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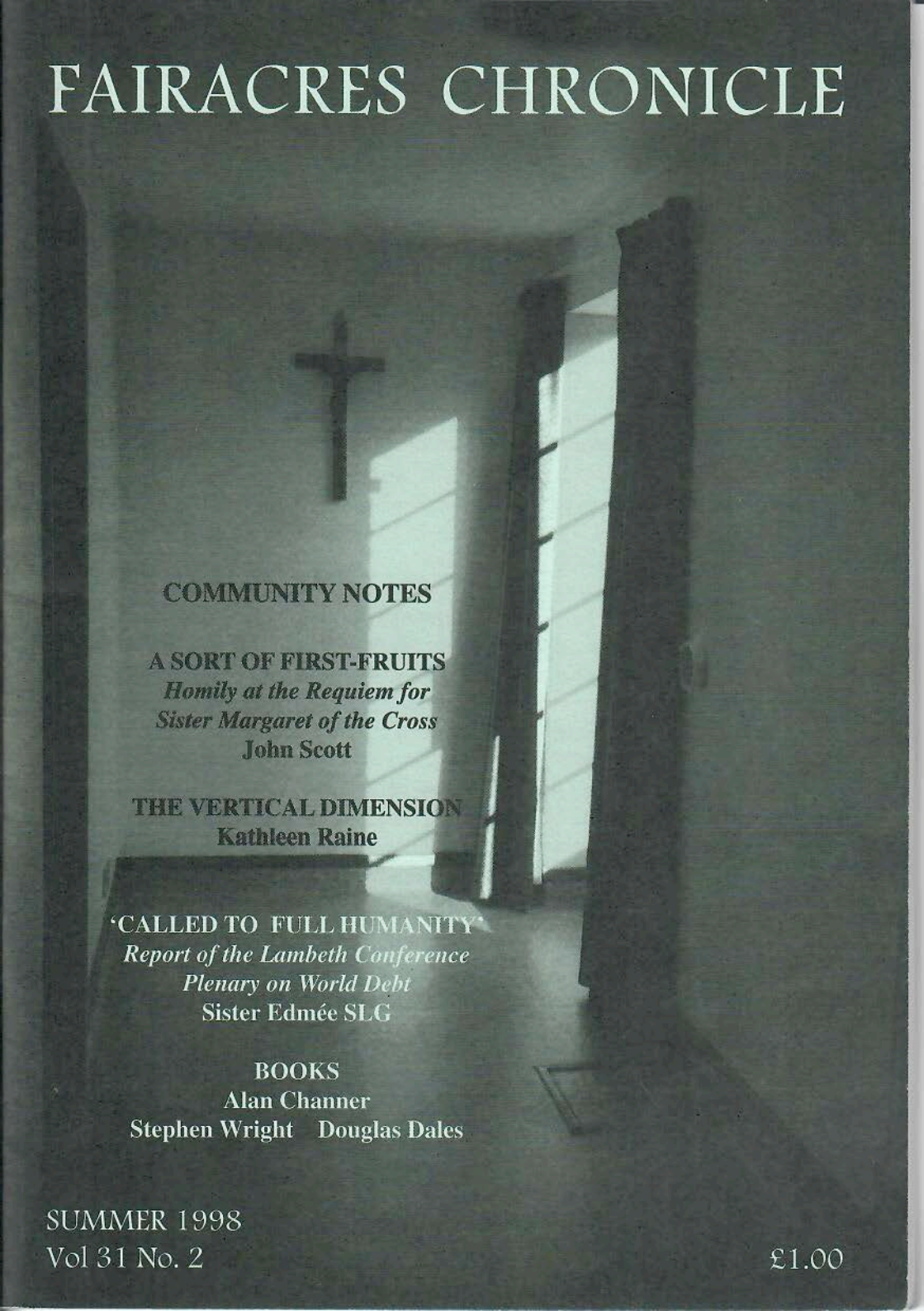

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'CALLED TO FULL HUMANITY'
Report of the Lambeth Conference Plenary on World Debt
Sister Edmée SLG

BOOKS
Alan Channer
Stephen Wright Douglas Dales

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COMMUNITY NOTES

FROM TIME TO TIME we are asked why we have four different forms of association with the Community instead of just one. What is the logic of having members of the Fellowship of the Love of God, Companions, Priest Associates and Oblate Sisters? 'Rationalization' seems to have much to commend it, except that in practice each form of association is different, and those who have been associated with SLG in these various ways over many years have no desire to be amalgamated. In New Zealand the situation is rather different and it may be that those who are meeting SLG for the first time there will find it best to have just one way of formalising the link. And of course we have a great many friends who are just that and for whom there is no need for anything formal; and many also for whom the *Chronicle* and the Fairacres Publications are the most important link.

What all who are formally associated with us have in common is a sense of feeling at home with us and a call and desire to pray their lives with the same intention and spirit as the Sisters. Becoming a member of the Fellowship signifies just that, and saying the FLG prayer of self offering faithfully each day is as far-reaching in its consequences as any sincere Yes to God must be. The vocation of Companions is specifically to *lay* life, and they have the Companion Guardian as their special link with the Community. For many years Sr Esther Mary has been fulfilling this task; Sr Shirley Clare has now been appointed as her Assistant. Companions have a personal rule of life and make a public affirmation of their commitment in the presence of the Community in one of our chapels.

Priest Associates vary greatly in their ministry and circumstances but they unite their priestly life, and the promises they made at their ordination, with the vowed life of the Community, recognise the primacy of contemplative prayer within it, and rely on the stability of the Community's prayer as a reminder of God's sustaining love. Many priests were initially drawn to SLG by the teaching of Mother Mary Clare and found in her a unique and valued soul-friend. Many still value their friendships with different Sisters in the Community, but what we can chiefly offer now to all associates is a spiritual link and awareness of standing together before God. We now pray for each of our associates (of whatever kind) by name at the Eucharist on the anniversary of their admission.

Oblate Sisters are, properly speaking, not associates but members of the Community. They have a training which includes a novitiate comparable to that of the nuns; they spend time living in the enclosure as Sisters and are committed to a Rule which is substantially that of the Professed, but made

applicable and lived out hiddenly in the world and in the midst of family and professional lives. Many Oblate Sisters are married; many find that retirement opens up opportunities for responding more fully to a contemplative vocation. In due course Oblate Sisters may make life-long promises to seal the totality of their commitment and self-oblation.

Just as our associates vary enormously so do we within the Community. It is easy to idealize the life of a contemplative community or to imagine that we are a group of like-minded women who, of course, are well on the way to sanctity, always get on well with each other, and do not have the ups and downs of ordinary human frailty and foibles to contend with. I enjoy the story, which may or may not be apocryphal, of a Roman Catholic teaching Sister whose order raised their hemline a few inches in the sixties. She came into the classroom in her new habit and the children were shocked to see her feet. 'What did you think I had?' she asked, 'Wheels?'! Incredibly, it is still possible to have such misconceptions.

But our daily experience reveals our 'feet of clay' as our different ages, temperaments, backgrounds, perceptions and stages in our lives, not to mention our sins, lead to tangles in relationships, conflicts over the kitchen stove, battles in choir and the occasional sleepless night. This unsatisfactoriness is the stuff of our prayed lives, as it must be for everyone who seeks to be real in their response to God, to be converted, and become available for God's work of redeeming love. Mother Mary Clare wrote to FLG in 1966:

> [Christ's] gift of peace is an inward gift, a peace which is not incompatible with conflict. It is not a peace as the world gives it but the peace of a will united in all things with God and therefore drawn with Christ into his saving work of reconciliation. What then is our work within the enclosure? A conflict with our enemies of which our selfhood is the chief, and with the principalities and powers of which St Paul spoke; the increase of corporate charity and unity - how much the Church needs this; how easily does a parish, a PCC meeting, a staff common room or even our own family become disunited; the re-direction of the frustration common to all mankind and the standing and going on standing through all the demands of a life of continuous prayer; through intercession to bear the weight of the world's needs and sorrows.

Not long ago we had a community meeting in which our feet of clay were revealed rather starkly, and I was anxious that our newest postulant would wonder what on earth she had come into and be dismayed. But when

I enquired, it was she who heartened me, rather than the other way round: 'It is just like in the world', she said, 'but here there is a little less escape'. We are thankful and glad to see our Novitiate growing: Sister Brenda of Jesus was clothed on the Feast of the Ascension; Eilidh Campbell was admitted as a Postulant on 26 June, and we expect others to join her before the end of the year. Also this summer we were saddened by the death of Patricia Pascoe, our Companion, and the cherished friend of a wide circle.

We continue to use daily before Sext the prayer for peace launched by Bishop George Appleton many years ago. It begins deliberately with a prayer in the first person singular, recognizing that it is with ourselves, with myself, that global peace-making must begin. I will end these notes by quoting it in full. I suggest that readers may like to take up, or renew, the practice of saying it at noon to associate themselves with a continuous prayer for peace offered at noon as it occurs around the world.

