

# Light Over the Mountains

Voice of the Blue Mountains Interfaith Group

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## *Beyond Environment:* Falling back in love with Mother Earth

*Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh (pictured) explains why mindfulness and a spiritual revolution rather than economics is needed to protect nature and limit climate change.*

Thay, as he is known to his many thousands of followers, sees the lack of meaning and connection in peoples' lives as being the cause of our addiction to consumerism. It is vital we recognise and respond to the stress we are putting on Earth if civilisation is to survive.

What Buddhism offers, he says, is the recognition that we all suffer and the way to overcome that pain is to directly confront it, rather than seeking to hide or bypass it through our obsession with shopping, entertainment, work or the beautification of our bodies. The craving for fame, wealth, power and sex serves to create only the illusion of happiness and ends up exacerbating feelings of disconnection and emptiness.

In an interview at his home and retreat centre in Plum Village, near Bordeaux, Thay outlines how a spiritual revolution is needed if we are going to confront the multitude of environmental challenges.

### **Move beyond concept of the "environment"**

He believes we need to move beyond talking about the environment, as this leads people to experience themselves and Earth as two separate entities and to see the planet in terms only of what it can do for them.

Change is possible only if there is a recognition that people and planet are ultimately one and the same.

"You carry Mother Earth within you," says Thay. "She is not outside of you. Mother Earth is not just your environment.

"In that insight of inter-being, it is possible to have real communication with the Earth, which is the highest form of prayer. In that kind of relationship you have enough love, strength and awakening in order to change your life.

"Changing is not just changing the things outside of us. First of all we need the right view that transcends all notions including of being and non-being, creator and creature, mind and spirit. That kind of insight is crucial for transformation and healing.

"Fear, separation, hate and anger come from the wrong view that you and the earth are two separate entities, the Earth is only the environment. You are in the centre and you want to do something for the Earth in order for you to survive. That is a dualistic way of seeing.

"So to breathe in and be aware of your body and look deeply into it and realise you are the Earth and your consciousness is also the consciousness of the earth. Not to cut the tree not to pollute the water, that is not enough.

### **Putting an economic value on nature is not enough**

Rather than placing a price tag on our forests and coral reefs, Thay says change will happen on a fundamental level only if we fall back in love with the planet. "The Earth cannot be described



either by the notion of matter or mind, which are just ideas, two faces of the same reality. That pine tree is not just matter as it possesses a sense of knowing. A dust particle is not just matter since each of its atoms has intelligence and is a living reality.

"When we recognise the virtues, the talent, the beauty of Mother Earth, something is born in us, some kind of connection, love is born.

"We want to be connected. That is the meaning of love, to be at one.

When you love someone you want to say I need you, I take refuge in you. You do anything for the benefit of the Earth and the Earth will do anything for your wellbeing."

### **How mindfulness can reconnect people to Mother Earth**

He points to increasing evidence that mindfulness can help people to reconnect by slowing down and appreciating all the gifts that the earth can offer.

"Many people suffer deeply and they do not know they suffer," he says. "They try to cover up the suffering by being busy. Many people get sick today because they get alienated from Mother Earth.

*Continued page 2*

## **For our readers . . .**

We invite you to share with us in this venture. You may like to contribute items for future publications: inspiring or informative passages from your religious tradition, news items, upcoming events, book notices. Let us know how you would like to receive future issues (email, hard copy, mail?), how you might help in its distribution (by hand to friends, copies in your place of worship?).

For this and the next few issues we have members of our group offering a brief explanation of their religious affiliation. In each issue we hope to group items under general themes. The final selection and editing of contributions will be in the hands of the editorial committee.

Eugene Stockton 4759 1818  
Pamela Croci 4757 2339  
Angela Moore 0418 568 008  
Jim Tulip 4758 8104

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<http://bluemountainheart.net/interfaith>



“The practice of mindfulness helps us to touch Mother Earth inside of the body and this practice can help heal people. So the healing of the people should go together with the healing of the Earth and this is the insight and it is possible for anyone to practice.

Thay gives the example of something as simple and ordinary as drinking a cup of tea. This can help transform a person’s life if he or she were truly to devote their attention to it.

