



**ST THEOSEVIA CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY  
OPEN STUDY DAYS IN TRINITY TERM 2012**

*An Ecumenical Centre for Christian Spirituality in Oxford  
at St Theosevia House, 2 Canterbury Road, Oxford OX2 6LU  
www.theosevia.org*

**Saturday 12 May, 10.30 am – 4 pm**

**Divine Light : Encountering Light Uncreated  
and Created**

*with Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, Dr Santha Bhattacharji,  
Dr Allan Chapman*

**Saturday 9 June, 10.30 am – 4 pm**

**Christian and Islamic Mysticism,  
Affinities and Contacts:**

**Ibn 'Arabi, Jalal al-Din Rumi, Louis Massignon**

*with Stephen Hirtenstein, Revd Dr Jane Baun,  
Anthony O'Mahony*

*St Theosevia House, 2 Canterbury Road, left off Banbury Rd just after North Parade  
Study days FREE for students with card. Non-students £5 (on door). No booking needed, just  
come, for all or part of the day. Lunch break 1-2 pm (please provide your own lunch).*

*Director: Revd Dr Liz Carmichael, St John's College  
Enquiries: Assistant Director of Studies: Revd Steffen Weisshaut.*

## The St Theosevia Centre for Christian Spirituality

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*From the Director*

Revd Dr Liz Carmichael

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April 2012

Dear Friends of St Theosevia's,

Thank you for supporting last term's programme. Both days, on Icons and stained glass, and on the Norman-Byzantine churches of Sicily, were very well attended.

This term we begin on Saturday 12 May (third week) with a day exploring Divine Light in Eastern and Western spirituality. The inner search for the Uncreated Light seen at Christ's Transfiguration on Mount Tabor is a distinguishing theme of hesychast spirituality in the east. The light of Christ within features in the writings of Rhineland mystics and later in the thought of the Quaker George Fox. Early scientist-theologians saw light as a divine creation that itself reveals the mysteries of nature. The historian of science Allan Chapman writes: "Optics became a study of intense fascination during the medieval centuries, as priests and monks such as Robert Grosseteste, Roger Bacon, Theodoric of Freiburg, and Witelo, conducted pioneering research into the nature, properties, and mathematics of light. They formed a wonderful confluence of Christian faith and science: light, as originating with God in the Heavens, played a fundamental role in the creation, and illuminated darkness." The mathematics of light provided a way into "thinking God's thoughts after Him".

On Saturday 9 June (seventh week), we explore some of the affinities and mutual influences between Byzantine and Roman Catholic Christian mysticism and the Islamic Sufi tradition in the mediaeval period and beyond, with the poet Rumi in Anatolia (Turkey) and the Andalusian Sufi scholar and mystic Muhammad Ibn 'Arabī in Spain.

You may also like to know about 'Understanding Islam', an interesting and useful introductory course for Christians, led by the Revd Dr David Marshall. It takes place at St Stephen's House, Oxford, 11 - 14 June 2012.

[www.ssho.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/.../Understanding\\_Islam\\_Course](http://www.ssho.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/.../Understanding_Islam_Course)

LIZ CARMICHAEL

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Newsletter subscriptions for 2011-12: Please send at least £3 (cheques to 'St Theosevia Trust') to Newsletter, St Theosevia House, 2 Canterbury Rd, OX2 6LU.</b></li></ul> |
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- If you would like to receive newsletters and reminders by email, you can subscribe by sending a blank email to: [theosevia-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:theosevia-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)
- Free tea and coffee are available at Study Days, from 10am and at lunch-time. Lunch break is about one hour, 1-2pm. Bring packed lunch, or you can buy food nearby in North Parade.
- If you are willing to help serve coffee for a study day you will have a free place. Please

## DETAILS OF EVENTS IN TRINITY TERM

### **Saturday 12 May, 10.30 am – 4 pm** **Divine Light: Encountering Light Uncreated and Created**

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, Dr Allan Chapman and Dr Santha Bhattacharji

