

FAIRACRES CHRONICLE

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COMMUNITY NOTES

TODAY is the day of the census in the UK. What is there to record about the Sisters of the Love of God, besides the details of where we live, and our ages, nationalities, sex and religion? There are some Community events to note certainly. This time they are all about our Oblate Sisters: on 25 January, the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul, Mrs Joan Cooper was admitted as an Oblate Postulant, taking the name Joan Anna; Mrs Liz Koole was admitted as a Novice Oblate on 10 February; and Mrs Trish Stevens has withdrawn from being a Novice Oblate.

Other things are less susceptible to such cataloguing, like the light falling on the wall of my cell during Holy Week. I watched it fade, and as it did so the light in front of the icon grew brighter. Nothing remarkable about that, but I thought of how people have must watched this transfer of brightness for hundreds of thousands of years, on cave walls and in remote monastic cells, and I was awed to be connected to them. Yesterday, after a hailstorm, the light outside was so bright that the cell seemed a refuge from the excesses of the sky, and I again became aware of how the light falls. The patterns and shading were at once subtle and sharp; they moved constantly, like water moving over pebbles, impossible to record. The life of the Community, and of each of us, is something like that.

Occasionally, in graced moments, it finds expression in prayer. Thus today, in Eastertide, we sang alleluias around the verse, 'the disciples knew the Lord Jesus in the breaking of the bread', and suddenly I knew what knowledge '*in the breaking*' might mean. There is knowledge which only comes through breaking. It is like salt in water, or light in air, or a cry in a song. And witness to that is worth putting on record for you as an Easter greeting and blessing.

MOTHER ROSEMARY SLG

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

*A sermon preached at the Church of St Mary and St Nicholas,
Littlemore, on 21 February 2001.*

DR PÈTA DUNSTAN

WHAT does John Henry Newman mean to us? Perhaps his writings have nurtured our faith, or we associate our own spiritual struggles with a part of his well-told story, or he may interest us because we worship in places in which he ministered. And most of us have a personal view of the man who was born two hundred years ago, emerging from our very own understanding of history. Yet, because history is an art—the art of interpretation—it is easy for us to project our own views back onto heroes of the past. We all run the danger of creating a memory of this man in our own image. Newman can become for us the forerunner of all that we personally hold dear.

And I am no stranger to that temptation. I can look at portraits of the saintly face of the aged Newman and feel a sense of wonder. I too would love to listen and try to imagine the rustle of his cassock and the intonation of his voice. It would be magic to be transported back in time. But if we associate John Henry Newman with an image of the past, and bathe in that nostalgia, it is hard for us then to translate all he taught into something relevant for our lives as Christians today. We face a different world to the one in which he lived. So the pertinent question is: can Newman's reflections, his spirituality, his life, help us to find a fruitful response to the challenges which we face today?

I believe they can. But first we have to admit that for many of his contemporaries John Henry Newman was not an easy person. He was quite solemn and lacked much of a sense of humour. Von Hügel said of Newman that, 'I used to wonder ... how one so good and who had made so many sacrifices for God, could be so depressing.' Newman was prickly too, and over-sensitive, and found it hard to forgive those who wronged him. It seems he could

be very self-absorbed. He was certainly anxious and over-concerned about what others thought. But admitting that John Henry Newman was not always the benign, saintly and holy ‘father figure’ of our longings liberates us to discover a person with weaknesses and hurts, a maker of mistakes just like you and me. He then becomes much more interesting, much more approachable. For it is the way in which Newman coped with his troubles—and struggled against his sins—which can be so relevant to us.

Trust in God

So what can Newman as a person teach us? Let us begin with his insecurity, this sensitivity to criticism and the anxiety about being misunderstood. This surely stemmed from his upbringing. Although Newman’s mother came from a moderately prosperous background, his father was a grocer’s son and to better himself had gone into the risky business of being a partner in a private bank. In 1816, when young John was only fifteen, this bank failed. His father staved off bankruptcy for some years, working as a brewery manager and then a tavern-keeper, but it was all to no avail. At the end of 1821, bankruptcy proceedings began in earnest. During those five years Newman’s family descended the social ladder, shamed by living in a succession of poorer and poorer lodgings.

All this was the emotional and social background to those critical years when John was growing from adolescence to adulthood. The initial financial collapse occurred not long before he began his university studies at Oxford. One can imagine the effect this enfolding family catastrophe had on Newman’s self-confidence. Educated at a small private school, John must already have felt at a disadvantage to the privileged young men from places like Harrow and Eton. His shabbier clothes caused him to be laughed at in the street, and he wrote to his father that he was ‘stared at’ wherever he went. As his family situation deteriorated, notch by painful notch, his anxiety level grew, and in his final examinations—which in those days were mainly oral rather than written—he went to pieces. Confused and shy, he ended up unclassified in maths and failed to reach even a second in classics. Only success in the Oriel College

fellowship competition a year or so later would save his academic career.

