EDITORIAL

CHERYL HUNT
University of Exeter, UK

Several years ago I arranged to meet a gentleman in the anonymous surroundings of a coffee bar at Euston station in London. We had never met before and I had no idea what he looked like. The potential embarrassment of accosting the wrong person was high and various thoughts crossed my mind as I entered the station: what if there is no signal for our mobile phones - our only means of contact?; why didn't we arrange to wear blue carnations so we could spot one another?; should I just turn and run now? Realising I would be hopeless as a spy, I smiled at the somewhat surreal situation in which I had placed myself. At that moment I caught sight of someone waving vigorously on the far side of the bar, and my phone rang. The voice at the other end said, "I think I can see you - you look just like your website picture. I'm over here, waving a doughnut!"

And so began the first discussion about publishing the Journal for the Study of Spirituality (JSS). The gentleman in question was the Managing Director of a small publishing company. He was an old friend of my colleague Peter Gilbert, one of the founder-members of the British Association for the Study of Spirituality (BASS). Peter had set up the meeting between us in pursuit of one of the key objectives of BASS: 'to encourage and facilitate scholarship and research in spirituality, through the development of a journal, joint collaborative research projects and a biennial conference'.

Ultimately, following a change in the circumstances and focus of that particular publisher, JSS became a reality with the support of a different publishing company. Its aims and style, nevertheless, still owe much to that initial meeting over the doughnuts, and to Peter. An Executive Editor of JSS from its inception, he was adamant that, although the academic quality of the journal was paramount, it should also be of interest to practitioners - to people who did not want simply to 'study' spirituality but to live and work spiritually. As he put it: 'Spirituality, in whatever form it takes, is a vital dimension of our humanity' (Gilbert 2011:42; see also this issue of JSS).

The meeting was enjoyable and very encouraging: I left believing that the journal could, and would, become a reality.

Peter Gilbert died on 12 December 2013 after battling courageously with motor neurone disease for over a year. This issue of JSS is dedicated to him as an acknowledgement not only of his contribution to the journal and to BASS but to the field of spirituality generally, especially in relation to health and social care, mental illness, and leadership. By kind permission of Pavilion Publishing and Media Ltd, we are pleased to be able to reproduce Peter's own chapter from his edited book Spirituality and Mental Health (2011), entitled 'Understanding Mental Health and Spirituality', as the lead article in this issue. It was chosen as illustrative of Peter's inimitable style as well as of his key interests.

1 See: http://www.basspirituality.org.uk/about-us/aims-and-objectives
3 See also Hawes with Bano (Eds)(2014) for a collection of articles by various authors exploring and celebrating Peter Gilbert's work.
The diagrams, anecdotes and 'reflection exercises' are indicative of his concern, in person and in print, to engage with his audience and to involve them in active exploration of spirituality and its implications for personal and professional practice.

It is almost certainly no coincidence that two questions in the reflection exercises in Peter's chapter are: 'what do you feel gives your life meaning and purpose?' and 'what approaches do you take to ensure your well-being?' Such questions lie at the heart of our humanity, of our care for ourselves and others, and of the spiritual quest. And, as John Swinton points out in his article, 'Peter Gilbert: In Memory of a Life Lived Well', 'the facets of spirituality that Peter proposed as central to the practice of being human [are] love, meaning, purpose, respect, dignity, value'.

These facets of spirituality arise in various guises in all the papers in this issue. For example, in his tribute to Peter, John Swinton speaks movingly about love and friendship, noting 'how deeply relationally interconnected we are. There is truly much truth in the African saying "I am because we are"'. Larry Culliford bravely tackles the role of spirituality within the entire 'practice of being human' and how we make sense of it, using what he calls 'The Meaning of Life Diagram': a model that is designed to provide a framework for understanding individual spiritual development from birth to full spiritual maturity. Building on Fowler's (1981) 'Stages of Faith', Culliford notes that 'Regarding the meaning of a person’s life, there are different priorities within each stage'. He offers the model as a structure for research and enquiry, including personal enquiry. However, echoing Peter Gilbert's admonition that we should not just study spirituality but also live spiritually, he reminds us that, however helpful a model or map may be, 'to find out what a place is really like, it is necessary to give up reading about it in a library and actually to go there'.

Leona English's essay, 'An Adult Educator's Hard Look at a Not-So-Soft Space: Spirituality, Religion, and Critical Edges', is a helpful example of what it means to 'go there' in terms of both adult education practice and deep personal reflection on the place of spirituality within that practice. Drawing on her own work and studies in these fields in Canada and elsewhere, she points out that, although spirituality has become an important area of study and practice in adult education, discussion is generally confined to its positive aspects and is often 'devoid of questions, challenges and criticality'. She argues that 'a robust, critical and engaged understanding of the topic needs to incorporate insights from religion and the critical social sciences, insights that are necessarily difficult to manage and negotiate'. Additionally, 'Adult educators need to be rigorous in their conversations, and aware of how culture, history and beliefs about justice enter into practices and policies', including, especially, their own professional practice. English's own commitment to social justice is perhaps reflected in her definition of spirituality as 'an awareness of something greater than ourselves….[that] moves one outward to others as an expression of one’s spiritual experiences' (original emphasis).

Such a definition is reminiscent of Peter Gilbert's (2011: 29) view that 'all philosophical traditions, whether religious or not, have a strong sense of social responsibility, so that the citizen has responsibilities as well as rights, and a duty to minister to the needs of those less fortunate than themselves'. Tensions between rights and responsibilities are increasingly being played out on a global stage where public apologies for past wrongs, including enslavement, territorial displacement, violations of earlier treaties, wartime casualties, ethnic discrimination, sexual abuse and other types of human rights abuses have featured on the agenda of a number of political and religious leaders, albeit in most instances
with politics rather than spirituality as the driving force. There seems to be a built-in assumption that such apologies will somehow lead to forgiveness and reconciliation.

