed as the University of Cumbria) and St. Johns Hospice, Lancaster.

Wright S G, Gough P and Poulton B (1998) Imagine – the Future. London.
Royal College of Nursing. Research report resulting from a study of over 2000 Royal College of Nursing (RCN) member's views of the future of nursing, embracing early conversations about nurses' understanding of spirtuality. The report contributed to debates at the Annual General Meeting and Congress on 1999 and in RCN Council policy development.

Sayre-Adams J & Wright S G (1995) *Therapeutic Touch*. Edinburgh. Churchill Livingstone. An early work exploring healing touch, commissioned by Churchill Livingstone, initiated through awareness of the Sacred Space Foundation's work in general media reports. A response to what was being perceived at the time as the increasing technological direction of nursing at the expense of the relational and spiritual. Further editions in 1997 and 2008.

Wright S G & Sayre-Adams J (2000) *Sacred Space – Right Relationship and Spirituality in Healthcare.* Edinburgh. Churchill Livingstone. An early evidence-based publication summarising initial thinking on healthcare and spirituality. Commissioned by Churchill Livingstone following the 'breakthrough' articles published in Nursing Times in 1997. Further editions in 2004 and 2008

Slade R & Wright S G (2001) *Report of the Enquiry into Failures of Care, Springhill Hospice.* Rochdale. Springhill Hospice. A co-chaired nine-month study (not released into the public domain) leading to radical organisational changes, staff dismissals and various disciplinary actions at the hospice after reports of failings in care. Commisioned by the Board of Trustees, in part because of the authors perceived expertise in nursing standards and spiritual care.

Wright S G (2005) *Reflections on Spirituality and Health*. Chichester. Wiley. A study of current knowledge of the connection between spirituality and health, and the relevance/influence of spiritual practices to healthcare. Included an extensive survey of available research and summaries of papers on the them published in the journals Nursing Times, Nursing Standard, Sacred Space and other sources.

Wright S G (2005) *Burnout: a spiritual crisis*. London. Nursing Standard Essential Guide. An early version of the later book exploring the connection between spirituality and burnout, and given as a free handout to RCN members. Later developed and published as a book by Sacred Space in 2010 with a later edition in 2021.

Wright S G (2006) *Spiritual Direction and the Bristol Cancer Help Centre: a survey of staff, patients and volunteers.* Bristol. Bristol Cancer Help Centre. A 12 month study commissioned by the Trustees of the Centre to explore how it did or did not meet the spiritual needs of staff, patients and volunteers. Recommendations were applied to a raft of educational and patient suport programmes and approved by the Trustees.

Wright S G (2008) *Coming Home – notes for the journey*. Penrith. Sacred Space Publications. An early version of the present book, containing early anecdotal reports and evidence from healthcare and spirituality research, and an inclusive approach to the contributions of different faiths. Requested by the Trustees at the Sacred Space Foundation and reviewed and approved by the establishment of an editorial board. Used as part of a prize for a Nursing Standard competition for the best essay on the relationship between nursing and spirituality.

Wright S G *with* White R M & Brett-Young P (2010). *Song and Dance for the Way Home*. Penrith. Sacred Space Publications. A result of the work in many retreats where I composed chants, song and circle dances as part of the *Way*, not least because of the dearth of these in the Western Christian mystical tradition.

Wright S G (2010) *Beloved.* Penrith. Sacred Space Publications. A first foray into publishing poetry. Like all my published poetry it is centred on the relationship between self and the Beloved.

Wright S G (2010) *Contemplation: words for the way Home*. Penrith. Sacred Space Publications. The first version of the exploration of contemplation, updated and reprinted in 2021.

Wright S G (2014) *Yours, Faithfully*. Penrith. Sacred Space Publications. A second volume of poetry, again expressing aspects of the relationship between the self and the Beloved.

Wright S G (2019) *Kentigern: a life and a Lakeland pilgrimage*. Glasgow.
Wild Goose. A work commissioned by Wild Goose as part of the Iona Community, based on earlier articles and influences from leading pilgrimages.

Wright S G (2019) *A Grasmere Pilgrimage: a contemplative walk through Wordsworth country.* Penrith. Sacred Space Publications. A further work on pilgrimage produced at the request of the Diocese of Carlisle.

Wright S G (2021) *Heartfullness: The Way of Contemplation*. Penrith. Sacred Space Publications. A consolidation and further development of previous works, taken out into a path of service and as background reading and exercises for participants in contemplative studies.

Wright S G (2023) *Fugue; climate, collapse and contemplation*. Penrith. Sacred Space Publications. A response to the Deep Adaptation/Collapse debate on climate change, exploring and arguing the case for the *Way* as a restorative and healing influence.

Chapters

Faugier J & Hicken I (eds. 1996) *AIDS: Ethical Dilemmas and the Nursing Response* in *AIDS and HIV: The Nursing Response.*London Chapman & Hall. An invitation to contribute because of my interest in spirituality and chairmanship of the RCN's Ethics and Nursing Committee, at a time of perceived crisis in the nursing response to the health care needs of patients with HIV and/or AIDS

Hospitaller Order of St John of God (1996) *Trends in the Care of the Elderly - A European Perspective* in *The Dependant Elderly - Partnership and Care.* Dublin. H.O.S.J.G A contribution to reports of uncaring attitudes towards older patients in Eire and a request to explore the psycho-spiritual reasons for prejudice.

Marr J & Kershaw E (eds. 1998) *Introduction* in *Caring for Older People.* London. Arnold. A request to provide a broader perspective in the care of older people based on my specialist knowledge in the field.

Johns C & Freshwater D (eds. 1998) *The Reflective Journey Begins a Spiritual Journey* in *Transforming Nursing through Reflective Practice.* Oxford. Blackwell. A contribution exploring the spiritual dimension in the emerging interest in reflective practice in the nursing profession.

Osterbrink J (ed.1998) *Entwicklung und Anwendung eines Plegemodells in der Praxis* in *Erster Internationaler Pflegetheorinkomgress.* Zurich. Huber. A chapter including the spiritual dimension in a congress exploring developments in European nursing, requested following the Nursing Times report of the previous year (cited in the references).

Butterworth T, Faugier J & Burnard P (eds. 1998) *Modelling Excellence: the role of the consultant nurse* in *Clinical Supervision and Mentorship in Nursing*. Cheltenham. Thornes. An exploration of the consultant nurse role in supporting a wider vision of nursing.

MacMahon R & Pearson A (eds. 1998) *Facilitating Therapeutic Nursing and Independent Practice* in *Nursing as Therapy*. Cheltenham. Thornes. Again, part of a movement in nursing at the time to expand horizons of what healing might mean, including the spirtuality and health perspective.

Bauer R & Jehl R (eds. 2000) *Humanismus, Spiritualitat und Pflege* (humanism, spirituality and nursing) in *Humanistiche Pflege.* Stuttgart.
Schattauer. An exploration of the spiritual basis of nursing and the relationship to humanism.

Bauer R & Jehl R (eds. 2000) *Meditation* in Humanistiche Pflege Stuttgart. Sachattauer. A practical guide to meditation practice.

Flint H (ed. 2000) *Developing Excellence in Nursing* in *A Compendium of Key Issues in Nursing Research and Development*. Dublin. Eastern Health Board. An exploration of the development of the nurse as a person and professional.

Flint H & Wright S G (2000) *Nursing Development Units* in Flint H (ed. 2000) above. Dublin. Eastern Health Board. I discussion of a model for focussed nursing development in the clinical setting.

Lloyd-Richards R (ed. 2000) *Nursing and the Changing Culture of the NHS* in *Change, Friend or Foe?* Cirencester. College of Health Care Chaplains.
A perspective on spirituality and NHS care and the relationship to chaplaincy.

Rankin-Box D (ed. 2001) *Sacred Space* (with Sayre-Adams J) in *The Nurse's Handbook of Complementary Therapies.* London. Bailliere Tindall. An exploration of the concept of sacred space and its relevance to health care.