Lead me from Death to Life, from Falsehood to Truth.
Lead me from Despair to Hope, from Fear to Trust.
Lead me from Hate to Love, from War to Peace.
Let Peace fill our Heart, our World, our Universe.
PEACE PEACE PEACE

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HOMILY AT THE REQUIEM MASS
for Sister Margaret of the Cross SLG
March 31, 1998

JOHN SCOTT

HEARING this gospel we shall need to hold together its two emphases. A couple of Sundays ago we had the vineyard owner, who was disappointed in his fig tree. For three years it has borne no fruit and so is threatened with being cut down. No, says the labourer: I will work on it to make it produce this season and if nothing comes, then let it be removed. Produce, fruit: these are what are needed and expected. St John does not enumerate today the characteristics of the fruit we are to bear, but God the Father, the vine-dresser, is working hard to maximise his crop—removing some branches, pruning others, all to produce more and better grapes. And this Jesus underlines: 'She (let us say) who abides in me, and I in her, she it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing'. To be sure, the branches of the vine are vital—otherwise there will be no grapes—but let us not think too highly of ourselves; just indeed as St Paul warned the Corinthians and us. No longer bearing fruit, withering, being cut away: these images are there and however fruitful we continue to be, our mortality, death, comes to us finally. But we have borne fruit, offered to the vine-dresser, to God our Father. So much for the one emphasis, on the vine-dresser's work and concerns.

But before speaking of his Father, Jesus speaks of himself: 'I am the true vine and you are the branches.' To think of the vine-dresser gives us our work in this life; to think of the vine gives us hope for this life and the next. No grapes without the vine, which must continue, and of that vine we are assured that we may always be part, by having the command in our hearts and wills and turning to it again and again: 'Abide in my love.' We can hardly follow the example of Jesus Christ without continually questioning our fruitfulness, for he had to suffer all things in the way of the Cross. But death will be overcome, the Father will raise his Son, and he is our hope, our Sister Margaret's hope, of new life, of sharing in all the fruits of love.

Sister, we shall record of you in Community that you have lived out your vows in a very particular way by dying here. Others have lived here very faithfully, but you have lived and died here as a sort of first-fruits, your own distinctive mark and place, and for that blessing, I want to call it, we give thanks. And you fulfil for us—this is part of your fruit—the consecration of this chapel. The late Brother Giles at Mirfield, showing people around the Community Church, was sometimes asked why there was

no font. ‘We don’t have baptisms’, he said, ‘we don’t have weddings’; (he paused) ‘but we have lovely funerals’. The first two have taken place in this chapel, and now, Sister, we can show forth the fullness of our faith and hope, celebrating your funeral. May you rest in peace, and may your joy be full.

The Revd John Scott is Chaplain at Bede House

THE VERTICAL DIMENSION

KATHLEEN RAINE

WHEN I was invited to talk to you the theme which instantly came to mind was, 'The Vertical Dimension'; in part that is, for me, essentially what it is that poetry and all the art of the Imagination represent in our lives—a scale of values, call it Jacob's Ladder, on which spirits of higher mental regions descend to earth, and on which we, from the realities of this world ascend in vision. And in the second place because, having lived a long life in this changing world, 'the vertical dimension', in this sense, is what I feel has come to be neglected, not to say altogether lost, from much of the poetry now being written and from our expectation of it. But when I came to put pen to paper I found such a flood of thoughts pressing in on me that it seemed I could not even begin; for the theme involves so much, involves the very oldest of questions, 'What is man?', the question of the Sphinx, the question of the Psalmist, the question my own Master, William Blake, asked again in an emblem depicting a chrysalis with the face of a sleeping child: into what state of consciousness will that sleeper, in metamorphosis from the caterpillar to the winged life, awake? An ancient emblem of the classical world, implying, again, a change of state, a transmutation of consciousness itself. We live in a world to which the very notion of a hierarchy of states of consciousness, is alien. Yet this is the theme which has, in various forms, been central to my life-work, both as a poet and a scholar, and during the last ten years, as editor of the Review, *Temenos,* devoted to the arts of the Imagination—a Review devoted to affirming, defining, attempting to re-establish, that vertical dimension.

But where to begin? What is poetry that it should have occupied the hours and days and years of my life? Or of any life? 'Man shall not live by bread alone' we are told, 'but by every word of God'. Living as we do in a culture circumscribed by a materialist scientism, we have indeed seen in the Communist world a deliberate attempt at a human society which provides 'bread alone' and deemed the 'word of God' an unreality, something needless. How often do we not read or hear on the media Man described as a clever, tool-making trousered primate with an exceptionally large brain capacity and so on. Yet man is not a species, but a kingdom, as different from the animal kingdom as the animal from the vegetable, the vegetable from the mineral. The texture of the universe is seamless, yet each kingdom, whatever the overlap, is distenct; and what, if not the Word, is unique in the human kingdom? 'In the beginning was the word'; Adam 'named' the creaatures in

Paradise; and if a beautiful painting by Blake is to be believed, Eve named the birds. Or Rilke, in his ninth elegy, considers what in this boundless universe we are here for? And he writes:

> For the wanderer does not bring from mountain to valley
> a handful of earth, of for all untellable earth, but only
> a word he has won, pure, the yellow and blue
> gentian. Are we perhaps *here* just for saying: House,
> Bridge, Fountain, Gate, Jug, Fruit tree, Window,-
> possibly: Pillar, Tower?

and he goes on, considering what to so vast a universe, we can contribute:

> Praise this world to the Angel, not the untellable: you
> can't impress him with the splendour you've felt; in the cosmos
> where he more feelingly feels you're only a novice. So show him
> some simple thing, refashioned age after age
> till it lives in our hands and eyes as a part of ourselves.
> Tell him *things.*

By the word we create a world far other than the material order of the utile that serves only our material needs, that can be quantified, but lies outside the order of meanings and values which, through the mystery of the Word, constitutes the human order: without the word there can be no civilisation.

So we are told that 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.' That is an amazing claim to make for language, for it points to a source that used to be called 'inspiration' when people spoke of such things—the 'inspired' Word of God, a God (if one dare use the word) who 'spake by the prophets', and what else is the spirit of prophecy (Blake asks) but 'the poetic genius'? If the name of poet is still held in honour is it not because it still carries with it a certain remote echo of that age-old belief that the poet is 'inspired'? An honour due to poetry only when, and insofar as, it does, in a measure, aspire to participation in a sacred vision of the Word that is 'with God', on that vertical ladder which has in our time for the most part been lost?

Is not poetry the inspired word by which we name—and by naming create the human kingdom of meanings and values? Without the Word our humanity languishes, we revert to the order of animals whose food is material.When I was a child we believed that the sacred scriptures were 'inspired'; and if we venerated poets it was not for their craftsmanship or 'relevance' in terms of current affairs but because they too were held to be inspired. If and when we left school for a University it was more than likely that we read in Plato's *Ion* of the 'sacred' power of inspiration:

> For the best epic poets, and all such as excel in composing any kind of verses to be recited, frame not those their admirable poems from the rules of art; but possessed by the Muse, they write from divine inspiration. Nor is it otherwise with the best lyric poets, and all other fine writers of verses to be sung. For as the priests of Cybele perform not their dances when they have the free use of their intellect; so those melody poets pen those beautiful songs of theirs only when out of their sober minds. But as soon as they begin to give voice and motion to those songs, adding to their words the harmony of music and the measure of dance, they are immediately transported; and, possessed by some divine power, are like the priestesses of Bacchus, who, full of the god, no longer draw water but honey and milk out of the springs and fountains...For they assure us that out of certain gardens and flowery vales belonging to the Muses, from fountains flowing there with honey, gathering the sweetness of their songs, they bring it to us like the bees; and in the same manner withal, flying. Nor do they tell us any untruth. For a poet is a thing light, and volatile, and sacred; nor is he able to write poetry, till the Muse, entering into him, he is transported out of himself.

To poets of the inspired kind the 'measure' of song and dance is a magical means of transporting poet and listener from the common world into that other realm; Shelley spoke of the 'incantation' of his verse; we have but to hear the first words of any ballad,

The king sat in Dunfermline town
Drinking the blood red wine

or

There lived a wife at Usher's well
And a wealthy wife was she

to be transported into that other state, as by the words 'once upon a time' into fairyland. And indeed the poetic intoxication is a theme of poets from Arabia to W.B.Yeats, he too a Platonic poet, who invokes that state:

Because I have a marvellous thing to say.
A certain marvellous thing
None but the living mock,
Though not for sober ear—

The invocation of the Muse has become a literaary commonplace, but to poets of the Imagination it remains a reality; Milton invoked his 'heavenly muse' aand Gray wrote of Shakespeare who beheld 'such forms / As glitter in the muse's ray'. Blake, more down-to-earth, summons the 'Muses who inspire the Poet's Song to

...Come into my hand,

> By your mild power descending down the Nerves of my right arm
> From out the portals of my brain, where by your ministry
> The Eternal Great Humanity Divine planted his Paradise'

for the Inspirers are within. Yeats had his 'instructors' who spoke through the mediumship of his wife; or in more modern terms we may invoke Jung's 'transpersonal' mind. By whatever name, the Inspirers are a reality of imaginative experience.

* * *

If I speak of a 'vertical dimension' I must make it clear that what is at issue is not any question of 'another world' but the manner in which we experience this one. The vertical dimension is in the beholder, its transforming power operates in this world; as Blake wrote to an employer who accused him of not painting the world as it really is:

> I see Everything I paint In This World, but Everybody does not see alike. To the Eyes of a Miser a Guinea is more beautiful than the Sun, & a bag worn with the use of Money has more beautiful proportions than a Vine filled with Grapes.The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing which stands in the way. Some See Nature all Ridicule & Deformity, & by these I shall not regulate my proportions; & Some Scarce see Nature at all. But to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself. As a man is, So he sees. As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers. You certainly Mistake, when you say that the Visions of Fancy are not to be found in this World. To Me This World is all One continued Vision of Fancy or Imagination.

