

Name – Sarah Fae

Student Number- 2126250

University of Wales Trinity St. David

Title- Thresholds:

A Heuristic Inquiry into the Sacred at Hexham Abbey.

Submission – 30TH September 2025

Word Count 14,990



Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

Declaration Form

1. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Name..Sarah Fae.....

Date 30/9/25.....

2. This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Cultural Astronomy and Astrology

Name... Sarah Fae.....

Date 30/9/25.....

3. This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references.

A bibliography is appended.

Name.....Sarah Fae...:

Date: 30/9/25.....

4. I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying, inter- library loan, and for deposit in the University's digital repository

Name.....Sarah Fae.....

Date.....30/9/25.....

Supervisor's Declaration.

I am satisfied that this work is the result of the student's own efforts.

Signed: Sarah Fae.....

Date: 30/9/25.....

Acknowledgements

Ever grateful to the good folks of Hexham Abbey especially David Glover, and Frances Stride for your unwavering faith. To Dr. Nick Champion, and his inspirational team at UWTSD, alongside Adrian Davis. Thank you to Grace, Caitlyn, Natalie, Ian, and of course, you, without whom none of this would be possible.

Abstract

Sacred experience is diverse, unique and highly subjective and yet shares one common thread, it makes life meaningful. The sacred express's religious identity, creates, contains, and maintains connection to God, is special, holy, and yet also ineffable. For people to share in, and express the sacred what language do they use, and how do we define such experiences?

This investigation set out to learn how people inside Hexham Abbey, Northumberland feel, and perceive the sacred at three distinct thresholds inside the building. Rudolph Otto, and Mircea Eliade's work supported the study to test if their theories are still relevant in the 21st Century for people worshipping and visiting a Church of England heritage site.

As a heuristic enquiry my personal journey as a Christian was used in autoethnographic and reflexive accounts, alongside qualitative data methods, such as participant observation and semi structured interviews to learn from people inside the Abbey. I took the position of an overt insider, and the investigation took place over a three-month period.

The study found people looked to the past to find meaning in the present and had a profound nostalgia for those who had occupied the space before. Members of the congregation saw the Abbey as their 'fixed point,' and used words such as home, whilst Eliade's concepts pertaining 'sacred time, and 'axis mundi,' and Otto's 'awefulness,' were relevant to my own experiences, underpinned by Carl Jung's Acausal principle.

This investigation is of significance to scholars and practitioners, especially those interested in how heuristic enquiry can inform and support research into Christianity, congregations, and Church of England buildings.

Contents Page

Introduction	7-9
Methodology	10-14
Cultural & Historical Context	15-16
Heuristic Mystic Autoethnographic Account Part One	17-20
Literature Review	21-29
Heuristic Mystic Autoethnographic Account Part Two	30-33
Data	34-39
Reflexive Section	40-41
Conclusion	42-48
Appendices	49-71
Bibliography	72-75

Introduction

This dissertation is an investigation to learn how members of a church congregation experience 'that which is sacred,' alongside day-to-day visitors and tourists at three places inside Hexham Abbey, Northumberland. How do *they* define the ineffable? As a heuristic enquiry my own experiences as a Christian will also inform the research and how I experience the sacred at the Abbey.

To learn how people feel, perceive and define space Rudolph Otto's work on the *numinous* and Mircea Eliade's theory of *the sacred* will be sourced. Qualitative data will be gathered at three distinct '*thresholds*' inside the Abbey; the entry into the building, the passage through the pulpitum into the choir stall, and the entry/exit to the ancient crypt 'to bring out the differences between it and profane experience of the world.' See *figure's one, two, three, four & five*.

Due to the unique status of the crypt, the only remaining part of St Wilfrid's original 7th Century church I propose a further question could threshold three be a hierophant within the hierophant? Once a central point for Anglo Saxon pilgrims, could this gaping hole in the ground, the navel of the nave carry the human psyche via Eliade's 'axis mundi,' to new cosmic meaning?¹

For the purposes of this investigation the Abbey is regarded as a hierophant, a manifestation of the sacred, and an example of 'how space is constructed and why it becomes qualitatively different from the profane space by which it is surrounded.'² A heuristic approach combined with Carl Jung's work on synchronicity will support how the sacred manifest prior too, and throughout my research on Hexham Abbey.

Through the word *sacred* my research question has a clear spiritual intention, this, combined with the desire to investigate human experience within a religious space will be supported by the phenomenological research methods underpinned by the work of Clark Moustakas. One of the fundamental qualities of heuristic research is in the passionate relationship the researcher has with the subject and their intimate and often

¹ Lane, C. Beldon, 'Landscapes of the Sacred Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality,' (The John Hopkins University Press), p. 20.

² Eliade, Mircea, '*The Sacred and the Profane the nature of religion*,' (Harcourt Inc 1957) p. 15.

autobiographical connection to the question.³ As an overt insider I will use my immersive role within the community to its fullest potential to gather and interpret data.

This data, alongside the self-discoveries, and awareness gained through two ethnographical and reflexive accounts aims to uncover both wholeness, and any unique patterns⁴ to learn if Eliades concept of the sacred, and Otto's notion of 'the numinous,' are still relevant to people in a Christian space in the 21st Century.

Academic Framework

Encapsulated in his work '*The Idea of the Holy*,' Otto sought to find a word, and thus a way to define the qualities of divine providence, and coined the term 'numinous,' as something which objective and external to self, 'a wholly other.'⁵ He described the qualities of numinous experience within the context of the mysterious through which daunting feelings of 'awefulness,' and 'majesty' are provoked.⁶ Furthermore, within a spiritual context he qualified such experience as 'mysterium tremendum,' that which is hidden, unfamiliar, extraordinary and beyond usual conception and or understanding.⁷ Alongside the 'mysterium tremendum,' Otto explained that numinous experiences diminish the self into nothingness and provoke a sense of 'creature consciousness,' and 'creature feeling.'⁸ Otto's cosmology enabled me to frame my own experiences into an academic context and formulate the research question, and aims.

For Eliade space was made sacred through orientation via the founding of a world, one which creates a break in plane, opens a cosmic communication between heaven and earth, and makes it possible to shift from one mode of being to another.⁹ Some of the defining qualities of Hexham Abbey are in its height, scale, and impressive architecture, all of which correspond to Eliade's 'cosmic mountain.' Upon entry it is immediately evident that religious conceptions and cosmological images intertwine and constitute a break in the homogeneity

³ Moustakas, Clark, '*Heuristic Research Design, Methodology, and Applications*,' (Sage Publications Inc, 1990), p. 43.

⁴ Moustakas, Clark, '*Heuristic*,' p. 16.

⁵ Otto, Rudolph, '*The Idea of the Holy*,' (Oxford University Press, 1923) p. 11.

⁶ Otto, Rudolph, '*The Idea*,' p. 31.

⁷ Otto, Rudolph, '*The Idea*,' p. 13.

⁸ Otto, Rudolph, '*The Idea*,' p. 50.

⁹ Eliade, Mircea, '*The Sacred and The Profane The Nature of Religion*,' (Harcourt Inc, 1959), p. 63.

of space as passageway through the Pulpitum moves from one cosmic region to another, a notion enhanced via the crypt as one move from earth to underworld.¹⁰

While Eliade's approach to sacred architecture, and space is useful this study will also use phenomenological methods based on the belief that the meaning of a place emerges as it is used. Buildings such as Hexham Abbey only become sacred when people bring their beliefs regarding the sacred into the space, and thus it is the meaning assigned to the place by those entering it that establishes its sacredness. Therefore, a crucial part of this enquiry is to learn from those on the Abbey floor and give people the space to share their stories.

As narrative is a key component the work of storyteller Beldon C. Lane will provide a subsidiary theoretical framework for above all he affirms, 'sacred space is storied space.'¹¹ Lane identified four axioms of sacred place, first, that the space chooses us rather than vice versa. Second, that ordinary places become sacred through ritual. Third, the recognition of a sacred place is related to one's state of consciousness and finally, sacred place is at once both local and universal.¹²

Anthropologists Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner used the term liminality to denote a rite of passage rooted in the Latin word limen meaning threshold.¹³ For the purposes of this investigation the term 'threshold' is spiritually symbolic and serves a religious ritual function by creating a physical link, a vehicle to transport from one space to another.¹⁴ Thus, as a spiritual symbol the threshold is a metaphor signifying an emotional, and or spiritual shift in being for 'within the sacred precincts the profane world is transcended.'¹⁵ Each of the three thresholds identified are spaces of transition and have physical and sensory differences that contribute too, and highlight the 'cosmogonic value of the ritual orientation and construction of sacred space.'¹⁶ For example, upon entry man moves from outside to inside, through the Pulpitum, man moves through a short tunnel into a dimly lit space, via the crypt man journeys underground.'¹⁷

¹⁰ Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred*, (Harcourt Inc, 1959), p. 37.

¹¹ Lane, Beldon, *Landscapes of the Sacred*, (John Hopkins Press, 2001), p. 15.

¹² Lane, C., Beldon, *Landscapes*, p. 19.

¹³ Lane, C., Beldon, *Landscapes*, p. 181.

¹⁴ Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred*, p. 25.

¹⁵ Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred*, p. 26.

¹⁶ Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred*, p. 22.

¹⁷ Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred*, p.17.

Methodology

Heuristic research is a process, inspired by personal experience which seeks to answer a question arising from the researcher's consciousness.¹⁸ An enquiry into *the sacred* at Hexham Abbey is founded upon my own 'mysterium tremendum,' pertaining the events surrounding March 25th, 2020, and March 25th, 2024, underpinned by Jung's Acasual principle contained within autoethnographic account one. These deeply personal, and until now private synchronous events drove me to question how the sacred is experienced by others in the Abbey for 'the one who searches heuristically may draw upon the perceptual powers afforded by direct experience.'¹⁹

As an overt insider my role as member of the congregation, and as the caretaker were crucial to accessing the respondents and I was open about my research, and its title. Also, whilst writing the dissertation I was asked to become a lay minister and began to read and lead prayers in Holy Communion services.

I aim to learn through a series of semi structured interviews how other people perceive and define sacred boundaries within Hexham Abbey. This part of the study was conducted with a small sample, used an interpretive perspective, and I was not interested in looking at large scale trends. Questions were simple, open ended and informal, examples include, "what strikes you upon entering this space," "what do you notice, think or feel?" and "what does it mean to you?" Respondents controlled the pace, and length of the interview, and were briefed prior to the conversation on the title, and aims of the research. I was reactive to responses and quick to scaffold further questions based on previous answers. For example, "how is it different from other places?" and "what made you choose that word?" Though I am more than aware the attempt to collect and interpret data based on real life experiences of the numinous will provide evidence that rational thought cannot provide.²⁰

One of strengths of semi structured interviews meant I was able to use my strong interpersonal skills to build rapport quickly, and this combined with the position as caretaker

¹⁸ Moustakas, Clark, '*Heuristic*,' p.15

¹⁹ Moustakas, Clark, '*Heuristic Research Design, Methodology, and Applications*,' (Sage Publications, 1990). p. 44.

²⁰ Dunaetz, R. David, '*Church Based Research: Challenges and Opportunities*,' (Great Commission Research Journal, 2020), Vol 12. p.6.

placed me in good faith with respondents. An automatic trust was granted, and each interaction was unique. However, it's these very factors that call into question the validity of my findings for my role will likely influence and affect what people share and why. For example, something as seemingly small as the fact I wear a cross necklace could affect responses from those with alternative faiths and belief systems. Confirmation bias is a term used to describe how people tend to interpret ambiguous information in a way that confirms their existing beliefs. Though the data one collates might be accurate it's interpretation could be called into question through my professional and personal connection to the Abbey, and as a Christian.²¹

Issues with reliability are noted, due the informal often spontaneous nature of conversations that renders the methodology unrepeatable. Ethical limitations also include safeguarding and confidentiality especially pertaining the regular community due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter there is a small risk of disclosures being made. This is also compounded by the public nature of the interviews for they all took place on the Abbey floor and during the opening hours.

Currently Hexham Abbey has approximately five hundred regular congregation members who attend various services across the week, the church is a thriving community that often socialises together. As Hexham Abbey is a heritage space some of the congregation also act as stewards whilst a small number, are also lay ministers. All church members featured in the investigation are acquaintances something pre agreed with management as prerequisites of the project.

Factors such as age, sex, race, class and professional background were unimportant to the sample, and there were no barriers to entry. As the congregation are actively Christian the question of faith did not feature nor was part of conversations with general visitors, and tourists.

Officially the study began Sunday 6th July 2025 between 10-4pm however in responding to the research's needs in real time, and in lieu of heuristic enquiry changes to data collection took place. Barrineau and Bozarth (1989) define heuristic research by its adaptability, celebrating its spontaneity, and freedom for 'changing methods midstream is

²¹ Dunaetz, R. David, '*Church*,' p. 4.

not only allowed but encouraged.’²² Considering this I found most, if not all of semi structured interviews occurred sporadically whilst I was working, and worshipping in the Abbey between July-August 2025.

