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Something of an
Autobiography

from *Exploration into God*, 1991



Through Agnosticism into Holistic Vision

THE WHOLENESS VISION in our time does challenge us to cross the threshold of consciousness and explore into higher knowledge - into God. We are all called on to attempt this in our own way and all can start now from where we are.

We are seeking the path to spiritual knowledge, to find how we can learn to think spiritual IDEAS. In our time wonderful revelations are being given by those advanced souls who have had what is called the "peak experience", a breakthrough into higher knowledge which brings direct and absolute certainty that the Universe is a great Mind. Those of us who are not in that category can nevertheless set forth on the exploration.

It is to all on this quest that I dedicate this book.

Perhaps it would be helpful if I gave a brief autobiography, to show how this exploration developed in my own case. My family was agnostic, my father an avowed atheist. None of us six children was baptized and we rarely saw the inside of a church - except for my younger sister Katharine, who knew God from childhood. My parents were in that cultural stream devoted to the service of mankind but without religious belief or any expectation of survival after death. My family tradition was one of liberal and radical politics. My uncle was the great historian, G.M. Trevelyan, my grandfather Sir George Otto Trevelyan was one of Gladstone's cabinet and author of a fine history of the American Revolution, my father, a Liberal M.P., who during the first World War came over to Labour and was Minister of Education under Ramsay MacDonald in 1924 and 1928 in the first Labour governments. They were great orators.

As a young man at Cambridge I thought that I too wanted to go in for politics, but my path was to be very different.

Up to the age of thirty-six, I had no concern with the Spirit and no religious belief. Then came the turning point, in 1942. Let me briefly lead up to that event. I was born in Westminster on 5th November 1906 at 9.25 p.m. Those concerned with

astrology will know what it means to have Scorpio as Sun sign with Leo rising. The time puts Leo exactly on the cusp of the 12th House. Thus my life shows these qualities fairly clearly – the reserve and secretiveness of Scorpio and the outgoing and sunny front of Leo, the actor and public speaker.

My life has been marked by a series of enthusiasms which overlaid the darker scorpionic propensities. The first of these was for caves! We were sent during the first war to Sidcot, the Quaker co-education school in the Mendip Hills of Somerset. Here, as an older boy, I found a passion for cave-exploring. A small group of us were given permission to explore on free days in the caverns of Mendip. I lived and dreamed caves and doubtless this great sport, with its adventuring into the mysteries and wonders of the darkness underground, had deep psychological significance! Certainly it was a thrill!

I recall a Christmas gathering with all the family and cousins, in which our Grandmother wrote a little verse about each one of us young people. Mine ran:

*There was a young person called George
Whom all of his family adorge,
And he loves them too
But between me and you
Not so much as a cave or a gorge.*

This summed me up completely!

In 1925 I went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, to which all my family had been. I, rather inevitably, fell into reading history as the family subject. Here my scorpionic reserve caused me trouble. I was, strangely, never able to discuss my future or my career with anyone. I was innerly somewhat adrift, but threw myself into Cambridge life with enthusiasm. This involved debating, fencing, dancing with the Cambridge Morris Men under Rolf Gardiner, illicit roof climbing with friends from the Cambridge Mountaineering Club. Mountains and climbing came to mean a great deal to me.

One unusual activity should be mentioned. This was the Man Hunt in the great hills of the Lake District, invented by my uncle, G. M. Trevelyan, and the mountaineer Geoffrey Winthrop Young when they were at Trinity in 1898 and running still, always Mastered by one of my family. Some twenty or thirty men gather for the three days of Whitsun at Seatoller in Borrowdale. Three hares are sent out at dawn with red scarves round their shoulders, to be hunted till dusk. It is an absolutely epic sport. I revived it after the war in 1948 and ran it as Master till 1967 when my younger brother Geoffrey took over. The Hunt is well set for its centenary in 1998 with my nephew Robin Dower as Master.

After Cambridge, undecided on a career, I went to Germany for six months in 1928, at the time when Hitler's Brown Shirts were emerging as a force. There I

made some contact with the Freischaar, that liberal aspect of the German Youth Movement which could have swung Germany in a very different direction. I had developed a real interest in architecture, discovered the Bauhaus at Dessau, and made a personal link with Gropius and Moholy Nagy, and even, quixotically, signed on to train in the office of a modern architect, Breuhaus.