“When I am mindful, I enjoy more my tea,” says Thay as he pours himself a cup and slowly savours the first sip. “I am fully present in the here and now, not carried away by my sorrow, my fear, my projects, the past and the future. I am here available to life.

“When I drink tea this is a wonderful moment. You do not need a lot of power or fame or money to be happy. Mindfulness can help you to be happy in the here and now. Every moment can be a happy moment. Set an example and help people to do the same. Take a few minutes in order to experiment to see the truth.”

### **Touching the “ultimate dimension”**

Key to Thay’s teaching is the importance of understanding that while we need to live and operate in a dualistic world, it is also vital to understand that our peace and happiness lie in the recognition of the ultimate dimension: “If we are able to touch deeply the historical dimension – through a leaf, a flower, a pebble, a beam of light, a mountain, a river, a bird, or our own body – we touch at the same time the ultimate dimension. The ultimate dimension cannot be described as personal or impersonal, material or spiritual, object or subject of cognition – we say only that it is always shining, and shining on itself.

“Touching the ultimate dimension, we feel happy and comfortable, like the birds enjoying the blue sky, or the deer enjoying the green fields. We know that we do not have to look for the ultimate outside of ourselves – it is available within us, in this very moment.”

While Thay believes there is a way of creating a more harmonious relationship between humanity and the planet, he also recognises that there is a very real risk that we will continue on our destructive path and that civilisation may collapse.

He says all we need to do is see how nature has responded to other species that have got out of control: “When the need to survive is replaced with greed and pride, there is violence, which always brings about unnecessary devastation.

“We have learned the lesson that when we perpetrate violence towards our own and other species, we are violent towards ourselves; and when we know how to protect all beings, we are protecting ourselves.”

### **Remaining optimistic despite risk of impending catastrophe**

In Greek mythology, when Pandora opened the gift of a box, all the evils were released into the world. The one remaining item was “hope”.

Thay is clear that maintaining optimism is essential if we are to find a way of avoiding devastating climate change and the enormous social upheavals that will result.

However, he is not naïve and recognises that powerful forces are steadily pushing us further towards the edge of the precipice.

In his best-selling book on the environment, *The World we Have*, he writes: “We have constructed a system we can’t control. It imposes itself on us, and we become its slaves and victims.

“We have created a society in which the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. We are so caught up in our own immediate problems that we cannot afford to be aware of what is going on with the rest of the human family or our planet Earth.

“In my mind I see a group of chickens in a cage disputing over a few seeds of grain, unaware that in a few hours they will all be killed.”

*This an edited article. For the full article please go to:*

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/sustainable-business/zen-thich-naht-hanh-buddhidm-business-values>

## *The Canticle Of the Creatures*

**Francis of Assisi (1181 – 1226)**

We praise You, Lord, for all your creatures,  
Especially for Brother Sun,  
Who is the day through whom You give us light.  
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,  
Of You Most High, he bears your likeness.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars,  
in the heavens you have made them bright, precious  
and fair.

We praise You Lord, for brothers Wind and Air,  
Fair and stormy, all weathers moods,  
By which you cherish all that You have made.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Water,  
So useful, humble, precious and pure.

We praise You, Lord, for Brother Fire,  
Through whom You light the night.  
He is beautiful, playful, robust and strong.

We praise you, Lord, for Sister Earth  
Who sustains us with her fruits, coloured flowers  
and herbs.

We praise you, Lord, for those who pardon,  
For love of You bear sickness and trial.  
Blessed are those who endure in peace,  
By You Most High, they will be crowned.

We praise you, Lord for Sister Death,  
From whom no-one living can escape.  
Woe to those who die in their sins!  
Blessed are those that She finds doing Your will,  
No second death can do them harm.

We praise and bless You, Lord, and give You thanks,  
And serve You in all humility.