Peters D (ed. 2001) *Healing and Therapeutic Touch – is it all in the mind?* (with Sayre-Adams J) in *Understanding the Placebo Effect in Complementary Medicine: theory, practice and research. Edinburgh.* Churchill Livingstone. A study of the nature of healing touch, the effects on wellbeing and a refutation of the dismissing of the power of the placebo effect.

Horrigan B (ed. 2003) *Creating Sacred Space* in *Voices of integrative Medicine – Conversations and Encounters.* St Louis. Churchill Livingstone/Elsevier. The relevance of spirituality in cultivating healing environments, and the integration of the personal spiritual journey with action in service.

Greenstreet W (ed. 2006) *Soul Works: the relevance of spirituality to a healthy workplace* in *Integrating Spirituality in Health and Social Care.* Oxford. Radcliffe. Spirituality and its influence on staff and patient relationships, wellbeing and healing.

Cooper J (ed. 2006) *Spirituality and Palliative Care* in *Stepping into Palliative Care (book 2): care and practice.* Oxford. Radcliffe. An exploration of the impact of spirituality in meeting the needs of staff and patients in palliative care

Barker P (ed. 2009) *Spirituality and mental health nursing* in *Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing: the craft of caring*. London. Hodder Arnold. How spirituality impacts the work of mental health nurses and their clients.

Hinchliff S, Norman S & Schober J (eds. 2010) *Loving Nursing: nursing beyond boundaries and the search for wellbeing* in *Nursing Practice and Health Care.* London. Hodder Arnold. Spiritual practice and the expansion of understanding of love as service, and a critique of the literature on nurses' understanding of nursing work as an expression of love.

Paynter N (ed. 2013) *Prayers* in *Leaves Like the Sun* Glasgow. Wild Goose. A request for prayer suggestions used at the Sacred Space Foundation and published in earlier books (*Contemplation*) for the Iona Community.

Burgess R (ed. 2014) *Blessings and Prayers* in *Moments of our Nights and Days.* Glasgow. Wild Goose. More requests for prayers to inform the Iona Community and its networks.

Polhill C (ed. 2015) *In the present moment* in *In the Mists of the Shoreline.* Glasgow. Wild Goose. A reflection on being fully present and the influence of Iona.

Paynter N (ed. 2017) *Good Friday: the veil of the temple* in *The Sun Slowly Rises*. Glasgow. Wild Goose. A meditation and reflection, from a contemplative perspective, on the Gospel story of 'good Friday'.

Paynter N (ed. 2018) *Everyone is welcome* in *Iona of my Heart*. Glasgow. Wild Goose. Further spiritual practice based on the experience of Iona.

Hemsley M (ed. 2019) *James* (anonymised interview) in *Here there be Soul Eaters: sacred journeys of nurse healers.* Canberra. Eldership Academy Press. A chapter detailing personal and theoretical aspects of awakening.

Dale S (ed. 2020) *Sacred Space* in *Standing on Our Stories*. Glasgow. Wild Goose. Further reflections on sacred space as applied to the Iona Community.

Bulman J (ed. 2021) *The Fifth Sacred Thing* in *Talking unity*. Milton Keynes. Holden. A meditation on the nature of love as a fifth element beyond the four elements.

Aris S, Garraway H & Gilbert H (eds. 2021) *Burnout: a spiritual crisis* in *Mental Health, Spirituality and Wellbeing*. London. Pavilion. An update of the evidence and further exploration of burnout as a spiritual crisis and the limitations of psychological models.

Paynter N (ed. 2023) *Burnout* in *Redeeming Our Cracks.* Glasgow. Wild Goose. A chapter updating information on burnout and its relevance to spiritual communities.

Paynter N (ed. 2023) *Loneliness Makes You Sick* in *Redeeming Our Cracks*. Glasgow. Wild Goose. A report on the evidence relating loneliness to ill health, and what spirituality and soul communities can contribute to countering it.

Paynter N (ed. 2023) *Drink this cup: a meditation and reflection* and *Take Three – an Advent and Christmas meditation on gifts and power* in *Wild Goose Big Book of Liturgies and Resources 3: Bread of Hope*. Glasgow. Wild Goose. Two detailed meditations on gospel readings and contemplative insights and practices.

Aparna N, Hallett C, Bhatnagar P (in press; expected 2024) *Quintessential Nursing* in *Florence Nightingale and Healthcare: Lessons for a Post-Pandemic Era*. commissioned by Routledge. An invitation to reflect on my past in nursing, offer evidence for the continued relevance of Nightingale's model of health care, and how spirituality informs a possible fullness of nursing and healing relationships beyond technical intervention.

Papers – joint authorship.

Wright S G & Sayre-Adams J (1997) Change in Consciousness
Nursing Times 91 (41) pp44-46

Biley F & Wright S G (1997) Towards a Defence of Nursing Routine & Ritual. *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 6 (2):115-119

Wright S G, Gough P & Mortlock R Mapping the Future. *Nursing Times* 11(34):25-27

Wright S G & Sayre-Adams J (1997) Nursing - In Spirit. *Complementary Therapies in Nursing and Midwifery* 3:61-63

Wright S G , Gough P & Poulton B (1997) Forward Thinking. *Nursing Standard* 11(44):25

Wright S G, Salmon D, Watts J, Maddock J, Sandford L, Thomas D, Crowder J & Hopkins V (1997) Clinical Supervision – Making it happen
Elderly Care 10(5):10-14

Wright S G & Sayre-Adams J (1998)Healing energy and the complementary therapies. *Complementary Therapies in Nursing and Midwifery* 5:95-97

Wright S G, Armstrong P & Crowe B (1998) Record Breakers
Nursing Times 95(36):34-35

Wright S G, Watson M, Walker K, Gaskell S, Graham M, Taylor S, Parker C & Abernethy A.(1998) A tale of two tribes. *Nursing Times* 95(37):35-36

Shepherd P, Fletcher B, Sayre-Adams J and Wright S G (2000)Journey through the labyrinth. *Sacred Space* 1(3):48-52

Wright S G & Sayre-Adams J (2001) Therapeutic Touch and the older person: healing and connecting. *Nursing and Residential Care* 3(4):174-176

Wright S G & Sayre-Adams J (2005) Encouraging nature to act. *Nursing Standard* 19(17):14-15

Wright S G & Sayre-Adams J (2005) Self Discovery. *Nursing Standard* 19(22):14-15

Wright S G & Sayre-Adams J (2006) Love me tender. *Nursing Standard* 21(2):20-22

Wright S G, Doherty D, Aveyard B & Sykes M (2006) Therapeutic Touch and dementia care: an ongoing journey.*Nursing Older People* 8(11):27-30

Wright S G & Sayre-Adams J (2006) Who do you think you are? – the enneagram. *Nursing Standard* 21(32):20-23

Neuberger J & Wright S G (2012) Why spirituality is essential for nurses.
Nursing Standard 26(40):19-21

Wright S G & Sayre-Adams J (2012) Reassess the stress. *Nursing Standard* 26(42)18-19

Wright S G & Neuberger J (2013) Spiritual expression. *Nursing Standard* 27(411):16-18

Hall I & Nelligan M (with commentary: Wright S G) (2015) Helping nurses reconnect with their compassion. *Nursing Times* 111(41):21-23 (see below re: outreach work with this trust).