But this was not to be. Coming back to England to sort things out, a friend, with perception, simply said "What about Crafts?" In a flash I knew that this was what I must do. I had studied the medieval crafts guilds, but as an intellectual it had never occurred to me that one could actually make things oneself. A passionate longing filled me. I soon realised that woodwork and furniture was my line and after a little enquiry found that the fountain head was the workshop of Peter Waals at Chalford in Gloucestershire. The Cotswold furniture tradition was inaugurated by Ernest Gimson and his friends Sidney and Ernest Barnsley, architects personally inspired by William Morris. Peter Waals had been foreman to Gimson and took over the workshops after his death.

It was a wonderful experience for a young man to come into that workshop. My bench in the old mill room was next to that of Ernest Smith, the foreman, who had been with Gimson as an apprentice. There were twelve men working, all trained in this superlative tradition of fine construction, mostly in solid woods. I could watch the making of a cabinet here, a bureau there, a dozen chairs at the next bench, a dining table or a wardrobe. I myself made the chamfered bed which I still sleep in, a tall fall-front bureau at which I now write, my armchair and other pieces. For nearly two years I lived in the bliss of creative activity. It was a great privilege and experience to work as student-apprentice in a large craft workshop and I learned the significance of surrendering oneself totally to the discipline of a great tradition before attempting to design oneself.

The Cotswolds have for me a magic through this experience. The Chalford workshops closed down in 1937 shortly after Waals' death, but I kept Ernest Smith going with designs of my own for the next ten years.

I see the crafts as integrally part of the holistic vision and the alternative life-style that grows out of it. Naturally a craftsman has no need to be concerned with the spiritual world-view. But once we have seen that the Earth is an integral living being, that the forms and materials of Nature are the expression of living divine ideas, and that man is integrally part of the wondrous whole, then a new and deeper significance is given to every craft.

But making furniture was not to be my work. On that same weekend, when I knew with certainty that I must become a craftsman, I also took a great decision which hit me with complete clarity. I would master the teaching of the Alexander Technique and this would be my life's work. Since I give a later chapter to this, I shall not go into it further now. Suffice to say that while at Cambridge I had gone for lessons to F. M. Alexander and knew with full conviction that he had made a

discovery of paramount importance for a new humanity. Here was something to which I could give total devotion. The opportunity now presented itself through his deciding to launch the first training course for teachers in 1931. It was typical of my temperament that I should give up everything to this work. None of my family or friends had the least clue what it was about!

For me, the significance lay in the vision of wholeness. The word holistic had not then come into general use. I had not yet achieved any vision of the spiritual nature of man and the universe. But now, looking back, I can see how this step in my life was an essential preparation for what was to follow. I have no doubt that Alexander's technique and teaching about conscious, constructive direction of the use of the self will take its place as a fundamental feature in the emergence of a new life-style and a new humanity.

A group of eight of us went through the three years training course with Alexander. Then, after teaching it for a while, I had to face the fact that I was getting to a point of social isolation that was for me psychologically untenable. I had put everything into it and now had to admit I could not carry it through. Therefore I was left without a career or qualification in 1936, at the age of thirty.

At this point Kurt Hahn, the great headmaster and founder of Gordonstoun School, came into my life. It was clear that I now had to enter a wider field of human contact, and teaching was the obvious line. So I went to Gordonstoun, teaching history, literature, woodwork and outdoor pursuits. This made a fine and full life.

In 1936 I was fired with a new vision – that of using our great country houses as cultural centres for everyone. At Hahn's suggestion I went out to Denmark and Sweden to make contact with the Folk Highschools. This movement had been launched in the 1840's by Bishop Grundvig, to lift the young Danes out of the slough of despond, after a period of depression following the Napoleonic wars. His plan was to run five-month residential courses for young farmers, not to teach them better farming, but to make them better Danes, so that they went back to their farms inspired, through learning about Danish history and literature and Scandinavian mythology and folklore. He felt that "enlivenment" was as important as "enlightenment". Therefore he decreed the Doctrine of the Living word. His teachers were to speak from the heart direct to the hearts of their pupils, without using set notes. They were free to shape their own curriculum on themes they themselves found inspiring. The plan worked, and it did much for modern Denmark. I was clear that the Folk Highschool idea could not be applied directly in Britain, but aspects of Grundvig's teaching were of vital significance.

I saw that for England the ideal tool for a new consciousness would be the short residential course in a country house, to break through into wider interests. I am rather proud to have been thinking along these lines in the 1930's, well before the movement for the Short Term residential colleges came to birth. This followed the

war years. Sir Richard Livingstone, Oxford Professor of Education, wrote books such as "Education in a World Adrift", in which he urged the need for a new kind of people's college, a cultural centre for all, and what better venue than country houses, many of which had fallen on difficult days. Somewhat quixotically I had the hope that I might in due time use Wallington, our family home in Northumberland, for such a purpose. But this was not to be.

