Editorial: For Edward Bailey

Reverend Canon Professor Dr Edward Ian Bailey
1935–2015

He has (also) set eternity in human hearts … what will happen after him?
(Ecclesiastes 3, 11 and 22)

A bountiful legacy

This special tribute issue of Implicit Religion, the Journal he founded in 1998 and edited until his final days, is dedicated to the memory of Reverend Canon Professor Dr Edward Ian Bailey, Founder of the Centre for the Study of Implicit Religion and Contemporary Spirituality (CSIRCS).1 Each of the seven current Trustees of CSIRCS, a charitable foundation,

1. Edward Bailey had numerous additional roles, offices and honours, such as First President of the British Association for the Study of Spirituality (BASS), 2012–2014. For present purposes, however, the focus is on his unsurpassable “IR career.”

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has contributed an essay (two with co-authors) to this commemorative edition in Edward’s honour.

Contributions to the present dedicatory edition range profusely across academic subject fields, substantive themes, theoretical and methodological frameworks, and personal preference schedules, to address, through the prism of “IR,” that kind of bountiful variable selection in which Edward took delight: art and aesthetics; the cure of souls; carefully cultured Christian data bruta; Asian variants of the carnal mysteries (Edward had a soft spot for India); Presley and Punk (occidental “magic” of their own); and “spiritual revolution,” the latter sort of thing, eliciting such drama and excitement elsewhere, “IR” takes in its stride. There is literally no foreseeable end to “implicit religion”—and no discernible beginning. Tatjana Schnell (2012, 114) rightly calls “IR”: “a broad and wide-ranging concept.” As such, its roominess can evoke giddiness in the academically unwary. But for those prepared to set aside firm compass points, there are real advantages.

The liminal experience of engaging with Edward Bailey’s “implicit religion” in its quest of “the sacred” is evinced in a stanza by T. S. Eliot in *Little Gidding*:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

And, should we—within this Journal or beyond its pages—be fortunate enough to discover that holy grail, we are, indeed, truly blessed. As put by David Martin, a long-time friend of Edward and a former Trustee of CSIRCS, in an essay entitled *Alternative Visions and Constraints: Religious Education* (2002, 136):

The core of religious knowledge is not knowledge of X or Y; it is an act of appropriation […] “making one’s own,” that is, knowing things by heart and therefore having them in the heart […] Moreover, like all things which matter, they should be “by heart” before they are understood.

In this respect, “religious knowledge”—the stirring, life-changing, life-enhancing sort (not necessarily “RK” *per se*)—is, on a par with, has the same ethical status as, knowledge of a person. Both concern veneration and respect; and, at their best, love. Little wonder that Edward sought “the sacred” among people, where they gathered, where they were “at home.” The dialogue of hearts: *cor ad cor loquitur* (as John Henry Newman put it), is the true discourse of religious science. It is in and through its very
“implicitness” that “IR” draws us into this largely silent conversation; and, at the same moment, raises “translation” challenges for ordinary language science. It is ever thus. As dual citizen passport holders of “worlds” of faith and fact, we go along, sometimes merrily, sometimes not, learning, forgetting and remembering—breaking—codes of communication, trying to secure a toehold on certainty. We are corrigible beings notwithstanding.

Strictly speaking, this Volume 19, Issue 1 of *Implicit Religion* should be termed a *Gadenskschrift*, as it is effectively a posthumous tribute collection. Yet, the term *Festschrift* with its connotations of feast, festivity and, frankly, fun—does seem more apt for a collection of articles written in tribute to the man and his enduring intellectual legacy. This Issue aims to celebrate and convey something of that distinctive energy and *joie de vivre* with which Edward Bailey went about his work as pioneer and prime mover of the now established field of “implicit religion” studies. Edward had a phrase for such an undertaking as this. Referring, in his last published synopsis of “implicit religion” to “commitments,” a favourite defining emphasis of his, Edward wrote: “It captures the conative; what the eulogist adds to the obituarist, when asking: ‘What did the deceased “stand” for?’” (Bailey 2012, 202). Here, with reference to his signature concept, “implicit religion,” this Editorial and the Issue as a whole, asks this very question of Edward himself. And endeavours to indicate—and imagine—some answers.