Blake's vision is simple and universal; and there are surely few of us who have not at some time seen the simplest things 'apparelled in celestial light', in the phrase of Wordsworth, while for Thomas Traherne also, the simplest pebbles on the path were radiant with that light. It is not the pebbles or the trees that have changed: it is we who no longer participate in that light of vision. There are poets—I think of Larkin—who at best regret its absence; few indeed who attempt to re-kindle that vision at the source, though there have been some, during my lifetime; not merely Eliot and Yeats and Rilke, but Dylan Thomas, who used that unfashionable word 'holy' or his friend Vernon Watkins, who, no less than the bard Taliesin knew the reality of inspiration.

* * *

I have lived to see the rise and fall of the Communist empire, proclaimed in my student days as the advent of Utopia—a sincere if misguided attempt to

prove that huankind could live by ‘bread alone’. Edwin Muir, in a poem written at a time when he was witnessing in Czechoslovakia what this doctrine represented in human terms, wrote of the diminution and obscuring of the human image by the denial of the sacred nature of man; by exalting the image of natural man, what makes man great is lost:

> At a sudden turn we saw
> A young man harrowing, hidden in dust; he seemed
> A prisoner walking in a moving cloud
> Made by himself for his own purposes;
> And there he grew, and was as if exalted
> To more than man, yet not, not glorified:
> A pillar of dust moving in dust; no more.
> The bushes by the roadside were encrusted
> With a hard sheath of dust.
> We looked and wondered; the dry cloud moved on
> With its interior image.
>
> Presently
>
> we found
> A road that brought us to the Writers’ House
> And there a preacher from Urania
> (Sad land where hope each day is killed by hope)
> Praised the good dust, man’s ultimate salvation,
> And cried that God was dead ...
> .....
> And in our memory cloud and message fused,
> Image and thought condensed to a giant form
> That walked the earth clothed in its earthly cloud,
> Dust made sublime in dust. And yet it seemed unreal
> And lonely as things not in their proper place.
> And thinking of the man
> Hid in his cloud we longed for light to break
> And show that his face was the face once broken in Eden,
> Beloved, world-without-end lamented face;
> And not a blindfold mask on a pillar of dust

Such was Edwin Muir’s imaginative perception of the human image in the Communist empire—’far Urania’. Nor has Western technological prosperity given rise to a flowering of the poetic genius. Where now is the once confident assurance of Western materialism in the ever onward and upward march of ‘progress’ through the forces of ‘evolution’? Contemporary poetry and painting, and even music which reflects the materialist mind of the time reflects rather the uncertainties, the desperation, the cynicism or the despair

of an age that has lost its roots in a spiritual order, deemed to have been made invalid by our materialist science, but with nothing to put in its place. The palliatives of modern technology do not feed the human hunger, when the image of man made 'a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour' has given place to some genetic formula. Reaffirmations of human dignity, rather, have come from the heart of Soviet Russia where the extremity of the need has generated a heroic response in such poets as Pasternak, Mandelstam, and Arseny Tarkovsky, father of the great film-director. No such heroic response has been demanded of us, and we adapt ourselves to our comfortable hells with acquiescent self-pity. The Waste Land Eliot prophetically described has invaded the arts themselves. Not even the artificial paradise of psychedelic drugs can take the place of mankind's spiritual food, one provided by the poets, painters and musicians—'Poetry, Painting & Music, the three Powers in Man of conversing with Paradise'—Blake again.

In contrast with what I have called the vertical dimension, the materialist ideologies can operate only on a horizontal, a flat-land world. On that level there can be, at best, political propaganda and social protest, a heightened journalism. Eliot in his use of free verse gave expression to the 'waste land' for which there is no incantation, no poetic frenzy of music or dance-rhythms. What for Eliot was a lament, for later generations became merely a style; for loss of form follows on loss of the poetic exaltation of which Plato speaks, that 'intersection of time with the timeless', 'the 'still point of the turning world' of which Eliot writes in the *Four Quartets*. It is notable that it is the poets who still affirm that centre whose work retains formal verse—Yeats, Edwin Muir, Vernon Watkins, Dylan Thomas and Robert Frost. Blake declared long ago that naturalism leads to loss of form, whether in painting or in verse. 'Nature has no Outline, but Imagination has. Nature has no Tune, but Imagination has. Nature has no Supernatural & dissolves: Imagination is Eternity.' The present time demonstrates in the loss of form in all the arts—the dribbles of Jackson Pollock and the 'abstract impressionists', the tuneless twelve-note scale, the 'free verse' that has no more structure than a news-item—which are the inevitable expression of the loss of access to the rhythms of life itself, the formal principle which is, as Blake affirms, not in nature but in what Coleridge called the 'shaping spirit of Imagination'.

Throughout the nineteenth century descriptive verse, and painting which reproduced natural appearances with minute and photographic accuracy abounded. Much of this continued to present the natural world as pleasing to behold, continuing unquestioned earlier schools which had held

beauty to be a supreme value. Now beauty is a word scarcely used, for what meaning has the word in the context of the neutrality of nature, unrelated to the vital form-creating power of Imagination? We have seen the emergence first of 'social realism' and then of a grimmer realism of poets and painters who have ceased to discover beauty in nature or in human nature. There has emerged a school of writers and painters who describe appearances not to enhance, but to dislimn, not a discovery but a denial of form, beauty and meaning. The kitchen sink is ever with us, but I think of Vermeer's kitchens where daily occupations at household tasks are bathed in what I can only describe as the light of love; so unlike the resentful and negative fashion of reducing our simple works and days to something valueless, to be resented rather than enjoyed. Again, it is not the bowls and dishes that have changed—though by our machines these too are made without the informing spirit of craftsmanship—but the light in which these are seen no longer shines from some inner vision of meaning and beauty. The song of birds has been a source of delight to poets from the troubadours to Chaucer, from the nightingales of Persia to Keats, from Shelley's skylark and Milton's to Hopkins'. Now children's schoolbooks contain poems informing them that the voices of birds are not a song but a scream; it is deemed more 'honest' to note nature's warts and blemishes than to observe its daily panorama of sun and moon, clouds and stars, birds and trees as the epiphanic language of a living mystery; or indeed to see that 'The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword are portions of eternity, too great for the eye of man.' All is meaningless and human fantasy, severed from its sacred source, becomes a Disney-land of vulgarity.

* * *

It would be unjust to hold poets and other artists individually responsible for the climate of an age and a materialist ideology which implicitly or explicitly affirms the cosmos to be an autonomous mechanism—or a meaningless accident—a view which precludes an entire realm of values. When Wordsworth wrote (paraphrasing Plotinus) ''Tis my belief that every flower enjoys the air it breathes', he was not indulging in poetic make-believe, but affirming that nature is a *living* presence, as other cultures have held as a self-evident truth. As indeed it is, if not matter but spirit, not the object perceived but the perceiving consciousness, be taken as the ground of reality as we behold and experience it. Yeats saw the post-Renaissance concept of a material universe as a mere brief deviation from the immemorial wisdom of mankind and predicted its end: 'The three provincial centuries are over',

he wrote, ‘Wisdom and poetry return’. Are not the predictions of the poets self-fulfilling? Let us hope so.

We all know Blake’s lines that so clearly affirm a hierarchy of mental worlds, or states of consciousness:

> Now I a fourfold vision see,
> And a fourfold vision is given to me,
> ‘Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
> And threefold in soft Beulah’s night
> And twofold Always. May God us keep
> From Single vision & Newton’s sleep.

Newton, creator of the cosmology which some leading scientists have already challenged but which, imaginatively, modern Western man continues to inhabit. Yeats, first editor of Blake’s Prophetic Books, followed his Master in his total rejection of the premisses of Western materialism, and in the course of his intellectual pilgrimage he scanned the entire horizon of the long excluded knowledge of the learning of the Imagination, ranging from theosophy and magic, folk-beliefs of the West of Ireland and psychical research, to the writngs of the Neoplatonists, the Sufis, the ghost-drama of the Japanese Noh. He came, ultimately, to his final commitment to the great source of that learning, the Vedic tradition. With his Indian Teacher, Sri Purohit Swamy, he made, in his last years, translations of the principal Upanishads. These studies were ridiculed at the time by both Marxist and American materialist critics. George Orwell did not hesitate to refer to these studies as ‘hocus-pocus’.

> One has not, perhaps the right to laugh (Orwell wrote) at Yeats for his mystical beliefs—for I believe it could be shown that *some* degree of belief in magic is almost universal—but neither ought one to write such things off as mere unimportant eccentricities.

It is a measure of the changes of the times that it would no longer be possible for an intelligent critic to write in such a way. He laughs best, we may be inclined to comment, who laughs last! No one can any longer dismiss the Perennial Philosophy, comprising as it does the philosophical and metaphysical literature of all civilizations prior to our own, as ‘hocus-pocus’—to do so is provincial indeed.

In a seminal essay entitled ‘The Necessity of Symbolism’ prefaced to the Ellis and Yeats edition (1893) of Blake’s Prophetic Books, Yeats takes up the theme of the ‘vertical dimension’ so uncompromisingly stated by his Master; a hierarchy of states of consciousness which are themselves the

agents which create different ‘worlds’. Yeats saw as the underlying fallacy of the materialist view:

> the belief that material and spiritual things do not differ in kind; for if they do so differ, no mere analysis of nature as it exists outside our minds can solve the problems of mental life.