In 1942, when I was 36, occurred the event which changed the course of my life. I had become interested in compost and organic husbandry and sought out the leading adviser, Derryk Duffy, in Heathcote House, near Aberdeen. I found him busy with a conference of twenty leading members of the Anthroposophical movement, studying Rudolf Steiner's agriculture course. Derryk was a bit bored at having to give time to a visitor, but showed me the garden and the compost heaps. Then, since I had turned up, they suggested that in the evening they should break into the general programme and invite Dr Walter Johannes Stein to give a general lecture entitled "What did Dr Steiner mean by Anthroposophy?"

That hour was a revelation. Stein was an advanced clairvoyant and initiate. I am certain that he knew precisely what he was doing. The lecture was given directly to me, though he never looked at me. All the great concepts of Spiritual Science came up one after the other and my whole soul innerly shouted affirmation to him. "Pre-existence - yes, yes, obviously; Earth as training ground for souls - yes, indeed!; therefore Reincarnation through many lives - obviously yes; Universe as Mind and living thought - Earth as a living creature - yes, yes!" For that whole hour no negative response rose in me. The agnosticism of thirty-six years faded like morning mist. The spiritual world-view was clear to me in its glory and wonder.

I have no doubt that this event in my life was planned and staged by higher destiny and that the timing was ripe for a leap in consciousness. I owe Walter Stein the profoundest debt of gratitude for what he did that night. Thereafter Dr Ernst Lehrs took me over as his pupil, led me into Goethe's thinking about plant metamorphosis and opened the doorway to the understanding of spiritual science. I joined the Anthroposophical Society and read Steiner avidly for the next years. Had I been a bachelor it is likely I would have plunged into Steiner teaching with the same drive as I had entered the field of the Alexander work. But for family reasons it seemed more appropriate to return to Gordonstoun.

My war experience was also in the teaching field. I was commissioned as Captain in the Rifle Brigade, but was posted to the so-called "GHQ Travelling Wings" for training of Home Guard in warfare. Our field was northern Scotland, and I was then appointed as adjutant to the Highland Home-Guard Division based on Inverness.

At the end of the war I went down with jaundice and spent six weeks in an army hospital on a diet of boiled white fish. I came out looking yellow and shrivelled, as

if I had been in Belsen. When I recovered and reverted to normal diet, I remember visiting one of the biodynamic gardeners near Nairn and being allowed to sit under a tunnel of green raspberry bushes and pick these delectable fruits and eat them direct and sunwarmed. It was a taste of heaven.

Illnesses often mark karmic turning points in a life. Certainly this seems to with mine. Gordonstoun had kept open my place and I recall walking the six miles from Elgin to take up schoolmastering again. Halfway I found myself going slower and slower, as if some invisible elastic rope was holding me back, or as if some angel barred the way. I can still picture the sandy road with a leaning scots pine. I came to a standstill. There was no conscious reasoning. I just stood and then quietly turned around and walked back to Elgin. I knew that if I once entered Gordonstoun my post-war career would be that of schoolmaster. Now I turned and walked into adult education and an unknown future.

The decision taken, all the enthusiasm for the concept of the cultural centre in the country house came flooding back. I would get into the new movement for the short-term residential colleges. To gain experience I decided to sign on for two years more in the army and take a post of instructor in the No 1 Army College at Dalkeith, which was running two-week courses on every conceivable subject to help men and women from the services to get back into civilian life and qualification. I took a post in the arts department, teaching history and literature, with the hope that in due course I might become a tutor in one of the new colleges now coming to birth.

The dream of using the family home at Wallington proved quite impossible. It would not have been a suitable house, even if I had inherited it as my own. But my father, Sir Charles Trevelyan, decided that after his day Wallington should pass out of private ownership. The estate was not entailed, so he had no obligation to leave it to me as his eldest son. In 1941 he bequeathed the house and the large agricultural estate to the National Trust, the mansion to be maintained from the rent roll of the estate. This set an important precedent for the Trust. By accepting the bequest, they took on the task of becoming landlord and agent to big estates and the lead given at Wallington has been followed in many parts of the country. After my father's death in 1958, the Trust took over and have made Wallington into one of the finest show houses in the North.

For me the door closed on Wallington, but opened on a country house far more suitable for a cultural centre. In 1947 the Shropshire Education Committee advertised for a principal for Attingham Park, the Shropshire Adult College. I applied and against a very strong field was, to my astonishment, appointed. Here was a dream coming true.