All this humiliation, social and academic, may be a key to much of his spiritual questing. For Newman understood only too well the cruelties of human society. There was no certainty in human endeavour and everything could be lost. It was therefore into the spiritual realm that he looked for certainty, and he realised from an early age that he had to depend—and depend utterly—on God. He had a profound sense of God being the sole rock on which a life could depend.

So what does that say to us? How many of us have self-doubt? How many of us worry about our social and professional lives and our levels of achievement? We certainly see such anxiety in the world around us, for problems of low self-esteem abound in the highly competitive society which we inhabit. We are scared of being losers. Every day the media names and shames and blames someone, a perpetual warning of how precarious human success and fame is.

But Newman's example is a path through it. The witness of his life tells us that the only antidote is a reliance upon God. Not a sugar-coated fantasy of God—someone who takes all troubles away—but rather a God who will show us a path out of difficulty, and support us through our tribulation. This is the true God, who does not laugh at us, or humiliate us, or misunderstand, but who loves us unconditionally and guarantees us salvation. It was God to whom John Henry Newman turned when he was full of doubt and lacking in confidence—and so should we.

Study the Tradition

Newman, however, realised that whilst turning to God is the essential starting point, faith also needs to be fed—and this is an intellectual challenge as much as a spiritual one. It is a lifelong quest, a journey of discovery. Faith may ignite in a moment, but the knowledge by which it is nourished is collected piece by piece in the development of our relationship with God. Newman lived in an age when the Christian narrative and interpretation of the world

were facing a formidable scrutiny from the rise of science. The problem was not the scientific discoveries themselves, but the method by which science arrived at those conclusions, for it provided a different way of establishing ‘truth’. Scientific methodology, therefore, challenged the traditional view of doctrinal interpretation and scripture, and above all of the concept of revelation—and that challenge is just as strong for us in the twenty-first century.

Newman gave two priorities here for our guidance. The first is study the tradition. Not the particular interpretation of one thinker or one group, but the tradition of the Church as a whole. Newman himself took this path when he felt called to defend the Church of England in the eighteen-thirties. Strength was to come from delving deeper into the history and tradition of the faith. For Newman, the struggle in the patristic period to formulate and understand the mysteries of doctrinal truth was an instruction in itself of how to defend the Christian vocation in any age.

So we can take heed of that today. It is short-sighted to react to challenge by ditching the seemingly inconvenient elements of our doctrinal heritage. Simply abandoning parts of the Christian tradition which jar with modern ideas creates as many problems as it solves. Newman’s intellectual journey was a quest for authority and for firm intellectual foundations for proclaiming the faith—and that points us to the tradition. Only there can we find the authority to engage with the sometimes hostile—and increasingly agnostic—intellectual world around us.

Develop your Faith

Lest that seems merely an attack on liberal attitudes in matters of doctrine, I would remind you too that Newman has just as much to say to those who regard themselves as conservative in the Church. For he also teaches us that tradition survives precisely because our understanding of it develops and therefore in a sense ‘changes’. He saw clearly that just as his own faith had developed and grown through his life, so does the collective mind and heart of the Church. To be truly a traditionalist does not mean blindly defending

practices or particular ways of expressing the faith. One should not sit unmoving in a fortress, tut-tutting at how wrong everybody else is. Rather, to rest on the authority of tradition, we should be engaged in a dynamic process. Newman had a critical frame of mind throughout his life. Those in authority tended to be suspicious of him for that very reason.

What we learn here is that the search for truth—for us, equally as much as for Newman—is never at an end. We can't own God so we can't own the truth—it is an ongoing search. It may mean we change our minds, it may even mean we change our spiritual family, but in no place have we come to the end. In practical terms, that means we have to listen to each other, even those with whom we disagree. Dialogue and debate strengthen our witness. Ecumenism is important not purely because of the vision of an united body of Christ which is its ultimate goal, but because it is the very engagement with differing interpretations from our own which forces us to think and reflect and therefore grow in our own faith.

Be Spiritually Disciplined

Newman's thought teaches us as much then about the way we should be Christians as it does about where truth can be found. That is why we cannot discuss his ideas without also considering his spirituality. The message he left for us is that faith needs a spiritual discipline. Newman was frank in admitting that this was far from easy, and he could be severe with those who expected the rewards of Christian life without putting in the spiritual effort.

That is why Newman's being part of the religious community of The Oratory in Birmingham was a significant statement for him. For his study as the tradition had led him to see religious life as an essential presence in the Church. It is not that he believed all people are called to be monks and nuns, rather that the calling of the few is a prophetic challenge to all in the Church to take spiritual practice seriously. Embracing corporate prayer and living in community were a measure of how important spiritual discipline was for him. And to take our spiritual practice seriously is advice we can all profit from hearing. The word 'spirituality' for our generation can

easily be associated with a superficial comfort-seeking, where chasing spiritual sensations can overwhelm the need to work at our relationship with God. Newman understood that deepening any relationship is not based on ‘feeling good’ but on being committed. That is as true of our prayer life as it is of our closeness with those we love the most.