Ramluggun P, Idowu C, Sandy P & Wright S G (2021) Supporting mental health nurses to meet patients' spiritual needs. *Mental Health Practice* doi: 10.7748/mhp.2021.e1549

Jenkins C & Wright S G (2022) Faith in a time of collapse. Church Times. https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2022/4-november/features/features/faith-in-a-time-of-collapse/

Papers: sole authorship

1997

- Free the Spirit. *Nursing Times* 93(17):30-32
- Spirituality and Nursing - an Interview with Mother Meera. *European Nurse* 2(1):49-52
- A Conversation with Eileeen Caddy. *European Nurse* 2(2):112-117
- Spirituality - the Awakening. *Nursing Times* 93(40):34
- Creating Sacred Space. *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine* 4(5):76-83

1999

- Nursing in Retreat. *Nursing Management* 5(4):21-24
- Spirituality and Nursing.*Healing Today.* Spring:16-17
- How to be happy at Work. *Nursing Times* 95(35): 26-29
- When Fallen Angels Rise – the re-spiriting of health. *Sacred Space* 1(1):1-10
- Cover Story and Interview. *Nursing Standard* 14(27):14-16
- The Guru, the Bypass and the Teacher's Little Wife. *Sacred Space* 1(2):1-4
- Faith and the donkey stone: the death of credibility. *Sacred Space* 1(3) :1-3
- Picking up the Pieces. *The Australian Journal of Holistic Nursing* 7(1): 9-14

2000

- Soul works: the relevance of spirituality to the workplace. *Nursing and Residential Home Care* 2(8):382-384
- Making a spectacle out of a miracle. *Sacred Space* 1(4):1-6
- Give me Darth Vader anyday. *Sacred Space* 2(1):1-5

2001

- Making a spectacle of a miracle. *Healing Today* May 84:23-25
- On empty tigers and a roaring sea. *Sacred Space* 2(2):1-8
- Power, Professions and Practice. *Sacred Space* 2(3):1-4
- Beyond "being with". *Sacred Space*. 2(3):1-7

2002

- On the Existential Edge: when things fall apart. *Sacred Space*. 3(1):1-4
- Socks, Silence and Stillness. *Sacred Space*. 3(2)1-7
- Examining the impact of spirituality on nurses and health care provision. *Professional Nurse* 17(12):709-711
- Of Shadows and Light. *Sacred Space* 3(3):1-5
- Exploring the spirit of caring touch. *British Journal of Dermatology Nursing* 6(3):6-8
- Do Winter Buffalo Dream of Summer Meadows? *Sacred Space* 3(4):1-5

2003

- Reclaiming the Crone. *Sacred Space* 4(1):1-4
- If God is All – Does that include measles? *Sacred Space* 4(2):1-7
- Pouring Oil on the Fire of the Soul. *Sacred Space* 4(3):1-5
- In a Ballroom Mirror: reflections on sacred space. *Sacred Space* 4 (4):1-6

2004

- Soul Works. *Spirituality and Health International* (1):1-7
- Faith in practice. *British Journal of Dermatology Nursing* 8(1):22-3
- Peeping Through the Crack in the Doors of Perception. *Spirituality and Health International.* 5(2)63-67
- Deconstructing Nursing: from theory to practice – attentive, tuned in, focussed. *Nursing Standard* 18(52):15-16
- The Soap Opera of the Sleeping Spirit. *Spirituality and Health International* 5(3):129-133
- The Gift of the Dead. *Spirituality and Health International* 5(4):189-194

2005

- Intimacy, Touch and the Long Voyage Home. *Chrism – the journal of the Guild of St. Raphael.* Spring:7-10
- Whatever Happened to Mrs. Buddha? *Spirituality and Health International*. 6 (2):51-5
- Burning Out and Finding Fire: stress, burnout and the healthcare practitioner. *Journal of Holistic Healthcare* 2(1):29-34
- Limited Body: Limitless Soul. *Spirituality and Health International* 6(2):1-7
- Holy Work: spirituality and health care in transition. *Journal of Holistic Healthcare* 2(3):10-14
- A New Ijtihad? *Spirituality and Health International* 6(3):127-131
- The Fast Track to God or the Road to Nowhere? *Spirituality and Health International* 6(4):189-194

2006

- The Waste Land. *Spirituality and Health International* 7(1):1-7
- Escaping Memphis: leaving the wasteland and heading for home. *Spirituality and Health International* 7(2):59-66
- God Heals: I make the tea. *Spirituality and Health International* 7(3):115-119
- Finest of Fine Arts. *Nursing Standard* 21(4):20-22
- And Let the Darkness. *Spirituality and Health International* 7(4):175-180

2008

- Unthinkable Nursing. *Nursing Standard* 23(11):20-21

2010

- Commentary on: Light Still Shines in the Darkness: Decent Care for All. *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 28 (4):275-83

2011

- Darkness on the edges. *Journal of Holistic Healthcare* 8(1):37-40

2012

- Interview**.** *Church Times.* 6th January 2012 http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=122751

2013

- Exposed and vulnerable. *Nursing Standard* 27(21):20-1

2014

- Home, Heart and Holy Ground. *Retreats* 194:14-17

2015

- Burnout: a spiritual crisis. *Coracle* Summer:19-20
- Minding my own language. *Shoreline Conversations* 3 (October):4-5
- On Contemplation. *Coracle* Autumn 2015:16-18
- Pilgrimage Isn't Just for the Holy. *Shoreline Conversations* 4 (December):4-5

2017

- Sacred Space. *Paradigm Explorer* 2017(3) 21-24

2018

- Making sacred space for staff renewal and transformation. *Journal of Holistic Healthcare* 15(1):38-41

2020

- Finding your heart space. Download publication. Wild Goose Publications
- Spirituality, sexuality and identity: a story of dis-possession. Journal for the Study of Spirituality 10(2)171-181 https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/KHQPCTG86H3GSKEUNWJY/full?target=10.1080/20440243.2020.1812888

2021

- Rydal Hall retreats. Report in Church Times 13/08/21

2022

- This is how it starts; this is how it ends: a white man's response to Black Lives Matter. https://www.nighvision.net/stories
- The Sacred Space Foundation: honoring the soul of caring. https://www.nighvision.net/sacred-space-foundation-story.html
- Take Three: An Advent or Christmas Meditation on Gifts and Power. Download publication. Wild Goose Publications
- Spirituality in a time of collapse. *One Spirit Interfaith Forum* (November 2022) https://www.onespiritministersinconnection.com/blog-wexley

2023

- Still and Still Moving. *Coracle* (2):23-4

Some related media presentations

Webcast – spirituality and wellbeing (2011)
http://nursingstandard.rcnpublishing.co.uk/resources/video/swright.asp

Webcast – Should vulnerable nurses be allowed to care for vulnerable patients? Dialogue with chief executive of the UK Nursing and Midwofery Council (2011)
http://www.quantumnetstream.co.uk/rcn/RCN_Fringe.html

Interview by Fay Barratt 'What is truth?'
www.untangledfm.com (2013)

BBC Radio Cumbria (2013) Interview: 'time out' days and spiritual support for NHS staff organized by the Diocese of Carlisle and the Sacred Space Foundation

Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Trust (2016) Heart of Leadership Project 1: Inspiring Cultural Change Through Leadership and Training
201https://youtu.be/YUMBKXjgEN0

A series of 14 YouTube videos, on spiritual matters such as 'how to meditate' published on the YouTube site of the Sacred Space Foundation. (2020)

Interview, Radio Cumbria. Kentigern and pilgrimage (2020)

Countrysideco podcast on pilgrimage: https://www.countrystride.co.uk/single-post/countrystride-47-lakeland-pilgrims (2021)

Interview. Radio 4 9th May. Sunday Programme. On Pilgrimage. (2021)

Podcast Interview by Joel Lazarus. Contemplation, social action and environmentalism.
https://open.spotify.com/episode/2Njs6KeCQbebY2CWL0AtoQ?si=oDg0B984QPmKOlFlxzkReg (2021)

Interview by Joel Lazarus: spirituality
https://youtu.be/xHRp6ToU2Nw (2021)

Interview by Jean Watson at Caring Science Institute: Burnout: a spiritual crisis.
https://vimeo.com/580460187 (2021)

Interview: On the spiritual life.Buddha at the Gaspump
https://batgap.com/stephen-wright (2021)

Interview with Katie Carr for Deep Adaptation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S71PNLz4_XU (2022)

Mystics and Scientists webinar: Heartfullness
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWdU6NVHSd4&feature=youtu.be (2022)

Conversation with Neil Douglas-Klotz

https://vimeo.com/758674560/50918fd831 (2022)

'I am' meditation with Marty Rosenblatt
https://youtu.be/tYBthIrmRSQ (2022)

Heartfullness and Contemplation.
Iona Community Learn
https://youtu.be/PEwtV2m-uQM (2023)

Nightingale Initiative for Global Health
Nursing thought leader.
https://www.nighvision.net/nurses-voices-virtual-launch.html
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrSW7sEVqbA (2023)

Conferences and other outreach work, based on the four works

Stemming from the published *works* are invitations to share findings and thinking. These have been many and include the podcasts above, for example: -

A lecture tour of nine Australian city universities in 2007 and a keynote address at the Annual Congress of the Royal College of Nursing (Australia) in Cairns.