Attingham, a noble Georgian mansion built in 1785, was the perfect setting for an adult college. It was the finest of all the group of some twenty-five colleges founded in these years and it was the fourth to come to birth. Lord Berwick,

following the lead from Wallington, had bequeathed it to the National Trust. He died just before the opening of the College. Lady Berwick, a gracious presence, lived on in her own apartments. My governing body, tenants of the National Trust, represented many Shropshire interests. Sir Offlay Wakeman, Chairman of the County Council was Chairman of Governors. Birmingham University Department of Extra Mural Studies contributed the salary of a tutor and were closely linked. The instigator of the whole plan, Martin Wilson, the Secretary for Education, was Clerk to the Governors.

This, however, was a quite new venture. No one had experience of a short-term adult college. So, very wisely, they decided that the actual programme planning and direction must be left entirely to the Principal. Attingham was to become a hub of adult educational activity for the county and region. I was given complete freedom in creating the activities, though it was all closely watched. Martin Wilson made some excellent appointments of adult tutors for the county, so with the tutors from the Extra-Mural Department we made a fine team.

Attingham grew into a focal centre for a great number of stimulating activities. I was to be there for twenty-four years till my retirement in 1971. In that period I calculate that we laid on 1,033 open courses on an infinite variety of subjects. Often two courses were run at a weekend with closed conferences midweek.

I made a point of joining in and actually running one of the courses every weekend. This was important. I knew, quite simply, that I could enthuse people on any subject I wanted to know about. Thus in those post-war years we broke into theme after theme and subject after subject and I made it the rule that I always gave at least one lecture, even if it was a subject new to me. This, I think, encouraged people to explore new fields. I saw that it was a question of finding what I then called the "integrating ideas" which would relate the subject to a wider context. That would give encouragement to exploration and then the visiting professor or expert could take us to a deeper understanding. I can see that this was in line with holistic thinking, though we had not yet heard the word.

So our programmes touched literature, history, architecture, archaeology, music (both creative and listening), drama, all the crafts, painting, birdsong, butterflies, geology, heraldry and much more - any subject which could arouse enthusiasm and widen vision. Then we arranged concerts with the famous quartets, special lectures and amateur drama. Through the inspired direction of Eric Salmon, the drama adviser, we offered *Twelfth Night*, *The Winters Tale*, *School for Scandal* and other great plays as arena productions in our music room.

The midweek periods were mostly filled with closed conferences and there were summer schools for a week or ten days. At Attingham I also established a ten-day summer school called *Creative Leisure*, in which students could explore a number of crafts and get creative experience. Bill Campbell and Jeff Lowe directed this dynamic project for twenty years. Among the activities we developed a school of

mosaic and the triumph was a zodiac of twelve panels five and a half feet tall to decorate a circular room in the house. These are still displayed in the Library at Wellington, Shropshire.

I also taught the colourful art of heraldry by getting students to paint shields. By so doing, they mastered the picturesque language of 'blazon' and we decorated our refectory with over one hundred shields.

In 1942 I had married Helen Lindsay-Smith. Now at Attingham, on one of my art courses, she discovered a latent talent for painting, which released a creative drive continuing to this day. She filled our house and the College Dining Room with colourful pictures of flowers and plant forms.

We must recognize that the weekend house-party in country houses has been a major factor in English social history, but of course it was confined to the rich upper classes. Now we were experiencing the metamorphosis of the country house-party for everyone from all walks of life. The groups were welded together by a common enthusiasm to explore some cultural subject, theme or activity. Some three thousand people stayed at Attingham each year and an equal number came to concerts and single events. And we must recall the annual course in musical analysis of a major work, conducted by Mary Firth. The success of Attingham owes much to Mrs Orgill, for ten years domestic bursar, and affectionately known as 'Mrs O'.

It was a full and exciting life. My governors had arranged with the National Trust that the college should use the great dining room with its lovely plaster ceiling as lecture and music room. We also had use of the library. Thus the students had a real experience of living in a country house set in its park land with a nearby river.

In 1952, through the initiative of my art-historian friend, Helen Lowenthal, we founded the Attingham Summer School on the Historic Houses of Britain, for American art and architectural historians, museum experts and preservationists. This offered a week of lectures and tours at Attingham, followed by a two-week tour to different regions. It runs to this day and has forged a remarkable link between our two countries on the basis of enjoyment of visiting country houses and studying their architecture and collections.

I have so deep a debt of gratitude to all who worked at Attingham as colleagues, tutors and visiting lecturers, but space does not allow me to mention all by name. It was a great group enterprise and it released creative energy into adult education. Many people were enriched with an enhanced sense of the deeper meaning of life and the potential of the human being.

After twenty-four years the time for retirement approached, for in 1971 I should be sixty-five. To mark the retirement a farewell celebration was held at the end of August 1971, with some five hundred guests and speeches in a great marquee.