Yeats then goes on to elaborate on Blake’s master, Swedenborg’s doctrine of ‘correspondences’:

> Degrees are of two kinds (Swedenborg writes) there being continuous degrees and degrees not continuous. Continuous degrees are like the degrees of visual clearness, decreasing as the light passes from the objects in the light to those in the shade… But degrees that are not continuous but discrete, differ from each other like that which is prior and that which is posterior, like cause and effect, and like that which produces and that which is produced…He that has not acquired a clear apprehension of these degrees cannot be acquainted with the difference between the exterior and interior faculties of man; nor can he be acquainted with the difference between the spiritual world and the natural, nor between the spirit of man and his body (Heaven and Hell, 38)

The materialist thinker (Yeats comments) sees ‘ “continuous” where he should see “discrete” ’ degrees and thinks of the mind not merely as companioning but as actually one with the physical organism. The degrees correspond to one another only by ‘correspondence’ as Swedenborg calls the symbolic relation between outer and inner; which ‘begins with a perception of something different from natural things with which they are to be compared’.

The vertical comparison is the key to the power of the symbol, in which the natural world is used, not (as in nature-poetry in the horizontal dimension) as an object to be described, but as the poet’s language, the keyboard, as it were, upon which he strikes resonances of inner experience, by the skilful use of corres-pondences. Mountain and river, tree and garden, bird and cloud, are words in the language of Eden in which Adam ‘named’ the creatures. One thinks of that supreme genius of the poetic art, Shelley, whose soaring lark (as the French phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard has so beautifully shown), is not so much a bird as an emblem of ascent, the soaring mood of poetic aspiration itself. Shelley does not describe the bird, as a naturalist might do, feather by feather - Shelley’s skylark is not visible at all, as ‘singing still it soars, and soaring ever singeth’. It is the poet’s spirit in flight, like Plato’s rhapsodist, to the ‘Garden of the Muses’, the ‘skies’ of Blake’s ‘supreme delight’, a region of spaciousness, freedom and light above

common consciousness of which the ‘skies’ have always been the natural symbol. Shakespeare’s lark sings at ‘heaven’s gate’ and Milton’s at the ‘watch-tower in the skies’ and Blake’s mounts through the ‘crystal gate’ of heaven. Hopkins’s lark is a musician reading his score:

> Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,
> His rash-fresh, re-winded new-skeinèd score
> In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour
> And pelt music, till none’s to spill or spend.

To what good purpose does a poet for whom these regions are closed inform us that the bird-song that has delighted generations, is not singing but screaming? What do such facts, true or false, tell us of music, of inspiration, of human experience?

Keats’s words still remain true:

> The voice I hear this passing night was heard
> In ancient days by emperor and clown,
> Perhaps the selfsame song that found a path
> Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home
> She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
> The same that ofttimes hath
> Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

The nightingale too is a word in the language of poetry. Yet English poets seem to have fallen into the habit of thinking that the function of poetry is descriptive—descriptive of the natural world, the one real world to the ‘single vision’ of materialist thought. It is true that for a poet like Peter Redgrove, nature is no mere mechanism, but a living, vital, magical process of Goethean ‘formation, trans-formation’. But there are few poets who retain, as does David Gascoyne, England’s one great poet at this time, the high role of the poet as the spokesman of the human spirit. The poetic exploration of the human kingdom, its moods and meanings has, since the last war, become incalculably impoverished. Poetry, from Homer, Dante, Rumi and Shakespeare, to Eliot and Rilke, to Edwin Muir, to David Gascoyne has continually explored the human kingdom in all its heights and depths, seeking to extend the frontiers of that kingdom and record its fine subtleties of wisdom and beauty and moral perception. In an age when there is only natural man the higher realms of Blake’s fourfold vision are lost, and with that loss, as Yeats foresaw,

> Conduct and work grow coarse, and coarse the soul…

We are misreading the works of poets of the imaginative tradition if we read their symbolic discourse in terms of another ideology; as indeed we have seen in much modern criticism, especially criticism of the romantic poets—of Shelley, whose exquisite imaginative landscapes, reminiscent of Turner, are taken as such. In Shelley's great Ode on the 'wind' of inspiration, every image resonates overtones in the scale of 'correspondences'. Shelley is invoking—affirming—not a material world but a living, epiphanic cosmos:

> Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
> On the blue surface of thine aery surge
> Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
> Of some fierce Maenad, ev'n from the dim verge
> Of the horizon to the zenith's height—
> The locks of the approaching storm.

Those who know him best will not fall into the mistake of imagining he uses the word 'angels' for aesthetic reasons. for all his knowledge of science—the electrical charge of the storm-cloud producing the fringes of cloud—he held the cosmos to be informed by living intelligences—angels, who, like the bright cloud itself, undergo a metamorphosis into the fiercer form, of 'Maenads'—of the approaching storm. The allusion to the passage from Plato's *Ion*, on poetic inspiration, is clear. The hair of the Maenad, frenzied follower of the god Dionysus, rises on the head as the divine inspiration possesses her. Shelley in these images is communicating his own deepest belief about the nature of poetic inspiration. Symbolic thought establishes by means of multiple allusion through images, associations with a whole field of thought, which I have called the 'learning of the Imagination'. Unless we know who the Maenads are, and the character of the god Dionysus and his cult, those frenzied rites that swept over the classical world, unless we have read or seen performed Euripides' play *The Bacchae*, in which the women draw honey and milk from the fountains, and tear to pieces Pentheus, the king who cast doubt on their god, we shall not be reading what Shelley wrote.

We have seen much misreading of this kind, in modern criticism; even to the point of one critic who goes so far as to propose 'simply to brush aside' Yeats's own reading of his own words (on the allusions in 'Among Schoolchildren' to Porphyry's *De Antro Nympharum).*

> What youthful mother, a shape upon her lap
> Honey of generation has betrayed
> And that must sleep, shriek, struggle to escape
> As recollection or the drug decide.

—Platonic recollection or the Lethean 'drug' of forgetfulness. This symbolism from the main-stream of European tradition, John Wain dismisses as 'a personal fandango of mysticism and superstition'. Instead of the 'the drug' of Lethean forgetfulness, Mr Wain suggests we take 'the drug' to be administered by the midwife at childbirth! Such critics are not reading, but misreading, the works of the poets. Both Shelley and Yeats employ a language of symbols which resonate within a whole context of civilization, of whose continuity every present is a part, If that civilization be forgotten or discarded we have indeed already entered a new Dark Age. Nor is the loss a matter simply of historical memory, it is a loss of 'the vertical dimension' of consciousness itself.

A still greater impoverishment follows from the abandonment by the poets themselves of their age-old task of establishing in every present a relation with the timeless world which is the soul's country, the invisible kingdom humankind has from time immemorial laboured to realize on earth in works of art. There is, as my parents' generation would have said—as I would still say—no 'poetry' in so much modern verse—no poetry in the sense of no resonances of imaginative meaning and beauty, but merely descriptions of facts or events we might find as well or better presented by a television commentator. I.A.Richards, himself one of the 'new critics', described poetry as 'the house of the soul'. Poetry and the other arts are indeed the world we inwardly inhabit, the human kingdom built over millennia in the full range of the height and depth of human experience by means of symbolic correspondences on a vertical axis of consciousness itself, with its whole range of values which it is the nature of the arts to explore and embody. If the material world be the body's country, the arts are the soul's country; where the realities are of a different order, where the rules are different, where (Blake again) 'all Things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms' and warty-face can never come.

* * *

In that world are heraldic animals and oracular birds, the walled garden of Paradise and its trees and rivers, a whole inner landscape of soul's country, mountains and caverns, demons and enchant-ments. Do we not all visit that country in our dreams? Jung somewhere has written that when words are spoken from that world (whether in dream or in some other state which unites, at certain moments, the sleeping and the waking mind) it is in a high exalted tone, fraught with meaning beyond the mere designatory significance of some object or event in the external world. In contrast with the trivial chatter of the daily mind of the commonplace there is a solemnity and dignity which meanings and values impart to communications of the 'other mind'.

In much poetry of the recent past there has been a deliberate avoidance of the incantatory, the lyrical, the solemnity and grandeur of speech proper to the image of man as made 'a little lower than the angels' but not to the materialist image of man - 'all that great glory spent', as Yeats laments. It is surely; through no mere change of literary fashion that this has come about, but inevitably in terms of the exclusion and denial of soul's country, which nevertheless we continue to visit in dreams—or which continues, in dreams, to visit us. Poets who deny that dimension can no longer write, or desire to write

> ...whatever most can bless
> The mind of man or elevate a rhyme;
> But all is changed, that high horse riderless,
> Though mounted in that saddle Homer rode
> Where the swan drifts upon a darkening flood.

So we have a revised prayer-book, a Good News Bible rewritten in the language of a chat-show, we have productions of Shakespeare which deliberately flatten out his verse to be read as a paragraph of prose, not to elevate but to depress a rhyme. The 'high horse' Pegasus on which, in the Greek myth, the poet ascends, has withdrawn to the world of dreams. David Gascoyne described this school of poetry as 'a celebration of the commonplace'—not as Vermeer and Traherne celebrated the commonplace, illumined by celestial light, but as such; like the dust that enveloped Edwin Muir's labourer in the fields of Czechoslovakia under the Communist rule.