**Iconic**

“Implicit Religion” appeared so often to centre on one man, Edward Ian Bailey, its veritable pantocrator, and the human dynamo who fuelled its persistence on the global academic stage for over four decades. No mean feat in a world increasingly given over to the hegemony of secular modernism. Louis XIV-like, a *roi de soleil* figure, Edward radiated life and light to the “IR world” around him, a discursive universe which he himself largely created and did most to sustain over its highly active decades. There was always, in my own experience of him, something pleasingly autumnal about Edward; something golden-hued—seasoned, casked, (not bottled or canned), inspiring trust. As I write this, on a crisp late September morning, an aureate oak leaf abseils quietly through a shaft of psychedelic sunlight to the good earth. Alas, the “King is dead”! How might his iconic light shine on? What becomes of the Founder’s intellectual patrimony? Who can follow this man?

Edward Bailey was unflagging and relentless in his all-round efforts to commission articles, seek out book reviewers, allocate conference rooms,
negotiate menus, arrange taxis, preside at Sunday communion service, do what needed to be done to keep his “baby” fit and well. Who can possibly take his place? How might the separate functions and tasks be shared? With the demise of such a prolific, hands-on “Founder-cum-Father Figure-cum-General Factotum,” those who come after face a challenging future.

This Editorial contends that “implicit religion” represents a vital ideational force that is most unlikely to fade away with Edward’s passing. Though no stickler for detailed succession planning (not an atypical trait of the founder type), Edward leaves to us, nonetheless, at this sad time of bereavement, a munificent legacy of ideas, ideals and institutions robust enough to sustain, in some incarnation or another with which he would have approved, for today, and onwards into a foreseeable future, a distinctive illuminating “real presence.” Let his light shine!

Bailey’s biography remains to be written. Positioned somewhere between hagiography and historiography, this Editorial takes full advantage of that unique interlude when “the Founder’s tale” has not as yet been drafted; and where “followers” are not preoccupied with the construction of competing “cultic” versions of their “ancestral story” or “founding myth” (cf. George 1977). At this unrepeatable juncture, it is my privilege, as Editor of “his” Journal (for this singular occasion), to compose an unfettered tribute to Edward Bailey’s intellectual heritage. In doing so, I confess to profligate delight in breaking the “Positivist” great commandment: “Thou shalt not commit a value-judgement.” Hopefully, aspects of what is written here in Edward’s honour will resonate positively with his family members, colleagues and readers of this Journal, many of whom got to know Edward personally through his extensive travel and, in particular, through the annual “IR” corroboree, the “Denton” conferences, the final meeting of which, at the majestic Bailey family estate in Yorkshire, England, took place between 8–10 May 2015 (cf. Walters 2015).

Grace-filled

“Implicit religion” is what I wish to call a “grace-filled” big idea, a “gift” that is capacious, inclusive and wise. And, like grace, relatively light-touch, though absolutely heavily consequential with respect to the vast “sacrascape” of everyday life. Sacredness, Bailey’s “IR” reminds us, is ubiquitous, pervasive, to hand. “Implicit religion” provides a rope-bridge (nothing too fixed or rigid, always requiring a sense of balance) between “worlds”—and between “words,” where so many gaps appear in human understanding.
and sympathy. Along it, if less sure-footedly than he, many of us have followed E.I.B.’s pioneering steps to-and-fro into the entangled thickets of the sacred and secular; the personal and institutional; the traditional, modern and postmodern; the pub and the pew. “His” Denton conferences and “his” journal *Implicit Religion* (though he was never possessive about them), create “integrating foci,” particularly for those with the “commitments”—Edward preferred the plural form (Bailey 2012, 202)—to “run the gauntlet between the stratosphere and the concrete, the human and the humane” (Bailey 2001, 102). “Intensive, with extensive effects,” their “Bailey–(I)an effect” lives on in lives, libraries and electronic labyrinths, as subjective and objective knowledge.