There was a great flow of warmth and affection on this occasion. As a diversion after tea, I arranged for a balloon to fly from the lawn. The concept of the Warden of Attingham disappearing into the clouds in a hot air balloon was irresistible!

The previous year I was struck by rheumatoid poli-arthritis. This could have been totally crippling. By the time of my retirement I was wearing calipers on my legs and was in a sorry state, but the arthritis was in no way to be allowed to interfere with the holistic enterprise. Illnesses, as I have said, may well mark turning points in our lives, and the arthritis made retirement from Attingham essential, since I was not prepared to let the college run at anything less than its traditional pace and pressure. However, I would not consent to hand myself over to medical treatment with drugs and cortizone and gold injections.

Then I found my way to Dr Gordon Latto, one of the leading figures in natural therapy in the country. The secret of nature cure is to stop putting into the blood what causes imbalance, and so allow nature to restore us to health. With raw, live food, herbal remedies, hydrotherapy and other nature cure treatments, we restored the blood to complete normality on every count and the arthritis steadily receded. Some damage to joints was irreversible, but in four or five years I was free from pain, mobile and full of energy and could walk the hills again. One of my proudest moments was in a great Wrekin Trust conference on Holistic Healing, during a session of questions to the lecturing panel. I was sitting between Gordon Latto and his surgeon brother Conrad. The question came up, "Would the Lattos tell us about the holistic treatment of arthritis". Both brothers turned to me and said, "George, you answer that question." I can categorically declare that rheumatoid arthritis can be overcome by nature-cure methods. In my case the Alexander teaching was also an essential asset.

Adult Education for Spiritual Knowledge

At Attingham I was free to experiment with any themes for courses that would arouse enthusiasm and vision and sense of meaning to life. I remembered a statement by Whitehead which could well have come from Plato: Moral Education is impossible without habitual Vision of Greatness. In an age when so many values were slithering, we needed to do all we could to restore sense of meaning. This seemed to me the real task of adult education. We were not so much concerned with current affairs, sociology and economics. These had been the major themes in the great days of the Workers Educational Association. I recall an occasion when our group of newly appointed wardens or principals to the short-term adult colleges, met to hear a lecture by one of the great figures of the W.E.A. He spoke of the Law of Diminishing Enthusiasm, and we looked at each other, knowing that we in the new movement were working with the Law of Mounting Enthusiasm!

Now our form of the new adult education was open to all classes and was clearly concerned to tap interests which added significance to our lives and gave the lead for development of the self through cultivating new skills and wider capacities. For me personally the spiritual world-view gave sense of meaning to life. Therefore from the first I began to experiment. In the very first programme I included a weekend called "What can we believe?" in which we touched on spiritual knowledge. I also invited my heroes from the Anthroposophical Movement to come and lecture. Dr Lehrs, Dr Stein and Dr Karl König all came to Attingham, but it became clear that the idiom of anthroposophical lectures was not right for this setting. Warnings came to me that I must not risk criticism from rate-payers about what was happening at Attingham. Obviously I had to find ways of presenting these new ideas in a generally acceptable English idiom. I learned to be very diplomatic and play down these courses. The Extra-Mural Department expressed grave doubts as to whether they were valid for adult education!

Yet the governors had given me full freedom, so I continued my experiments in the fifties. At this time we knew little about a 'New Age Movement'. Yet by the early sixties I found that if I laid on a course on "Frontiers of Reality" or "The Quest for the Grail in our Time" or "Spiritual Awakening", the house was packed. Clearly there was a profound need in the field of adult education for teaching about the deeper meaning of life. The news was getting around that here was a country house running spiritual courses, and people flooded in from all over the country. On one occasion the seventy beds were filled by return of post when our programme was sent out. Though my governors were doubtful about these courses, they at least brought in the funds! And to their credit, they never interfered or came to see what happened. And wonderful things did happen, but I learned to play my cards carefully.

In the sixties I ran each year about six weekend courses and one summer school on the spiritual themes. Let me tell one strange story. It was on a weekend course on "Light and Love". I gave the final talk on the Sunday afternoon and in closing put on a recording of Beethoven's Hymn of Joy. Then, with an audience of one hundred and fifty, we went into meditation. I had noticed that the cows in the park had all gathered along the sunken fence below the lawn. During the silence they all began to moo and the sheep to bleat and the rooks to caw. There was a tremendous racket and as we went down to tea everyone was saying "Did you hear those cows?" On such an occasion there are bound to be a few real sensitives with 'sight'. They declared that for them the beautiful plasterwork ceiling had melted and disappeared and they saw through into heights of celestial light. In baroque architecture such scenes are painted on the ceilings. Here at Attingham they had the baroque experience in direct vision. They declared that our souls were being drawn or sucked heavenwards through this funnel of Light and that the nature kingdoms were saying "Take us with you, take us with you". Such things may be and our minds must be open to their strangeness!