*In Jesus Name, Amen*



## *The Mystic in the Universe*

*William Johnston:*

... the whole universe is so unified that every movement or action, however slight, has its repercussions throughout the world. And man is part of this network. At one time he thought he could extricate himself from the totality to view the universe objectively as a serene and detached outsider. Now we know this cannot be. Receiving influences from every corner of the mysterious universe, he likewise influences it; and his actions are like the proverbial pebble thrown into the pond and causing endless ripples. I myself believe that next to God the most influential person in the cosmos is the mystic.

# Care of the Earth

Quotes from Different Religions

## Sufism

Nerily in the creation of the heaven and the earth, and in the successions of night and day, there are indeed messages for all who are endowed with insight. And whoever remembers God when they stand, and when they sit, and when they lie down to sleep, and thus reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth. *Quran 3:190*

## Hinduism

The heaven and the earth yield rain for our sustenance. The bounteous dawns toil for us, glittering with dew drops: they send down heavenly treasures for the prosperity of mankind.

*RIG VEDA 559.8, The Holy Vedas.*

## Daoism

Man follows the earth.

Earth follows heaven.

Heaven follows the Tao.

Tao follows what is natural.

*Dao De Jing 25 (Lao Tsu Tao) translated by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English 1972*

## Sikhism

Air is the Guru, Water is the father, and Earth is the great Mother of all. We must treat them with respect.

*Guru Granth Sahib, Sikh Faith Page 8*

## BAHA'I

For every part of the universe is connected with every other part by ties that are powerful and admit no imbalance, nor any slackening whatever.

*Selection from Writings of Abdu'I – Baha, Baha'I World Centre, Haifa. Page 137*



## Islam

God the Exalted says: “There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth or a being that flies on its wing, but (forms part of) communities like you.....” 6:38

## Confucianism

“Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions.”

*The Western Inscription of Chang Tsai (Complete Works of Master Chang) source book, Page 497*

## Zen Buddhism

We have to walk in a way that we only print peace and serenity on the Earth. Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet.

*Thich Nhat Hanh*

## Christianity

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” *Genesis 1:28*

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## Notes on the Aboriginal Connection with Country

For the Aboriginal people, land is a dynamic notion, something creative. Land is not bound by geographical limitations placed on it by a surveyor who marks out an area and says “this is your plot”, land is the generation point of existence, the spirit from which Aboriginal existence comes.

Land is a living place made up of sky, clouds, rivers, tress, the wind, the sand and the spirit has created all these things, the spirit that planted my own spirit there, my own country.

It is something – yet it is not a thing – it is a living entity. It belongs to me, I belong to the land, I rest in it. I come from there.

Land is a notion that is most difficult to categorise in English, but it is something that is very clear to me and to those people who belong to my group. Land provides for my physical needs and provides for my spiritual needs. It is a regeneration of stories.

New stories are sung from contemplation of the land, stories are handed down from spirit men of the past who have deposited the riches at various places – the sacred places.

The sacred places are not just geographically beautiful. They are holy places, even more holy than shrines, but not commercialised. They are sacred. The greatest respect is shown to them and they are used for the regeneration of history – the regeneration of the Aboriginal people, the continuation of their life. Because that is where they begin and that is where they return. *Patrick Dodson.*

\* \* \* \* \*

The land is my backbone... I only stand straight, happy proud, and not ashamed about my colour because I still have land. I can paint, dance, create and sing as my ancestors did before me.

I think of land as the history of my nation. It tells of how we came into being and what system we must live. My great ancestors, who live in the times of history, planned everything that we practise now. The law of history says that we must not take land, fight over land, steal land, give land and so on. My land is mine only because I came in spirit from that land, and so did my ancestors of the same land ... My land is my foundation. *Galarrwuy Yunupingu*

# Sufism, Teaching Stories and Poetry

In the West, Sufism is usually regarded as a form of Islamic mysticism. However, the Sufis themselves say their “way” has always existed, under many names, in many lands, associated with the mystical dimension of every spiritual system. In ancient Greece, for example, they were identified with the wisdom (sophia) schools of Pythagoras and Plato. At the time of Jesus, they were called Essenes or Gnostics. After Mohammad, they adopted many of the principles and formulations of Islam and became known in the Muslim worlds as “Sufis,” a word given various meanings, including “wisdom,” “purity” and “wool” (for the coarse woolen habits of wandering dervishes).