Heuristic Modal

The heuristic method is demanding and has pushed me to a level of spiritual self-disclosure I was not intending to share in academic circles. One of the hallmarks of this type of research is radical self-honesty, and authentic self-dialogue, which is why the investigation was not based solely on phenomenological methods. Phenomenology encourages detachment from the phenomena being explored, and this was impossible due to my deep spiritual connection to the Abbey, place within the congregation, job as caretaker, and now lay minister.²³

To develop the investigation, I drew upon Moustakas six principles of heuristic research as a template, and structure for the formulation and justification of the methodology. Via the first principle, *initial engagement* the researcher discovers a passionate call, an intense interest with ‘a willingness to enter fully into the theme.’ The call of the researcher can be found in the autoethnographic account one through the hearing of ‘*the voice*,’ which told me to go and work at Hexham Abbey. Thus, entry was found within the job role as caretaker as daily routine became ritual. ²⁴ A notion acknowledged by one respondent who shared at the end of our conversation with regards to my position ‘you really did need to be here to come up with this didn’t you. You had to be physically present, you had to live it.’

Moustakas second stage is known as *immersion* as the researcher ‘enters fully into the life of others whenever the theme is being expressed,’ for ‘people, places, meetings, readings, and nature all offer the possibilities for understanding the phenomenon.’²⁵ The theme of immersion is exemplified by my role as an overt insider and being an active member of the church community, and visible on the Abbey floor. To immerse respondents fully into the experience of what constitutes sacred experience I walked them through each threshold to make it tangible in the hope of producing deeper insights. Though, it must be noted that this

²² Moustakas, Clark, ‘Heuristic,’ p.103.

²³ Moustakas, Clark, ‘*Heuristic*,’ p. 38.

²⁴ Moustakas, Clark, ‘*Heuristic*,’ p. 27.

²⁵ Moustakas, Clark, ‘*Heuristic*,’ p. 28.

technique was not used with visitors through a prior agreement with management to not impede or seemingly intrude upon their experience.

Incubation, is the third stage and signifies the researcher retreating from the question and no longer being directly absorbed in the topic. Stage three is an impossible task due to my daily duties in the space and therefore I was unable to take adequate respite from the topic a notion to be addressed later.

In the fourth stage, via the process of *illumination*, the researcher awakens to new constituents of experience adds new layers and dimensions of knowledge. This stage was typified through the acceleration of my own 'numinous' experiences whilst reading, writing and researching themes pertaining to the dissertation contained within autoethnographic account two. The illumination of the numinous in real time (through the events surrounding my Confirmation ceremony June 8th 2025, and with the artwork in the side chapel on Feast of Mary Magdalene on July 22nd 2025) certainly inspired and challenged me to integrate the experiences and then turn and learn from others in the Abbey.

Through *explication* the researcher must 'attend to their own awareness, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and judgements as a prelude to the understanding that is derived from conversations and dialogues with others.'²⁶ The level of self-reflection needed will be difficult to achieve within the time constraints of this dissertation for a prolonged time away is needed due to one's own numinous experiences co-occurring alongside the interviews with respondents. Under the heuristic model significant time away is necessary to process, and synthesise experiences, and data, and unfortunately this something I could not achieve.

Finally in a creative synthesis narratives will form a small body of work as respondents 'permit ideas, thoughts, feelings and images to unfold and be expressed naturally.' These narratives, a product of informal, semi structured interviews and observations will share how people perceive, experience and express *the sacred* and conclude only when the person has finished their musing.²⁷ Due to time constraints, and research aims further creative projects are not a necessary requirement though management are keen to learn from the study. Though the opportunity for creative synthesis will take place at my talk 'Divinely

²⁶ Moustakas, Clark, '*Heuristic*,' p. 31

²⁷ Moustakas, Clark, '*Heuristic*,' p. 46.

Aligned,' underneath Luke Jerams Gaia installation in October as I present my research on the solar alignment at the Abbey. I have also been given the opportunity to present the findings of this research as part of series of talks led by the Abbeys conservation department in January 2026.

Cultural and Historical Context of Hexham Abbey

There has been a church on this site at Hexham since 674AD and of St. Wilfrid's Benedictine Abbey, only the Saxon crypt remain. In the Norman period Wilfrid's Abbey was replaced by an Augustinian Priory, the church seen today is mainly that building of around 1170-1250. Since the Dissolution of the monasteries in 1537 the Abbey has been the parish church of Hexham. Today, the Abbey is a Grade 1 listed building attracting over 80,000 visitors every year and is the only Anglican church in Hexham.

To appreciate that which is sacred one must have contrast and as a hierophant the Abbey is something of a wholly different order that does not belong to the profane world.²⁸ Yet the building sits atop a hill nestled next to a beautiful park coexisting alongside modern life, shops and a busy road. Hexham Abbey is imposing, and arguably out of place with its surroundings for as Eliade states the profane consists 'of an infinite number of more or less neutral places in which man moves, governed and driven by the obligations of an existence incorporated into an industrial society.'²⁹ As one respondent explains 'it a striking figure in the clutter of a modern life, you have all these little shops and then bang, this ginormous ancient building,' With the word 'bang' the respondent encapsulates how hierophanies create a break in the homogeneity of space revealing an absolute reality, a fixed point, a centre.³⁰

Underpinned by Eliade's framework Hexham Abbey is not only a hierophant but a 'fixed point,' a notion reinforced by the fact St Wilfrid's church, and crypt became an important place for pilgrimage in the 7th Century. Wilfrid's biographer Eddius Stephaus shared how 'there was no church comparable to Hexham this side of the Alps,' highlighting its spiritual importance,³¹ 'for our holy bishop, being taught by the Spirit of God, thought out how to construct these buildings.'³² Hexham Abbey is still a place for pilgrimage for those walking St

²⁸ Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred*, p. 11.

²⁹ Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred*, p 24.

³⁰ Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred*, p 21.

³¹ Kirby, D.P. *Saint*, p. 81.

³² Colgrave, Bertram, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, (Cambridge University Press, 1927) p. 47.

Oswald's Way and thus the same cosmological schema repeats the same ritual scenario for settling in a territory is equivalent to founding a world.'³³

³³ Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred*, p. 47.

Heuristic Mystic Autoethnographic Account Part One

In his work '*Heuristic Research Design, Methodology and Applications*,' Moustakas explains how heuristic enquiry is not led by linear time, calendars or clocks, but through the integrity and presence of a researcher who is willing to immerse themselves fully and commit endless hours concentrating on one question.³⁴ Via Moustakas modality I understand my research question had been brewing for over a decade and began when I first crossed threshold one and entered the Abbey September 2015.

I relocated to Hexham following Gods call, and it was in the Abbey I surrendered my life completely to his hands. Hexham Abbey became a sanctuary and space that was to create and contain many numinous experience and encounters as Lane explains 'to encounter God was to have known the experience of being placed.'³⁵

Moustakas notes, 'in heuristic investigations, I may be entranced by visions, images, and dreams that connect me to my quest,' and the most notable of these took place at the end of March 2020 whereby I had a dreamtime experience that was to change and shape the entire trajectory of my life.³⁶ Memorable for many reasons, it was also at the start of the Covid lockdown and thus coincided with my desire to keep a dream diary, the entry states;

'I was shown an oversized dolphin beached upon the sand, I tried desperately to get it back into the sea after which I was taken into the crypt at Hexham Abbey and given news of pregnancy. Inside the crypt I had a sense that although I was standing still, I was travelling through time at great speed as "a reassuring yet authoritative presence" spoke to me and told me "the news."' The entry states, '*I was changed.*'

Albeit familiar with Christianity and its major festivals at this point in my life I was not aware of the significance of the timing of this dreamtime experience and that it coincided with the Feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. It is simply noted.

As my personal enquiry into the sacred gathered momentum synchronous events, and numinous experiences seemed to abound. In January 2024 (after nine months unemployed)

³⁴ Moustakas, Clark, '*Heuristic*,' p. 14.

³⁵ Lane, C. Beldon, '*Landscapes of the Sacred Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*,' (The John Hopkins Press, 1988), p. 193.

³⁶ Moustakas, Clark, '*Heuristic*,' p. 11.

'the voice,' told me to go and work at Hexham Abbey, following its instruction I jumped on their website and sure enough there was a vacancy for caretaker for which I applied and was successful in. The timing was significant for it coincided with the start of the Sacred Skies module which was about to align me even further with my enquiry. Sacred time shares a desire to reintegrate a primordial situation -that in which the mythical ancestors and gods were present, who were engaged in creating the world, organising it, or in revealing the foundation of civilisation.³⁷

In Sacred Skies led by Dr Bernedette Brady I was given the opportunity to conduct a simple fieldwork exercise, investigating the likelihood of celestial alignment of a site. As I had access to the Abbey out of hours and had become familiar with its layout I titled my assignment 'Arguing for a Solar Narrative on the Former Footprint of St Andrews,' (Hexham Abbey was formally known as St Andrews). I conducted both remote, and onsite site measurements to find the azimuth and this combined with the building's latitude, produced the data to find the altitude, and declination. I used the tools provided in UWTSD Moodle such as declination excel spreadsheets, solar declination tables, and Julian to Gregorian conversion charts. The azimuth taken from Google Earth was 273 degrees.

The focus of my investigation was to learn the time, and date of the sun as it set through the west door for despite the buildings tumultuous history its position had remained unchanged. I was also keen to learn if the date of the sunset was significant to any events in the Christian Calendar, and if it had any relationship with remains of Wilfrid's 7th church.

Through a ground truthing exercise using the theodolite app I recorded a measurement of 270 degrees, I positioned myself in line with the west door, as opposed to the central line of the Abbey. At the time of writing I have not had clarification from Dr Bernedette Brady with regards to the onsite azimuth of 270, and how it relates to the floorplan of the building. Brady also calculated a remote azimuth of 273 for Hexham Abbey via Google Earth.

Using the onsite measurement of an azimuth of 270 degrees the investigation found an alignment with the sunset on the 25th March, the Feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. Furthermore, the discovery was reinforced by documentary evidence pertaining to the time Wilfrid spent studying in Rome. In c. 650 Rome introduced *Adnuntiatio domini* 'The

³⁷ Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and the Profane*, (Harcourt Inc, 1959) p. 91

Annunciation,³⁸ feast date and in 653AD Wilfrid was under the influence of and studying with Pope Sergius who was well known for his devotion to Mary.³⁹ Moreover, the floorplans completed by C.C Hodges in 1880-1910 report a feature of 'great liturgical significance' marked as 'h' on the floorplan, known as an ambo, positioned next to the crypt, in line with the west door.⁴⁰

The correlation between Wilfrid's time in Rome, the creation of the feast date, and the completion of the Abbey nineteen years later, combined with the ambo theory provide evidence to suggest a deliberate celestial intention with the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. *See figures seven to fourteen.*

Whilst capturing the Annunciation alignment in March 2024 and in recollection of the dream end of March 2020 pertaining '*the news*,' my diary states '*in shock, the synchronicity of this is off the scale, there was even a child rehearsing 'Oh Little Town of Bethlehem' on the organ in March!*' Capturing the alignment March 25th 2025 my diary entry records, '*witnessing the sun pour through the west door, a beam of white light penetrating the nave, a secret held in plain sight sends me to my knees. I cannot contain my elation, so I jump, skip, dance and run around in sheer delight.*' Holly McNiven's work in '*An Unexpected Pilgrimage to Nansam Mountain*,' highlights how sacred experience can have an almost childlike quality. In McNiven's work I found a comparative narrative as she writes, 'I was skipping and singing to myself, feeling absolutely giddy,' and likens her feelings to a divine essence.⁴¹

As I began to introspect, meditate and reflect on the events pertaining to the 25th March I saw a meaningful pattern, and connection between the spirit and material world and Hexham Abbey.⁴² Perhaps synchronicity a term coined by Carl Gustav Jung (1938) could help to shed some light on the phenomena. Synchronicity, or the acausal principle, is a concept used to describe events that coincide in time and appear related for such events have an orderliness which pertain to meaningful coincidences.⁴³ Jung's theory of synchronicity was

³⁸ Clayton, Mary, *The Cult*, p. 29.

³⁹ Clayton, Mary, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo Saxon England*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 92.

⁴⁰ Bailey, *The Anglo*, p. 57.

⁴¹ McNiven, Holly, '*An unexpected Pilgrimage to Nansam Mountain, Sacred Geography Conversations with Place*,' (Sophia Centre press, 2024), p. 82.

⁴² Moustakas, Clark, '*Heuristic Research Design, Methodology, and Applications*,' (Sage Publications, 1990), p. 50.

⁴³ Jung, G. Carl, '*The Red Book Liber Novus*,' (W.W. Norton and Company, 2009), p. 91.

inspired by the work of Otto's 'numinosity,' for such occurrences echoed religious experience and had a sense of gravitas. In his book 'Synchronicity an Acausal connecting principle,' Jung wrote

'How are we to recognize acausal combinations of events, since it is obviously impossible to examine all chance happenings for their causality? The answer to this is that acausal events may be expected most readily were, on closer reflection, a causal connection appears to be inconceivable.'⁴⁴

Even more meaningful patterns seemed to surround my work at the Abbey with one notable expression on the evening of Monday 24th March 2025 starting at 7.59pm. For as I locked up and left the building, I saw a large blue light moving across the sky directly above it and watched as it shapeshifted into a beautiful spiral. *See figure sixteen to twenty.* The anomaly seen across Europe was later explained as rocket fuel from a Space X flight. However, in lieu of heuristic enquiry I could not let such a potent, ancient sacred symbol lay dormant and found its appearance and timing to be synchronistic for it coincided with the eve of the Annunciation alignment for the constellation of an archetype led to a relativization of time and space.⁴⁵ Eliade explains how in Neolithic cultures 'the spiral is one selenic hierophany, that is the light-dark cycle and is at the same time a sign by which man can assimilate the virtues of the star,' for example fertility, and regeneration. Furthermore, the image of the spiral revealed to the archaic man life that repeats itself rhythmically, periodically.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Jung, G, Carl, 'Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle,' (Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 8.