So, not an obituary, then, of which a number are already in print; but more a *liber amicorum*. In a real sense, it is to be hoped that the variegated range of themes and approaches gathered together in this commemorative Issue represents in some way the expansive and ever-expanding circle of points of view around Edward Bailey’s magnetic key idea. As an editor, Edward exercised consistently a generous catholicity of outlook. An interesting and academically sound submission always stood a real chance of acceptance for publication. This is not always characteristic of the standpoint of academic power-brokers—oft-tempted to promote a narrower intellectual self-interest via their strategic position in the great chain of publication. Edward was devoid of confessional—political, religious or scientific—*parti-pris*.

A time with Edward; a time, alas, without Edward, to paraphrase the *Book of Ecclesiastes*. Sacred time; profane time; *illud tempus; hic et nunc* (cf. Eliade 1995). Apposite anthropological, psychological and cosmological demarcations, for sure; but, for an influential and beneficent life, such as that of Edward Bailey—the academic multi-tasker’s multi-tasker—surely somewhat overstretched divisions. His “real presence”—what we know of him in his writings; his charitable and academic foundations; who

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3. These present pages, it should be noted, could have been expanded considerably, had practicalities allowed, to incorporate contributions from Edward’s many “companions,” to use a quaint term for those who gathered round a living Founder, such as Francis of Assisi or Ignatius Loyola. Hopefully, subsequent Issues of *Implicit Religion* will attract such offerings in due course through the Equinox online submission system. http://www.equinoxpub.com/journals/index.php/IR/about/submissions.
and what he “begat” (Keenan 2014) in terms of intellectual beneficiaries and progeny—all, happily, survive the finitude of this mortal coil. With Edward Bailey, we are, indeed, talking about a positively consequential life and legacy. Edward *lives on* in what Karl Popper refers to as “World Three,” the independent, ever-available global empire of published ideas (cf. Popper 1972). It is the “third world” after-life of Edward Bailey’s “big idea,” namely, “Implicit Religion”—“IR”—with which this Tribute Edition is concerned, that is to say, with its potency, power and promise. An inheritance of this nature cannot be owned. It must be held in trust for those yet to come.

But alongside its serene and dignified standing, “implicit religion” packs a punch. Like an intellectual stealth missile, “IR” creeps up on consciousness—or, more suggestively, *from* the primordial religious unconsciousness (a definite provocation!)—without much prior warning. Though seemingly a mild scholastic notion, “implicit religion” carries an explosive intellectual charge. In concert with other such critical munition—for “heavy guns,” one simply has to line up the complete works of David Martin here—“IR” has helped undermine the one-time seemingly impregnable fortress of secular modern materialism. When let loose upon the secular Leviathan, “implicit religion” discharges daring, even dangerous, ideas. Edward was no placid satyagraha. He would fight his corner, for ideas and precepts he believed in. One is reminded here of G. K. Chesterton’s remark: “The role of the religious leader is to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable.” “Implicit religion” represents a tract against the times. It speaks a certain “truth to power.” It tells of the persistence of fertile religious imagination in the midst of parched secular wasteland. Edward Bailey, the “Robert Oppenheimer” of modern religion studies; the one who “became Death” (well, not quite, but you get the drift!) to the cosy, comfortable, consensual world of triumphalist secularism. And all done with such disarming “Anglican” gentility, and such subderisorius4 humour!