All the points I have made revolve around John Henry Newman as a person. For I would argue that it was his very weaknesses and inadequacies, his doubts and his anxieties, which led him to that stronger commitment. The lessons he leaves us—have trust in God, study the tradition, be open to developing your faith, be spiritually disciplined—all these were reactions to his own frailty and vulnerability. That is why he can still appeal to us so strongly: not because he is holy and remote and more spiritually adept than we are, but because he was just as frail, just as troubled, and just as anxious as we can be—and then found a path through it. That is why ultimately Newman can be a sign of hope and encouragement for us even two centuries after his birth.

So when you think of John Henry Newman, do not just remember the grand old man of the familiar pictures, the holy icon you revere, but remember too the poor, troubled undergraduate, racked with humiliation and facing failure, someone who felt laughed at and inadequate. Then remember that he turned to God and was not disappointed.

Dr Péta Dunstan is Librarian in the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of St Edmund’s College. We are grateful to Dr Dunstan for allowing us to print this edited version of the sermon she preached at the festival Eucharist for the bi-centennial celebrations of Newman’s birth.

IN MEMORIAM RICHARD SOUTHERN

SISTER BENEDICTA WARD SLG

EARLY in the morning of Tuesday, 6 February, two days before his eighty-ninth birthday, Richard Southern died peacefully at his home in Oxford. Born and educated as a schoolboy in Newcastle, he won a *domus* exhibition to Balliol College, Oxford, where, under the influence of Vivian Galbraith and Maurice Powicke, he turned his attention to medieval history, in the study of which he made what must be called a revolution. Oxford recognised his unique genius, and he continued to teach there all his life, first at Exeter, then at Balliol, and after the war at All Souls as the Chichele Professor of Medieval History until his election as President of St John's in 1969. In 1981 he retired from St John's and concentrated on writing, living in a small house in St John Street. There, with his wife Sheila, he established an unparalleled centre of welcome, continuing to inspire and challenge scholars with his enthusiastic vigour. National and international recognition were expressed first in his knighthood in 1974, and then by the bestowal on him in 1987 of a distinguished prize given by the Fondazione Internazionale Balzan (the equivalent for literature of the Nobel Prize) as 'the greatest historian of medieval Europe'.

His influence on his pupils created a new outlook in medieval studies, where to the careful and accurate interpretation of the documents of English institutional history (the basis of the Oxford School), he added the life-giving ability to enter into the minds of the people behind them, and so to find friends in the past. As a tutor he was exacting, as a supervisor he was as ruthless with his pupils as he was with himself. As a writer he admirably fulfilled his own dictum: 'The first duty of the historian is to produce works of art, to portray people whose actions are intelligible within the framework of their circumstance and character.'

His influence on the whole of scholarship continues to be as enlivening as ever through his pupils and his readers. Within that wide field he had a special connection with and influence on our community. This was a contact initiated by my own friendship with him which began in 1953 but it continued and deepened because of his interest in monastic life which was focused through his greatest friend in the past, the monastic archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm.

In the nineteen-sixties, at his suggestion, I translated for Penguin Classics the *Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm*, for which he wrote a preface. A few years later, after consultation between Dick and Mother Mary Clare, I became his graduate student for the study of miracles and miracle collections in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In the last year of his life he often referred with great pleasure to his visits to the community, especially to his discussions with Mother Mary Clare which went deeper than the possibilities open to one sister and dealt with the relationship between academic study and the life of contemplative prayer. Himself a man of deep, unobtrusive Anglican piety, he was concerned that the sisters should link clarity of mind with devotion of heart, as Anselm had done in 'faith seeking understanding,' an approach which resonated with and strengthened aspects of community teaching. He often asked in his last days if this unity of mind and heart continued to flourish in the community, and would end such discussions by saying, 'So it is going very well for you all now; I am so glad.' He and Sheila visited us, and twice he gave us lectures, once 'On a Monastic Library', and once on 'Hildegard of Bingen'; he also contributed his sermon on Archbishop William Laud to the SLG pamphlet, *The Beauty of Holiness*.

Like Anselm, Richard Southern combined a love of learning with his desire for God, and it could be said of him as of Anselm that he 'entered into the joy of his Lord'. He is buried in the countryside graveyard of Toot Baldon near a medieval church, with its wide view and long perspective.