⁴⁵ Jung, G. Carl, 'The Red,' p. 91.

⁴⁶ Eliade, Mircea, 'Treatise on the History of Religion,' (Iztok-Zapad Publishing House, 2012), p. 141.

Literature Review

One of the undertakings of this research is to learn the nature of the sacred and apply it to how people inside of Hexham Abbey experience it. How do they define the ineffable? The purpose of this literature review is to explore how the sacred evolved from Otto's concept of the numinous in 1917, to Eliade's work, and criticisms of such, to contemporary work on hierophanies in the 21st Century.

Firstly, I will draw upon the work of Sociologist Emile Durkhiem, and Psychologist Sigmund Freud to learn different applications, and definitions of sacred experience, and those that oppose, Otto and Eliade. The four axioms, concepts of the sacred framed, and created by storyteller Beldon C. Lane in his work 'Landscapes of the Sacred,' will also be discussed.

Within the content of this investigation Hexham Abbey is a hierophant. Thus, Holly McNiven's work 'An Unexpected Pilgrimage to Seoul's Namsan Mountain,' combined with 'The Gnome, The Rock, and The Pool, Sacredness in a Domestic Garden,' by Wendy Fey will be examined as examples of the most up to date research within the field of contemporary heirophanies.

Finally for events to be synchronistic, a person must then be able to connect them in a significant way, and these experiences bring change to the psychic state of the person.⁴⁷ My work regarding sacred experience at Hexham Abby is underpinned by heuristic enquiry and synchronous events, and thus I was pleased to find previous scholarly work in such matters! For the purposes of this literature review the work of Psychologist Carl Jung, and Nancy Furlotti will also be discussed.

Nature of the Sacred

Sacred experience can be, and has been, understood, and defined in many ways. Its subject matter has been an interest to linguists, anthropologists, psychologist, sociologists and scholars of religion approached from various perspectives.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Furlotti, Nancy 'Tracing the Red Thread,' (Taylor and Francis, 2010) p. 460

⁴⁸ Pessi, Birgitta, Anne, Gronlund, Henrietta, Salonen, Sofia, Anna, Westinen, Jussi, Pitkanen Ville, 'The Sacred of Today?: Exploring the Personal Views of the Sacred by Religious and Non-Religious Individuals,' (Journal of Religions in Europe, 2004), p.477.

For Eliade the study of religious thought, action, symbol or ritual could only be understood within the context of religion and are thus not open to psychological or sociological analysis. Eliade was known for his stance on the irreducibility of religious experience, in that it could only be defined in its own terms, and by the believers themselves.⁴⁹ Boldy, Otto states at the start of his chapter on creature consciousness that non-believers, or those without religious experience or feeling should not waste time to read further.⁵⁰

If we are to consider that God makes his presence felt in an infinity of ways, then a unilateral and limited approach towards him would be completely unjust.⁵¹ However, it is necessary to learn from, and understand the forefathers to Otto and Eliade's work and thus examine the work of Psychologist Sigmund Freud (1938) and Sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858). For Freud, belief or connection to a God, or religion was regarded as a need arising from 'needs and drives planted deep in the psychic structure of individuals,' and that to avoid psychic stress beliefs are projected outwards.⁵² Freud states religious belief is the 'universal obsessional neurosis of humanity,' and was certain that in time, as knowledge becomes more widely accessible there will be a decline in belief.⁵³

However contemporary work by Beldon Lane argues that sacred space 'is not chosen, it chooses.'⁵⁴ Although a byproduct of human searching connection to the sacred is not an outward psychological projection but instead something that reveals itself, for the holy exists outside of human control.⁵⁵

Whereas Freud was concerned with the personal psych Durkheim was concerned with public structure and found religious beliefs support clans that share in a "effervescence" of spirit that which meet the groups needs and drives.⁵⁶ He acknowledged the important role

⁴⁹ Segal, A. Robert, '*In Defence of Reductionism, The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*,' (Continuum, 1999), p. 140.

⁵⁰ Andreea, Christina, '*The Concept of Sacred in Multi-Disciplinary Perspective*,' (Cross Cultural Management Journal, Volume XV, Issue 1, 2013), p. 28.

⁵¹ Andreea, Christina, '*The Concept*,' p. 29.

⁵² Rawls, Ann Warfield, '*Sacred and Profane: The First Classification*,' *Epistemology and Practice: Durkhiem's The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 182.

⁵³ Kistner, Ulrike, '*Religion as universal obsessional neurosis of humanity? Re-reading Freud on religion*,' (Aosis Publishing, 2021), p. 1.

⁵⁴ Lane, C. Beldon, '*Landscapes of the Sacred, Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*,' (The John Hopkins Press, 1988) p. 19

⁵⁵ Lane, C. Beldon, '*Landscapes*,' p. 21.

⁵⁶ Rawls, Ann Warfield, '*Sacred and Profane: The First Classification*,' *Epistemology and Practice: Durkhiems The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 182.

the sacred plays as something society 'sets apart,' and through that choice society is therefore the sacred force. For Durkheim, to define the sacred as a social construct is to define it within the context of man for religion is 'the management of the sacred.'⁵⁷

Durkheim's idea of the sacred as social function is supported by Lane's second axiom regarding ritual, that the ordinary can become the extraordinary. To highlight this Lane uses the example of the topography of Jerusalem, though not the highest point in Israel its place became meaningful through scripture, and socialisation known as the cosmic hub of the universe.⁵⁸

According to Eliade religion can only be understood within the language and experience of believers and not reduced to psychological or sociological purposes. That sacred experience is irreducible means it can be understood only within its own context by the believers themselves.⁵⁹ This is reinforced by Peter Berger who argued that studying religious consciousness can only belong to phenomenological enquiry and not scientific structure such as Freud, and Durkheim as experiences "from within," cannot be reduced. Eliade credits Otto whom he states is the source upon which all other thought should spring.⁶⁰ Sacred, and spiritual experiences are beyond our understanding and as our knowledge is limited, and the mysterious is not, how can a person ever truly comprehend and apprehend such a thing?⁶¹

Heirophanies

One of key questions of my research is to learn whether Otto and Eliade's theories are still valid in the 21st Century? Contemporary work by Holly McNiven and Wendy Fey provide evidence but do so within the context of the natural world.

McNiven's work 'An Unexpected Pilgrimage to Seoul's Nansam Mountain,' details how at the time of her journey she was feeling lost, and lonely in a foreign land, and how unexpectedly Nansam mountain became her heirophant.⁶² The lure of sacred space is most

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p 25.

⁵⁸ Lane, C. Beldon, 'Landscapes,' p. 27.

⁵⁹ Segal, A. Robert, '*In Defence of Reductionism, The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*,' Continuum, 1999), p 140.

⁶⁰ Segal, A. Robert, '*In Defence*,' p. 180.

⁶¹ Otto, Rudolph, '*The Idea of the Holy*,' (Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 28.

⁶² Eliade, Mircea, '*The Sacred and The Profane The Nature of Religion*,' (Harcourt Inc, 1959), p. 21.

profound amongst those people who are alienated, estranged or homeless.⁶³ Perhaps her intention to undertake a trip to Nansam was born from Eliade's notion, 'in the homogenous and infinite expanse, in which no point of reference is possible and hence no orientation can be established, the hierophany reveals an absolute fixed point, a center.

At the start of her journey McNiven documents how the sacred presents through an ancestral connection to her grandfather who was a Korean war veteran 'here I was on the other side of the world, yet I found my grandad.'⁶⁴ Whether conscious or not she had found her 'axis mundi,' in Nansam which along with her deceased grandfather became her connection between heaven and earth as she compares the task of climbing it to going home.⁶⁵ McNiven's pilgrimage showcases how different cultural contexts share the same ritual scenario and cosmological schema: settling into a territory is equivalent to founding a world.⁶⁶

In Fey's work on her domestic rockery a gnome gifted by her husband is her 'fixed point' for 'its human features perhaps made it more accessible to me, and the personal story attached to it added to its specialness.'⁶⁷ Although, just like McNiven it is an ancestral connection, through a stone collected by her mother in 1960s, a family air loom. deeper meaning is imbued upon the rockery. Fey notes how it has travelled far in space, and time to find place in her garden, and credits her family for its safe passage. Fey uses the words sacred, solid and special to encapsulate the stone and that it is 'deserving of respect.'⁶⁸ Thus, the stone is symbolic of both exile and home.⁶⁹

Another crucial element in McNiven's journey is highlighted by how the sacred, and the profane intersect. McNiven writes through her journey how unclean she feels 'I did not feel a physical purification, rather the opposite,' and yet through her grandfather 'a sense of belonging to the landscape,' the hierophant.⁷⁰ The sacred and profane intersect, and

⁶³ Lane, C. Beldon, 'Landscapes,' p. 34.

⁶⁴ McNiven, Holly, 'An Unexpected Pilgrimage to Nansam Mountain, Sacred Geography Conversations with Place,' (Sophia Centre Press, 2024), p. 77.

⁶⁵ McNiven, Holly, 'An Unexpected,' p. 81.

⁶⁶ Eliade, Mircea, 'The Sacred,' p. 47.

⁶⁷ Fey, Wendy, 'The Gnome, The Rock, and The Pool Sacredness in a Domestic Garden, Sacred Geography Conversations with Place,' (Sophia Centre Press), p. 151.

⁶⁸ Fey, Wendy, 'The Gnome,' p. 151.

⁶⁹ Lane, C. Beldon, 'Landscapes of the,' p. 32.

⁷⁰ McNiven, Holly, 'An Unexpected,' p. 77.

sometimes the profane is a vehicle to the sacred, a notion is reflected in the paper by Oren Golan and Michele Martini, 'Religious Live Streaming: constructing the authentic in real time.' Their work highlights how global connectivity, and digital platforms have transformed how people access the sacred through live streaming ceremonies and services, 24 hour footage of important holy sites, and places of pilgrimage. Pertaining space, and time digital manifestations blur the sacred with the profane, and through technology the meaning is reconfigured. In their study one interviewee attributed the effectiveness of live streaming and how old video footage is outdated for 'live streaming makes people live the emotion of the celebration in a stronger way.'⁷¹ The study found through technology connection to the hierophant is instantaneous and gave people the opportunity see God as one Cancao Nova Priest explained, 'we want the doors of the church open, and with live streaming we are doing this.'⁷² Furthermore, through one click of a button you can go to The Church of St Joseph or the Annunciation Grotto as live streaming brings people inside of sanctuaries.⁷³

Comparable to Golan and Martini, a notable part McNiven's pilgrimage is in the climatic stage and her relationship with the sky, specifically Venus. In witnessing the night sky devoid of stars due to air pollution she highlights how the sacred and profane intersect for she felt 'profoundly moved by it somehow.'⁷⁴

Siegfried Krakauer's work is a critique of modern sacred architecture, he states it is found in the profane as opposed to the sacred,⁷⁵ and is discussed in a paper by Ansgar Martins 'Religious Encounters in Profane Spaces.' The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin is used to show how the profane and sacred intersect as it exudes 'a gentle lustre,' sourced from Berlin's nightlife. Martins reduces the space to 'a brightly lit façade,' for the church served no more purpose than as a 'social and cultural prop.'⁷⁶ Krakauer argued that in contemporary society avowedly sacred buildings were devoid of that which they stand for,⁷⁷

⁷¹ Golan, Oren, Michele, Martini, 'Religious live streaming: constructing the authentic in real time, *Information, Communication & Society*, (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), p. 447.

⁷² Golan, Oren, Michele, Martini, 'Religious,' p. 447.

⁷³ Golan, Oren, Michele Martini, 'Religious,' p. 448

⁷⁴ McNiven, Holly, 'An Unexpected,' p. 82.

⁷⁵ Martins, Ansgar, 'Religious in Profane Spaces: Siegfried Krakauer's Reading of Spatial Images and His Critique of Modern Sacred Architecture,' (EBSCO Publishing, 2024) p. 17.

⁷⁶ Martins, Ansgar, 'Religious,' p. 21.

⁷⁷ Martins, Ansgar, 'Religious,' p. 21.

and that through the profane a profound truth emerges for the divine is accessible only when we are not expecting it.⁷⁸

Once the mountain is truly underfoot and sufficiently scaled Venus becomes the focal point of McNiven's journey, and arguably, her next 'axis mundi,' as she muses on its ability to still shine amongst the smog filled sky. She writes how, 'it was that lonely point of light that called to me somehow and I felt completely embedded in the precise moment of space and time.'⁷⁹ Eliade's theories of the sacred are certainly demonstrable for through her grandfather's history she finds a sacred connection to the Earth, and through Venus (as he is now deceased) a merging with heaven, both mountain and star are hierophants. Fey has a similar experience with sky, and earth at dawn at Winter Solstice viewing her rockery from her bedroom window, yet she despite feelings of 'awe' she is quick to rebuke comparatives to Otto's notion of the sacred.⁸⁰ Fey writes 'I felt very aware that they rockery and I were part of a magnificent Whole that was indeed awe inspiring and sacred.'⁸¹ Yet, through Lanes third axiom Fey's entrance into the sacred is completely valid, as her writing encapsulates 'a fullness of being to which humans can be open to time and space.'⁸²

Meanwhile, McNiven's pilgrimage highlights Durkhiem's principle, the sacred as a socially driven concept as she questions the sacredness of her pilgrimage; were her experiences merely the product of a collective consciousness based upon Korean myth, and folklore?⁸³ However in, 'Approaching Sacred Space,' by Baruch M Bokser he notes how Jewish people create sacred space through the reciting of Biblical verses and thus can be potentially formed anywhere, he writes 'although these places are not inherently holy and cannot become holy on their own, they may yet become holy through sacred interaction.'⁸⁴

For McNiven, Venus is the personification of remoteness as she is 'looking lonely,' encapsulated again as 'a lonely point of light,' it is clear she has imbued upon Venus her own sense of isolation in a foreign land.⁸⁵ Like Freudian psychology who attributes our quest for

⁷⁸ Martins, Ansgar, 'Religious,' p. 27.