From about 800 to 1400 A.D., Sufi schools flourished under the guidance of master teachers such as Rumi and Ibn Arabi. As individual schools developed, their methods of teaching diversified according to the needs of each group. Some stressed formal meditation, others focused on selfless service to the world, and still others emphasized devotional practices: song, dance and spiritual poetry celebrating love for God. The Sufis cherish Hafiz as a perfect expression of the human experience of divine love, (from Daniel Ladinsky).

This edition includes some poems from the Sufi master, Hafiz and just a few of the famous Sufi teaching tales of Nasrudin. Poems to inspire and stories to confound. Nourishment and learning for the heart that, for the Sufis, is an organ of love and knowledge that enables a lived experience of Unity, and a live connection with the Divine. The Way of the Sufi is often suggested through stories and poems.

*Contributed by Yasmin Mayne*

## I Am So Glad

Start seeing everything as God,  
But keep it a secret.  
Become like a man who is Awestruck  
And Nourished

Listening to a Golden Nightingale  
Sing in a beautiful foreign language  
While God invisibly nests  
Upon its tongue.

Hafiz,  
Who can you tell in this world  
That when a dog runs up to you  
Wagging its ecstatic tail,  
You lean down and whisper in its ear,

“Beloved,  
I am so glad You are happy to see me.  
Beloved,  
I am so glad,  
So very glad You have come.”

## Would You Think It Odd?

*Would you think it odd if Hafiz said,*

“I am in love with every church  
And mosque  
And temple  
And any kind of shrine

Because I know it is there  
That people say the different names  
Of the One God.”

Would you tell your friends  
I was a bit strange if I admitted  
I am indeed in love with every mind  
And heart and body.

O I am sincerely  
Plumb crazy  
About your every thought and yearning  
And limb

Because, my dear,  
I know  
That it is through these  
That you search for Him.

## What Happens

What happens when your soul  
Begins to awaken  
Your eyes  
And your heart  
And the cells of your body  
To the great Journey of Love?

First there is wonderful laughter  
And probably precious tears

And a hundred sweet promises  
And those heroic vows  
No one can ever keep.

But still God is delighted and amused  
You once tried to be a saint.

What happens when your soul  
Begins to awake in this world  
To our deep need to love  
And serve the Friend?

O the Beloved  
Will send you  
One of His wonderful, wild companions -  
Like Hafiz.

(All poems from *I Heard God Laughing: Renderings of Hafiz* by Daniel Ladinsky, Penguin Books, 2006)

## Colour Blind

The Shah was very vain indeed. One day, the Court barber remarked that the royal beard was starting to grey, and the unfortunate man was immediately beheaded. The ruler then looked around for another barber. “Tell me,” he asked the first candidate, “do you see any grey hairs in my beard?”

“One or two, Sire,” admitted the man.

“Call the executioner!” ordered the Shah, and he too was led away.

The monarch turned to the next applicant for the job and asked the same question. Horrified by the fate of the last, he bowed low and said, “Majesty, your noble beard is jet black.”

“Liar,” bellowed the Shah and immediately had the man beheaded.

Finally, he turned to Nasrudin.

“You! How would you describe the colours of my beard?”

“Alas,” said the Mulla, “I am colour blind.”

(From *The World of Nasrudin* by Idries Shah, The Octagon Press Ltd, London, 2003)



*Mahsheed Ansari, a speaker from the Islamic Sciences and Research Academy; Jacqui Remond, National Director of Catholic Earthcare Australia; Janelle Randall-Court, National Parks Discovery Ranger, a Bundjalung woman; Charlie Hogg, Director of Brahma Kumaris Australia at the Interfaith Earth Forum on June 16 at Lawson.*

## Climate Change, Inner Change, a Shift in Consciousness

### Interfaith Earth Forum

***How do we conceive of ourselves in relation to the earth? Embracing spiritual wisdom from four traditions, the speakers at this forum aimed to address the inner changes that climate change requires of us. A dramatic shift in human consciousness is already under way, through which we can learn to cultivate hope, simple living, courage and dedication to build together a genuinely sustainable future.***