SERMON AT THE FUNERAL OF SIR RICHARD SOUTHERN

Given at St John's College Oxford, 13 February 2001

SISTER BENEDICTA WARD SLG

WE are here today with Richard Southern and his family to thank God for the years in which he was with us. We are not today primarily concerned with the famous man, the international scholar, the greatest medieval historian of our times, the outstanding writer, the administrator, or even the Oxford man—there will be a time and place for the details of all that. But today we stand as witnesses not only to the famous man but much more to the father and the friend. We each have our own store of memories of him, but we all thank God for the gifts of love and life we have received from the generosity of Dick—husband, father, grandfather, teacher, colleague and above all friend. He had a singular gift for friendship which went everywhere with him, flowering especially as he formed with Sheila the heart of the life of this college and of medieval scholarship here for many years. It was that warm and loving centre to his life that made him able to give so generously to others, and always his family was the first focus of his care; it was because of them that he could give himself to us. So it is Dick within his family which is our cause for thankfulness today. From that centre his friendship was given to us all.

I have chosen three quotations though which to talk about him and I make no apology for choosing them from the past. Dick's friendships were not limited to the present; he made friends in the past and we inherit them, whether it is contact with his Northumbrian friend Bede, Robert Grosseteste, Bernard, Abelard, Master Vicarius, or his dear Anselm. All of them were reflected through him to us: he was another Bede, who made it his delight to learn, to teach and to write; he was another Anselm, known for his friendship, his conversations and his encouragement to all. So from

the Prayers and Meditations of his Anselm here is my first choice of a prayer which embodies Dick's love for his family and therefore for his friends:

Christ Jesus, I love all men, in you and for your sake,
though not so much as I ought or as I desire.
I pray your mercy upon all men,
yet there are many whom I hold more dear
since your love has impressed them upon my heart
with a closer and more intimate love,
so that I desire their love more eagerly—
I would pray more ardently for these.
Love them, Author and Giver of love,
So that they may come at last to glory and eternal rest.

My second quotation relates to a darker theme. As we thank God for Dick and his family and all that means to each of us, there is of course a deep grief and desolation for us in this separation from the man we love. The past two months were a long and gradual departing, in which each day he drew peacefully further into eternity. Dick is now free from the increasing limitations he experienced among us, and has gone, as he wished, from the centre of his loving family, into the freedom of light and life which surrounds us all. But it was not an easy change for him or for us, and it is right that we should also weep. With this in mind, I quote a prayer written in great desolation by another of his friends, Archbishop William Laud, benefactor of this college, who is buried in this chapel. In 1973 Dick preached here on the four-hundredth anniversary of Laud's death, and after an entirely typical unsentimental but appreciative survey of the man (beginning 'No-one can live with his portrait as I do without feeling his entire lack of charm') he ended with Laud's last prayer, which seems to me a description also of his own last days:

Lord I am coming as fast as I can. I know I must pass through the shadow of death before I can come to see thee, but it is but umbria mortis, a mere shadow of death, a little darkness upon nature; but thou by thy merits and passion hast broke through the pains of death. So Lord receive my soul, and have mercy upon me, and bless this land

with peace and with plenty, and with brotherly love and charity, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

My third choice is again from Anselm, and the theme is 'a sure and certain hope'. Because Dick was so deeply and simply, without affectation or self-consciousness, grounded in Christian faith, it seemed unnecessary to speak with him about it, and I was always too shy to do so. But I find I can do now what I hesitated to do earlier, and so I would like to read for him an ardent prayer of Anselm which has always seemed to me to describe Dick in all his life of 'faith seeking understanding', in the sure hope that he, with Anselm, has entered into the fullness of joy he sought:

God of truth, I ask that I may receive, so that my joy may be full.
Meanwhile, let my mind meditate on it,
let my tongue speak of it, let my heart love it,
let my mouth preach it, let my soul hunger for it,
my flesh thirst for it, and my whole being desire it
until I enter into the joy of my Lord,
who is God one and triune, blessed forever. Amen.

In this moment of loss, it is for us to remember Dick with thankfulness, to pray for him and for each other, and resolve to use all he gave us by living with all his energy and delight in life and in one another.

Bring us, O Lord, at the last awakening, into the house and gate of heaven, to enter into that gate and dwell in that house where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light; no noise nor silence, but one equal music; no fears nor hopes, but an equal possession; no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity; in the habitations of Thy majesty and Thy glory, world without end. Amen.

TRADITION AS THE TRANSFIGURED CROSS

ALEXANDRU POPESCU

Somewhere Mircea Eliade writes about a Chinese emperor who dreamt that he was a butterfly. When he woke up, the emperor no longer knew what he truly was: a man who had dreamt he was a butterfly or a butterfly which dreamt it was a man. This is also my dilemma: Am I a free man dreaming he had been a prisoner of war in Russia or am I a prisoner dreaming he is a free man?