⁷⁹ McNiven, Holly, 'An Unexpected,' p. 82.

⁸⁰ Fey, Wendy, 'The Gnome,' p. 148.

⁸¹ Fey, Wendy, 'The Gnome,' p. 148.

⁸² Lane, Beldon, 'Landscapes,' p. 29.

⁸³ McNiven, Holly, 'An Unexpected,' p. 80.

⁸⁴ Bokser, M. Baruch, 'Approaching Sacred Space, *The Harvard Theological Review* Jul-Oct,' (Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 293.

⁸⁵ McNiven, Holly, 'An Unexpected,' p. 82.

the sacred as an expression of neurosis, might McNiven's pilgrimage have a much more mundane origin? That is as an antidote to her anxiety, a way for her mental struggles to find purpose, and perhaps some peace.

Yet for McNiven it is through a combination of factors; family history, nature, Korean heritage, local folklore, combined with mental health and human action Nansam becomes a powerful symbol of a transitory state as she traverses the mountain, up and down (axis mundi) in the hope of finding her centre (fixed point). According to Bosker the sacred centre was not a tangible physical place, like a mountain or temple but that 'the divine dwells in the midst of people,' and that they choose the occasions and moments to enter that centre.⁸⁶ A notion underpinned by Eliade through his 'gestures of approach,' theory whereupon the sacred is first a state of consciousness which is then manifest through outwards symbols, structures, and rituals.

Synchronicity

In her paper 'Tracing the Red Thread: Synchronicity and Jung's Red Book,' Nancy Furlotti details her journey to publishing Jung's Red Book in 2008 stating 'I could never have orchestrated such linked experiences if I had tried,'⁸⁷ and notes how 'the psyche had been setting me up to do this for years.'⁸⁸ Furlotti's work is an example of the intensity heuristic enquiry can provoke as she writes 'being so close to the actual expression and working papers that document Jungs own journey into the unconscious affected me on all levels of my being.'⁸⁹

In the search to define the ineffable pertaining to sacred experience Jungs work in the Red Book gives hearty advice noting 'words that oscillate between nonsense and supreme meaning are the oldest and truest.' Jung highlights the importance of imagery, and symbols in art left behind by ancient society explaining all has been foretold yet who knows how to interpret it?⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Bokser, M. Baruch, 'Approaching,' p 296.

⁸⁷ Furlotti, Nancy, 'Tracing a Red Thread: Synchronicity and Jung's Red Book, Psychological Perspectives,' (Taylor & Francis Group, 2010) p. 457.

⁸⁸ Furlotti, Nancy, 'Tracing,' p. 461.

⁸⁹ Furlotti, Nancy, 'Tracing,' p. 476

⁹⁰ Jung, C.G. 'The Red Book Liber Novus, A Readers Edition,' (Norton and Company, 2009), p. 143.

Comparable to Otto Jung also distinguished two modes of thought pertaining to perception the rational and irrational. In his paper 'On the unconscious,' Jung wrote we stand between two worlds, conscious and unconscious and that symbols are the bridge between only when we were ready to recognise them.⁹¹ Furthermore, Jung echoed Otto notion of 'mysterium tremendum,' describing a divine intoxication stating 'love, soul, and God are beautiful and terrible.'⁹² Perhaps even trying to do a literature review on the sacred is in itself as thankless, and wasted task for it is the knowledge of the heart, and not scholarliness which provides the deepest insight. For what the heart knows can be found in no teacher nor book but grows out of you, and you alone, and the soul is everywhere that scholarly knowledge is not.⁹³

Ineffable

One of the key undertakings of this research is to learn the words people used to describe sacred experience. In his work 'Understanding Sacred Objects towards an Anthropological Theory of Religious Meaning,' Carles Salazar shares how what is shown as sacred often cannot be said and uses the ethnographic example of meeting a Catholic woman and sharing in the contents of a drawer whereupon the sacred and the profane mix freely. The drawer contained crosses, recipes, birth mementos, relics, rosaries and photographs, all symbols of a personal history. Inside the drawer was a relic of Padre Pio (a small piece of bone) to which she stated as a matter of fact 'it has healing properties.' Later Salazar questioned the women about the healing powers of the relic of Padre Pio to which she replied, 'that's the religion,'⁹⁴ providing what Salazar deemed to be an improvised answer as opposed to genuine feedback, or account for their behaviour.⁹⁵ Salazar concludes that 'it is not theology, understood as a set of propositions about the nature of the sacred, and the divine, but the set of interwoven modes of experience that provide them with their sacred nature.'⁹⁶

The notion that the sacred is undefinable continues through the work of Karla Cavarra Britton in 'The Risk of the Ineffable,' who applies it to religious buildings. Britton asks the

⁹¹ Jung, C.G. 'The Red,' p. 57.

⁹² Jung, C, G, 'The Red,' p. 151.

⁹³ Jung, C, G, 'The Red,' p. 133.

⁹⁴ Salazar, Carlos, 'Understanding Sacred Objects Towards An Anthropological Theory of Religious Meaning,' (*Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford Online*, 2019), p. 57.

⁹⁵ Salazar, Carlos, 'Understanding,' p. 63.

⁹⁶ Salzar, Carlos, 'Understanding,' p. 65.

questions ‘how do we express the sacred today?’ and ‘how do we express it in built form?’ She understood the need and search for recognisable displays, and patterns of meaning which are still a powerful force in the 21st Century.⁹⁷ In her chapter she notes the work of Architect Le Corbusier’s connection between the ecclesiastical spaces he curated, and created and his inability to share in their magnitude to which he writes, ‘I am not conscious of the miracle of faith, but I often live that of ineffable space, the consummation of plastic emotion.’⁹⁸ Britton concludes her work by sharing in the profound relevance and relationship sacred architecture still has in contemporary society despite competing amongst a technological and economically driven landscape. She encapsulates her notion of the futility of the ineffability of sacred space by stating; ‘perhaps the ultimate risk the architect of sacred architecture undertakes: to say more even than the architect intended to say by saying less than anyone would initially understand.’⁹⁹

Though by no means comprehensive this literature search highlights contemporary phenomenological, and heuristic studies on heirophanies in relation to the Church of England to be lacking and thus presents a gap in the field.

⁹⁷ Britton, Cavarra Karla, ‘*The Risk of the Ineffable, Transcending Architecture*,’ (Catholic University of America Press, 2010), p74.

⁹⁸ Britton, Cavarra, Karla, ‘*The Risk*,’ p. 79.

⁹⁹ Britton, Cavarra. Karla, ‘*The Risk*,’ p. 86.

Heuristic Mystic- Autoethnographic Part Two

As Fey, and McNiven shared through their research sacred experience can be found in nature, in a variety of contexts, from the humble gnome to the mighty mountain hierophants are wide and varied. Through reading their work on the natural world I was reminded of a significant event in my life February 2019 whereupon I happened across a wild white albino roebuck in woodlands close to my home. *See figure twenty-one and twenty-two. Ghost*, I affectionately named him is included in my research due to the Christian significance of the sighting of white stag, and as an example of the Acausal Jungian principle. For it was Jung's experiences with the animal kingdom, namely a kingfisher which led him to start examining the phenomena of synchronicity. Jung knew synchronicity was operating in his life when during an intense period his psyche was activated with archetypal material specifically that of a kingfisher, later Jung found a dead Kingfisher (a bird rarely seen in Zurich) in his garden.¹⁰⁰

On Christmas Eve 2018 I gifted my partner a card with a white stag framed under an archway made by a tree inside I wrote a poem about connecting to that which is sacred. Six weeks later whilst walking in the woods we found and photographed a white stag framed the same way as the Christmas card for 'without the parameters of space, and time, the movement from psyche to matter is fluid.'¹⁰¹ See figure twenty-three. As *Ghost* was a wild white albino roebuck, we were advised that his appearance was incredibly rare, a deer a decade. *Ghost* was a sacred symbol, and Christian archetype that deeply informed my life at a time I felt simultaneously connected and abandoned by God.

In conversations with his soul contained within the Red Book Jung grapples with his ego, as his soul reminds him 'to no longer be a Christian is easy,' reminding him that he should speak up, and serve his calling despite his fears of being misunderstood, 'but above all your calling comes first.'¹⁰² Meeting *Ghost* and spending time with him the woods was a milestone in my life, an example of a hierophant, and a product of synchronicity that gave me the strength to keep walking through the spiritual wilderness, and to trust my path with God.

¹⁰⁰ Furlotti, Nancy, '*Tracing a Red Thread: Synchronicity and Jung's Red Book, Psychological Perspectives*' (Taylor and Francis Group, 2010), p. 460.

¹⁰¹ Furlotti, Nancy, '*Tracing*,' p. 460.

¹⁰² Jung, G, Carl, '*Red Book*,' p.61.

As my investigation into the sacred at Hexham Abbey progressed so did its power, and status as a hierophant. Just like me, Furlotti's work to publish the contents of Jung's Red Book found 'a thread of synchronicities led the way from the projects very beginning.'¹⁰³ Furlotti decided to record the dreams of herself and group members whilst we were 'contained in a unique vessel with Jung's Red Book, just as he was contained in his own alchemical vessel during the creation of his precious manuscript.'¹⁰⁴ Furlotti notes how group members reported dream symbols such as pots and pans that symbolised alchemical processes and transformed states of being.¹⁰⁵

My research coincided with my Confirmation ceremony on 8th June with Bishop Helen Anne Hartley of Newcastle, and four days prior to the service I recorded a significant symbolic dream. In my diary I document the words 'horror, shame, shocking, celebration, and brilliant,' as I awaken with a puncture mark in the middle my right wrist. See twenty four. The diary entry states, *'I am standing on water returning from the deepest depth, and highest height returning to ground (balance) and see an abandoned shack, I look around and state "Wow I can't believe I used to live in there." I walk to my right and am enveloped in a warm, safe embrace from behind and receive the words 'father,' and 'sanctuary.'* Just like Furlotti who states being so close to the Red Book affected her on all levels of being as my Confirmation ceremony at Hexham Abbey approached sacred experience escalated too for 'the material is very much alive.'¹⁰⁶

This sense of aliveness continued July 21st 2025 whilst cleaning the high altar I heard "the voice," again instructing me. My diary entry states,

'I am told to go into the side chapel. Inside is artwork from the 1480's of the crucifixion whereupon Mary Magdalene has been erased, albeit badly. See figure twenty five & twenty six. The artwork is cryptic, coded and has caused much confusion amongst the conservation team at the Abbey. "The voice," states firmly 'count the numbers on the dice. 34, and am reminded of Numbers 34 in The Bible the instructions to reach the Promised Land, the land of milk and honey. I add 3 and 4 together and understand the importance of the number 7

¹⁰³ Furlotti, N 'Tracing,' p. 457.

¹⁰⁴ Furlotti, Nancy, 'Tracing,' p. 466.

¹⁰⁵ Furlotti, Nancy, 'Tracing' p. 473.

¹⁰⁶ Furlotti, Nancy, 'Tracing', p.476.

*which links to the number of steps on the ladder, and discs which look like pieces of silver but allude to the sun, and moon cycles. As Eliade states, 'communication with heaven is expressed by one or another of certain images of which refer to the axis mundi: pillar, ladder (Jacobs Ladder).'*¹⁰⁷

What follows is mystical steam of consciousness pertaining to the artwork for 'the Bible is a compilation of astronomical, physiological and anatomical symbols, allegories and parables.'¹⁰⁸ In my intention to dive deeply into the sacred at Hexham Abbey I am reminded again how man is the meeting point between two worlds, and that human existence abounds in symbols, lives from images.¹⁰⁹

My experience with "*the voice*," and artwork coincides with the Feast Date for Mary Magdelene whose presence within the scene, and associated symbols convey esoteric knowledge, and alchemy. My diary entry states '*Humanity is sick because its connection to heaven is severed. Man's inability to reconcile God and sex is why this world is fallen; women are the vessel and it's been erased from the Gospel. Just like she is erased from this picture so powerful is she, are we.*' Albert Einstein, not highly associated with religious thought claimed that scientific knowledge without religion is not convincing, and stated science is Jacob's ladder, it ends at Gods feet.¹¹⁰

Eliade's notion of 'axis mundi,' was to express herself again this time pertaining to the other chantry chapel, at the right side of the high altar. As I was dusting the dimly lit space on Thursday 25th September 2025 I glanced at the three panels and noted how the two Mary's (Virgin and Magdelene) truncate the crucified Christ. Both women were holding symbols pertaining to the cosmic pillar, with the Virgin holding sceptre, whilst Magdalene holds a sheet of wheat. *See Figure twenty-seven.* In my diary I note, '*For the Virgin the sceptre symbolises her queenly powers of bringing the son of man from heaven to earth, whilst Magdalenes wheat shaft symbolises fertility and the lifting of the son of man from earth to heaven. They are both divine vessels, compounded by the fact Mary Magdelene is holding a chalice.*' For Eliade space was made sacred through the opening of cosmic

¹⁰⁷ Lane, C. Beldon, '*Landscapes of the Sacred*,' p. 13

¹⁰⁸ Carey W. George, '*God-Man The Word Made Flesh*,' (Martino Publishing, 2013), p. 141.