A five-year leadership development project (2010-2015) at Calderstones Partnership NHS Foundation Trust involving monthly 2-day retreats for clinical leaders exploring issues of self-care, staff support and spirituality-health insights. (Wright and Sayre-Adams 2012, Conroy 2012, Hall and Nelligan 2015). Based explicitly on spiritual themes found in the *works*, and initiated at a University of Cumbria event. Ian Hall was "head of learning and organisational development at the learning disability trust in the north west of England, he had been involved in a variety of leadership courses for nursing staff. But this time he wanted to do something different. As Ian told me later, he hoped to 'change the mindset of staff and instil a new sense of purpose'. In November 2010, he attended a nursing student graduation ceremony at Carlisle Cathedral. At this event Stephen Wright, director of the Sacred Space Foundation, was made an honorary fellow at the University of Cumbria. Afterwards, he spoke with Ian and offered to work on a leadership programme that had spirituality at its core. This was Ian's 'eureka' moment – the concept of soul-centred leadership was the 'something different' he had been seeking." (Conroy 2012:17). A development programme merging the spiritual and professional, entitled Compassion and Leadership, evolved from its original site in Calderstones and was repeated in all NHS Trusts across the North West of England. It was further taken up by one Trust in Cheshire and continues to this day. These projects draw heavily on the Christian contemplative tradition, as explored in the *works*, and especially the conversation about "Who am I?" and the consequences of answering that question – a theme explored in detail in the *works*. Both have produced peer reviewed evidence illustrating their possibilities and effectiveness (Nelligan and Hall 2015,also YouTube video produced by Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Trust https://youtu.be/YUMBKXjgEN0, please see above)

Church: Continuing facilitation in 2024, a follow on from similar work in previous years) providing retreats for health care professionals based on the models in the *works* connecting

self-care, leadership, spiritual development and contemplation. These projects draw heavily on the Christian contemplative tradition, as explored in the *works*, and especially the conversation about "Who am I?" and the consequences of answering that question – a theme explored in detail in the *works*. Five days reserved at Rydal Hall in 2024. Further work ongoing across the Diocese of Carlisle, based on the Church Times article (Jenkins and Wright 2022), a motion passed at Synod seeking to engage parishes in Deep Adaptation work, and meetings planned during 2024 to apply contemplative approaches to insight and action into climate change and collapse (Wright 2023)

Environmentalism: Engagement in the *Deep Adaptation Forum* (https://www.deepadaptation.info/) at the request of the founders. Various on-line interviews and reports added. Forthcoming book on the connection between spirituality and the environmental crisis (Wright 2023). Plans in hand at the time of writing to develop the Heartfullness work as an on-line course for spiritual development, to support members through times of collapse; anticipated start, Spring 2024. See also above re: diocesan activity.

Explorations of consciousness, "I Amness" (Wright 2017), health and contemplation: Annual conference presentations on themes of spirituality, consciousness and contemplation to the *Applied Precognition Project* (https://appliedprecog.com). Presentations also to the *Scientific and Medical Network* (https://scientificandmedical.net/). A further exploration of the connection to issues of sexuality (Wright 2020c) race (Wright 2022b) can also be found in the published papers and on-line dialogues.

Contemplation in Community: An invitation in November 2023 to facilitate the first retreat (for the *Iona Community* https://iona.org.uk/) at Iona Abbey. Positively evaluated, this is a theme that will be repeated in 2024.

The Sacred Space Foundation: Providing retreat facilitation for groups of individuals, and spiritual direction, under the auspices of the Foundation. Participants are drawn on the basis of public works and media presentations as listed above. The models of spiritual development in the *works* provide the basis for spiritual development.

Citations: as a member of Researchgate - Research Interest Score: 198.2. Citations:297. Index:8 Further evidence of activity on Researchgate: my section continues to be the most frequently read in the department as reported in email updates. This is a common message: "Congratulations, Stephen! With 45 new reads, your research items were the most read research items from your department last week" (Researchgate January 8th 2024)

Conroy M (2012) A Place to Unwind. *Nursing Standard* 26(44):16-17

Donald G, Wilson I, McCarthy J, Hall I, Crossley B, Adshead P, Shaw V, Dunne R & Dwyer T (2019). Experiences of nurses and other health workers participating in a reflective course on compassion-based care. *British Journal of Nursing. 28*(15), 1020-1025. https://doi.org/10.12968/bjon.2019.28.15.1020

Hall I & Nelligan M (with commentary Wright S G) 2015 Helping Nurses Reconnect with their Compassion. *Nursing Times* 111(41):21-23

University of Durham (2015) *It's in the relationship: wellbeing, spirituality and science.* University of Durham https://youtube.com/watch?v=OLpfjfMzamM&si=OZvOPQwwQ4hl6Gep (Accessed January 2024)

Bendell J (2023) *Deep Spirituality in an Era of Collapse*. (Blog). https://jembendell.com/2023/12/02/deep-spirituality-in-an-era-of-collapse/ (Accessed January 2024)

House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee (2021) *Workforce Burnout and Resilience in the NHS and Social Care.* Written evidence on behalf of the Sacred Space Foundation submitted at request of the parliamentary committee of inquiry. Second Report 2021/22. London. House of Commons. https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/13459/pdf/ (Accessed January 2024)

NHS Education for Scotland (2024) Spiritual Care Matters: an introductory resource for all NHS (Scotland) staff. Edinburgh. NHS Education for Scotland https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/xzadagnc/spiritual-care-matters-an-introductory-resource-for-all-nhsscotland-staff.pdf (Accessed January 2024)

Researchgate (2024). Wright S.G: University of Cumbria. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Stephen-Wright-2/achievement/659bf885b960f326e295e241

Wright S G (2012) Be a Guiding Light. *Nursing Standard* 26(41):18-20

Wright S G (2020) Spirituality, sexuality and identity: a story of dis-possession. Journal for the Study of Spirituality 10(2)171-181 https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/KHQPCTG86H3GSKEUNWJY/full?target=10.1080/20440243.2020.1812888

Wright S G (2022) This is how it starts; this is how it ends: a white man's response to Black Lives Matter. *Nightingale Initiative for Global Health.* https://www.nighvision.net/stories

References

All *Holy Bible* citations are taken from the New International Version.

Aldern C P (2024) 'Everybody has a breaking point': how the climate crisis affects our brains. *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/mar/27/everybody-has-a-breaking-point-how-the-climate-crisis-affects-our-brains. (Accessed March 2024)

Alister Hardy Trust 2023 https://www.studyspiritualexperiences.org/ (Accessed January 2024)

Andersen H C (trans. MacCarthy P 2017) The Snow Queen. Worksop. Award

Ancilla (1955) *The Following Feet*. London. Longmans, Green

Anker Larsen J (trans. Chater A G 1924) *The Philosopher's Stone.* New York. Knopf

Anonymous (trans. Wolters C 1978) *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Harmondsworth. Penguin

Anonymous (1991) *Alcoholics Anonymous: the story of how many thousands of men and women have recovered from alcoholism (The Big Book).* New York. Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.