The renowned French Ismaeli scholar, Henry Corbin, a co-founder with Jung of the Eranos circle, coined the word 'Imaginal', in distinction from 'imaginary'—which in common parlance signifies the merely unreal—to designate that inner world of psyche, recognized within the rich Ismaeli tradition he studied as the universe of the soul the *alam al-mithal.* This *mundus imaginalis* is soul's universe, and the whole immense world of the imaginable, the universe of symbol, would not exist without the soul. Here thought is materialized as image; and the sensible image, conversely, is imbued with meaning from the angelic intelligences of the inner worlds. This inner universe of soul is the human kingdom proper, an immeasurable kingdom native to us (or to which we are native) with an order of its own. It is the world which from the beginning of humanity poets and painters, dance and story, all the arts of the Imagination have embodied in countless forms, according to each nations—or each period's or each individual's—perception, and the current language of symbol and myth. In a time when there is no received language these living forms still present themselves to us, nameless but still intelligible. I see in the work of the painter, Cecil

Collins, the fullest embodiment of the soul's country that we have seen in England in this time—the beautiful gentle forms of the vulnerable soul, moving within a landscape of sacred trees and birds, rivers and mountains, the Holy Grail, the beautiful adornments imagination imparts. Collins uses no religious iconography, but these nameless figures, characteristic of this time in which many look for reality in our own dreams rather than in the iconography of religion, are no less recognizably holy than the Russian icons of the figures of the Christian story or the gods of Greece or India. We recognize the presences themselves of angels and oracles, kings and holy fools, sibyls and oracles, and we know that country and its landscape as one to which we are native. And for what other purpose has humankind built temples and palaces, painted and sculpted and told all the fairy-tales and visionary recitals, but to embody and make known to ourselves our inner kingdom? And what is music but the native speech of that country? If man does not live by bread alone is it not because the human kingdom must be fed on the milk and honey of the fountains of the muses, by the 'bread of angels'? The quest of the soul as it seeks the Holy Grail or the rose-garden or the emerald cities, a world of marvels and meanings and metamorphoses and ordeals and revelations, bears little relation to 'social realism' or minimalism or post-modernism and the rest. The *mundus imaginalis* is, further-more, a world of true imaginings, (unlike the imaginary as conceived in factual terms) since the intelligences—archetypal forms—which embody themselves in that interworld have their origin in reality itself. It is the true world, whose forms we see reflected in the 'vegetable glass' of nature, and without which 'nature has no outline and dissolves'. The imaginal world is, in Blake's terms, 'the Nature of Eternal Things Display'd All springing from the Divine Humanity'.

The greater part of the poetry of all times and nations tells and retells the soul' story, her loves and sorrows, her desires and her quest. These are guidance on the way as each individual takes up that story, realizes some part of it, and by the poets we are enabled to experience a whole beyond our partial personal lives. No poet understood this better than did Edwin Muir, who in his beautiful autobiographical book *The Story and the Fable* wrote of that archetypal story as 'the fable', of which each individual life is a reflection:

> ...the life of every man is an endlessly repeated performance of the life of man. It is clear...that sleep, in which we pass a third of our existence, is a mode of experience and dreams a part of reality. In themselves our conscious lives may not be particularly interesting. But what we are not and can never be, our fable, seems to me inconceivably interesting. I should like

> to write that fable but I cannot even live it; and all I could do if I related the outward course of my life would be to show how I have deviated from it; though even that is impossible, since I do not know the fable or anyone who knows it. One or two stages in it I can recognize; the age of innocence and the Fall and all the dramatic consequences which issue from the Fall. But these lie behind experience, not on its surface; they are not historical events; they are stages in the Fable. (p 49)

Edwin Muir's fable is Corbin's *mundus imaginalis,* the Imaginal world, not an imaginary world, but reality itself, where our human truth resides. In every generation the circumstances of life are different, so that every generation needs its poets to re-tell the endlessly repeated story anew. We have, as Muir elsewhere wrote, 'one foot in Eden' and from Eden look into 'the other land', the time-world, the world of history. But when that link is broken can civilization survive?

According to sacred tradition, the universal Imagination—Blake's Divine Humanity—knows all things—such is the wisdom embodied in the Welsh myth of Taliesin. Vernon Watkins, himself a great, underrated poet of the Imagination, has written his own version of the Taliesin poems, wherein this claim is made. In 'Taliesin and the Mockers' he paraphrases the age-old claim of the legendary poet:

> Before men walked
> I was in these places,
> I was here
> when the mountains were laid.
>
> I am as light
> To eyes long blind,
> I, the stone
> Upon every grave.
>
> I saw black night
> Flung wide like a curtain,
> I looked up at the making of stars.
>
> I stood erect
> At the birth of rivers.
> I observed the designing of flowers.
>
> Who has discerned
> The voice of lightning,
> Or traced the music
> Behind the eyes?
>
> My lord prescribed

The paths of the planets,
His fingers scattered
The distant stars.

The poem continues to tell the story of creation, and of human history, to the Incarnation:

Certain there were
Who touched, who knew him,
Blind men knew
On the road their God.

and ends with Taliesin, the inspired poet's challenge to those who assume the title of poet without knowledge of that sacred source;

Mock me they will
Those hired musicians,
They at Court
Who command the schools.

Mock though they do
My music stands
Before and after
Accusing silence.

This paper was first delivered as the Kenneth Allott Memorial Lecture at Liverpool in 1991, and on a later occasion at Fairacres. It was subsequently published in the 13th issue of Temenos*, the distinguished Review founded and edited by Kathleen Raine. We are very grateful to Dr Raine for permission to include her paper in this Chronicle, and especially glad to do so now, in celebration of her ninetieth birthday on 14 June.*

‘CALLED TO FULL HUMANITY’

A Report of the Lambeth Conference Plenary on International Debt
24 July 1998

SISTER EDMÉE SLG

There is a story told of a visitor to Mount Athos who asked a hermit how he was able to pray for the world when he never so much as saw a newspaper. The monk replied to this question: ‘I do not need to read the papers to know what is going on in the world.’

In the silence of an Athonite cave, we are to understand, prayer becomes so focused that it penetrates to the heart of the world’s wickedness and requires no information regarding this or that manifestation of it. But I needed, I was to discover, to attend the Lambeth Plenary on International Debt in order to feel the full impact of the evil being perpetrated on the poor countries of the world by the rich. Those who are informed about this issue will know that such language is not too strong to describe what is happening, while those who are less well informed may be interested to learn the facts which give rise to it as they were presented at Lambeth.[1]

But, first, I should explain that I, together with other Anglican religious (I do not know how many, but I picked up the figure seventy from somewhere), participated in the Lambeth Conference for twenty-four hours, 24-25 July, at the personal invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Right Reverend George Carey. Through his first-hand knowledge of several religious communities, the Archbishop has become a warm supporter of the religious life, and it was his desire that bishops attending the Lambeth Conference be given an opportunity to see for themselves that the religious life exists in the Anglican Communion. Thus it was that three from our Community, one representative from each of the houses, Fairacres, Boxmoor and Bede House, attended overnight, while three more Sisters from Bede House, being local to Canterbury, joined the Conference next day, the Feast of St James, for the midday Eucharist. There were already eight religious, from the UK, USA, Australia and Korea, on the Chaplaincy Team of the

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1 For these facts I shall use Canterbury Press Releases, nos. 44, 45, 48, 49 and 50, kindly despatched on request by the Canterbury Press Office (abbreviated in what follows: CPR + no.), supplemented by *Make a* Chain*ge: Official Human Chain Programme*, Birmingham, Saturday 16 May 1998, a single issue magazine devoted to the subject and given to all who attended the Lambeth Plenary on Debt. See note 3 for further details.

Conference, and the sudden arrival after the passage of a week of dozens more caused some surprise. 'Have you spawned?' a bemused bishop enquired. So the Archbishop's explanation of our presence, which he included in his introduction to the Plenary on International Debt, was rather welcome, as well as being warmly welcoming. Dr. Carey further explained that he had invited us for this particular issue because he knew it was the one about which we would be most deeply concerned. The three hours which followed ensured that he was right.

The Christian Aid Video

After the Archbishop's introduction, a Christian Aid video, lasting about twenty minutes, was shown. It began with a cholera epidemic in Tanzania, caused by contaminated water, and the opening shots focused on a memorably beautiful little girl of between two and three years who was dying, and who did die not long afterwards. The video revealed, graphically and searingly, some of the hardships brought on by crushing debt in Tanzania and Jamaica, and it included criticisms of the inadequate efforts of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to relieve Third World debt.

The President of the World Bank

The President of the World Bank, Jim Wolfensohn, spoke next. He had been shown the video earlier and had flown in from New York that morning in order to present his side of the picture, after which he flew back to New York for a 7.0 p.m. appointment. He was visibly upset, and acknowledged it: 'I am not angry about the film. I'm upset. I'm upset because it paints a picture of our institution which is quite simply wrong' (CPR 49, p. 2). His attempt to paint an altogether different picture was full of good points, but ultimately revealed him as being unwilling to budge: 'The last thing I would like to say on this debt question is, insofar as the Bank is concerned, and insofar as the countries are concerned, there is a limit to the extent that we and they are prepared to forgive debt' (Ibid. p. 7). Nevertheless, the good points he made in defence of the Bank should be reported.

First, of the estimated $215 billion owed by the indebted countries, the World Bank is owed less than 9%, the Monetary Fund less than 5%. The rest of that debt is owed to individual creditor countries, the United Kingdom, the USA, European countries (which are owed 55% of the debt), while the rest is owed to banks and various creditors. The World Bank is, therefore, only one creditor among many.