4. “SUBDERISORIUS, adjective. Mocking, but gently and with affection—as between friends and lovers. A needed word, describing as it does a particular quality for which there is no other satisfactory adjective” (Source: Bowler 2002, 135.) Edward and I liked to fandangle, often over a buttered scone, in a game of “arcane-ology,” the object being to resurrect and recycle otiose grandiloquisms. Readers, I trust, will forgive a “remembrancer” or two of this shared and generally harmless pastime here. Brobdingnagian ultracrepitarianism is, naturally, the thing to avoid. Edward, I like to imagine, may have responded califaciently to the following item: “THAUMATURGE, noun: A wonder-worker, miracle man, or magician […]. The nearest modern equivalent to the original meaning would seem to be the road-service mechanics employed by
“Implicit Religion” is polyvalent and versatile; it is many things: idea, ideal and, with the establishment since 1978 of dedicated annual conferences; the setting up of the Network and Centre for the Study of Implicit Religion and Contemporary Spirituality (CSIRCS); and the publication since 1998 of the international Journal Implicit Religion, an institution. With Edward’s passing (announced in the Editorial to Volume 18, Issue 3 of this Journal), all three expressions of this polysemic notion inevitably find themselves facing an unknown future. While now well-established—unquestionably due to Edward’s own efforts primarily—the three legs of the “IR” tripod may be deemed, post-Edward, to have become a tad less steady than of yore. Much, however, is already underway to perpetuate the “IR” heritage. At the time of writing, the “Denton” Conference has a two-year establishment at Sarum College, Salisbury; and the editorial future of this Journal is in the hands of Equinox, its publisher. The “thought-world” of “implicit religion” is out there, on the record, freely accessible.

The fine details of tomorrow’s “IR” life-world cannot be predicted in advance. It will depend on what we, successor generations, want to happen and seek to bring about. Perhaps “implicit religion” will merge into the dialect and lore of the tribe, as a once-vibrant and distinctive subject matter, displaced by more fashionable and pressing issues and concerns, now become part of arcane intellectual history, its task completed. Perhaps it will have its times of revival and rediscovery in far off days when forgotten insights and arguments of “IR” are recalled and renewed by scholars seeking fresh inspiration from old wine. Suppose, like old soldiers, “IR” simply fades away, from memory, from the record? So be it. Edward Bailey, as realist, would not have been unduly discomfited by these practicalities. What, intellectually speaking, he was really “determined about”—to use his own phrase—was the scientific (in the fullest sense) standing and utility of his pet “thesis,” based as it is, wholly and entirely around the concept of “implicit religion.”

Put simply: sacredness is all around. Seek it and ye shall find it. What has become a commonplace of “faith studies” today, throughout the academic disciplines, was a breakthrough revolutionary insight of a very few

motorists’ organizations such as AAA and the like” (Bowler 2002, 141). Just as Bailey’s oeuvre is indispensable reading for anyone interested in cracking the implicit code of religious life at large in the modern world; so, too, is Bowler 2002 a crack source for scrabble players; and for those, like Edward Bailey, averse to battology and boondoggle in academic and liturgical life. A quodlibet, perhaps.

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scholarly radicals (in the true meaning of the term), including Edward Bailey, at the time of its late modern renaissance. Bailey—with an outcome Emile Durkheim might have considered affirming; though Max Weber may have found disenchanted given his dispositions towards rationalization, secularization, desacralization, and so on—let “the sacred” and the social sciences loose upon one another. A risk that paid off. Judging purely by their interactions in this Journal over its lengthening run, both appear to be holding their own, which is undoubtedly as it should be. “IR” has a formidable capacity to hold the ring between the sacred and profane, the religious and the secular, faith and reason.

If this Editorial borders occasionally on the panegyric, so be it. Rules, even academic ones (religio, again), are there to be broken. Tribute Editorials ought to be a tad eulogistic. When else can academics wax so lyrically without fear of the “politically correct,” the fun police? Needless to say, the contributions to this Issue for Edward are all inspired by his unique insights and forceful arguments; and by his characteristic openness to constructive criticism. Edward Bailey, I submit, and rejoice in saying, is an implicit, vibrant, on-going real presence for students and scholars of all academic disciplines—and beyond—in personal and/or professional quest of “the sacred.”

The “sacred” is the heart of “IR.” Sacrality is its raison d’être and sine qua non. What more could Edward Bailey—could anyone? —have possibly done to affirm the true nature of humankind? Edward’s “big idea” provides stimulus, scope and fertile soil at the busy, unpredictable, interface—inter-faith?—of religion and science, for many flowers to bloom. He left us more than a dry bones academic legacy. He has left us the priceless—the sacred—gift of intellectual and spiritual light.

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References


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The Paschal Candle

[H]e was simply a witness to tell about the light (John 1: 5 [ELT]).


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