¹⁰⁹ Moustakas, Clark, '*Heuristic*,' p. 25.

¹¹⁰ Andreea, Christina, '*The Concept of Sacred in a Multidisciplinary Perspective*,' (Cross Cultural Management Journal, 2013), p. 24.

communication between heaven and earth making it possible to shift from one mode of being to another.¹¹¹ However, just like Magdelene's image has been erased in the chantry chapel to the left of the altar, here her image is attributed to being that of a man, St John.

's

¹¹¹ Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and The Profane The Nature of Religion*, (Harcourt Inc, 1959), p. 63.

Data

The principal issue with analysing qualitative data on sacred experience is that words can only convey so much as Otto states, ‘the nature of the numinous can only be suggested by means of the special way in which it is reflected in the mind in terms of feeling.’¹¹² Yet through my role as caretaker, and in line with heuristic enquiry I noticed through self-disclosure I was able to spark, and inspire similar calls and responses in others.¹¹³ This tactic worked well with members of the congregation and as ‘a overt insider,’ I curated a connection which likely enhanced the quality of the data collated.

Self-disclosure also worked well with visitors as conversations evolved naturally from a shared appreciation of the space, as oftentimes they would initiate contact. Visitors often shared their feelings and thoughts without prompt, or pleasantry. In these instances, I was acutely aware that the openness, trust and connection visitors felt was a likely by product of my role. These interactions proved rich as they expressed, and together we explored experiences pertaining that which is sacred in Hexham Abbey.¹¹⁴ However, when I approached visitors in a more formal direct way the tactic felt evasive and one common thread emerged as most tended to project their thoughts and feelings onto the physical structure of the building.

If these stones could talk

Through a series of semi-structured interviews on Sunday 6th July I made a direct approach to visitors and noticed a pattern in how they expressed their feelings; they deferred to the physicality of the building. Phrases such as “I don’t know how they did this,” were commonplace as respondents replied with questions such as “I wonder how long it took them to build it?” alongside “makes you think how they did it without the technology we have now.” Visitors also used the artwork, stained glass, and the buildings size as points of reference for feeling as Otto explains, ‘in the arts nearly everywhere the most effective

¹¹² Otto, Rudolph, ‘*The Idea of the Holy*,’ (Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 12.

¹¹³ Moustakas, Clark, ‘*Heuristic Research Design, Methodology and Applications*,’ (Sage Publications Inc, 1990), p. 17.

¹¹⁴ Moustakas, Clark, ‘*Heuristic*,’ p. 28.

means of representing the numinous is in the sublime. This is especially true of architecture, in which it would appear to have first been realised.’¹¹⁵

The congregation also projected thought onto matter with one notable difference, they projected *The Idea of Holy* onto and into the building. When members connected to the physicality of the building they did so with a holy undertone sharing statements such as, ‘the prayers are soaked into the stones,’ ‘a potent place of prayer,’ ‘prayers seep in, as well as out of these walls,’ and ‘I feel this is a place where many prayers have been said...they live in the stones.’ A tangible sense of nostalgia expressed in phrases such as ‘if these walls could talk,’ highlight without exception a sacred space is one alive, and rich with stories, or in this case prayers.¹¹⁶

As the investigation developed, I noticed a huge difference in speaking with members of the public as opposed to the congregation. Quickly it became apparent I should use my position of caretaker to its full advantage and in lieu of heuristic enquiry change my approach to how I gathered data. To adapt to the complexities, and challenges of speaking with strangers about sacred experience I instead began to observe. Through my regular duties I was able to position myself by the welcome desk at the entrance (threshold one) and watch the reactions of people as they entered the space. In doing so I witnessed the ineffable in action, and how those entering the space shifted their demeanour. First, they would either stop in their tracks or slow down considerably upon entry. Second, look up. Third, voices were lowered, and children brought under control, hushed and instructed to behave. Ultimately, I noticed a change in being something seasoned stewards referred to as the ‘the wow factor.’ The diary entries recorded those entering the building ‘*had an awareness of something other than was before,*’ and adopted a specific etiquette in lieu of this. Meaningful expressions, and exchanges between visitors were also observed and words such as ‘beautiful,’ ‘peaceful,’ ‘calm,’ where commonplace as one man even used the word ‘numinous,’ to a friend as he exited the crypt.

For the congregation the Pulpitum, a threshold once crossed only by clergy held a powerful reverence described as an ‘atmospheric shift.’ Here, people spoke of God, of Christ, and the

¹¹⁵ Otto, Rudolph, ‘*The Idea of the Holy*,’ (Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 65.

¹¹⁶ Lane, C. Beldon, ‘*Landscapes of the Sacred*,’ p. 15

Saints, as one member states, 'I feel surrounded, supported, and safe, knowing this was a place where only the ordained had access too gives it a special energy.' Furthermore, she attested its power to the artwork, and then with palpable sense of certainty exclaimed '*this* is sacred space, there is more than a trace of faith in the place.' The word 'sacred,' was used repeatedly as I walked with members through the space following in the footsteps of the previous monastic community. A theme of privilege was also noted as one member explains 'I feel important, and I wonder who has stood here before,' whilst another stated, 'the prayers are still there, I want to wall it off and keep it to myself it is so sacred.'

Nostalgia was strong as respondents (all members) often stood in the present moment and harked back to times of yore. Hindsight's filled with yearning, and respect for those who had preceded them. One such example stood out dramatically whilst sweeping the main central crossing a member of the congregation appeared as if from nowhere, grabbed my arm, looked into my eyes, and stated assuredly, 'saints have stood here.'

Though, it must be noted there was one oddity in relation to threshold two as one member simply pointed out the inconsistencies in the architecture. This response was out of context with the data collated, and yet it was the same person who was also at odds with the community's connection, or lack thereof to the ancient Anglo-Saxon Crypt.

From Sacred to Scared

One of the questions of this project was learn if the crypt as important place of pilgrimage in Anglo Saxon England was a hierophant within the hierophant? Did the space still hold a special significance, and if so, how was that felt, experienced, and expressed by visitors, and congregation members?

For the most part all respondents seemed generally underwhelmed, and unfazed by the crypt. Visitors to the Abbey saw it as 'just another place to visit on the list,' as one man explained, 'I am spoiled by my Scottish history and have been exposed to so many sacred, ancient sites, this is just another stop off,' then proceeded to wax lyrical about New Grange and the Winter Solstice Solar Alignment.

Positioned by the above ground entrance/exit of the crypt I observed and witnessed public reaction largely centred on health and safety such as the logistics of steep steps and

was surprised by this. Access was certainly an issue, and it became apparent that the congregation felt vulnerable about the space, a notion exemplified through the statement 'since my hip replacement I can't go down there, the stairs are terrible,' as another explained 'I am worried that the lights aren't working properly at the moment.' Another explained joyfully as she stewarded visitors by the entrance 'the crypt....I haven't been down there for forty years!'

As some members of the congregation also work as stewards, I quickly learned they associated the crypt with duty, and education as Lane explains 'places become valued in proportion to the number and power of stories that are attached to them.' Yet there seemed to be a disconnect between Lane's axiom, and the crypt as a potent place of value, as when broached about their personal feelings members would simply rehash well-worn historical facts and rely on scripted stories. For example, one member talked to me from the point of view of a 7th Century Pilgrim, whilst another spent five minutes explaining how the stones were sourced from Hadrian's Wall.

Eliade's concept of the threshold and the 'narrow gate,' could explain the lack of connection people showed to the crypt. One visitor sombrely shared 'you feel the weight of history down there,' and expressed relief for their return to the surface. The notion of a 'narrow gate,' and awareness of a dangerous passage, commonly occurs through initiatory, and funerary rituals and mythologies.¹¹⁷ Evidence suggests that a deep subconscious fear of the unknown, of the dark, and of burial might be why most members spoke of the crypt from the point of view of previous visitors, or hid behind rehearsed heritage scripts?

Yet there was one oddity in the data. The same member who did not regard the Pulpitum as sacred had an altogether very different experience of the crypt as they explain 'I have visited so many religious places and spaces, but nothing like here, nothing like this.' In my diary I note a shift in their demeanour as they approach the above ground entrance and stop as if startled, and with a whiff of Otto's 'awefulness,' pointed into the void 'it all comes from there, whatever *it is* it comes from there.' The diary notes how the respondent seemed

¹¹⁷ Eliade, Mircea, 'The Sacred' p. 180.

simultaneously fascinated, and yet repelled by the crypt, the space evoked a dual character and for him the numinous was both attractive and daunting.¹¹⁸

Perhaps the lack of connection to the crypt was compounded by a distinct sense of what Jungian psychology refers to as 'othering,' notably different to Otto's concept of 'wholly other.' For example, one member shared his thoughts on visiting the crypt solely from the vantage point of other people, 'I have to reassure them that it is safe; people are afraid it was a place of burial, they feel uncertain and scared about going down there.' Another member who had spoken personably and vividly at other thresholds simply talked about the engravings, associated myths, and the point of view of a 7th Century pilgrim. He explains, 'they came from all over Europe to visit here you know, it was pitch black down there, a labyrinth when they entered the inner sanctum light and relics... it would have been an experience.' This paradox of being present yet not present in a place is encapsulated in Lane's third axiom and the tragedy of being in and occupying a place 'without actually dwelling within it as a place.'¹¹⁹

The lack of contemporary connection to the crypt is palpable one member of the congregation sought me out to explain, 'I would love to see it integrated back into the Abbey it feels like a standalone feature and separate from everything else.' Another theory, and or reasoning behind the ambiguity of the crypt may pertain to the deep subconscious symbolism it stirs within the human soul, that it is very much 'wholly other.'

HOME

In the effort to define in the ineffable one overriding theme with members of the congregation centred around the notion of home. Furthermore, the word 'home,' was used within the first few sentences relating to threshold one experienced as members entered the building. The word 'home' encapsulated a sense of familiarity and warmth despite the building's public nature and vast size. For them the Abbey is their 'fixed point,' for human existence is deeply dependent upon these points for they enable people to reside in the world with meaning.¹²⁰ Most members expressed upon entering the Abbey, 'I am home,' and

¹¹⁸ Rudolph, Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, (Oxford Press, 1923). p. 42.

¹¹⁹ Lane, C. , Beldon, *'Landscapes'*, p. 29.

¹²⁰ Lane, C. Beldon, *'Landscapes'*, p. 34.

words such as 'safe,' and 'comfort,' also expressed. A conversation with one member stood out, 'I lived in Middle East for ten years, and beautiful as it was with their temples, and traditions when I came back here (Hexham Abbey) and saw the columns I just burst into tears, I was home.'

Eliade's work pertaining 'cosmic mountains,' found that in cosmological terms there is a 'projection of the favoured territory which is "ours" onto the summit of the cosmic mountain.'¹²¹ One member of the congregation shared, 'despite the height there is a warmth, even though it is so grand I still feel at home, I look up, and think about God becoming man, the Christ story.' One tourist exclaimed 'the height is what makes it so special, it is unreachable, untouchable.' Echoes of Otto's concept of creature consciousness are found in these statements for 'the interval between the creature and him is not diminished but made absolute; the unworthiness of the profane in contrast to Him is not extenuated but enhanced.'¹²²

¹²¹ Eliade, Mircea, '*The Sacred*,' p. 39.

¹²² Otto, Rudolph, '*The Idea of the Holy*,' (Oxford Press, 1923), p. 56.

Reflexive Section

I would not have undertaken the investigation if I did not know Hexham Abbey was suitable, full of potential for numinous experience, and was able to detect, notice and feel the three sacred boundaries within the building. As a reflexive tool I will explore my own experience prompted by dialogue with a tourist whereby the potency of threshold one is captured. In this section I will also share my experiences as a lay minister reading the gospel, and leading prayers in threshold one and two.

On Tuesday July 8th 2025, my diary documents dialogue with a lady who had travelled from America who asked me how I feel working in such a special space. The entry highlights Otto's notion of paradox regarding my place inside Hexham Abbey as I note she is both magnificent and humble, and how one is rendered undeserving.

'Stepping through the door I feel like I could be at any point in human history, there is a timeless transcendent truth about this building its power being both in her magnificence and humility. To me she is both ordinary and exquisite, functional, and yet inaccessible. As I enter the outside world ceases to exist, likened to Lindisfarne (once the tide comes in) there is a feeling of severance, of island. Stepping through the door for my daily cleaning shift I pause to appreciate the palpable shift, a respect. I am on holy ground. "Jerusalem," I state whenever anyone pries into my personal thoughts about the place, "to me it feels like Jerusalem, and the crypt is the womb." It is a privilege, and an honour to be part of Hexham Abbey, to hold the keys, keep her clean, and ensure her wellbeing. I am home, and terribly unworthy.'