Moreover the Bank is, Wolfensohn claimed, the leader in education and in health care. 'You talk about cholera,' he said. 'No one talks about river

blindness [which] we've nearly eradicated in Africa for thirty million people…We're the major fighter in the world against AIDS. We're the major fighter in the world against malaria. None of that is in your film, none of it.' In addition to showing what the Bank is succeeding in doing, the President showed something of what the rich countries are failing to do:

> I spend an enormous amount of my time trying to convince governments that their responsibility to the poor of the world is not just responsibility for charity, is not just a moral responsibility, but is a responsibility to themselves in terms of interdependence with a world which has 4.7 billion in development out of the total of 5.6 billion.
>
> And I have troubles. I have troubles in the United States with Congress,[2] and I have troubles locally because you may or may not know that the level of overseas development assistance from those very governments in the last seven years has gone from 60 billion to 45 billion. That is not the World Bank. That is not the Monetary Fund. That is you. That is the people who are your parishioners and the governments you elect. (Ibid. p.3)

The President went on to talk about the 'toughest business in the world, that of convincing governments not to be corrupt'. The last ten years, he said, has happily seen a move from only a third of the countries in the world living under some form of democratic government to three-quarters, but many of those which until recently were dictatorships do not have strong governments. 'Capacity is the limitation in many of these countries, and conditions of inequity and corruption are abounding everywhere' (Ibid. p. 4).

Jim Wolfensohn joined the World Bank only three years ago and cannot be held responsible for many of the charges brought against the Bank by the speakers in the Plenary (in particular, the charge that the Bank has lent to regimes it knew to be corrupt). It was clear from the way he talked that the present leader is a man of energy, intelligence and courage, and is by no means lacking in compassion; that he knows from first-hand experience the horrors of Third World poverty and, within the constraints of the system to which he has given his allegiance, is struggling to alleviate the worst of them. But the facts remain. For the $25 billion in aid and development loans received by debtor nations in 1997, they paid the loaner countries $270 billion in debt service (CPR 45, p. 2).

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[2] An American bishop told me before the Lambeth Conference that of the 200 Episcopalian bishops in the States, only four had committed themselves to an interest in the issue of world debt.

The Archbishop of Cape Town

The next speaker was the Archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndungane—successor to Desmond Tutu—whose jurisdiction extends from South Africa to Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, Angola and the Island of St Helena. He spoke with a controlled passion, an urgency and an authority which were immensely impressive, and he covered the ground so thoroughly that his speech must be quoted at length:

> I want to assert from the start that this is not a financial crisis confined to Africa or Latin America. Countries that were until recently described as economic tigers, today find themselves toothless in the face of their own rising indebtedness…
>
> The United States, the world's most powerful economy, itself has a very high level of international debt—$1.3 trillion. This is twice as much as the US owed in 1994, and nearly triple the 1989 value. Although this debt does not pose a threat to human life in the US, as it does in the poorest countries, it is causing concern in international financial circles.
>
> So let us be clear. The crisis of international debt that we are debating here today is not just a matter for the poorest countries. Nor is it a matter that only affects sovereign governments. It affects all of us everywhere, all of us who have become too dependent on credit cards. It affects those of us who struggle to repay loans to pay for the very roof over our heads, those of us who live in fear of losing our jobs, and therefore our ability to repay our debts; those of us in hock to the loan-sharks that prey on our poorest communities. We all live in the grip of an economy which encourages over-lending and over-borrowing, an economy which drives us relentlessly into debt. But the poorest, those with very little income to depend on, are not just in the grip of this economy. They are enslaved by it. (CPR 48, pp.1–2)

In another Canterbury Press Release (45), Dr Carey is quoted as having told his own diocese earlier this year that the people of the debtor nations are 'engulfed in a form of slavery no less real than the terrible Atlantic slave trade of the early nineteenth century,' an analogy being drawn by everyone who is concerned about the plight of the poorest countries, and one which sprang spontaneously to my mind during the Plenary before I had encountered its use in this context. The fact is, we live now, no less than in the early nineteenth century, in a world in which, as the Archbishop of Cape Town went on to say, 'money has more powerful rights than human rights.' He added a somewhat doubtful claim, if an entirely legitimate hope, that 'only in our churches, our synagogues, our mosques and our temples does it seem possible to envision a different world and a different economy.' (CPR 48, p. 3)

Then, under a heading called 'The Trickle–Up Effect,' the Archbishop went on to say:

> This is the effect that defies gravity. It's the trickle–up effect. It's the transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich…As this crisis has deepened, so poor indebted countries are increasingly transferring their tiny wealth to rich countries. They do this by paying interest, and then compound interest, on loans they have sometimes repaid several times over. They do this by using money given for aid and development to pay off debts. For every $1 that rich countries send to developing countries, $11 comes straight back in the form of repayment on debts. So wealth is trickling up from the South to the North. Countries of the South find themselves giving away, virtually free, their precious commodities, like coffee, copper, tea and sugar…We are debating this issue today because trickle–up is not working, because enslaving the poor through debt is unjust, because each day the poorest countries transfer $717 million to the richest creditor countries.

After Archbishop Ndungane's powerful speech, which received prolonged applause, we heard Bishop Luiz Prado Pires of the Diocese of Pelotas, Brazil, making the point that debt is not a simple North–South issue because there are people in the south who have money and live like people in the north. He went on to describe how 'natural resources are exploited in ways that degrade the quality of the environment, with the same technology that is forbidden in its country of origin.' (CPR 44, p.3.)

Further speakers were Archbishop Khotsu Makhulu of Central Africa, Archbishop Alberto Ramento of the Philippine Independent Church, Bishop Nicodemus Engwalas–Okilli of Uganda and, finally, Peter Selby, Bishop of Worcester. They all had important things to say. Especially disturbing was the plight of the Philippines, which the Archbishop of Cape Town also touched on in his speech. The government of the Philippines has to allow an automatic allocation of 40% of its annual budget to service its debt burden of $46 million incurred during the Marcos regime. 'This means,' Archbishop Ramento said, 'that more and more foreign currency will be needed to pay off debts—foreign currency that can come only from remittances of our exploited migrant workers abroad, now numbering seven million, and from tourism which has encouraged the growth of the sex industry…an industry which encourages the exploitation of children by paedophiles posing as tourists.' (CPR 44, p.2.)

A Selection of Facts from *Make a* Chain*ge*

The three–hour Plenary on International Debt at Lambeth covered the whole ground of the problem and must have left everyone attending it both

informed and convinced that the call for the cancellation of Third World debt is not one whit less justified or urgent than the call to abolish the slave trade in the early 1800s. But, in this necessarily abbreviated account, a great many important points have been left out, and for some of these I turn to the publication *Make a* Chain*ge, Official Human Chain Programme,* published by JUBILEE 2000 COALITION for the annual summit meeting of the G8 held in Birmingham on Saturday 16 May of this year.[3]

From this publication it is possible to see at a glance some of the factors which have contributed to the present crisis. For instance, in the early 1970s the banks were awash with dollars when oil–producing countries raised their prices and deposited their profits with western banks. The banks, who had to pay interest on this money, needed to lend it quickly and they targeted Third World countries which were keen to borrow in order to pay for, among other things, increased oil prices. From then on the wheel of mis-fortune continued to grind for these countries. The end of the pro-cess, described on pp. 12–13 of *Make a* Chain*ge*, is: 'Essentially, poor countries have gone bankrupt. But there is none of the provision for them that there would be for an individual or company who goes bankrupt and is thereby protected from creditors.'

Make a Chain*ge* also gives a full account of the G8 (the eight most industrialised countries of the world comprising Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States and, since this year, Russia) which has met annually since 1975, the decisions of which, although it represents only 12% of the world's population, are decisive in relation to the rest of the planet—a fact which raises questions about its legitimacy.

One of the most significant articles in this richly informative publication is called 'Debt Relief is Nothing New' (pp. 32–33). From it we learn that Britain borrowed huge sums of money from the United States to help finance the First World War and, in the 1930s, stopped paying back, and still owes $12.8 billion to the States from World War I loans. After World War II Britain borrowed $3.75 billion, and repayments were limited to no more than 4% of export earnings. In 1953, Germany was granted massive debt relief by the Allied Powers who initially required Germany to use 10% of its exports to repay the debt. But Germany argued that this was unsustainable and the Allies agreed to limit Germany's payments to only 3.5% of export earnings. But in the current negotiations for debt relief for the poorest countries of the world, the creditors have decided that these countries can afford to spend *20*

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[3] For further information please contact Jubilee 2000 Coalition, PO Box 100, London SE1 7RT. Telephone +44 (0)171 401 9999, fax +44 (0)171 401 3999, www.jubilee2000uk.org.

to 25 % of their export earnings on repaying debts.

'Where there's a will there's a way'

One of the points made by the Archbishop of Cape Town is that the cost to all lenders of cancelling all debts is, by the World Bank's own estimate, $7.4 billion. 'Compare that,' he said, 'to the $12.5 billion being promised to President Yeltsin. Compare that to the $60 billion that was found, almost overnight, to bail out bankers who had lent foolishly to South Korean banks and companies.' (CPR 48, p.7.) Money in large amounts, as anyone who is accustomed to reading audited accounts soon realises, is a very flexible commodity indeed, and seems to depend more on the will of those handling it than upon its quantity. 'What is lacking,' the Archbishop said, 'is the political will to find the money to bail out the poorest people on earth.'

But there are hopeful signs that the political will of the creditor countries is being aroused by the gathering weight of public opinion and the dedication of an increasing number of individuals and groups to this cause. The chain of human beings round the G8 Summit in Birmingham on 16 May must have looked like the writing on the wall to the G8 members, and if that kind of pressure is sustained the demand for a Jubilee year and a halt to such unbridled usury will have to be heard.