In these "significant courses" as we called them, many people who are now leading figures in the New Age Movement met each other. We began to know who was in the field. We were beginning to develop an adult education for spiritual know ledge. It was clear that many important movements were already presenting their particular approach to higher know ledge. I now saw the need for a form of adult education which offered the spiritual world-view without commitment to any particular approach.

In 1964 we mounted a conference on "Death and Becoming". This was, as far as I know, the first time death had been dealt with in open adult education. I am proud to realize that at Attingham we held a number of 'first occasions'. There was the very first conference on Teilhard de Chardin to be held in England. I went out to Vezelay to meet René-Mary Parry at the Teilhard conference and invited her to bring her team of lecturers. We packed the house and on the Sunday evening the Teilhard de Chardin Association of Great Britain was founded in my study. We also held the first Psychosynthesis Conference. It was a great moment to be able to introduce the subject to a full house, saying that none of us yet knew what it was, but we were drawn together by the concept of synthesis, which was then in the air.

At this time the holistic world-view was emerging. We now recognize that this world-view involves comprehending that the Earth is a living, sentient being and that humanity is integrally part of nature. Thus conservation is essentially part of the alternative life style, which grows directly out of the spiritual and holistic vision. At Attingham we held a series of ten annual conferences with the Soil Association and the convention was established that I should give a closing fifteen minutes commentary from the spiritual viewpoint. Sometimes this nearly split the Association!

I first visited Findhorn, the community in the north of Scotland, in 1968. I suspected that Peter Caddy's garden of magnificent flowers and glorious vegetables grown on arid sand dunes was the result of co-operation with the nature spirits. For the first time he confessed that this was the truth, so I wrote a memorandum to Lady Eve Balfour which brought up the Soil Association experts to see for themselves. I was never a member of the community, but for ten years was a trustee and felt closely linked. I gave opening lectures at most of their annual conferences which they have published in a little book called *Summons to a High Crusade*.

After ten years at Attingham occurred an event which, being deeply traumatic, served to transform my consciousness. Our lives run with a continuous parallel between outer events and inner development. I have described how the single lecture by Dr Walter Johannes Stein in 1942 lifted me clear of agnosticism and released the spiritual vision. But still it was largely theoretical. By 1958, after ten years at Attingham, I had given many lectures touching on spiritual themes and was learning how to weave this holistic vision into a setting of open adult

education. But then in 1958 came an event which was the absolute inner turning point. This was the sudden death in America of my great friend and colleague. Till now my lectures had been based on theoretical understanding, an endeavour to present Steiner's teaching in simple words to the general public, and naturally our attitude to the after-life came in. We were understanding the truth of pre-existence and the implication of Earth as training school for immortal souls in their long education. Now I had been hit by the event which lifted the whole outlook from theory into direct experience. I now knew without any shadow of doubt that the spark of divinity in us cannot possibly die. Therefore the whole quality of my thinking and lecturing was enhanced and lifted. I laughed to think of Samuel Butler's delightful misquotation: "It is better to have loved and lost than never to have lost at all."

The great truth is that death in all its forms is the great educator, to teach us that the divine droplet in us always was and always will be. It cannot die and be extinguished. It needs a traumatic experience of loss to make such a breakthrough. Those who have experienced it are the privileged ones. It shows the possibility of establishing a direct contact between the planes of being, not merely but . This can be the equivalent of the peak experience, bringing about an absolute certainty and subjective proof of the eternal spirit in each of us.

I began a precious little note-book in which to write the names of all our friends who pass over, and whom I know to be in close touch with us, who are working still on this plane for the birth of the New Age. I call it "The Company". The list begins with the name of my friend on 3rd May 1958. This event was a major turning point in my life.

To return to 1971. I now entered a new phase, with burgeoning possibilities! 'Retirement' meant (as so many have found) a release into a new field of activity. We now had 1,500 names on the mailing list for the spiritual conferences. I could not let them down. So with advice from Major Bruce MacManaway, Ian Gordon Brown and Air Marshall Sir Victor Goddard, we conceived the idea of an "Educational Trust concerned with the spiritual nature of man and the universe", to mount conferences all over the country. What was it to be called? I looked out of the window at Attingham and saw our local mountain, the Wrekin and thought: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." I will call it the Wrekin Trust after this central hill in England. And then I remembered the lines from that fragment of an epic by Lord Macaulay, who was my great-great-uncle. He is describing the signal fires leaping from hill to hill to give warning of the approach of the Armada:

*Till the proud Peak the flag unfurled over Darwin's rocky dales,
Till like volcanoes flared to heaven the stormy hills of Wales,
Till twelve fair counties saw the blaze from Malvern's lonely height,
Till streamed in crimson on the wind the Wrekin's crest of light,
Till Skiddaw saw the fire that burned on Gaunt's embattled pile,*

And the red glare on Skiddaw woke the Burghers of Carlisle.