Anonymous (trans. Powell R A 2019) *Meditations on the Tarot: a journey into Christian mysticism*. Brooklyn. Angelico Press

Aris S, Garraway H & Gilbert H (eds. 2023) *Mental Health, Spirituality and Wellbeing: a handbook for health and social care professionals, service users and carers*. Shoreham-by-Sea. Pavilion

Armstrong K (2011) *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. New York. Knopf

Armstrong K (2022) *Sacred Nature: how we can recover our bond with the natural world*. London. Bodley Head

Auden W H (1964) *Introduction* in Fremantle A (1964) *The Protestant Mystics*. London. Weidenfeld & Nicholson

Auden W H (1970) *A Certain World: a commonplace book*. New York. Viking

Baker E (1977) *The Mystical Journey*. London. Wildwood

Baring A (2013) *The Dream of the Cosmos: a quest for the soul*. Dorset. Archive

Barker P (ed. 2009) *Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing: the craft of caring*. London. Hodder Arnold

Barks C & Green M (1997) *The Illuminated Rumi*. New York. Broadway

Beard M (2018) *The Eye of Faith*. London. Profile

Beckett Sister W (1994) *The Gaze of Love: meditations on art and spiritual transformation*. London. HarperSanFrancisco

Bendell J & Read R (2021) *Deep Adaptation: navigating the realities of climate chaos.* Cambridge. Polity.

Benet of Canfield (trans. Emery K 1987) *Rule of perfection.* New York. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies

Bennett A (2004) *The History Boys*. London. Faber & Faber

Benson H (1996) *Timeless Healing*. London. Simon & Schuster

Blake W (Ed. Erdman D. 1988) (first published 1790) *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in *The Complete Poetry* and Prose. London. Anchor

Bloom W (2011) *The Power of Modern Spirituality: how to live a life of compassion and fulfilment.* London. Little, Brown

Blumenau R (2001) Kant and the Thing in Itself. *Philosophy Now.* https://philosophynow.org/issues/31/Kant_and_the_Thing_in_Itself (Accessed January 2024)

Bohm D (2005) *Wholeness and the Implicate Order.* New York. Routledge

Booth R & Goodier M (2023) Census data suggests UK faces 'non-religious future', say campaigners. *The Guardian* 30th January 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jan/30/census-data-england-wales-uk-non-religious-future-campaigners. (Accessed January 2024)

Borysenko J (2012) *Fried: why you burn out and how to survive*. New York. Hay House

Bourgeault C (2004) *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*. New York. Cowley

British Medical Journal (2001) Editorial - restoring the soul of medicine. *British Medical Journal* 322 (7279):113

British Social Attitudes (2017) *Record number of Brits with no religion*. Report number 34. https://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39196/bsa34_full-report_fin.pdf. (Accessed January 2024)

Brown G, El-Erian M, Spence M & Reid L (2023) *Permacrisis: a plan to fix a fractured world.* London. Simon & Schuster

Browne E (1927*) A Year Amongst the Persians: impressions as to the life character and thought of the people of Persia*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press

Bruce S (1996) *Religion in the Modern Word: from cathedrals to cults*. Oxford. Oxford University Press

Bryant M (2023) It's Soul Destroying: why so many NHS staff are off sick with burnout. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/feb/05/why-so-many-nhs-staff-are-off-sick-with-burnout (Accessed January 2024)

Bucke R (2011: reproduction of original approx. 1880). *Cosmic Consciousness*. Guildford. White Crow

Burgess Y (1996) *The Myth of Progress*. Glasgow. Wild Goose

Bushby H (2022) Permacrisis declared Collins Dictionary word of the year. *BBC News* (Culture)1st November. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-63458467. (Accessed January 2024)

Caddy E (1971) *And God Spoke to Me*. Forres. Findhorn Press

Carrette J R & King R (2005) *Selling Spirituality: the silent takeover of religion*. East Sussex. Psychology Press.

Cavafy C P (trans. Keeley E & Sherrard P 1995) *Ithaka* in *The Essential Cavafy*. Hopewell. Ecco Press

Cave N & O'Hagan S (2023) *Faith, Hope and Carnage.* Edinburgh. Canongate Press

Charity Commission (2023). The Sacred Space Foundation. https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/328449/full-print (Accessed January 2024)

Chiesa A (2012) The difficulty of defining mindfulness: current thought and critical issues. *Mindfulness* DOI 10.1007/s12671-012-0123-4. (Accessed January 2024)

Childre D & Martin H (2011) *The Heartmath Solution*. London. Piatkus

Chopra D (1996) *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success: a practical guide to the fulfilment of your dreams*. London. Transworld

Cocozza P (2023) A New Start After 60. *The Guardian* July10th. https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/jul/10/a-new-start-after-60-burnout-quit-ceo-dream-job-truck-driver. (Accessed January 2024)

Conroy M (2012) A Place to Unwind. *Nursing Standard* 26(44):16-17

Cooper D A (1998) *God is a Verb: Kabballah and the practice of mystical Judaism*. London. Penguin

Cooper J C (1995) *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*. London. Thames & Hudson

Cowan T (2016) *Human Heart: Cosmic Heart.* White River Junction. Chelsea Green

Cropper M (1958) *Evelyn Underhill.* London. Longmans

Dante A (trans. Wheeler C 1919) *The Divine Comedy: Paradiso*. London. Dent

de Barros M C M, Leão F C, Filho H V, Lucchetti G, Moreira-Almeida A & Peres M F P (2022) Prevalence of spiritual and religious experiences in the general population: a Brazilian nationwide study. Transcultural Psychiatry doi: 10.1177/13634615221088701 https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35382640/ (Accessed February 2024)

de Caussade J (1921) *Abandonment to Divine Providence*. Exeter. Catholic Records Press

de Guibert J (trans. Young W J, ed. Ganss G E 1986) The Jesuits: their spiritual doctrine and practice – a historical study. St. Louis. Institute of Jesuit Sources

Deep Adaptation (2024) https://www.deepadaptation.info/about/what-is-deep-adaptation

de Jaegher P (trans. Attwater D 1935) *An Anthology of Mysticism.* London, Burns & Oates

de Oliveira V M (2021*) Hospicing Modernity: facing humanity's wrongs and the implications for social activism.* Berkeley. North Atlantic

Dossey B (1999) *Florence Nightingale: mystic, visionary, healer.* Springhouse. Springhouse

Dossey B (2008) Theory of Integral Nursing. *Advances in Nursing Science* 31 (1)52-73 doi:10.1097/01ANS.0000311536.1163.0a

Dossey B, Keegan L & Guzetta C (2010) *Holistic Nursing: Handbook for Practice*. Gaithersburg. Aspen

Dossey L (2000) *Prayers is Good Medicine: how to reap the healing benefits of prayer.* San Francisco. HarperSanFrancisco

Dossey L (2008) *Transplants, Cellular Memory and Reincarnation*. New York. Explore

Dossey L (2013) *One Mind.* New York. Hay House

Douglas-Klotz N (1990) *Prayers of the Cosmos*. San Francisco. HarperCollins

Douglas-Klotz N (1999) *The Hidden Gospel.* Wheaton. Quest

Douglas-Klotz N (2003) The *Genesis Meditations: a shared practice for Christians, Jews and Muslims.* Wheaton. Quest

Douglas-Klotz N (2006) *Blessings of the Cosmos.* Boulder. Sounds True

Douglas-Klotz N (2022*) Revelations of the Aramaic Jesus: the hidden teachings of life and death.* Newburyport. Hampton Roads

Earle J C (1917) *Bodily Extension* in Nicholson D H S & Lee A H E (eds. 1917) *The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse*. Oxford. Oxford University Press

Easwaran E (trans.1988) *The Upanishads.* London. Arkana

Eisenstein C (2020) *A More beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible*. Berkeley. North Atlantic Books

Elgin D (2022) *Choosing Earth: humanity's journey of initiation through breakdown and collapse to mature planetary community*. https://choosingearth.org/about/. Choosing Earth Project (Accessed January 2024)

Eliot T (1944) *Four Quartets*. London. Faber & Faber

Ellis C, Adams T E & Bochner (2011) Autoethnography: an overview. *Historical Social Research*. 36 (4) 273-290