**Janelle Randall-Court**, a National Parks Discovery Ranger and a Bundjalung woman showed part of an educational film she has made ‘*No waste on Country – Leaving only Footprints*’. She spoke of the deep connection and identification Aboriginal people have with the land. Their ancestors cared for Mother Earth over thousands of years, and now it is their responsibility. The film demonstrates their commitment to eliminate the pollution from our consumerist society which is found even in the remotest parts. Janelle actively reduces waste by recycling useable items found in municipal tips. She and her daughter have found creative ways to rescue clothes, toys, furniture and other treasures from landfill and recycle them. They are an example of how we can live according to our conscience.

**Jacqui Remond**, National Director of Catholic Earthcare, Australia spoke of our responsibility to sustain God’s country by being in close harmony with nature – the Majestic Temple of Creation. She demonstrated with quotes from popes that caring for the earth can be part of the Catholic way. Pope John Paul II said we are called to an ecological conversion - “a conversion in thoughts and behaviour is required.”

The current pope, Benedict XVI said “we can no longer do without a change in outlook. If you want to protect creation, you must work for peace”.

Jacqui said the answer lies in viewing the world from a holistic perspective, so we engage with the earth in such a way that honours its sacredness. This requires a new lifestyle, embracing sobriety, sustainability and self-discipline. To engage, we must be empowered to participate at the local level. A spirit of communion is required where we communicate with one another and explore the steps needed for sustainability, and to lead by example. We should live as God wants us to and be co-creators of the future.

**Mahsheed Ansari** from the Islamic Sciences and Research Academy explained how, for a Muslim, God has created the world like a majestic palace, so everything in it is of value. In the Islamic worldview, the earth is the tree of life, meeting all our needs. The Qur’an has directions in it to protect the earth, as it is there to serve us. To a Muslim this is a path of interdependency between God the Creator and the human being – the vicegerent on earth. We therefore have to be responsible as guardians and accountable for our actions in how we care for it. She said the shift has to happen at the individual level. We have to give up any egoistic way and integrate into God’s holistic way. If we live life God-consciously we will be more aware of our role as a caretaker.

**Charlie Hogg**, Director of Brahma Kumaris Australia, explained how our inner living system, of thoughts, feelings and attitudes has a deep connection with the outer living system, the environment. An attitude of greed or ego is the first pollution that then manifests in the external environment. We need to examine our internal system. The seed of our thoughts is how we view ourselves. If I am caught up in a limited image of myself, one of superiority or inferiority then I won’t be able to truly respect myself and therefore will also not respect others or the environment. When we connect to our true self, the soul or spirit, that is eternal, then we reconnect to our original feelings of self-respect and peace. Then as a natural consequence we will care for others and the environment.

The film “*No Waste on Country – Leaving only Footprints*’ is available from: the Aboriginal Cultural and Resource Centre , Elm Street. Katoomba.



*Concentric circles, engraved beside Woodford Trail, Woodford.*

This symbol, widespread throughout Australia, was the most sacred in Aboriginal iconography.

# A Meditation on Environment

## The Buddha from the Digha Nikaya

You should be an island to yourself, a refuge to yourself, not dependent on any other but taking refuge in the truth and none other than the truth. And how do you become an island and refuge to yourself?

In this way. You see and contemplate your body as composed of all the forces of the universe. Ardently and mindfully you steer your body – self by restraining your discontent with the world about you. In the same way, observe and contemplate your feelings and use the same ardent restraint and self – possession against enslavement by greed and desire. By seeing attachment to your body and feelings as blocking the truth, you dwell in self-possession and ardent liberation from those ties.

This is how you live as an island to yourself and a refuge to yourself. Whoever dwells in this contemplation, islanded by the truth and taking refuge in the truth – that one will come out of the darkness and into the light.