A Mediation Council

Towards the end of his speech, Archbishop Ndungane set out a scheme for a Mediation Council which would provide 'a strict and neutral arbitration and monitoring process for agreeing debt relief for the poorest countries,' and I should like to end this attempt to report the Lambeth Plenary on International Debt with some of the points he made:

> The Mediation Council I propose would function as an international bankruptcy court. [It] would challenge corruption, in both the lending and borrowing. It would take evidence from experts. It would assess the country's capacity to pay. Above all, it would seek to protect ordinary citizens of the country—men, women and children—from having to carry the full brunt of the country's debts and losses. Resources for human development—like clean water, sanitation, health provision and education—would have to be allocated before governments could divert funds to unproductive debt service. Its purpose would be to give countries a fresh start, and by disciplining both debtors and creditors, prevent countries from over–borrowing in future, and discourage lenders from making reckless loans. It would stop the poorest people of a country falling into a bottomless pit of debt in the future.
>
> What I am saying here is that debt cancellation, far from being an unjustified and wasteful handout, is really an opportunity to return order, stability and discipline into the international financial system of lending and borrowing.

After inviting his brother bishops to take this matter prayerfully into their hearts, and posing the question: 'What is God calling you to say to the Church in your own country, to the members of your diocese, to the rich and powerful in your country?' the Archbishop concluded:

> … I have a dream: that we will celebrate the birth of Christ our Lord with a truly Jubilee celebration by the cancellation of the unbearable debts of the poorest countries; that we will give a billion people a debt–free start; that the Third Millennium will be a new beginning for the Third World.

Since I put together this account, a book has come into my hands[4] which I warmly commend, *Grace and Mortgage: The Language of Faith and the Debt of the World,* by Peter Selby,[5] now Bishop of Worcester, and the last speaker in the Plenary on International Debt. *Grace and Mortgage* is a book which struggles with every aspect of money and our relationship to it, while its chapter 'A World in Debt' provides a detailed exposition of the crisis, revealing it at once in all its complexity as well as in all its appalling simplicity. From a book overflowing with quotable facts and ideas, I will confine myself to only one:

> By seeing our debt to God and Christ's repayment of that debt as a spiritual truth (by which we easily mean, strangely for Christian believers, a truth that is not based in the material world) we are allowed to leave the financial world to look after itself and go its own way. We have made it possible for ourselves to worship God (religiously) and Mammon (economically) by simply allowing ourselves two separate kinds of language and not letting them interact in any way that would confront our dependence on the economy of credit. (p.6)

It seems to me that another way in which we have made it possible for ourselves to use two separate kinds of language between which no interaction is allowed, derives from the superficial interpretation of the saying, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's'. (Mark 12:14–17, also Matt. 22:17–22 and Luke 20:22–26.) This reply of Jesus to the question, 'Is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or not?' has been assumed to mean that Jesus is giving permission for the two spheres—tribute to the powers of the world and tribute to God—to operate independently of each other, with iniquitous consequences in

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4 Through Professor Christopher Rowland, to whom I also owe an extremely helpful discussion on this issue.

5 Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997, £10.95, ISBN 0-232-52170-0.

Christian history. But the emphasis in the synoptic accounts on Jesus' request to be shown the symbol of these powers, 'Bring me a coin that I may look at it,' followed by, 'and they brought one,' suggests, on the contrary, that he is stating a law: if you possess coins with Caesar's image and superscription on it then you are under a law to 'render unto Caesar'. But he is also, and primarily, revealing an ideal: no such image is to be found on Jesus himself, and he is, therefore, free of any necessity to render tribute to the powers of this world. And so, in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is able to say, just before his arrest: 'The ruler of this world is coming, but he has nothing in me' (14:30).

By the end of the three–hour Plenary, the sense of *how much* the ruler of this world has *in me* was overwhelming. I think the fact that we were cheek by jowl with the bishops and their wives from those suffering countries enormously contributed to one's capacity to feel part of their plight, but even more to feeling convicted for being inextricably part of the economic system which is perpetrating it. We have not only allowed the financial world to look after itself and go its own way but we have been, and are, bound up in it by our tacit approval of its methods of 'rendering unto Caesar'. Just at the point when we could have learnt something from Marx about the iniquities of capitalism, we have consigned Marxism to the dustbin of history. But if we recognise that there are not two legitimate languages for the Christian, one for Caesar and one for God, then the uncontrolled rapacity of this world for money, which is reaching suicidal proportions for the whole planet, would be checked, and the dream of the Archbishop of Cape Town be realized—and much else besides.

BOOKS

ALL IN GOOD FAITH: A Resource Book for Multi-Faith Prayer. Edited by Jean Potter and Marcus Braybrooke. World Congress of Faiths, 1997. £7.99

I opened *All in Good Faith* with mild apprehension. The text on the back cover begins with the following observation: 'People of all faiths have, in recent years, met together on a growing number of occasions to pray and witness together. This has raised both practical and theological questions.' The design of the front cover points to these questions with unconscious ease. Strewn down the front of the book, and juxtaposed at varying angles, are the symbols of 10 religious traditions. Symbols of incalculable significance are crowded together as if they were merely logos.

The book is divided into three main parts. First, in a section called *Prayer in the World Faiths,* the nature and history of inter-faith services are outlined, and some of the theological questions raised by these services are examined. Then adherents to the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Jain, Jewish, Sikh and Zoroastrian faiths present the practice of prayer in their respective traditions. The second section, *The Anthology,* draws together prayers, extracts from scripture and sayings from all these traditions, and covers themes including freedom and justice, healing, human dignity, peace and relationships. Finally the third section, *Inter-Faith Services,* reproduces several orders of service—including the 1997 Observance for Commonwealth Day, the marking of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, and an international service of prayer for the victims of land mines.

The book provides much to ponder. The varied approaches to prayer encompassed by the range of traditions is striking, and there are enjoyable differences in style. Reverend John Pridmore maintains, for example, that 'Where Christians take part in interfaith worship…it is usually out of courtesy rather than conviction. When half the Scouts are Sikhs it seems rude to forbid their prayers at the parade service.' Ranbir S Sandhu says simply, 'The Sikhs believe that the human soul is part of God. If one understood this link with Divinity one would be at peace…No faith that believes in prayer to God can be false'. Rabbi Rachel Montagu points out that 'petitionary prayers are felt to be inappropriate on the Sabbath, God's day of rest', while Venerable Pandith Vajiragnana maintains that since 'the Buddhist does not believe in the existence of an omnipotent deity, then there is no point in making petitionary or intercessory prayers'.

Dipping into these pages is an excursion into the aspirations, struggles and contradictions of the human soul. There is a rich seam of commonality. Imam Abduljalil Sajid contends that 'where there is no prayer there can be no purification of the soul...Prayer in Islam is truly an act of worship to God. Worship means serving and obeying God in all aspects of life.' Venerable Vajiragnana points out that 'the spiritual path is one of purification...this process of mental purification might be described by the word "prayer" '. Reverend Pridmore maintains that 'the liturgy of worship is important but what matters more is the life of the worshipper', and Ranchor Prime, a Hindu, says that 'to remember God at all times is the essence of all spiritual instructions'.

Both differences and similarities of prayer in different faith traditions are referred to in a moving prayer from the *Reform Forms of Prayer for Jewish Worship:* 'In that which we share, let us see the common prayer of humanity;

in that in which we differ, let us wonder at the freedom of man; in our unity and our differences, let us know the uniqueness that is God'.

There is also a moving element to the orders of services cited in the *Inter-Faith Services* section, a sense of the human family coming together in the presence of the transcendent. As John Pridmore expresses it, 'few who have shared in such worship would doubt its validity'. The editors of the book note that very often the preparation of such services, 'when people of different faiths need to be completely honest with one another and accept what others say in a spirit of humility', creates great depth of fellowship between people.

The book also contains a helpful discussion on different types of inter-faith gathering.Careful distinction is made between three categories of inter-faith occasion: those held by one faith com-munity to which members of other faiths are invited as observers; those of a 'serial multi-faith character' where members of different faiths make distinct and separate contributions; and those involving 'interreligious prayer' where all participants may be asked to join in prayer together.

I am more convinced, than before I read this book, that multi-faith prayer is possible and valuable. Mahatma Gandhi pointed out that God 'transcends speech and reason...He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply IS to those who have faith.' If that is the case, and if each of us is only a tiny window into truth, then we will surely be enlarged by worshipping with those whose vision is different.

Perhaps my mild aversion to the front cover of the book is unjustified. However I do retain two reservations, both of which are linked to what the front cover inadvertently expresses. Both reservations are also linked to the fact that, as the editors indicate, the book was produced primarily for a British (or western) readership already well-disposed towards multi-faith prayer. This is a tiny fraction of all people of faith.

First, little attention is given to the deep pain and long-standing division which has been caused by, or at least associated with, inter-religious strife. Acknowledging this pain, and ultimately dealing with it, can be a crucial element in the building of bridges between faiths. Multi-faith prayer in urban Britain is likely to require a smaller movement of the heart than it would in Beirut, Sarajevo, Jerusalem, Karachi, Juba or Jaffna. Engaging naively in multi-faith prayer can have harmful consequences, and the gravity of this fact merits more precautionary advice on the part of the editors.

Second, there is little guidance for the reader living in pluralist, largely secular western societies, on the value of deepening roots within one faith

tradition. There is a danger that people yet young in faith and in prayer will find that a '*Resource Book for Multi-Faith Prayer'* offers an invitation to create a syncretistic system of personal worship which 'feels good', but which, consciously or unconsciously, leaves out the more difficult, and ultimately beneficial aspects, of religious commitment. This again would have merited more comment from the editors.