Extinction Rebellion (2024) https://extinctionrebellion.uk

Ferrer J D (2002) *Revisioning Transpersonal Psychology: a participatory vision of human spirituality.* New York. State University of New York Press

Forman R (1999) *Mysticism, Mind, Consciousness.* New York. State University of New York Press

Frankl V (trans. Lasch I 1959) *Man's Search for Meaning*. London. Random

Fremantle A (1964) *The Protestant Mystics*. London. Weidenfeld & Nicolson

Garrigou-Lagrange R (trans. Cummins P) 1952. L*ife Everlasting and the Immensity of the Soul*. Rockford. Tan Press

Geismar H, Otto T & Warner C D (2022) *Impermanence: exploring continuous change across cultures.* London. University College of London Press

Globerman D (2012) *The Joy of Burnout.* London. Skyros Press

Gordoncillo M (2021) Quote fact or fiction? The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. https://lusciousmind.com/quote-fact-or-fiction-the-whole-is-greater-than-its-part/ (Accessed January 2024)

Greene D (1991) *Evelyn Underhill: artist of the infinite life.* London. Darton, Longman & Todd

Grof S & Grof C (1989) *Spiritual Emergency: when personal transformation becomes a crisis*. New York. Tarcher/Putnam

Grof C & Grof S (1990) *The Stormy Search for the Self.* New York. Tarcher

Guenther M (1993) *Holy Listening: the art of spiritual direction*. London. Darton, Longman & Todd

Guite M (2012) *Sounding the Seasons: seventy sonnets for the Christian year.* Norwich. Canterbury Press

Haig M (2021) *The Comfort Book*. New York. Penguin Life

Hall I & Nelligan M (commentary Wright S G) 2015 Helping Nurses Reconnect with their Compassion. *Nursing Times* (111(41):21-23

Hamer D (2004) *The God Gene.* New York. Doubleday

Hammarskjöld D (trans. Sjöberg L & Auden W 2006) *Markings.* London. Random

Hampshire M (2000) Stress Busters. *Nursing Standard* 14 (27) 14-14

Heschel A J (1962) *The Prophets.* New York. Harper & Row

Heelas P (2009) *Spiritualities of Life: New Age romanticism and consumptive capitalism.* Oxford. Blackwell

Heelas P & Woodhead L, with Seel B, Szerszynski B & Tusting K (2005*) The Spirituality Revolution: why religion is giving way to spirituality.* Oxford. Blackwell

Hesse H (trans. Winston R & Winston C 1970) *The Glass Bead Game.* London. Cape

Hill C E & Knox S (2021) *Introduction* in Poulos C N (2021) *Essentials of Autoethnography*. Washington. American Psychological Association.

Hillesum E (trans. Pomerans A J 1996) *An Interrupted Life: the diaries 1941-1943 and Letters from Westerbork*. New York. Owl

Horrigan B (1998) *Creating Sacred Space: Stephen G Wright.* Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine. 4 (5):76-83

Huxley A (1943) *Grey Eminence*. London. Chatto & Windus

Huxley A (1954) *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell.* London. Chatto and Windus.

Huxley A (1970) *The Perennial Philosophy.* San Francisco, Harper & Row

Hyde L (2008) *Trickster Makes This World: mischief, myth and art*. New York. Canongate

James. W (1902) *The Varieties of Religious Experience: a study in human nature.* New York. Longmans, Green

Jenkins C & Wright S G (2022) Faith in a time of collapse. *Church Times.* https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2022/4-november/features/features/faith-in-a-time-of-collapse? (Accessed January 2024)

Jenkinson G (2023) *Walking Free from the Trauma of Coercive, Cultic and Spiritual Abuse*. London. Routledge

Johnson D (1991) *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse*. London. Baker

Johnston W (1974) *Silent Music: the science of meditation*. London. Collins

Johnston W (1985) *The Wounded Stag.* London. Fount

Johnston W (1991) *Letters to Contemplatives.* London. Fount

Johnston W (1995) *Mystical Theology: the science of love*. London. HarperCollins

Johnston W (2000) *Arise My Love: mysticism for a new era*. New York. Orbis

Jones R M (1906) *The Double Search: studies in atonement and prayer*. London. Headley

Jung C (ed. Adler G & Read H, trans. Hull R 1960) *Collected Works Volume 3; The Psychogenesis of Mental Illness.* New York. Pantheon

Jung C G (1974) *The Undiscovered Self*. London. Routledge & Kegan Paul

Jung C G (eds. McGuire W & Hull R 1977*) C G Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters.* Princeton. Princeton University Press

Jung C G (ed. Jaffe A, trans. Winston R & Winston C 1995*) Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. London. Fontana

Jung C G (ed. Shamdasani S 2009) *The Red Book: Liber Novus*. London. Norton

Kathleen S & Friends (2022) *12 Steps to Freedom: adverse childhood experiences recovery workbook.* Freedom. Crossing

https://freeaca908372589.files.wordpress.com/2022/01/freedom-portfolio-1.pdf (Accessed January 2024)

Katsaros T & Kaplan N (1969) *The Western Mystical Tradition: an intellectual history of western civilisation.* New Haven. College & University Press

Kay M (2005) Letters to the Editor. *Nursing Standard* 19 (48) 38-39

Keating T (1974) *Intimacy with God*. New York. Crossroad

Kelly T (1943) *A Testament of Devotion*. London. Hodder & Stoughton

Kelly T (1966) *The Eternal Promise*. Richmond. Friends United

Kellner E (1971) *A Work of Art is Never Finished, Merely Abandoned.* https://quoteinvestigator.com/2019/03/01/abandon/ (Accessed January 2024)

King D B & Wertheimer M (2005) *Max Wertheimer and Gestalt Theory.* New Brunswick. Transaction

King M, Marston L, McManus S, Brugha T, Meltzer H & Bebbington P (2018) Religion, Spirituality and Mental Health: results of a national study of English households. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*. 202(1) 68-73 doi: https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.112.112003 (Accessed January 2024)

Kingsley P (2018) *Catafalque: Carl Jung and the end of humanity*. London. Catafalque

Kinross (2023) *Dark Matter: the new science of the microbiome*. London. Penguin

Koenig H G (2008) *Medicine, Religion and Health: where science and spirituality meet.* West Conshohocken. Templeton

Koffka K (1935) *The Principles of Gestalt Psychology.* London. Harcourt Brace

Kornfield J (2001) *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry: how the heart grows wise on the spiritual path*. New York. Bantam

Lanara V (1981) *Heroism as a Nursing Value.* Athens. Sisterhood Evniki

Lao Tzu (trans. Legge J 1994) *The Tao Te Ching*. New York. Bulfinch

Laski M (1961) *Ecstasy: a study of some secular and religious experiences*. London. Cresset Press

Laubach F C (2011) *Letters by a Modern Mystic*. London. SPCK

Lejeune P (1924) *An Introduction to the Mystical Life*. London. Burns Oates & Washbourne

Lerner M (2000) *Spirit Matters.* Charlottesville. Hampton Roads

Liester M B (2020) Personality changes following heart transplantation: the role of cellular memory. doi: 10.1016/j.mehy.2019.109468. Epub 2019 Oct 31. *National Library of Medicine.* https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31739081/ (Accessed January 2024)

Loades A (1997) *Evelyn Underhill*. London. Fount

Lonergan B (1974) *A Second Collection*. London. Darton, Longman & Todd

Longaker C (1997) *Facing Death and Finding Hope.* London. Century

MacCulloch D (2009) *A History of Christianity*. London. Penguin

MacCulloch D (2013) *Silence: a Christian history.* London. Allen Lane

MacQuarrie J (1972) *Paths in Spirituality.* London. SCM Press

Macy J (2021) *World as Lover, World as Self.* Berkeley. Parallax

Macy J & Brown L (1998) *Coming Back to Life: practices to reconnect our lives, our world*. Gabriola Island. New Society

Marcel G (2008) *Man Against Mass Society*. South Bend. St. Augustine's Press

Markides K C (2008) Eastern Orthodox Mysticism and Transpersonal Theory*. Journal of Transpersonal Psychology.* 40(2):178-98