Radu Marculescu, *Anguish and Enlightenment from the Soviet Captivity*

Learning from Orthodoxy

AT the end of the first Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in this millennium I was invited to speak at the Mirfield Centre about 'Handing on the Tradition' in the course of a Study Day on the theme: 'Learning from Orthodoxy, *The Earthly Heaven*'. I began by speaking about tradition (Latin *traditio*, Greek *parádoxis*) in the sense of the historical life of Jesus Christ and His commandment to love which was *handed on* to the Apostles and to us (I Cor. 11:23). I also spoke about tradition as the organic life of the Church, through which we receive the divine revelation here and now. Tradition is handed on through the successive generations of those who continue to witness to Christ in the power of the Gospel first preached to those men and women who were uniquely privileged to be His contemporaries. Tradition indeed makes us contemporary with Christ, above all in the Eucharist but also in our daily life. So tradition is not a further source of revelation alongside Holy Scripture. The Holy Spirit breathes through the Gospel: tradition is the 'many other things' which Jesus continues to do in the presence of His disciples in every generation (John 21:25).

Tradition is an inspired way of teaching that we members of the human race, and with us the whole cosmos, are called in this transient world to mirror the eternal world which is to come. The Incarnation of the Word in Jesus of Nazareth mediates the mystical union between the essentially inaccessible Godhead and the finite creatures of the living, loving, and enlightening Trinity. For 'he who

believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me' (John 12:44-45). 'For I have not spoken on My own *authority*; but the Father who sent me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is eternal life' (John 12: 49-50)¹

Other definitions of tradition can be found in dictionaries. I wanted in my lecture to illustrate what tradition meant for a Romanian Orthodox Christian in the aftermath of the so-called collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. In his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* the early Marx wrote explicitly that 'Communism begins from the outset with atheism.' He dismissed religious belief as delusion. Marxism-Leninism set out to destroy not only the Christian tradition but all spiritual traditions. Dialectical and historical materialism (which was a compulsory subject in all schools and universities under Communism) claims that, since matter is the primordial principle of existence, any spiritual dimension is merely derivative. It fell to Lenin and Stalin to put Marxist theory into practice. Their achievements are comparable with the genocide which marked the culmination of Nazi ideology. It is shameful and scandalous that the enormities committed under Communism continue to be leniently mentioned in international discussions rather than truly acknowledged, investigated, and addressed with the rigour applied to the perpetrators of the Holocaust and other subsequent 'war crimes'.

Communist Re-Education

A Soviet-inspired programme of 're-education and unmasking', based on physical and mental torture and brainwashing, was undertaken in Romania between 1949 and 1952 (in prisons such as Pitesti, Ocelele Mari, and Targosor), and between 1960 and 1964 (at Aiud and Gherla). Almost entirely ignored by the western media, it

¹ *The Orthodox Study Bible*, New Testament and Psalms, New King James Version, Nelson: Nashville, Tennessee, 1993).

was supervised from Moscow by Beria and by Stalin himself.² With its roots in Marxist atheism, Pavlovian reflexology, and Freudian psychoanalysis, it aimed to eliminate Christian faith and Romanian culture, especially amongst the younger generations, and to replace national consciousness with an overall Communist ideology. In June 1946, an election manipulated by Moscow installed a pro-Bolshevik government in Romania which lost no time in forcing King Michael I to abdicate and leave the country. This minority government quickly set up a programme of ‘de-christianisation and de-nationalisation’ of the opposition. The programme of re-education in fact continues in Romania today under its neo-Communist government with its ex-Stalinist president.

It is beyond the scope of this article to describe the experiment in detail. What we stress here is that re-education was first experimented with on Romanian soldiers and officers imprisoned in Soviet concentration camps during World War II, and then brought into Romania when prisoners were repatriated at the end of the war. One of these prisoners was the artillery lieutenant Radu Marculescu. From his years of detention in the ‘Corrective Labour Camp’ at Oranki (between Moscow and Novgorod) he recalls the following:

6 August 1945, Feast of the Transfiguration

I don’t know what made me turn my head and look back to the distant hill where Oranki stood—once a monastery, now a Soviet prison. But the whole length of the skyline was still wreathed in fog. Oranki was slow to appear and I was still vainly peering into the mist, when suddenly out of that grey blanket a tiny sphere of light began to emerge. Within that little sphere, as if traced in silver filigree, the outlines of the monastery could gradually be discerned. There was the church, the lower part of its cupolas (stripped of their crosses) hidden by the living quarters, and they in turn half-hidden by the precinct

² Dennis Deletant, *Ceausescu and the Securitate, Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989*, Hurst: London, 1995, p. 30.

wall. The base of this wall barely touched the ground, for as the mist dissolved, it seemed to float in the air.

Oranki appeared as in a Byzantine icon, in which the third dimension, the depth, is suppressed, and the church and all the buildings overlapping each other occupied the same plane. But this silvery light out of which the filigree image was wrought, where did it come from? There was of course a natural explanation for it in the atmospheric conditions. But for me it had the symbolic significance of a message coming from another world.