Despite these reservations, I put the book down feeling more convinced that inter-faith encounters can be of immense value in a personal spiritual journey. They can result in the deepening of belief and issue forth in the strengthened aspiration to lead a holy life.

Father Lawrence Freeman OSB, when he invited the Dalai Lama to speak on the Christian gospels, said that the ground of the encounter between Christianity and Buddhism was 'poverty of spirit and purity of heart'. *All in Good Faith* implicitly encourages the reader to move onto this ground, and perhaps it is ground where human opinions on types of prayer, types of faith and types of book cover become less important.

ALAN CHANNER

A NEW READING OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS, by Ruth Etchells. Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998, £9.95

I found this a deeply refreshing book. Partly this was due to its beautiful English: never trite, never pretentious, again and again communicating new insight into familiar themes through fresh turns of phrase. It is not always easy, and I found that several sections repaid re-reading; but that is the mark of Ruth Etchell's originality of thought. Partly it was refreshing because of the author's unashamedly theological interest in the parables. In an era when much parable scholarship (particularly in the richtly productive field of the USA) has distanced itself from theological categories in favour of philosophical or sociological ones, it is good to read again of the parables as revelations of God, the God of mercy and justice. And, not least, this book was refreshing for its finely-poised combination of a literary and a historical approach to the parables. Though the main 'tools' she uses to unlock the parables are literary ones, Dr Etchells gives the lie on every page to the notion that to read Scripture in a 'literary' fashion involves sitting loose to history. Without weighing her text down with footnotes, she constantly shows that she has done her historical spadework, conveying an unobtrusive sense of much scholarship absorbed.

An essentially simple distinction controls the argument—that between 'metaphor', by which things from different realms are brought together on the basis of an essential likeness, and 'metonymy', by which things from the

same realm are brought together by association with one another. (This conception of these two 'tropes' is drawn from the literary scholar David Lodge.) Readers should not be put off if they find the rather brief introduction to this distinction on pp.6-9 difficult to grasp at first; its applicability to the parables becomes clear very soon. It is, in fact, a brilliant way of moving beyond the old sterile and inadequate choice posed between interpreting the parables as 'allegories' and reading them as 'similes' making a single point. Dr Etchells shows that, in different degrees, elements of 'metonymy' and of 'metaphor' operate in all of them. That is , they present a coherent, metonymic world—whether it is that of a village, a journey, farming practices, a wedding, or whatever. The details hang together. Yet each parable also presents a metaphoric dimension, a point at which it opens on to another world, which is the order of God and his kingdom. Sometimes the clue to metaphor lies in a traditional image, such as that of harvest for judgement. Sometimes it lies in language that goes beyond the bounds of the metonymic world of the story, as when the father speaks of his son as having been dead, and come to life again. Sometimes it is found in an element of intensity or excess, as in the priority given by the shepherd and the woman in Luke:15 to finding that which was lost, and their joy in finding it. Dr Etchells shows how, time after time, the parables Jesus told reflect back upon the teller: not only do they reveal God the Father, but also the work and character of his incarnate Son.

There is a lightness of touch in the application of the 'tools' which betrays the hand of the sensitive and experienced literary critic. Here is no slavish, regimented forcing of the parables into a mould. The same is true of the themes around which the book is organized; Parables of the Sovereign God (The Law of Grace, The Law of Increase); Parables of Right Humanness (Knowing the Times; Commitment and Obedience); The Last Things. They are themes which let the riches of the parables emerge without imposing a straitjacket on them. Parables, above all, are texts which should be dealt with in such a way as to open them up rather than closing them down, and that Dr Etchells does in consummate fashion.

Her feel for the parables in their ancient context is seen not least in her judicious portrayal of their Scriptural background. She draws our attention to a number of thought-provoking echoes, such as that of Cain in the grumbling labourers in Matt. 20. Nor is she insensitive to traditional historical questions such as the transmission and redaction of the parables. But (another most refreshing feature!) she allows the stories to have their full resonance within their Gospel contexts before making any comments about the elements which may trace back to the early Church or the Evangelists

rather than Jesus, and she makes such comments in a commendably tentative spirit which more rigidly historical scholars would do well to imitate.

There are certain aspects of her interpretations which current historical scholarship would question. She sets a number of parables in the context of the quest for another-worldly 'heaven', an anachronistic notion in the Judaism of Jesus' day; related to this, her discussion of the Jewish expectation of the 'end', reflected in Jesus' teaching, tends to underplay the very this-worldly idea many Jews would have had of the 'new age'. And the portrayal of the 'self-righteousness' of the Pharisees and others over against whom the grace of God is revealed in the parables perhaps needs rather more nuancing—as is now made possible by many recent studies of Jesus in his historical setting. We need to make sure we are as fair as possible to Jesus' opponents. There are also places where a little more on the social background, drawing on studies such as that of William Herzog (1994) could have enriched her presentation. (In that light I would not be as hard on the untrustworthy manager of Lk.16: 1-8 as she is on pp 134-139!). But these are minor points which do not affect the thrust of her argument and could easily be incorporated within it.

Perhaps the most interesting thing which the book reveals—whether intentionally or not—is the usefulness of literary criticism as a bridge between historical study and theological interpretation. At the same time this very combination leaves us with a question. Whose 'world of meaning' are we considering? Dr Etchells slips effortlessly, and without sleight of hand, from the context of Jesus himself to our modern context, showing how the parables deal with fundamental and universal questions—the nature of authority, law and grace, stewardship of the earth and so on. Is this universality a sign that the author whose meaning we are seeking is God himself? Are we sometimes imposing our own questions and meanings on the parables? Can we maintain our sense of the *strangeness* of their human speaker, and what he meant? It is entirely appropriate that a book on the parables should send us away thinking about such things.

STEPHEN WRIGHT

THE CONVERSION OF EUROPE from Paganism to Christianity 371-1386 AD by Richard Fletcher. HarperCollins. 1997, £25.00 hardback; 1998, £10.99 paperback.

This is a remarkable piece of history, covering a huge sweep of European geography and social development. It is written in a lucid and accessible style, shot through with a gentle and perceptive irony. It can be highly recommended to the general reader as well as to those with a more

professional interest in the subject of the history of the Christian Church and its mission. Considering the scope of research, the book appears remarkably accurate and well-informed, and a mass of useful and directed reading is listed at the end.

The particular value of this book is in the way it shows how active missionary work grew up almost by accident in the fourth and fifth centuries in areas peripheral to the Roman Empire, in the east and the west. It has perceptive discussion of the challenge posed by pagan religion in the countryside, and highlights the role of individual missionary bishops where unusual patterns of opportunity opened up.

In relation to the spread of Christianity in the British Isles, the treatment is full and fair-minded, putting the labours of the Celtic monks and of the missionaries to the Anglo-Saxons into a wider European perspective. The initiatives in the eighth century of Boniface and others in Germany is ably examined and related. The writer handles well the political and social aspects of the growth of Christianity, especially the role and response of kings and the patronage of the nobility. Some of the saddest pages are those which describe the forcible conversion of central and eastern Europe by Charlemagne and his successors.

One of the most valuable sections from an ecumenical perspective is the fascinating and at times convoluted pattern of mission from Rome and Byzantium in the Balkans. There is also extensive consideration of the impact of Islam, and of Christian attitudes towards the Jews, both religions being rival monotheisms. Much subsequent European history is elucidated by this distinguished study.

DOUGLAS DALES

Would You Like An

ANGLICAN COMPANION?

It costs £7.99, is edited by Alan Wilkinson and Christopher Cocksworth and is produced by SPCK and Church House Publishing.

At one time Anglicans had a common core of religious material to nourish and guide them at the various stages of life, drawn from the Prayer Book, Bible, hymns and books like *Pilgrim's Progress.* The disappearance of that core in recent years has been a great loss.

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Prepared in consultation with the House of Bishops and other representative Anglicans, it is commended by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

The project arose after a consultant remarked to me that Anglicans were ill-prepared for death. My pastoral experience and my researches into the ministry of chaplains to the forces confirmed that he was right. This led to a sermon in Portsmouth Cathedral and then to an article in the *Church Times*, which called for the creation of an authorised 'knapsack' of core material. This call received such an enthusiastic response that the Liturgical Commission asked me to undertake the task in co-operation with Christopher Cocksworth, now Director of the Southern Ministerial Training Scheme.

ALAN WILKINSON, *Diocesan Theologian, Portsmouth.*

BOOKS RECEIVED

From SPCK
Tarjei Park, *The English Mystics,* £9.95

From Church House Publishing
Colin Podmore, ed., *Community—Unity—Communion, Essays in honour of Mary Tanner*, £9.95.

From Darton, Longman & Todd
George Hacker, *The Healing Stream, Catholic Insights into the Ministry of Healing*, £10.95
Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology, Christian Living and the Doctrine of God*, £12.95
A Carthusian, *The Prayer of Love and Silence*, £6.95.

From SCM Press
Murray Dell, *On a Huge Hill, A Search for Truth and Integrity*,£7.95.
From Canterbury Press
Anglican Religious Communities Year Book 1999, £4.99.

APOLOGY

We apologise to our readers for an error in the last issue of the Chronicle, where it was stated in the reviews section that N.F.S. Grundtvig, An Introduction to his Life and Work *by A.M. Allchin was priced at £50.00. The real price is in fact £19.95.*

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