No thorough investigation of Rilke’s life and work can fail to consider the poet’s lifelong preoccupation with his religious heritage. The deep piety of his mother cocooned the childish consciousness of the little René and the permanent influence of these early Catholic years is clearly evident in the works which mark a turning-point in his oeuvre (e.g. Visions of Christ (*Christus Visionen)* and The Book of Hours (*Das Stunden-Buch*)) and which “revolve” “around God” or his beloved Son. Nevertheless Rilke’s mature spirituality cannot be completely aligned with either one or other system of traditional religious beliefs. Rilke explicitly rejected Christian Orthodoxy and - while he used Jewish and Islamic sources for inspiration - never showed even the slightest interest in converting. However such a notion would completely belie his spiritual commitment, which was so central for Rilke: his determined preoccupation with the art of poetry, which was at the core of his being. If it is not actually possible to reconcile Rilke’s own *world view* with that of the established religions, how can we adequately grasp the spiritual universe in which and through which he explored his art? How can we then understand the “search for God in the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke”?

Laura Massey

July, 2017