*Renee Buhler*

## Climate Justice and Food Security: Moral, Ethical and Spiritual Imperatives

*Panel discussion arranged by:*

**Caritas Internationalis, Religions for Peace and the World Council of Churches' Forum**

***Perspectives from Sister Jayanti, panellist from Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University***

COP17, Durban Exhibition Centre, South Africa  
Wednesday 7th December 2011

***Panellist Sister Jayanti, European Director of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, which seeks to underline the spiritual origins of so many of the dilemmas facing our global community today:***

From the spiritual perspective, human beings have been given this planet in trust as stewards. We hold our own life, our own body and all that there is on this planet in trust for the Divine. And it is only if we live according to His instructions that we can continue to experience happiness and harmony and generate an atmosphere of well-being for others too. Yet when we move away from those instructions, we invoke the chaos that can be witnessed today.

The first and foremost instruction is respect for the self, then, when we learn to respect ourselves, seeing each one as a spiritual being we become able then to respect other human beings around us and the animal kingdom and all forms of life as well as the planet, and nature itself.

One of the things missing from today's world is respect; on a personal level and also on all these aforementioned levels. It is essential to come back to that awareness of respect through the spiritual understanding of the self. This step would restore balance and harmony in a way that we desire and would be healthiest for all ecosystems.

*We can only love our neighbour when we first learn to love ourselves.*

When we can respect, we can also go further and experience love. We can only love our neighbour when we first learn to love ourselves. And loving the self, as a child of the Divine, means that we acknowledge what God has given us, not out of ego but with that pure innocence with which we can recognise that we are children of God.

And with the awareness of loving the self we could then love all neighbours and all other aspects of creation too. When there is respect and love automatically there will be non-violence.

*There cannot be violence when there is respect and love.*

Understanding this universal truth, we can see how all exploitation on the planet around us has spread from a lack of respect and love. And we see also how when we have forgotten our spiritual identity and come to the consciousness that identifies with matter, developing an entirely physically-focused consciousness. We have moved away from understanding and honouring the inner qualities of the self.

Spirituality doesn't mean isolation or moving in another dimension somewhere, but spirituality means understanding the self, understanding the relationship with the Divine and thereby also understanding our relationships with all other people.

Furthermore, when contemplating the morals and ethics of food, security and climate justice, we can see that when there is love and respect, these two basic factors allow the possibility of being able to share and care, and this is how compassion can enter all interactions with others.

Trying to solve all the problems just on a physical level has not succeeded. We have tried negotiations and treaties and all manner of strategies, but coming together as a world family and a spiritual family, as children of the one Divine, recognising our own responsibilities towards each other can make a huge difference. This step will emerge the compassion that is much needed in the world and allow us to share time, resources and aspirations with each other.

A change in consciousness does not happen through laws; change of consciousness is not facilitated by treaties. Our awareness must mature and produce conscious choice to act in ways that are fully cognisant of our ethical guardianship as trustees of Mother Earth.

The faith communities are in a position where they can influence huge numbers of people because their constituencies include vast groups of concerned citizens across the world. The BKWSU sees the imperative for people of faith to work together to create harmony and equitable access, that is, a better world for all.

In our experience, as spiritual brothers and sisters, we know that our language has to change to include and manifest care and compassion in a culture of open sharing. The spirit of generosity must emerge if we are to step into times of greater prosperity and security for all people.

The BKWSU invites people to come together in spiritual understanding and awareness through the power of collective thought with this spiritual reflection:

*Aware of the inner being, the being of light and love,  
the spirit that I am,*

*I connect with the One Father, the Supreme, the Being of Light,  
the Source of truth, of love, of compassion.  
and through the recognition of spirit,*

*I know I am connected through an eternal bond of love  
with each and every human being on this planet.*

*And in this awareness, we hold this planet in trust,  
we share in remembrance of the Divine,  
our thoughts of God's light, of God's love.*

*So that all human hearts may come together  
and allow light and love to reach the animal kingdom and  
the world of nature.*

*The light restores harmony and the love heals.  
So that there can be a renewal and transformation  
and together we create a new world order of peace,  
of truth, of justice.*

*Jessica Yuille, Brahma Kumaris*

*Once an old woman came to the Buddha and asked how to meditate. He told her to remain aware of every movement of her hands as she drew the water from the well, knowing that if she did, she would soon find herself in that state of alert and spacious calm that is meditation.*

# Apophatic Contemplation

The apophatic tradition, the way of negation, stemmed from the fourth century Cappadocian Fathers and reached the climax in *The Mystical Theology* of Pseudo-Dionysius in the fifth century. His opening words express it well:

As far as is possible, raise thyself up in unknowing even unto union with Him Who is beyond all essence and all knowledge, for it is indeed by going out of thyself and out of all things with an irresistible leap, free and pure, that thou shall raise thyself up to the pure and superessential ray of the divine darkness, after having abandoned all things and having liberated thyself from them all.