As my research progresses so does my role within the Abbey as I am asked to become a lay minister. To be asked to write, read and lead the prayers at Holy Communion inside threshold two is a privilege, and an honour. My diary entry echoes 'creature consciousness,' and states, *'the silence is palpable, I feel naked, exposed, small, vulnerable, and yet have never been surer I am exactly where I am meant to be, everything feels so right, and yet so surreal at the same time. I am grounded in God. I have found certainty in eternity.'*

Notably, Sunday services are conducted in a different space within the Abbey, and due to the size of the congregation (200+) is spread out across the north transept, and nave likened to threshold one (the general space of the building). As I read from Revelations my diary

entry states *'It felt so right, I thought here, this is it, this is where you are meant to be, as I was reading I could see Jesus on the cross the entire time, I was pulling from that place, that place of direct experience, my whole life with Christ flashing before my eyes.'*

Conclusion

One of the questions of the research was to learn if Eliade's theories are still relevant in the 21st Century, and if so, could they be applied to a Church of England building? Eliade believed the sacred was the equivalent to 'the founding of a world,' that which separates it from the profane.

Yet it is through my everyday activities within the Abbey such as removing sticky fingerprints from glass doors, cleaning toilets, and sweeping up litter I was able to conduct this research on the sacred. In clearing dirty coffee cups off the reception desk I observed the reactions of tourists crossing threshold one, in polishing pews spontaneous chats erupted with visitors, and due my visibility on the Abbey floor sweeping members were able to share on the spot thoughts, and feelings. Ironically it was through the profane (my job role) I was able to conduct the research, and through these mundane tasks collect data, and learn about sacred experience inside Hexham Abbey.

Data collated from visitors found Eliade's concept of 'axis mundi,' to be expressed through an appreciation of the size, and scale of the building. This was observed mostly at threshold one where upon entry visitors looked up, and expressed awe with statements such as 'I don't know how they did this.' One visitor shared their story of returning to the UK after an extended stay abroad and how it was the columns, Eliades 'axis mundi,' that made her realise she was finally back, and prompted a deep emotional response.

However, one distinct 'axis mundi,' was largely ignored by people at Hexham Abbey, the descent, and ascent of the 7th Century crypt. For the most part members failed to attribute any meaningful cosmic meaning either sharing health and safety concerns or giving auto pilot responses. Eliade shared the notion of 'initiation rites,' which are part of the sanctified life, and 'in entering the belly of the monster, or being buried, or shut up in the initiatory hut is equivalent to a regression,' drawing a comparison to graves, death and then rebirth.¹²³ Perhaps just like the steps to reach it, the primordial symbolism of the crypt is too deep for most to traverse?

¹²³Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and the Profane*, (Harcourt Inc, 1953) p. 195.

In their reflections Douglas and Moustakas (1985) found that for the heuristic researcher learning takes a path of its own and is open to spontaneous shifts that defy the shackles of tradition and convention and push beyond the expected, the known or the merely possible.¹²⁴ Certainly instances in which I was led by '*the voice*' qualify as unconventional, and one instance pertaining the Mary Magdelene artwork certainly do break the shackles of tradition pertaining to the well-worn Christian narrative. Yet, it is through this artwork either erasing, or misrepresenting Mary Magedelene I found Eliade's 'axis mundi' to be very much alive in the 21st Century but likely only discernible to those who hold the initiated eye.¹²⁵ On page 18 there is more evidence to support the relevance of Eliades concept of 'axis mundi,' at Hexham Abbey through my discovery of the Annunciation alignment at the Abbey in the Sacred Skies module (using onsite azimuth of 270). For as the sun pierces through the west door of the Abbey it forms a pathway, an 'axis mundi,' and for the duration of the setting sun heaven and earth are one, as God came down to earth as son/sun of man.

Trends in the data showed that Hexham Abbey was the equivalent to 'the founding of a world,' and through the word 'home,' church members found the language, and associated feeling to describe their perception, and experience of the sacred. However, it was the notion of home repeatedly shared by members that highlighted the impossibility of any comparison between them and visitors to the Abbey. Congregation members clearly associated the Abbey with familiarity and comfort a likely byproduct of their weekly worship, and this combined with the kinship of community evidentially shaped the language they used.

The research found a strong propensity for nostalgia amongst the congregation and that Eliades theory of sacred time to be applicable in the 21st Century. For the congregation the meaning and maintenance of the space as sacred was sourced in the power of previous prayers as documented on page 35. Eliade's notion, 'that sacred time was indefinitely recoverable, indefinitely repeatable,'¹²⁶ explains how the congregation find, and attribute meaning within a contemporary context. A strong connection to the previous monastic community was shared at threshold two and highlights man's profound nostalgia to inhabit a

¹²⁴ Moustakas, Clark, '*Heuristic*,' p. 17.

¹²⁵ Lane, C., Beldon, '*Landscapes*,' p25.

¹²⁶ Eliade, Mircea, '*The Sacred*,' p 69.

‘divine world,’ founded on his desire to live in a holy and pure cosmos, direct from God, as it was in the beginning.¹²⁷ However, it must be noted the propensity towards nostalgia could be an deflection technique, and attempt to avoid sharing in deeper personal feelings.

One of the key differences between my experience of the sacred, and that of the congregation is *how* the sacred manifests within the Abbey. For me, it is very much a real time unfolding, something that is visceral, and present. To define the sacred at Hexham Abbey I have never looked back, instead I have seemingly found myself to be a vessel for it, and humbly so for synchronicities led the path from the very beginning.¹²⁸

Thresholds are key to our existence as the opening makes it possible to move from one mode of being to the next, from one existential state to another.¹²⁹ Eliade’s theory of passage, and how through the sacred human beings shift from one state of being to another was certainly observable in my enquiry. Described as ‘the wow factor,’ visitors entering the building for the first time had a very noticeable reaction, and yet the same sense of awe was absent as people exited the Anglo-Saxon Crypt. It is clear the grandiosity, size and scale of Hexham Abbey certainly add to the feeling of passage, or transition, the bright stained glass, the organ music, how the sunlight interacts with the artwork all support the shift into the sacred, combined with the calm atmosphere. The same level of sensory pleasure is noticeably absent in the crypt and could explain why it did not feel as significant.

Another question of the research was to learn if the crypt due to its history was a hierophant within a hierophant? The enquiry found very little regard for the space, and only four people (including myself) made sacred connections to it. The data found responses to be scripted and rehearsed as many members shared information on the history and heritage of the site. However, fears around accessibility, combined with health and safety concerns could be a factor in determining why the congregation have a lack of connection to crypt, and that it no longer serves a ritual function.

One theory could pertain to its emptiness, once filled with relics might the place of lost its purpose. Religious belief in Anglo Saxon England centred around the potency of relics and

¹²⁷ Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and The Profane*, (Harcourt Inc, 1959) p. 65.

¹²⁸ Furlotti, Nancy, *‘Tracing,’* (p457)

¹²⁹ Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and The Profane*, (Harcourt Inc, 1959). p. 180.

through proximity certain supernatural powers could be experienced.¹³⁰ In his work Salazar found 'sacred objects are uncanny, baffling, and enigmatic because we cannot find a theory that accounts for their sacred nature. Yet, we cannot find that theory because there is no such theory other than the object itself and the set of interwoven modes of experience that place it into a meaningful totality.'¹³¹ Could the absence of tangible religious, and or spiritual symbols equate to the reason why the crypt is so underwhelming? Once a compelling place for foreign pilgrim's, softly lit, celebrated by clergy with ceremony, and full of religious iconography is now barren. Candles have been replaced with LED artificial lighting, and other than the odd bunch of flowers the inner sanctum is devoid of any meaningful focal point nor used for clerical worship. Therefore, devoid of religious iconography, or contemporary lore the crypt is simply just 'a cool, damp, underground room with a funny smell,' as one visitor explained. It could be argued, as an inversion of Lane's axiom two that ironically the crypt once extraordinary has now become ordinary in the 21st Century.¹³²

Otto

Alongside Eliade my enquiry into the sacred at Hexham Abbey was also interested to learn if Otto's concepts pertaining to holy experience such as 'numinous,' 'mysterium tremendum,' and 'creature consciousness,' were relevant to the Church of England in the 21st Century. The data (collated from the congregation, visitors, and my own autoethnographic, and reflexive accounts) found Eliade's work, and terms to be contemporary. However, Otto's concepts not as discernible amongst the visitors, and congregation. A notion that can also be attributed to Lane's axiom three whereby the recognition of something as sacred relates to one's own consciousness. Perhaps the mystical nature of Otto's work cannot be captured in semi structured interviews with acquaintances for such experiences are much more nuanced and secret. For example, the information shared in my autoethnographic accounts would not be divulged to a researcher conducting similar work as myself.

¹³⁰ Fouracre, Paul, *Eternal Light and earthly concerns, Belief and the shaping of medieval society*, (Manchester University Press, 2021), p. 22.

¹³¹ Salazar, Carles, 'Understanding Sacred Objects Towards an Anthropological theory of Religious Meaning,' (Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford Online, 2019) p. 66.

¹³² Lane, C. Beldon, 'Landscapes,' p 65.

Yet that data does hint of Otto's 'creature consciousness,' in reference to the congregations' connection to the previous monastic community. This, combined with a Eliade's sense of nostalgia created a narrative that they felt they were standing on the shoulders of giants, being watched, and witnessed especially in threshold two. Members revelled in the power of previous prayers still holding the space and thus to describe the sacred was to default to the past.

Evidence suggests Otto's concept of 'wholly other,' a notion that numinous experience is objective and external to self was expressed in member idolisation of those who lived and worshipped there before. The congregation seem daunted by Abbey's human history instead of being daunted by God. For example, in one conversation with a visitor who was musing on how they built this, I asked if they had considered it was God working through them. It was clearly something that they had not considered. Yet, the notion of 'wholly other,' was observable with one member who upon walking towards the crypt, stopped, startled and stated, 'whatever *it is*, it comes from there.' Sentiments such as these suggest just how difficult it is to place the feeling of 'other' into language.

As respondents looked to the past to find and define the sacred in the 21st Century I found my own experiences to be quite the contrary. As I set my intention towards an enquiry into the sacred at Hexham Abbey, I experienced an acceleration of Otto's concepts documented in autoethnographic account part two. Paradox can be found in the words 'horror, shame, shocking, celebration, and brilliant,' noted prior to my Confirmation ceremony alongside feelings of 'awefulness' which resulted in the wearing of gloves to hide the very visible red mark on my inner wrist, *see figure's twenty-eight and twenty-nine*.

Paradoxical feelings are noted again in the reflexive section contained on page 40 as I begin my role as lay minister. Otto's concept of 'awefulness,' and Eliade's 'fixed point,' merge as I read and lead the prayers in threshold two. In my diary I note complete vulnerability, and feelings of exposure (awefulness) combine with a certainty of this is where I belong (fixed point). This paradox is captured again in my reflections as caretaker 'I am home and terribly unworthy.'

The project was ambitious to suggest members of the public would want to share their thoughts and feelings at three distinct thresholds within Hexham Abbey. As one would

imagine conversations with the congregation were much more fluid and from these interviews proved rich. It is clear threshold two, the pulpitum evoked the strongest feeling, as they used the words 'special,' and 'sacred.'

In Lane's third axiom he notes how 'sacred place can be tread upon without being entered,' and its identification intimately related to states of consciousness.¹³³ A notion encapsulated through my dreamtime experience in March 2020 whereby I was taken to the crypt and told "*the news*." Ironically, I became present to the numinous nature of the crypt through an astral body, for 'being bodily present is never identical with the fullness of being to which humans can be open in time and space,' for one can simultaneously be there and not be there at the same time.¹³⁴

One wonders if Carl Jung's concept of synchronicity is the modern-day equivalent of Ottos numinous. Grounded in Jung's work and through my personal subjective experiences I believe Eliade, and Ottos work to be very much alive in the Abbey and her crypt a hierophant within the hierophant. For the word hierophant denotes a manifestation of the sacred, and through the events documented in this dissertation I believe there is significant evidence to suggest this is so.

The scope of my project was framed within the heuristic modality for 'an unshakable connection exists between what is out there, in its appearance and reality, and what is within me in reflective thought, feeling and awareness.'¹³⁵ Moustakas framework provided a necessary structure for my investigation to experience the spiritual and the sacred in a vital, intense and full way.'¹³⁶ Due to my role within the Abbey I was not able to have physical (incubation) or emotional (explication) time away from the space, and subject and thus it could be argued that my enquiry isn't completely valid. Therefore, the investigation on Hexham Abbey is by no means conclusive, and due to a very small sample size is not representative, and due to the methodology nor is it repeatable. Questions arise pertaining to further research such as, how can visitors make real a place such as Hexham Abbey, have a comparable, so they have language to describe it? If they haven't got a comparable place, how can they be helped? Furthermore, to test if Ottos work is relevant in the 21st Century

¹³³ Lane, C. Beldon, '*Landscapes of the*,' p. 19

¹³⁴ Lane, C. Beldon, '*Landscapes*,' p. 29.

¹³⁵ Clark, Moustakas, '*Heuristic Research Design*,' p. 12.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 14.

people need to have had a holy encounter and a comparable. In future research how can we adapt the methodology so that people feel more able to give more in depth answers, and reports on the sacred, and holy.