Between my eyes and the golden sunlight in which the monastery must have been bathed at that moment, there lay a thin veil of fog, which turned the solar gold of this world into the other-worldly silver of the kingdom of God. What I was now seeing was the icon of the heavenly Jerusalem, floating in mist, no longer touching the ground. Where now was the ‘mouth of hell’, from which the power of darkness spewed out on us its apocalyptic scourges in the shape of cold, hunger, terror, forced labour, disease, deception and finally, betrayal? Where had Oranki vanished, that cauldron of Satan in which for all those terrible years we had simmered over a low flame in the foul brew of evil passions, while we waited for the arch-fiend to skim off the scum of the most vicious and corrupt among us, chosen to raise up a brain-washed army of dead souls to demonise our native land?

Oranki, that sink of horror and turpitude, with its interrogation rooms, its punishment cells where you could freeze to death, its mortuary crammed with naked corpses, frozen stiff and stacked like logs, the nauseous stench of its latrines teeming with worms, as we teemed with informers—that Oranki had vanished somewhere far, far away... And now before my very eyes another Oranki was there, an unearthly thing, a vision of Zion, coming down from heaven as a pure bride, clothed with the silver radiance of another world.

Surely Mount Tabor must have appeared like that in the light which streamed from the Saviour when for the first time he revealed his divine nature to the three disciples? And now, Oranki was revealed to me on this Feast of the Transfiguration, this day of all days!

The vision lasted no more than fifteen or twenty seconds before melting away in the early morning mist from which it had emerged, flooding my soul with a silence and peace not of this world. ‘No, davai!’ (Forward march!) assaulted my ears like a blow to jolt me out of my day-dreams. We all bent down to heave our poor bundles on to

our backs. We fell into line and stumbled out along the dusty road towards our bitter destination. I enclosed this vision within my soul and with it the question: How was I to understand this message from above?

* * *

Our situation was devoid of all prospects. A myopic and vacillating West left us helpless in the grasp of an evil superpower which dismissed all notions of honour and decency as ‘reactionary bourgeois prejudice.’ As an occupying power the Soviet Army was given carte blanche to crush any resistance to the establishment of communist regimes in the invaded territories. Immediately after the Second World War, Romanian officers held as prisoners of war in Soviet concentration camps were subjected to merciless pressure to become communist collaborators in Romania, with the alternative of being morally and even physically neutralised. Never was forced labour harder, food more wretched, the behaviour of guards more brutal, the lock-ups more densely crammed, informers more assiduous, and blackmail for our repatriation more openly rife than in the aftermath of the war, especially after the meeting between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin at Yalta. The Western powers, although they knew perfectly well what was happening, dared not lift a finger against the Soviet Union. In the absence of any national vested interest in Eastern Europe, western humanitarianism played no part there.³

³ R. Marculescu, *Patimiri si Iluminari din Captivitatea Sovietica, (Anguish and Enlightenment from the Soviet Captivity)*, Bucharest: Albatros, 2000, pp. 241-4.

Radu Marculescu was born in 1915 in Bucharest. In 1938 he graduated in philosophy at the University of Bucharest and taught Romanian in high schools in the capital. Following the Soviet annexation of Romanian territories in Bessarabia (which later became the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova), he fought in the Romanian Royal Army with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant against the Red Army. After the battle of Stalingrad in 1942 he was taken prisoner and held in the Soviet Gulag until 1951. Between 1959 and 1964, having written three ‘subversive’ poems, he was imprisoned as an ‘enemy of the Romanian working class’. Radu Marculescu is not only a gifted writer whose book *Anguish and Enlightenment from the Soviet Captivity* is a masterpiece of Gulag literature, he is also an icon painter of considerable talent. He is perhaps best characterised as a follower of the Hesychast tradition of spiritual life and prayer. In Romania this tradition, deriving from the Desert Fathers and renewed by St. Gregory Palamas, had been passed on from the

Marculescu's vision of heaven and hell, illustrates for us the perpetual tension in communist Eastern Europe between materialism and spirituality. Although the crosses on the cupolas of the monastery church had been smashed, their inner reality could not in fact be destroyed. Marculescu has told me of how he saw them back where they belonged when he was granted his vision of the New Jerusalem. Similarly the Christian faith, assailed on all sides by dialectical materialism, was yet grounded in the hearts of the people at such a depth that no external torment could eradicate it. Like the monastery crosses, people may have been smashed by communist *apparatchiks*, but their understanding of the meaning of human life could not be destroyed. The truth assured to us by the Incarnation—in which the Word of God, begotten of the Father *before all worlds*, entered into human history—was 'confessed.' Incarnation, with the reality of the Cross, cannot be negotiated. It cannot be erased from human consciousness simply by the smashing of man-made symbols. For God Himself who IS from the beginning, whose Kingdom shall have no end, and who dwells in human hearts and lives, is the ultimate reality.