Metropolitan Kallistos speaks on Divine Light in Orthodox spirituality. In his *Triads for the Defence of the Holy Hesychasts*, St Gregory Palamas (1296-1539) wrote that while the Divine Light incarnate in Christ appeared to the outward senses of his apostles on Tabor, now “since it is united to us and dwells within us, it illumines the soul interiorly.” Dr Bhattacharji, exploring “‘God our endless day’: divine light in the Western tradition” writes that references to God as light or source of light are scattered throughout the Western Christian tradition, from Augustine onwards. However, these do not add up to a clear theme as they do in the Eastern Christian tradition, as they tend to get subsumed into more dominant discourses in the West, such as the love vocabulary of the Song or Songs, or the emphasis on the divine Being as source of all being that one finds in Eckhart and his school. This talk will look at some of the western references to light, examine the more dominant discourses that eclipse them, and then show how the vocabulary of light does have some unexpected manifestations in the West. Turning to the rise of scientific enquiry Allan Chapman writes: “‘Thou deckest thyself with light as it were with a garment’ (Psalm 104:2): references to the glories of Divine Light run through the psalms, so priests and monks, who recited the psalms daily, found it an inspiration to their intellectual curiosity. Why, for instance did refraction and reflection follow mathematical laws and why could men replicate the beauty and mathematical precision of the rainbow experimentally? It clearly suggested that the Divine Logic runs through light. Light not only dispelled darkness and ignorance but also followed laws which – as Johannes Kepler would later put it – enable us “to think God’s thoughts after Him””.

### **Saturday 9 June, 10.30 am – 4 pm** **Christian and Islamic Mysticism: Affinities and Contacts:** **Ibn ‘Arabi, Jalal al-Din Rumi, Louis Massignon** with Stephen Hirtenstein, Revd Dr Jane Baun, Anthony O’Mahony

A day to consider the affinities between the Islamic and Christian mystical traditions, medieval and modern, guided by three scholars with a particular heart for better understanding between religions. Stephen Hirtenstein will consider the teachings and influence of the Andalusian Sufi scholar and mystic Muhammad Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240). Stephen has written a spiritual biography of Ibn ‘Arabi and translated some of his short treatises. Jane Baun will explore contacts between Byzantine Christians and Sufis in thirteenth-century Anatolia as found in the writings of Jalal al-Dīn Rumi (d. 1273). Anthony O’Mahony will discuss the work of the French scholar Louis Massignon (d. 1962) in promoting better understanding of Islam in Western Europe and the Roman

## OTHER EVENTS IN TRINITY TERM

### CHRISTIAN MEDITATION GROUP

The Christian Meditation Group meets on Tuesday evenings from 7.25pm in St Theosevia's (2 Canterbury Road) for a period of quiet, meditation and fellowship.

**Inquiries:** Brenda Newey, 792838, [brendanewey@talktalk.net](mailto:brendanewey@talktalk.net)

### THE UNICORN GROUP

*An ecumenical discussion group founded by Nicholas Zernov in 1959*

The meetings, open to all, are usually held on Friday lunchtimes at the **House of St Gregory & St Macrina, 1 Canterbury Road**. The talks, followed by discussion, run from 1-2pm. Coffee is served from 12.30pm, packed lunches may be brought. Donations are invited to cover costs.

**Friday 4 May:** Fr Brendan Callaghan SJ (Master of Campion Hall): **Renewing Our Images of God: Insights from Object-relations Psychology and Ignatian Spirituality**

**Friday 18 May:** Fr Simon Bishop SJ (Chaplain, Oxford University Catholic Chaplaincy): **The Meaning of Life in Two Words**

**Enquiries (no booking needed):** Lynda Ellis, 01491 875446, [ellislynda@sky.com](mailto:ellislynda@sky.com)

### MEDIEVAL ARTS GROUP & BYZANTINE STUDIES CLASS

The **Medieval Arts Group** with Dr Nicholas Gendle takes a break for the summer and resumes in **Michaelmas Term**, on Tuesdays at 2pm, at the House of St Gregory & St Macrina, 1 Canterbury Road. It will focus on **Venetian Art and Architecture of the Sixteenth Century**, beginning on 2 October.

The **Byzantine Studies Class** with Dr Gendle, on Wednesdays, 10.30am, at 9 Fyfield Rd., will focus on **Byzantine Painted Churches of Macedonia**, for five weeks in **Trinity Term**, beginning on 18 April. The topic in **Michaelmas Term** will be **Romanesque Cathedrals of Southern Italy**, starting on 3 October.

**Enquiries:** Valerie Sansom, 0118 9479471

### FELLOWSHIP OF SS ALBAN & SERGIUS (OXFORD BRANCH)

**Enquiries:** [gregory.platten@lincoln.ox.ac.uk](mailto:gregory.platten@lincoln.ox.ac.uk)