Then, delivered from all objects and from the very organs of contemplation (the contemplative) penetrates into the truly mystical *Cloud of Unknowing* in which he closes his eyes to all objects and knowledge and finds himself in utter intangibility and invisibility, since he now belongs entirely to Him Who is beyond all, and belongs no longer to any thing, neither to himself, nor to any other being, and is thus united in the most noble union with Him Who is utterly unknowable, by the cessation of all knowledge; in this total unknowing he now knows with a knowledge that is beyond understanding.

*The Cloud of Unknowing* is the title of the English spiritual classic (14th C) by an anonymous writer. In the sixth chapter he imagines being asked the question, how might one think of God in prayer.

Unto this I cannot answer thee, except to say: "I know not".

For thou hast brought me with thy question into that same darkness, and into that same *cloud of unknowing*, that I would thou wert in thyself. For of all other creatures and their works – yea, and of the works of God himself – may a man through grace have fullness of knowing, and well can he think of them; but of God himself can no man think. And therefore I would leave all that thing that I can think, and choose to my love that thing that I cannot think. For why, *he may well be loved, but not thought*. By love may he be gotten and holden; but by thought neither. And therefore, although it be good sometime to think on the kindness and the worthiness of God in special, and although it be a light and a part of contemplation: nevertheless in this work it shall be cast down and covered with a *cloud of forgetting*. And thou shalt step above it stalwartly, but listily, with a devout and a pleasing stirring of love, and try to pierce that darkness above thee. And *smite upon that thick cloud of unknowing with a sharp dart of longing love*; and go not hence for aught that befalleth.

## Pope John Paul II spoke to Aborigines in Alice Springs 29/11/1986:

For thousands of years, you have lived your lives in spiritual closeness to the land, with its animals, birds, fishes, waterholes, rivers, hills and mountains. Through your closeness to the land you touched the sacredness of man's relationship with God, for the land was the proof of a power in life greater than yourselves . . . The silence of the bush taught you a quietness of soul that put you in touch with another world, the world of God's spirit.

## Affiliated Traditions and Members

### *Brahma Kumaris*

Jessica Yuille, Sue Morrison,  
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### *Kunsang Yeshe Retreat Centre* Venerable Tencho

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Alison Croft, Chrysanthe White

### *Member of the Hindu Tradition*

Ashok Nath

### *Siddhartha's Intent, Australia*

Pamela Croci 4757 2339

### *The Australian Buddhist Vihara*

Rene and Jane Buhler

### *The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)*

Glennnda Marsh-Letts, Frank Lumley

### *The Thich Nhat Hanh Community*

Miriam Brooks

### *Emanuel Synagogue, Woollahra and the Jewish Community*

Angela Moore  
0418 568 008



<http://bluemountainheart.net/interfaith>

## Part One, Sonnet IV

You who let yourselves feel: enter the breathing  
that is more than your own.  
Let it brush your cheeks  
as it divides and rejoins behind you.

Blessed ones, whole ones,  
you where the heart begins:  
You are the bow that shoots the arrows  
and you are the target.

Fear not the pain.  
Let its weight fall back into the earth;  
for heavy are the mountains, heavy the seas.

The trees you planted in childhood have grown  
too heavy. You cannot bring them along.  
Give yourselves to the air, to what you cannot hold.

Rilke

Contributed by Miriam Brooks

## Book Notices

**Blue Mountains Dreaming** - the Aboriginal Heritage  
2nd Edition

*Eugene Stockton, John Merriman*

Aborigines have been present in the Blue Mountains for up to 50,000 years. Up-to-date information on them are here presented by ten experts in archaeology, anthropology, geomorphology, rock art, contact history and linguistics.