Earthly Martyrdom

For the Christian martyrs of the prison camps, the imitation of Christ meant taking up their cross in a way literally similar to that of Jesus Himself. Their trust in God, their 'confession' of faith, was proof against the most brutal attacks of their oppressors and re-educators. Indeed the paradox of Communism is that many who were supposedly being re-educated were in fact transformed, not by their physical torments, but by a discovery of indestructible love which sustained them in the midst of extreme adversity. At the beginning of his 'confession' (op. cit., pp. 16-18), Marculescu writes:

latter's disciples to St. Nicodemus of Tismana (14th c), St. Daniel the Hermit (15th c), St. Paissy Velichkovsky (18th c), St. Calinic of Cernica (19th c), and the living martyrs of the Romanian political prisons under Communism.

Anyone who has survived a long term of political imprisonment is in a sense initiated into another world where the warmth of love, camaraderie, and friendship has the power to melt the ice of selfishness, enmity, and indifference, and turn the hell of a concentration camp if not into a heaven on earth at least into a place in which existence is bearable. Above all, the survivor comes to realise that any effort inspired by sacrificial love for a needy neighbour, far from limiting his human powers, heightens them to an incredible degree. In such acts he breaks free of his selfish ego and the arid world of cause and effect, and finds himself in a realm governed by love.

Here, self-giving is no diminution but an increase, as in the parable of the feeding of the five thousand (Matthew 14:14). Through his initiation, the survivor manages—if only for a moment of grace at the height of his ordeal—to lift a corner of the curtain veiling the Kingdom of God. This is the lesson which we [prisoners of war, released only to become political prisoners] retained from our experience in those two great schools of suffering: the Soviet Gulag and the Romanian political prison

The decisive battles at the end of this millennium were not those fought on the battlefield. The human heart is the Armageddon of this aeon, and there too the final battle will take place. What is at stake in this confrontation is the divine spark within the human heart. This is where, until the end of time, the powers bent on fragmenting and enslaving the soul confront the heavenly powers which protect it in its struggle for perfection and freedom. This battle was fought in us throughout the years of imprisonment in the Soviet Gulag and thereafter in Romania. It was a battle for our souls, which our captors wanted to destroy and replace with a subhuman product: ‘the new man’, an automaton that would function in a world from which moral values had been eliminated.

The desperate effort to preserve our ontological identity, the image and likeness in which God made us, gave shape and substance to our resistance to these infernal forces bent on annexing our inner freedom. It was there that human dignity and even human holiness were revealed to us in all their transfiguring power.

Inner Freedom and External Liberties

Marculescu maintains that the Soviet brand of captivity was unique of its kind. It was not enough for the political power simply to

deprive the prisoner of ‘external’ liberties. It aimed constantly, methodically, by every means at its disposal (cold, starvation, forced labour, disease, but above all terror—the terrorisation of victims into acts of treachery and secret denunciation) to destroy their ‘inner’ freedom. They were to be no longer human persons but instruments for the establishment of an ideological police state in their native land.. However, the resistance of Romanian prisoners to this diabolical assault stands out as a supreme witness to the image and likeness of God in which we are made:

‘This is what we “confess”, this desperate and tragic battle to remain human beings to the very end.’ (idem, p. 18).

Comintern agents recruited from Romania were specially trained in the Soviet Union to create a military force comprising two divisions. Named after Romanian heroes of the 18th-19th century struggle for national freedom (‘Horia, Closca & Crisan’ and ‘Tudor Valdimirescu’), they were used in the Soviet ‘liberation’ of Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Austria, and subsequently in the imposition of a Communist government on post-war Romania. The mission of these so-called ‘voluntary divisions’ of Romanian prisoners was to set up an apparatus of repression and to maintain through terror ‘the abnormality of a system which—left to its own resources—could not have survived for a single day.’ According to Marculescu those who, by withstanding the relentless pressure to collaborate, did *not* become ‘dead souls’

realised that even the Sovietised government of our country (as well as the West, in which we had once had such faith) had abandoned us to the clutches of our oppressor. Our resistance was ultimately a life and death struggle for repatriation. We Romanians are proud to declare that we alone—before any of the other prisoners at their mercy—succeeded in forcing the Soviet power to send us home (idem, p.11).

Coming from the Soviet Gulag our officers brought into the Romanian political prisons to which they were now consigned a revolutionary spirit born out of that dehumanising experience, a capacity for rational discourse on the right to dignity and a specific code of morality. Eventually the lesson of human solidarity, which was for us an article of faith, proved also to be our lifeline and helped to cushion the terrible shocks we sustained first in the Gulag, and then

in the penal institutions of our own country when, hunted down by Soviet-controlled secret police, we became its prisoners.

Today, when two ex-prisoners of war or prisoners of conscience happen to meet, they exchange, involuntarily and even without knowing it, a secret glance of complicity, which seems to hint at some mutual good to which they, and only they, have access. Granted that this may be a purely subjective impression, what exactly would this mutual good consist in? It would consist in the recognition that through the sufferings they had survived each would have acquired a profound knowledge of life and of the world at a level which they could never have attained under normal conditions. It is as if the vast distance they had covered through the ordeal of the concentration camps were no more than a process of initiation, at the end of which those who had not succumbed would receive the prize of authentic 'gnosis': knowledge of life and of humanity, free from illusion and rooted in lived experience (idem, p. 15-16).