In the final stage of heuristic enquiry known as creative synthesis the researcher produces a something meaningful from the contents of their work. At the time of completion, I am readying myself to present a presentation titled 'Divinely Aligned,' underneath the Gaia installation by Luke Jerram at Hexham Abbey. At the event I will reveal the astronomical discovery pertaining to the sun's alignment with the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary on the site of Wilfrid's 7th century church. To do so I will incorporate the work Eliade, and his concept of sacred time, that it is recoverable and repeatable, and I will also put forward the notion that the sun's rays provide a 'axis mundi.' The event will be the culmination of my enquiry into the sacred at Hexham Abbey, one which has been the outcome of a surrendered life for sacred place chooses, and God reveals himself only where he wills.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Lane, C. Beldon, '*Landscapes*,' p. 19.

Appendices



Figure one is the view upon entrance (threshold one) taken 4.33pm on Friday 26th September on Iphone 12 by Sarah Fae.



Figure two is the view through pulpitum (threshold two) taken 2.35pm on Friday 26th September on iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae.

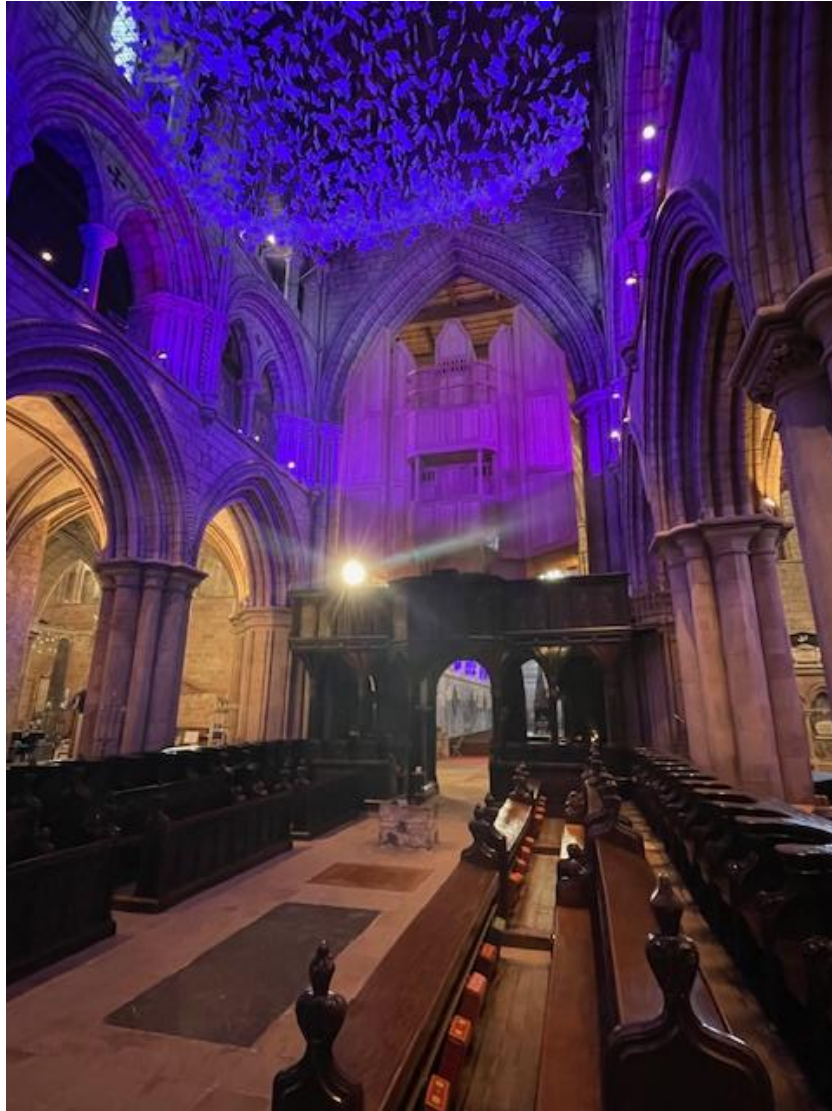


Figure three is the Pulpitum at night (threshold two) taken 5.33pm on Tuesday 26th March 2025 on iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae.



Figure five is the above ground entrance to the crypt (threshold three) taken 4.33pm on Friday 26th September on Iphone 12 by Sarah Fae.



Figure four is the inner sanctum of the crypt (threshold three) taken 4.35pm on Friday 26th September on Iphone 12 by Sarah Fae.

Measurement	West
Azimuth	270
Latitude	54.9715
Altitude	3.42
Declination	2.8
Conversion calendar	674 AD
Gregorian into Julian	Minus 3 days
Gregorian date	28 th March
Julian Date	25 th March

Figure seven is a table of measurements for Hexham Abbey for onsite azimuth of 270



Figure eight is a screenshot of the Theodolite surveyance app (published 2009 by Craig Hunter) on an iPhone 12. This took place on the 26th Sept 2025 inside Hexham Abbey, Northumberland. The reading shows an azimuth reading of 270 for the west.

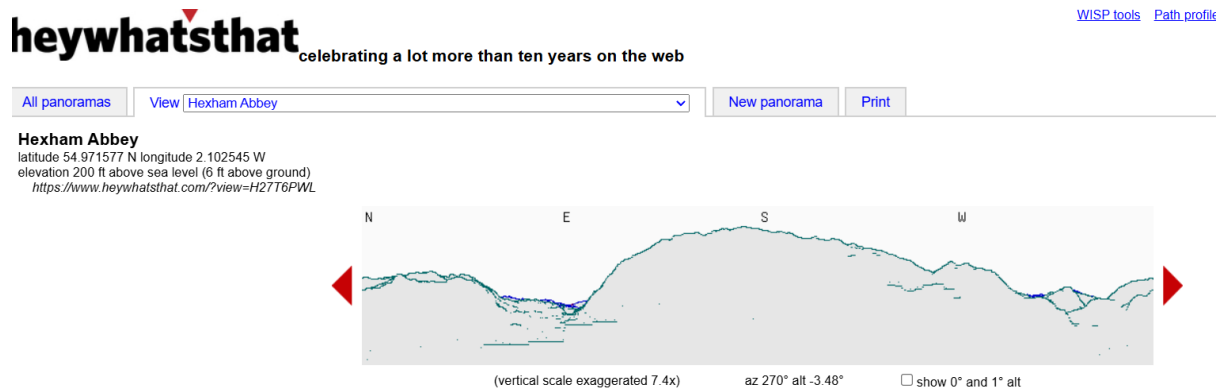


Figure nine is a screenshot from the site 'heywhatsthat,' and was used to calculate the altitude of east of Hexham Abbey, through input of azimuth, and latitude. Website accessed 26th September 2025 at 21.01pm.

Labels	AZIMUTH	ALTITUDE	LATITUDE	DECLINATION
example 1	270	3.42	54.97157	2.80
example 2				

Figure ten shows calculating declinations a excel spreadsheet used to input azimuth, altitude and latitude to produce declination created by Fabio Silva 2016. Table accessed via website Moodle tool kit page at University of Wales Trinity St David at 21.03pm on 26th Sept 2025.

Table of the Sun's Declination
Mean Value for the Four Years of a Leap Year Cycle

Day	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1	S23° 04'	S17° 20'	S7° 49'	N4° 18'	N14° 54'	N21° 58'	N23° 09'	N18° 10'	N8° 30'	S2° 57'	S14° 14'	S21° 43'
2	S22° 59'	S17° 03'	S7° 26'	N4° 42'	N15° 12'	N22° 06'	N23° 05'	N17° 55'	N8° 09'	S3° 20'	S14° 34'	S21° 52'
3	S22° 54'	S16° 46'	S7° 03'	N5° 05'	N15° 30'	N22° 14'	N23° 01'	N17° 40'	N7° 47'	S3° 44'	S14° 53'	S22° 01'
4	S22° 48'	S16° 28'	S6° 40'	N5° 28'	N15° 47'	N22° 22'	N22° 56'	N17° 24'	N7° 25'	S4° 07'	S15° 11'	S22° 10'
5	S22° 42'	S16° 10'	S6° 17'	N5° 51'	N16° 05'	N22° 29'	N22° 51'	N17° 08'	N7° 03'	S4° 30'	S15° 30'	S22° 18'
6	S22° 36'	S15° 52'	S5° 54'	N6° 13'	N16° 22'	N22° 35'	N22° 45'	N16° 52'	N6° 40'	S4° 53'	S15° 48'	S22° 25'
7	S22° 28'	S15° 34'	S5° 30'	N6° 36'	N16° 39'	N22° 42'	N22° 39'	N16° 36'	N6° 18'	S5° 16'	S16° 06'	S22° 32'
8	S22° 21'	S15° 15'	S5° 07'	N6° 59'	N16° 55'	N22° 47'	N22° 33'	N16° 19'	N5° 56'	S5° 39'	S16° 24'	S22° 39'
9	S22° 13'	S14° 56'	S4° 44'	N7° 21'	N17° 12'	N22° 53'	N22° 26'	N16° 02'	N5° 33'	S6° 02'	S16° 41'	S22° 46'
10	S22° 05'	S14° 37'	S4° 20'	N7° 43'	N17° 27'	N22° 58'	N22° 19'	N15° 45'	N5° 10'	S6° 25'	S16° 58'	S22° 52'
11	S21° 56'	S14° 18'	S3° 57'	N8° 07'	N17° 43'	N23° 02'	N22° 11'	N15° 27'	N4° 48'	S6° 48'	S17° 15'	S22° 57'
12	S21° 47'	S13° 58'	S3° 33'	N8° 28'	N17° 59'	N23° 07'	N22° 04'	N15° 10'	N4° 25'	S7° 10'	S17° 32'	S23° 02'
13	S21° 37'	S13° 38'	S3° 10'	N8° 50'	N18° 14'	N23° 11'	N21° 55'	N14° 52'	N4° 02'	S7° 32'	S17° 48'	S23° 07'
14	S21° 27'	S13° 18'	S2° 46'	N9° 11'	N18° 29'	N23° 14'	N21° 46'	N14° 33'	N3° 39'	S7° 55'	S18° 04'	S23° 11'
15	S21° 16'	S12° 58'	S2° 22'	N9° 33'	N18° 43'	N23° 17'	N21° 37'	N14° 15'	N3° 16'	S8° 18'	S18° 20'	S23° 14'
16	S21° 06'	S12° 37'	S1° 59'	N9° 54'	N18° 58'	N23° 20'	N21° 28'	N13° 56'	N2° 53'	S8° 40'	S18° 35'	S23° 17'
17	S20° 54'	S12° 16'	S1° 35'	N10° 16'	N19° 11'	N23° 22'	N21° 18'	N13° 37'	N2° 30'	S9° 02'	S18° 50'	S23° 20'
18	S20° 42'	S11° 55'	S1° 11'	N10° 37'	N19° 25'	N23° 24'	N21° 08'	N13° 18'	N2° 06'	S9° 24'	S19° 05'	S23° 22'
19	S20° 30'	S11° 34'	S0° 48'	N10° 58'	N19° 38'	N23° 25'	N20° 58'	N12° 59'	N1° 43'	S9° 45'	S19° 19'	S23° 24'
20	S20° 18'	S11° 13'	S0° 24'	N11° 19'	N19° 51'	N23° 26'	N20° 47'	N12° 39'	N1° 20'	S10° 07'	S19° 33'	S23° 25'
21	S20° 05'	S10° 52'	0° 00'	N11° 39'	N20° 04'	N23° 26'	N20° 36'	N12° 19'	N0° 57'	S10° 29'	S19° 47'	S23° 26'
22	S19° 52'	S10° 30'	N0° 24'	N12° 00'	N20° 16'	N23° 26'	N20° 24'	N11° 59'	N0° 33'	S10° 50'	S20° 00'	S23° 26'
23	S19° 38'	S10° 08'	N0° 47'	N12° 20'	N20° 28'	N23° 26'	N20° 12'	N11° 39'	N0° 10'	S11° 12'	S20° 13'	S23° 26'
24	S19° 24'	S9° 46'	N1° 11'	N12° 40'	N20° 39'	N23° 25'	N20° 00'	N11° 19'	S0° 14'	S11° 33'	S20° 26'	S23° 26'
25	S19° 10'	S9° 24'	N1° 35'	N13° 00'	N20° 50'	N23° 24'	N19° 47'	N10° 58'	S0° 37'	S11° 54'	S20° 38'	S23° 25'
26	S18° 55'	S9° 02'	N1° 58'	N13° 19'	N21° 01'	N23° 23'	N19° 34'	N10° 38'	S1° 00'	S12° 14'	S20° 50'	S23° 23'
27	S18° 40'	S8° 39'	N2° 22'	N13° 38'	N21° 12'	N23° 21'	N19° 21'	N10° 17'	S1° 24'	S12° 35'	S21° 01'	S23° 21'
28	S18° 25'	S8° 17'	N2° 45'	N13° 58'	N21° 22'	N23° 19'	N19° 08'	N9° 56'	S1° 47'	S12° 55'	S21° 12'	S23° 19'
29	S18° 09'	S8° 03'	N3° 09'	N14° 16'	N21° 31'	N23° 16'	N18° 54'	N9° 35'	S2° 10'	S13° 15'	S21° 23'	S23° 16'
30	S17° 53'		N3° 32'	N14° 35'	N21° 41'	N23° 13'	N18° 40'	N9° 13'	S2° 34'	S13° 35'	S21° 33'	S23° 12'
31	S17° 37'		N3° 55'		N21° 50'		N18° 25'	N8° 52'		S13° 55'		S23° 08'

Figure eleven shows the conversion of solar declination from the Gregorian to the Julian Calendar, the areas highlighted in yellow pertain to the west facing view.