Maslach C (1982) *Burnout: the cost of caring*. New York. Prentice-Hall

McCabe I (2015) *Carl Jung and Alcoholics Anonymous: the twelve steps as a spiritual journey of individuation.* London. Karnac

McColman C (2010) *The Big Book of Christian Mysticism*. San Francisco. Hampton Roads

McEntee R & Bucko A (2015) New Monasticism: a manifesto for contemplative living. New York. Orbis

McGuire B (2022) *Hothouse Earth: an inhabitant's guide*. London. Icon

McSherry W (2000) *Making Sense of Spirituality in Nursing Practice.* Edinburgh. Churchill Livingstone

Mental Health UK (2024) *The Burnout Report*. London. Mental Health UK

Mercadante L (2016) *Belief without Borders: inside the minds of the spiritual but not religious*. New York. Oxford University Press

Merton T (1949) *Seeds of Contemplation.* London. Hollis & Carter

Merton T (1953) *Bread in the Wilderness*. London. Hazell Watson & Viney

Merton T (1959) *Spiritual Direction and Meditation.* Collegeville. Liturgical Press

Merton T (1966) *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*. New York. Doubleday

Merton T (2003) *The Inner Experience: notes on contemplation*. London. SPCK

Mitchell S & van Gordon W (2023) Contemplation – the Power to Transform Self and Society. *The Psychologist.* https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/contemplation-power-transform-self-and-society (Accessed January 2024)

Murray R (1939) *The Good Pagan's Failure*. London. The Catholic Book Club

Murray R (1942) *Time and the Timeless.* London. Centenary

Murray R (1943) *The Life of Faith*. London. Centenary

Myers F (1955) *A Cosmic Outlook* in Johnston R (1955) *The Imprisoned Splendour.* London. Hodder & Stoughton

Myss C (1997) *Anatomy of the Spirit: the seven stages of power and healing*. London. Transworld

Naess A (2008) *Ecology of Wisdom*. London. Penguin

National Health Service (NHS) (2003) *NHS chaplaincy; meeting the religious and spiritual needs of patients and staff*. London. Department of Health (England)

Nervo A (trans. Rice W F 1928) *The Sign* in *Plenitude*. Los Angeles. University of California Digital Library.

Newberg A, D'Aquili E & Rause V (2001) *Why God won't go away.* New York. Ballantine

Newberg A & Waldman M R (2009) *How God Changes Your Brain: breakthrough findings from a leading neuroscientist*. New York. Ballantine

Newberg A & Waldman M R (2016) *How Enlightenment Changes Your Brain: the new science of transformation.* New York. Ballantine

Newell J P (1997) *Listening to the Heartbeat of God: a Celtic spirituality*. London. SPCK

Newell J P (1999) *The Book of Creation: the practice of Celtic spirituality*. Norwich. Canterbury

Newman M (1986) *Health as Expanding Consciousness.* St. Louis. Mosby

Nicoll M (1950) *The New Man*. London. Robinson & Watkins

Nicoll M (1954) *The Mark.* London. Stuart

Nursing Times (1997a) The Spiritual Dimension. *Nursing Times.* 93 (30) 22-24

Nursing Times (1997b) Sacred Spaces: letters. *Nursing Times* 93 (38) 22-23

Office of National Statistics (2022*) Religion, England and Wales: census 2021* https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021 (Accessed January 2024)

O'Neill M (2004) *Power to Choose: twelve steps to wholeness.* Nashville. Power Life Resources.

Ortega y Gasset J (1957) *The Revolt of the Masses*. New York. Norton

Palmer W (1908) *Liberal and Mystical Writings of William Law*. London. Longmans, Green

Parsons S (2000) *Ungodly Fear: fundamentalist Christianity and the abuse of power*. London. Lion Hudson

Pascal B (trans. Trotter W 1947) *Pensées.* London. Dent

Peng-Keller S, Winiger F & Rauch R (2022) *The Spirit of Global Health: the World Health Organisation and the 'Spiritual Dimension' of health, 1946-2021.* Oxford. Oxford University Press

Penseesdepascal (2023) *Memorial – papier original*. http://www.penseesdepascal.fr/Hors/Hors1-moderne.php (Accessed January 2024)

Pert C (1999) *Molecules of Emotion*. New York. Pocket

Peters D (ed. 2011) *Understanding the Placebo Effect* in *Complementary Medicine: theory, practice and research.* Edinburgh. Churchill Livingstone

Pew Research Center (2023) *Mystical Experiences* https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2009/12/29/mystical-experiences/ (Accessed January 2024)

Picciotto G, Fox J & Neto F. (2018) A phenomenology of spiritual bypass: Causes, consequences, and implications. *Journal of Spiritual and Mental Health*.20(4):333-354. doi:10.1080/19349637.2017.1417756).

Polkinghorne J (2012) *Quantum Physics and Theology: an unexpected kinship*. London. SPCK

Pollan M (2018) *How to Change Your Mind: the new science of psychedelics.* London. Penguin

Poulos C N (2021) *Essentials of Autoethnography*. Washington. American Psychological Association

Powell A (2023) Psychiatry and Spirituality in the United Kingdom. *Paradigm Explorer* 142(2023/2):3-7

Pseudo-Dionysius (trans. Lubheid C 1987) *Pseudo-Dionysius: the complete works*. New York. Paulist

Purcell B (2009) *Spiritual Terrorism: spiritual abuse from the womb to the tomb*. London. Authorhouse

Purser R (2019) The Mindfulness Conspiracy*. The Guardian* 14th June https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/jun/14/the-mindfulness-conspiracy-capitalist-spirituality. (Accessed January 2024)

Quinn D (1995) *Ishmael: an adventure of the mind and the spirit*. New York. Bantam

Ram Dass (1970) *Be Here Now*. San Cristobal. Hanuman Foundation

Ram Dass (2012) *The Need for a Guru*. https://www.ramdass.org/need-guru/ (Accessed January 2024)

Ram Dass (2023) *Dealing with Suffering and Seeing it as Grace.* https://www.ramdass.org/dealing-with-suffering-and-seeing-it-as-grace/ (Accessed January 2024)

Ram Dass & Bush M (2018) *Walking Each Other Home.* Boulder. Sounds True

Recovery Village (2024) *Types of 12 Step Programmes*. Recovery Village. https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/treatment-program/aftercare/types-12-step-programs/ (Accessed January 2024)

Redden G (2016) Revisiting the spiritual supermarket: does the commodification of spirituality necessarily devalue it? *Culture and Religion: an interdisciplinary journal* 17(2) 231-249

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14755610.2016.1183690?journalCode=rcar20. (Accessed January 2024)

Reilly D (2001) Enhancing Human Healing. *British Medical Journal* 322 (7279):120-121

Riso D & Hudson R (1999) *The Wisdom of the Enneagram.* New York. Bantam

Roberts D (2023) Synod debates deep adaptation. *The Way.* September 2023.

Rohr R (2009) *The Naked Now: learning to see as the mystics see*. New York. Crossroad

Royal R (2016) *Pascal's Fire* in *The Catholic Thing*. https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2016/07/06/pascals-fire/ (Accessed January 2024)

Sacks J (1985) Religious issues in psychotherapy. *Journal of Religion and Health*. 24(1):26-30

St. John of the Cross (trans. Kavanaugh K & Rodrigues O 2017) *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross.* Washington. Institue of Carmelite Studies Press

St. Romain P (2010) *12 Steps to Spiritual Wholeness: a Christian pathway*. Great Bend. Lulu

St. Teresa of Avila (trans. van de Weyer R 1995). *The Interior Castle*. London. HarperCollins

Salvage J (1997) Journey to the Centre. *Nursing Times* 93(17)28-29

Sayre-Adams J & Wright S G (1995) *The Theory and Practice of Therapeutic Touch*. Edinburgh. Churchill Livingstone

Sayre-Adams J & Wright S G (1997) Nursing in Spirit. *Complementary Therapies in Nursing and Midwifery* 3 61-63

Schuon F (1993) *The Transcendent Unity of Religions.* Wheaton. Quest

Servigne P & Stevens R (2020) *How Everything Can Collapse*. Cambridge. Polity.