It seemed we were called on to the adventure of lighting spiritual bonfires on the holy hills of Britain. Here was to be the next phase of work and activity. We wasted no time. In early November we held the first Wrekin Trust conference at the Hayes Centre in Swanwick, on the theme "Death the Great Adventure". It was a tremendous course with a full house of three hundred. This was to be followed by a New Year gathering at Stoke-on-Trent University. At one moment in November my heart sank. Compare the corpse-coloured brick university with our dear Attingham and the great Epiphany festivals we had celebrated there! No one would come. It would be a dismal contrast. But when the time came the place was thronged and it was an inspired course at which J. G. Bennett was chief speaker. At the end we felt those dull brick walls were vibrating with spiritual light!

Ruth Bell, my last secretary at Attingham, agreed to come with me into Wrekin Trust and we established our office in a house in the village of Bomere Heath in Shropshire, near the cottage into which my wife and I had retired.

We now, of course, had no conference house, so we sought out centres in different parts of the country where we could hold our weekend courses. There was now no need for me to be diplomatic and play down my real interest, so I came out in my true colours and proclaimed the spiritual awakening in our time.

Wrekin Trust and Beyond

Throughout my career in adult education I have tried to put into practice Grundvig's Doctrine of the Living Word. To me that implied never using notes. I argued that if one needs to look at a bit of paper to find out what one thinks, then the thoughts are not of burning significance. Of course with certain scholarly and more technical or scientific subjects it is necessary to read papers, but this involves the ability to put the subject over as an actor. Churchill was the great example of one who could write out his entire speech and then put it over as if it were spontaneous. For many of us, what is written cold in the study lacks the necessary fire to get over from the platform. The challenge is to speak the living word in a manner that starts a flow of inspiration and is audible to everyone in the room. Thus my lectures at times lost in precision but always came over 'alive'. Having brooded on the subject, I then found that the act of putting it over to the audience started a spontaneous flow of thought. Sometimes it goes off in unexpected directions and has to be brought back into control!

I can see the goal towards which this type of lecturing is leading. It confirms the conviction that there is indeed an ocean of living thought to which our minds are attuned. The brain, we realise, is not so much an organ for secreting thoughts as for reflecting ideas. The Ideas in a true sense, are alive. They are beings, strands of

-the energy of God. Thus the lecture is not merely a one-man performance. It is a united group endeavour, almost a ritual, in which one is the catalyst through whom living ideas can pour. Thinking is a kind of electrical power, flashing through the group mind of the audience. Thus each lecture can be an adventure, an invocation of the Divine World to speak through human thinking. Grasp that these ideas are living beings, to be seen as energies of God-thought. They long to enter and blend with the layer of human thinking. Once thought on our plane, the ideas are widely available to others.

To Grundvig's "Doctrine of the Living word", I should like to add the Doctrine of the Living Idea. Our goal must be to make ourselves worthy instruments for channelling these living ideas. Then a bridge can be made with higher worlds. Here is indeed a clue for exploration into God.

Poetry began to play an ever greater part in my lectures. The poem, after all, is a creation of the right hemisphere of the brain, that gateway to Oneness Vision. Here was a real example of the use of the Living Word. The secret is to teach oneself really to speak living thoughts and not recite dead words. Poetry can be used in active cultivation of Imagination. It was really as if the poets themselves came to contribute to the lectures! So many people asked for copies of poems used that I put them together with a holistic commentary in a little book called: Magic Casements: the Use of Poetry for the Expanding of Consciousness

I had been fortunate at Attingham that much of the administrative load had been lifted from me by the Education Department of the County Council, so that I could be continuously engaged in planning and running courses and events. With Wrekin Trust! had the essential need of a colleague who could take over management and financial control. Without such, our position was somewhat precarious. In 1974, three years after launching the Trust, destiny brought that colleague into my life. In midsummer at a conference in London I became aware of a figure I had not seen before, in jeans, bearded, and with an aureole of brown hair. I sought him out in the tea break and he tells me my opening greeting was "It's nice when we meet". I asked him what he was doing tomorrow and he replied "Coming to see you". I am certain that there was here a deep karmic connection and that we had been together in earlier incarnations. I saw in Malcolm Lazarus a wonderful potential and he saw in Wrekin a field of work which could fulfil his capacity. He brought the organizing and management ability and financial experience I sorely needed.