**Aboriginal Church Paintings** - Reflecting on our Faith

*Eugene Stockton with Terence O'Donnell*

A theological study of the art in eight Aboriginal churches. These paintings by elders for their own communities are priceless examples of Aborigines expressing their Christian faith in an Aboriginal way.

**A Scriptural Way of the Cross**

*Terence O'Donnell and Eugene Stockton*

The Stations of the Cross painted by Terence O'Donnell for Our Lady of the Nativity Church, Lawson are here reproduced, together with appropriate prayers for public or private devotion. In addition there is a new edition and translation (by Eugene Stockton) of the "Songs of the Suffering Servant" in Isaiah 42-53. Ideal for meditation during Lent.

**The Deep Within** - Towards an Archetypal Theology

*Eugene Stockton*

An examination of the influence of deep consciousness on our religious expression, opening out to mystical prayer. This study, from a Christian perspective, is relevant to all religious traditions.

**Tossimo** - Memories of Ethiopia

*Helena Gormally*

Helena Gormally lived and worked as a Daughter of Charity in Ethiopia for over 30 years, during times of Communist Revolution, Red Terror and famine. She tells stories of little people in a rural market town, some happy and some sad, against the more drastic backdrop of their nation's history.

**Bruny d'Entrecasteaux** and his encounter with Tasmanian

Aborigines: from Provence to Recherche Bay

*Dianne Johnson*

The French expedition sent out by the King, on the eve of the French Revolution, in search of La Perouse. A fascinating account of the leader of the expedition, the attitudes of the voyagers, and of the protracted encounter between the French and the local Aborigines at Recherche Bay, Tasmania.

These publications available from Blue Mountain Education and Research Trust, email: [olon@tpg.com.au](mailto:olon@tpg.com.au)

## Coming Events

**Visit to the Gallipoli Mosque** at Auburn is being arranged for Friday, August 10, beginning at 1.00 pm.

The tour will last 45 mins. to 1 hour. Cost: \$5.00 per person. As numbers are limited, it is essential to book in early.

For further information and to register please contact Alison Croft on 4757 4394.

**Care and Celebration of the Land** will be held again this year on Sunday, November 4.

Further details available soon.

The next edition of *Light Over the Mountains* will be November/December, please send any copy to [allan.walsh@exemail.com.au](mailto:allan.walsh@exemail.com.au).

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Brian Coyne and Amanda McKenna, co-founders of the global online initiative, **CATHOLICA**, are pleased to support and promote the work of the **Blue Mountains Interfaith Group**

**Catholica** is an internet cyber community seeking to foster communication with that now large part of the population that has dropped out of contact with the institutional church but who still believe spirituality is important. It has been in existence for six years and has a monthly global unique visitor reach of over 30,000 people.



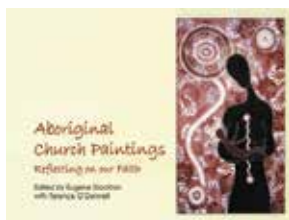
For a brief introduction to **Catholica** see our video at: [www.catholica.com.au/about.php](http://www.catholica.com.au/about.php)

[WWW.CATHOLICA.COM.AU](http://WWW.CATHOLICA.COM.AU)



**Blue Mountains Dreaming** 2nd Edition  
*Eugene Stockton, John Merriman*

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**Aboriginal Church Paintings**  
Reflecting on our Faith  
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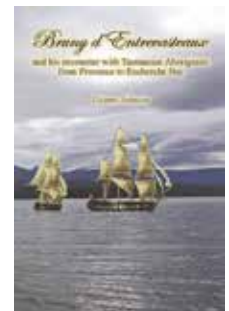
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*Dianne Johnson*

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**BLUE MOUNTAIN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH TRUST**

254 Great Western Highway, Lawson, NSW, Australia, 2783

Telephone (02) 4759 1034 Fax (02) 4759 3654 Email [olon@tpg.com.au](mailto:olon@tpg.com.au)

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