Servigne P, Stevens R & Chapelle G (2022) *Another End of the World is Possible.* Cambridge. Polity

Shorthouse J H (1881) *John Inglesant.* London. MacMillan.

Sinetar M (2007) *Ordinary People as Monks and Mystics: lifestyles for spiritual wholeness*. New York. Paulist.

Smith H C (1999) *The World's Religions*. New York. HarperCollins

Smith E E (2017) *The Power of Meaning: crafting a life that matters*. New York. Crown

Snow C & Willard P (1989) *I'm Dying to Take Care of You*. Redmond. Professional Counsellor Books

Spens M (1937) *Concerning Himself*. London. Hodder & Stoughton

Sturzo L (trans. Carter B 1939) *Church and State.* London. Longmans Green

Tacey D (2004) *The Spirituality Revolution: the emergence of contemporary spirituality*. London. Routledge

Tagore R (trans. Underhill E 1915) *Kabir's Poems*. London. MacMillan

Talbot M (1991) *The Holographic Universe*. New York. HarperCollins

Talbot M (2007) *Mysticism and the New Physics*. New York. Penguin

Taylor W (2023) Bishops are to review whether the Church of England should continue referring to God with male pronouns. *LBC News.* https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/god-gender-church-england-change/ (Accessed January 2024)

Teasdale W (1999) *The Mystic Heart: discovering a universal spirituality in the world's religions*. Novato. New World Library

Thompson F (*in* Nicholson D H S & Lee A H E eds. 1917) (1917) *The Hound of Heaven* in *The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse*. Oxford. Oxford University Press

Tolle E (2010) *The Power of Now: a guide to spiritual enlightenment*. London. Yellow Kite

Tooze A (2023) *This is why 'polycrisis' is a useful way of looking at the world right now.* World Economic Forum. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/03/polycrisis-adam-tooze-historian-explains/ (Accessed January 2024)

Torkington D (1997) *Inner Life: a fellow traveller's guide to prayer.* London. Darton, Longman & Todd

Uncommon Pursuit (2023) *12 Steps to God*. https://uncommonpursuit.net/12stepstogod (Accessed January 2024)

Underhill E (1911 & 1930) *Mysticism: a study in the nature and development of man's spiritual consciousness.* London. Methuen

Underhill E (1914) *Practical Mysticism: a little book for normal people*. London. Dent

Underhill (1925) *Mystics of the Church.* London. Clarke

Underhill E (1929) *The Mystic Way.* London. Dent

Underhill E (1933) *Mixed Pasture: twelve essays and addresses.* London. Methuen

Underhill E (1938) *The Mystery of Sacrifice: a meditation on the liturgy*. London. Longmans, Green

Underhill E (1941) *Worship.* London. Nisbet

Underhill E (ed. Williams C 1943) *The Letters of Evelyn Underhill*. London. Longmans Green

Underhill E (1947) *Concerning the Inner Life with the House of the Soul*. London. Methuen

United Nations Security Council (2021) *Climate Change 'Biggest Threat Modern Humans have ever faced'.* Press release: https://press.un.org/en/2021/sc14445.doc.htm

Vanauken S (1977) *A Severe Mercy: a story of faith, tragedy and triumph*. London. Harper & Collins

Vardey L (1995) *God in All Worlds: an anthology of contemporary spiritual writing*. New York. Pantheon

Vaughan F (1996) *Shadows of the Sacred*. Wheaton. Quest

Voltaire (Arouet F-M trans. Smollett T 2019) *Candide.* London. Larousse

Watson J (2020) *Unitary Caring Science*. Colorado. University of Colorado Press

Weber M (trans. Parsons T 1992) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London. Routledge

Weiss L (2018) Bottled-up Emotions at Work Lead to Burnout. *Mindful.* https://www.mindful.org/bottled-up-emotions-at-work-lead-to-burnout/ (Accessed January 2024)

Wilber K (1995) *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: the spirit of evolution*. Boston. Shambhala

Wilkinson R & Pickett K (2010) *The Spirit Level: why equality is better for everyone*. London. Penguin

William Davies R (2021) The Universal God: the search for God in the 21st Century. Bloomsbury. BookBaby

Wohlmut T (2024) *Fugue for a Spiritual Life.* Santa Fe. Purple Root Productions. https://vimeo.com/944904734

Woods R (ed. 1981) *Understanding Mysticism*. London. Athlone Press

World Health Organisation (WHO) (2024) The Global Health Observatory. Geneva. WHO https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/major-themes/health-and-well-being (Accessed January 2024)

Worshipforward (2023) God is not a Dude. *Worshipforward.* https://worshipforward231243692.wordpress.com/2019/09/19/de-gendering-god-how-inclusive-language-revolutionizes-worship/ (Accessed January 2024)

Wright S G (1997a) Free the Spirit. *Nursing Times.* 93 (17) 30-32

Wright S G (1997b) Spirituality: the awakening. *Nursing Times* 93 (40) 34-38

Wright S G (2005a) *Reflections on Spirituality and Health.* Chichester. Wiley

Wright S G (2005b) *Burnout: a spiritual crisis* (supplementary booklet) Nursing Standard 19:46.

Wright S G (2010a) *Beloved.* Penrith. Sacred Space

Wright S G (2010b) *Song and Dance for the Way Home*. Penrith. Sacred Space

Wright S G (2013) Meditate to medicate. *Nursing Standard* 28 (11) 26-7

Wright S G (2014) *Yours, Faithfully*. Penrith. Sacred Space

Wright S G (2017) *Coming Home: Notes for the Journey.* Penrith. Sacred Space

Wright S G (2019) *The Kentigern Way: a life and a Lakeland pilgrimage.* Glasgow. Wild Goose.

Wright S G (2020a) A Voyage Round Ram Dass. *Paradigm Explorer* 132(2020/1):25-6

Wright S G (2020b) *A Grasmere Pilgrimage: a contemplative walk through Wordsworth Country*. Penrith. Sacred Space

Wright S G (2020c) Spirituality, sexuality and identity: a story of dis-possession. *Journal for the Study of Spirituality* 10(2)171-181 https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/KHQPCTG86H3GSKEUNWJY/full?target=10.1080/20440243.2020.1812888 (Accessed January 2024)

Wright S G (2021a) *Burnout: a spiritual crisis*. Penrith. Sacred Space

Wright S G (2021b) *Heartfullness: the way of contemplation*. Penrith. Sacred Space

Wright S G (2022a) *Contemplation: an introduction*. Penrith. Sacred Space

Wright S G (2022b) *This is how it starts; this is how it ends: a white man's response to Black Lives Matter.* https://www.nighvision.net/stories (Accessed January 2024)

Wright S G (2023) *Fugue: climate, collapse and contemplation*. Penrith. Sacred Space

Wright S G (2024 in press) *Quintessential Nursing* in Hallet C. *Florence Nightingale and Healthcare: Lessons for a Post-Pandemic Era*. London. Routledge

Wright S G & Biley F (1997) Towards a Defence of Nursing Routine and Ritual. *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 6(2):115-119

Wright S G & Sayre-Adams J (1998) *Sacred Space: Right Relationship and Spirituality in Health Care.* Edinburgh. Churchill Livingstone

Wright S G & Sayre-Adams J (2012) Reassess the Stress. *Nursing Standard* (26(42):18-20

Wrigley-Carr R (2020) *The Spiritual Formation of Evelyn Underhill*. London. SPCK

Yeats W (ed. Webb T 1991) *The Second Coming* in *Selected Poetry*. London. Penguin

Zohar D & Marshall I (2000) *Spiritual Intelligence, the Ultimate Intelligence*. London. Bloomsbury

Zukav G (2007) *The Seat of the Soul.* New York. Simon & Schuster