In the second of the two essays in this issue, 'Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Spirituality: A Theological Perspective', Anthony Bash attempts to unpick the complexity of cultural assumptions, ideas and issues embedded within the twin notions of forgiveness and reconciliation. Although he observes that 'Like "motherhood and apple pie", most of us would agree that they are desirable, and an important aspect of mature spirituality', he subsequently undertakes a scholarly examination of the terms, and practices of, forgiveness and reconciliation in order to consider whether that is actually the case, and to what extent such practices can truly mend disrupted relationships in both personal and public domains. He demonstrates that, 'for all the spiritual, relational and social benefits they may bring', forgiveness and reconciliation 'comprise an impossible medley of moral and logical conundrums, if appraised critically'. Bash points out, nevertheless, that 'concepts akin to forgiveness and reconciliation feature in various types of work that promote processes and outcomes aimed at bringing about restored relationships', such as 'mediation, conflict management, conflict resolution, conflict transformation and preventive negotiation'. He concludes that, whatever terms are used, all such processes 'involve a journey of transformation and maturation that enhances the quality of human experience and happiness'.

The Forum section of this issue approaches the nature of human experience and happiness from a completely different perspective, that of the paranormal. Alejandro Parra and Juan Manuel Corbetta report from Argentina on an exploratory examination of 'Changes Resulting from Paranormal/Spiritual Experiences and their Effects on People's Wellbeing' in which they aimed to evaluate the effects of paranormal and mystical/spiritual experiences on people's lives, and any changes resulting from those experiences. Reflecting Peter Gilbert's view that every story, however strange it might seem, should be listened to with respect (with, as John Swinton puts it in his article 'the willingness to be hospitable to those experiences and views which are different from your own'), Parra and Corbetta point out that people who have a parapsychological experience often need reassurance and an opportunity to re-view it and perhaps consider its meaning and place in their life. For some, such an experience appears to provide the kind of dissonance that Culliford sees as a trigger for movement on the developmental path to spiritual maturity. As Parra and Corbetta conclude, there is clearly room for further research on the effects of psychic experiences on peoples' lives and worldviews.

By the time this current issue of JSS is published, the Third International Conference of BASS, Spirituality in a Challenging World, will have helped to facilitate discussion of more than forty presentations based on research into aspects of spirituality that range from Atheism to Zen! The next issue will be a special conference issue, including papers based on the five keynote lectures. For future issues, you are warmly invited to submit accounts of your own research and interests in spirituality in any of its myriad aspects, and/or to respond to topics and questions raised in this and previous issues of the journal.

I am always indebted to the Editorial Board of JSS: the support and expert advice of its members have helped to ensure the academic quality of the journal since its inception. As

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4 A 'Chronological List of Political Apologies' compiled by Graham Dodds when he was a doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania begins: '1077: Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV apologizes to Pope Gregory VII for church-state conflicts by standing barefoot in the snow for three days'; and ends: 'December 17, 2002: The Norwegian Parliament votes to compensate the estimated 12,000 children of German soldiers who occupied the country during World War II for discrimination they suffered growing up in Norway after the war'. (http://www.upenn.edu/pnc/politicalapologies.html. Accessed 26/03/2014). Another website, Political Apologies and Reparations, contains over 1,000 entries, including several this year. See: http://political-apologies.wlu.ca/about.php (Accessed 26/03/2014)
we move into a fourth year of publication, I am delighted that the majority of our Editorial Board members will be continuing to serve for at least a second three-year term of office. But personal and professional circumstances inevitably change and sometimes paths have to diverge. Sadly, therefore, this issue marks the retirement from the Board of David Hay, Ewan Kelly, Harriet Mowat and Linda Woodhead. I am grateful to them all for associating themselves with the risky venture of launching JSS and for helping to guide it through the often choppy waters of the past three years. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to have them, literally, 'on Board'. I wish them well wherever their respective journeys now take them.

New members of the Board will be announced in the next issue but, with immediate effect, I am delighted to welcome Chris Cook to the Executive Editorial Board. Chris is Professor of Spirituality, Theology and Health at Durham University, UK. He was Chair of the Executive Committee of the Special Interest Group in Spirituality and Psychiatry at the Royal College of Psychiatrists from 2009-2013, and is currently a Vice-President of BASS. His expertise, calming presence and good humour will be a great asset to the journal.

So: things change, our journeys take us in different directions, sometimes we meet and enjoy doughnuts, at other times we are forced to part. Although he was not at the Euston railway station meeting in person, Peter Gilbert helped to set in motion that day the journey on which the Journal for the Study of Spirituality continues. Although he is no longer able to influence the nature and direction of the journey JSS will take into the future, his own words, chosen in another context, could almost have been written for it. The book to which they originally applied is sub-titled 'Jewels for the Journey' (Coyte et al 2007). I borrow those words now as 'jewels' that I hope will shine through the pages of JSS as it continues to provide a forum in which to share accounts of the diverse explorations and experiences that contribute to our understanding of spirituality.

Following his usual practice of engaging with his audience, Peter described his own location - on a rock looking out to sea on one of the Channel Islands - and wrote:

I am sitting on a rock ... where are you reader? I really want to know because this [journal] will only have been worth writing if it touches you and the wells of your being, profoundly. All of us who have contributed hope that we can make connections for and with you. You are unique, reader, but we also share a common humanity which stretches back across the generations to the dawn of time.

I am on the beach alone but, paradoxically, you and all my sisters and brothers are here with me. Our identities are somehow interlinked - we stand both as unique and together, or we drift atomized and alone (Peter Gilbert 2007: 19).

References