Accessed via website Moodle tool kit page at University of Wales Trinity St David at 21.06pm on 26th Sept 2025.

Gregorian to Julian Calendars

The Solar Declination Table provides the calendar dates in the Gregorian calendar. Use the century of construction of the building to find the number of days difference between the Julian and the Gregorian calendar.

Year	Julian date	Gregorian date	Difference
500	February 28	March 1	1
500	February 29	March 2	
500	March 1	March 3	2
600	February 28	March 2	2
600	February 29	March 3	
600	March 1	March 4	3
700	February 28	March 3	3
700	February 29	March 4	
700	March 1	March 5	4
900	February 28	March 4	4
900	February 29	March 5	
900	March 1	March 6	5

Figure twelve shows the conversion of solar declination from the Gregorian to the Julian Calendar, the areas highlighted in yellow pertain to date of Hexham Abbeys completion

674AD. Accessed via website Moodle tool kit page at University of Wales Trinity St David at 21.12pm on 26th September 2025.

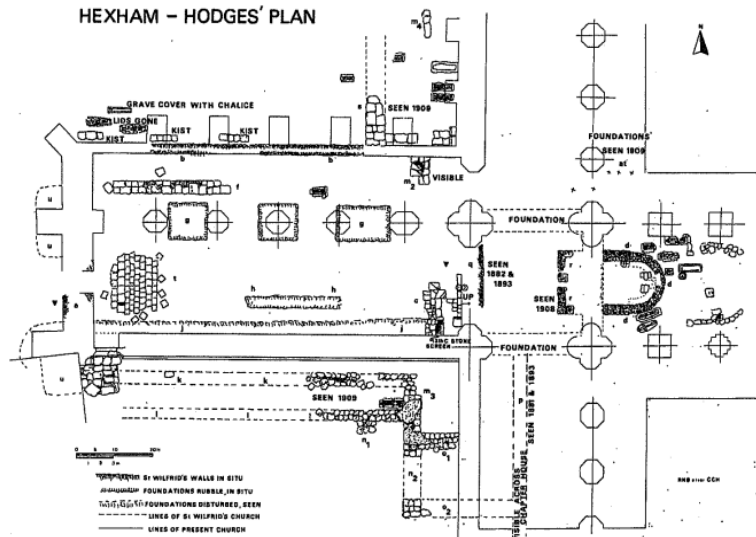


Fig. 1. The letter identifications are those of the Taylors. The key and all other descriptions are those shown in Hodges' plan. The triangle at the west end marks the point where Hodges wrote "Piece of W. face W. wall in situ side photographs and remarks by C.C.H." The triangle west of line "q" marks a stuck-on label reading "E. wall of crypt about here." See also note 9.

*Figure thirteen is a floorplan taken from C.C Hodges excavations Hexham Abbey between 1880-1910, and demonstrates the relationship between the position of the west door and internal layout of the site.*¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Bailey, Richard, *The Anglo*, p. 49.

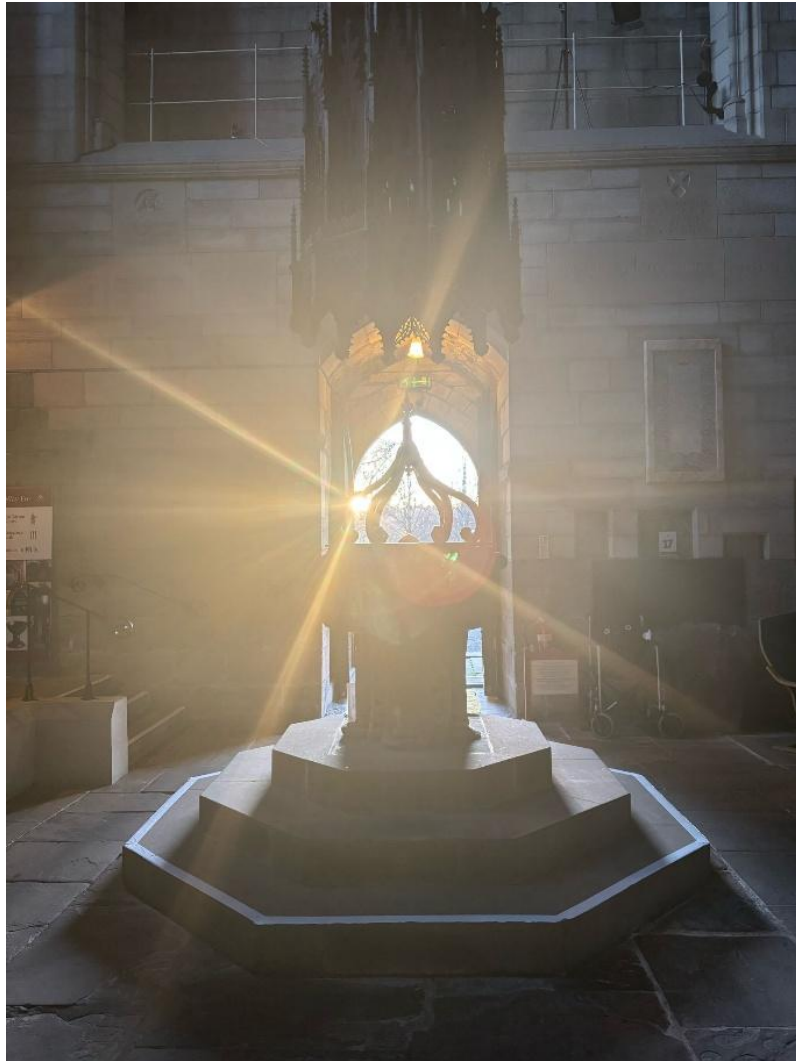


Figure fourteen is of Hexham Abbey west door, 25th March 2025 at 18.03pm. Although the precise date of alignment is the Gregorian date of 28th March weather conditions weren't favourable, so opportunities were taken in the few days around the alignment to capture the phenomena. Photo taken in iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae.



Figure fifteen was taken during the sunset and shows a sun beam through Hexham Abbey nave on 25th March 2025 at 18.10pm. Photo taken in iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae. Although the precise date of alignment is the Gregorian date of 28th March weather conditions weren't favourable, so opportunities were taken in the few days around the alignment to capture the phenomena.



Figure sixteen is of the start of the spiral formation above Hexham Abbey taken on 24th March 2025 at 19.59pm, taken on iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae



Figure seventeen is the formation of the spiral above Hexham Abbey taken on 24th March 2025 at 19.59pm, taken on iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae



Figure nineteen is of the spiral formation above Hexham Abbey taken on 24th March 2025 at 20.00pm, taken on iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae



Figure twenty is of the spiral formed above Hexham Abbey taken on 24th March 2025 at 20.01pm, taken on iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae



Figure twenty-one is Ghost the White Hart taken 14th February 2019 at 7.11am. Photo taken in iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae.

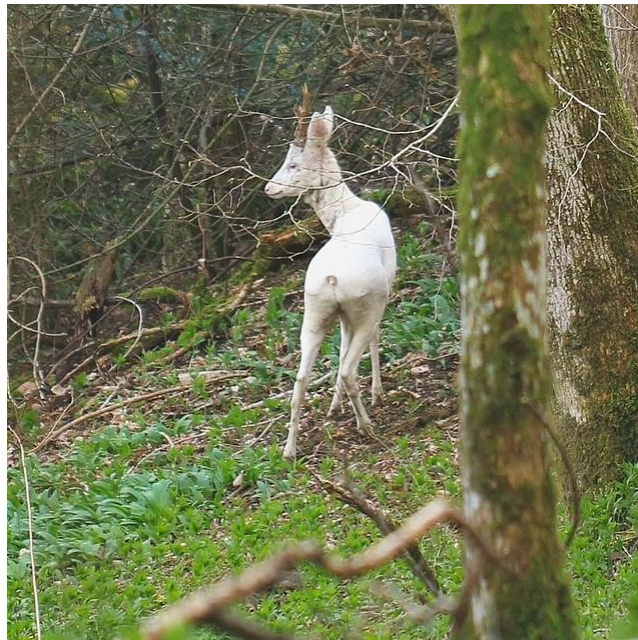


Figure twenty-two is Ghost the White Hart taken 7th July 2019 at 1.48pm. Photo taken in iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae.



Figure twenty-three is of the Christmas card cover, and first picture taken of Ghost on 4th February 2019 at 2.23pm, taken on iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae with use of the photo joiner app.



Figure twenty-four picture taken on 4th June 2025 at 11.36am on iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae



Figure twenty-five chantry chapel (left side of high altar) crucifixion scene taken on 10th September 2025 at 4.35pm on iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae



Figure twenty-six chantry chapel (left side of high altar) with erased Mary Magdelene, and dice (34) taken on 10th September 2025 at 4.37pm on iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae



Figure twenty-seven chantry chapel (right side of high altar) image of Christ between the two Mary's (documented and displayed as St John) taken on 25th September 2025 at 6.00pm on iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae



Figure twenty-eight prior to Confirmation ceremony taken 8th June 2025 at 9.20am on iPhone 12 by Ian Coulson.



Figure twenty-nine taken on 2nd July 2025 at 08.11am taken on iPhone 12 by Sarah Fae

Bibliography

Andreea, Christina, *The Concept of Sacred in a Multidisciplinary perspective*, (Cross Cultural Management Journal, 2013)

Bailey Richard, *The Anglo-Saxon Church at Hexham*, Archaeologica Aeliana series Vol 4 (1976)

Britton, Cavarra, Karla, *The Risk of the Ineffable, Transcending Architecture*, (Catholic University America Press, 2010)

Bokser, M. Baruch, *Approaching Sacred Space*, The Harvard Theological Review Jul-Oct, (Cambridge University Press, 1985)

Carey, W. George, *God-Man The Word Made Flesh*, (Martino Publishing, 2013)

Clayton Mary, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo Saxon England*, (Cambridge University Press 1990)

Dunaetz, R. David, *Church Based Research Challenges and Opportunities*, (Great Commission Research Journal, 2020)

Eliade, Mircea, *Treatise on the History of Religions*, (Iztok – Zapad Publishing House, 2012)

Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and the Profane*, (Harcourt Publishing Company, 1959)

Furlotti, Nancy, *Tracing a Red Thread: Synchronicity and Jung's Red Book, Psychological Perspectives*, (Taylor & Francis Group, 2010)

Golan, Oren, Michele Martini, *Religious live streaming: constructing the authentic in real time, Information and Communication Society*, (Routledge Talyor and Francis Group, 2017)

Hallamish M, *Daat A Journal of Jewish Philosophy*, (Bar-Ilan University Press 2006)

Hodgson Peter C, *Hegels Approach to Religion: The Dialectic of Speculation and Phenomenology*, (The University of Chicago Press 1984)

Jung, C.G, *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, (Princetown University Press, 1973)

Jung, C.G, *The Red Book Liber Novus, A Readers Edition*, (Norton and Company Limited, 2009)

Kister, Ulrike, *Religion as universal obsessional neurosis of humanity? Re-reading Freud on religion*, (Aosis Publishing, 2021)

Kruger, Kristina, *St Micheals at Hildesheim: Scripture Networks and the Perception of Sacred Space*, (EBSCO Publishing 2019)

Lane, C. Beldon, *Landscapes of the Sacred*, (John Hopkins University Press, 2001)

Otto Rudolph, *The Idea of the Holy*, (Oxford University Press, 1923)

Martins, Ansgar, *Religious Encounters in Profane Spaces: Siegfried Kracauer's Reading of Spatial Images and His Critique of Modern Sacred Architecture*, (EBSCO Publishing.2024)

McMohan Augusta, *Space, Sound and Light: Toward a Sensory Experience of Ancient Monumental Architecture*, (Archaeological Institute of America 2013)

McNiven, Holly *An Unexpected Pilgrimage to Nansam Mountain, Sacred Geography Conversations with Place*, (Sophia Centre Press, 2024)

Moustakas Clark, *Heuristic Research Design Methodology and Applications*, (Sage Publications 1990)

Pessi, Anne Birgitta, Henrietta Grönlund, Anna Sofia Salonen, Jussi Westinen, and Ville Pitkänen, *The Sacred of Today?: Exploring the Personal Views of the Sacred by Religious and Nonreligious Individuals*, (*Journal of Religion in Europe* 2024)

Rawls, Anne Warfield, *Sacred and Profane: The First Classification,' in Epistemology and Practice: Durkhiem's The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

Riccioni Stefano, *From Shadow to Light Inscriptions in Liminal Spaces in Roman Sacred Architecture 11-12th Century*, (EBSCO Publishing 2019)

Roads, Michael, *Talking with Nature*, (H J Kramer 1987)

Salazar, Carles, *Understanding Sacred Objects Towards An Anthropological Theory of Religious Meaning*, (Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford Online, 2019)

Segal, A. Robert, *In Defence of Reductionism, The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, (Continuum, 1999)

Shiner Larry, *Sacred Space, Profane Space, Human Space*, (Oxford University Press 1974)

Studstill Randall, *Eliade, Phenomenology and the Sacred*, (Cambridge University press 2000)

Julia Shaw, *Archaeology of religious change: introduction*, (Talyor and France 2013)

Fey, Wendy, *The Gnome, The Rock, and The Pool, Sacredness in the Domestic Garden, Sacred Geography Conversations with Place*, (Sophia Centre Press, 2024)