Gradually, in the next years, he learned the arts of planning and running courses and soon became Co-Director of the Trust. Together we mounted and ran some forty residential weekend courses each year and this full flood went on till 1982. Thus Wrekin, in ten great years, had mounted nearly five hundred courses in different parts of Britain and had taken its place as adult education for spiritual

knowledge. I owe Malcolm a lasting debt of gratitude and was happy to release full power and control to him as Director.

It was important that we had no label or commitment to any single movement or school of thought. Our task was to present the spiritual world-view in general terms, so that people could awaken to the holistic vision and then find their way to the particular path that suited them best. Thus in the whole wide movement of spiritual awakening and New Age thinking, Wrekin had a special place. We were in touch with all these groups and many of their lecturers spoke from our platforms, but we were not affiliated to any of them. Thus students did not feel that a particular doctrine was being imposed on them, and were free to find their own way.

One of Malcolm's greatest achievements was the devising of an annual conference on "Mystics and Scientists", drawing on to the same platform leading scientists who had arrived at holistic thinking, together with mystics and teachers of spiritual knowledge. At the time of writing this has run for eleven years.

In 1983 it was clearly desirable to pause and give Wrekin something of a sabbatical year. A change in direction was indicated. Now all over the country Networks were emerging, linking local groups founded for study, meditation or healing, or for living the alternative life-style. These really were now presenting the holistic world-view in ways often cheaper than we could do in Wrekin gatherings, hiring expensive conference centres. In the early years we had really been breaking new ground. Now the New Age Movement was forging ahead on a broad front and a stream of books on esoteric and spiritual knowledge was appearing. The Wrekin Trust needed to enter on a new direction and Malcolm saw the opportunity of developing a curriculum of on-going linked courses which really would help people consciously to change and transform themselves. I was very happy at this new stage to make him Director of Wrekin Trust, with myself as Founder/President.

Then, as I approached the age of eighty (in 1986) I invited Tony Neate, the founder of Runnings Park, West Malvern, to become Chairman with his colleague David Furlong as Co-Director. In 1987 Malcolm experienced a time of ill-health, which threw all planning on David. Malcolm also realized that his real task now was to develop his remarkable seminars on "The Transformational Journey". These he had established with his wife Jane and had built up a considerable following. So it became clear to us all that this was the time for him to retire from the Trust. Our long partnership was completed and Wrekin entered a new phase under the inspiration and direction of David Furlong and Tony Neate, with David Middleton as Administrator in charge of the office, which was now moved into the grounds of Runnings Park under the Malverns - a fine centre for spiritual adult-education. I remained as President and for a time, a member of the Trustees.

For me a new phase had been entered - lecture tours on spiritual knowledge all

over the country and abroad. This has been my increasing delight in the last years. For twenty-four years I had sat tight at Attingham, like a spider in the centre of my web and had travelled relatively little. Now I saw how many parts of England I had never visited. The lecture tours grew into pilgrimages to explore Britain and go to the cathedrals and sacred centres, while running seminars and giving lectures arranged by local groups. In addition, there have been tours to America, South Africa, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Germany. Thus I entered the third phase of my post-war quest for the holistic world-view. These tours can now be planned from my home in a converted Cotswold barn.

So there in outline is the story of one man's adventure into the vision of Wholeness, which to me equates with exploration into God. It sounds like a series of unfolding enthusiasms. Inevitably, being a Scorpio, there were traumatic experiences essential to growth of the soul and quenching of the ego, but they need not concern us here. Through the years the conviction grew in me to the point of a deep certainty that the universe is Mind, an ocean of living thought poured out from the Divine source, and that the human entity is a droplet of that Divine mind, which can of its own volition merge with the ocean without losing its identity. There lies the path of spiritual awakening in our time, the evolutionary step which the human being is called on and challenged to take. In this sense we can all begin to "explore into God".

The fact of human freedom does imply that our initiative is an essential factor. Nothing will happen until we take the first step upon the path. Every path will be different, but each leads to the same goal – -holistic vision, re-uniting with the Oneness, re-identifying with the Unitary Being of Humanity, which is indeed an aspect of God. So the fact that I am not an advanced mystic or seer may be an encouragement to others to start out on their own journey. Know that we are each in close touch with our own angelic guide and teacher and our Higher Self, who can speak within our own thinking. The door of the prison of self is unlocked. Push it and you can walk through. God is life everywhere, the being that animates all form. The great adventure of our age is indeed "Exploration into God".