The Heavenly Jerusalem

Radu Marculescu's vision of the heavenly Jerusalem, when he turned to look back at the prison which had once been a monastery, helps us understand what tradition really means for the Orthodox. It means to recognise that the Cross, which is both an instrument of death and God's guarantee of eternal life with Him in His Kingdom, is the ineffaceable mark of the Creator on all that He has made.

Spiritual reality can never be derivative, it is the primordial mystery of Christ within us, continually nurturing the divine likeness. That is why, when you look with the eye of the spirit at a human person, an animal, a tree, a house, or any object in the created universe, there you will see, or at least remember, the transfigured Cross.

Alexandru Popescu is a doctor of medicine and a deacon of the Romanian Orthodox Church. He is currently completing, at Balliol College, Oxford, a doctoral thesis on Petre Tutea, (1902-1991), a Romanian Christian thinker and prisoner of conscience

ASSOCIATES

FLG

Dena Jones, 16 rue Henri VII, L-1725, Luxembourg.

PRIEST ASSOCIATE

The Revd Andrew Thomson,
The Rectory, 18 Front Street, South Creake, Fakenham NR21 9PE

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CELEBRATING JOHN HENRY NEWMAN 1801-1890

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

Here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.

J.H. Newman, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.

ON 21 February, we gave particular thanks to God for the life and example of John Henry Newman, who had been born exactly two hundred years earlier. Newman had indeed changed often, always ready to begin again, and his life had been a series of conversions, the most public of which took place half-way through his life, when he was received into the Roman Catholic Church at Littlemore, just outside Oxford, on 9 October 1845. Before that, as an Anglican priest and Fellow of Oriel College, he had been the inspiring genius of the Tractarian Movement. Afterwards he was to be ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood; to bring the Congregation of the Oratory to this country; and to be made a Cardinal in 1879 by Pope Leo XIII.

The 1845 conversion was the most public, but there had been other spiritual turning points in his life. The first was at the age of fifteen, when the young Newman, baptised in the Church of England and brought up along Calvinist lines, underwent an evangelical conversion while at school at Ealing. He was influenced at that time by two sayings in the writings of a Unitarian, Thomas Scott: 'Holiness before peace' and 'Growth the only evidence of life'. It could be said that those two sayings became the tenets by which he lived his life. His quest for holiness was unrelenting, and he did a great service to the whole of the Church by demonstrating that doctrine can be developed, that the individual life must change and develop and grow.

The deep inner processes of the soul take time and require patience. Newman wrote: 'Time is our best friend and champion.'⁴ 'All the logic in the world would not have made me move faster toward Rome than I did ... Great acts take time.'⁵ When he did make the move, it was no longer regarded by him as change: 'I was not conscious to myself, on my conversion, of any change intellectual or

⁴ *Letters and Diaries*, Vol.XXVIII, Oxford, 1975, p.270

⁵ *Apologia pro vita sua*

moral, wrought in my mind ... it was like coming into port after a rough sea.’⁶ Just as doctrine may be developed through an organic interaction between the idea of Christianity revealed in Jesus Christ and the very human history of the Church, so the individual life may develop and grow. When Charles Kingsley, an Anglican clergyman (famous as the author of *The Water Babies*) launched an attack in 1863 on the Roman clergy in general and on Newman in particular with regard to truth, Newman responded with his *Apologia pro vita sua*, a work which could perhaps be described as the theory of development applied to his own life and ideas. He had set himself to give a clear account of his life’s journey thus far in order to demonstrate that it was all of one piece and not mendacious. He had therefore to say what he owed to his Anglican inheritance, both evangelical and catholic. The *Apologia* had the effect of helping Newman’s former Anglican friends to understand the path he had taken; of increasing sympathy for Roman Catholicism; and furthermore, of helping him to understand himself better.

During a Mediterranean tour in 1833 Newman nearly died from typhoid fever contracted in Sicily. On 16 June, while on the return voyage, he wrote a poem, with the title ‘The Pillar of the Cloud’, recalling the forty years of Israel’s journey through the wilderness. Later set to music as a hymn, it is better known by its opening words, ‘Lead, Kindly Light’. The illness had been a watershed in his life, and he was reflecting upon his experience. The words in the poem which are most characteristic of Newman come at the end of the first stanza:

I do not ask to see
The distant scene—one step enough for me.⁷

This thought would always be at the heart of his spirituality, that we are given enough light to see what we have to do next, but often not more than that. He therefore had constant recourse to prayer for light and guidance. He never undertook any step or any new work without much prayer. This enabled him to see whatever trials came in

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *Newman Prose and Poetry* selected by Geoffrey Tillotson, Rupert Hart-Davis, London 1957, p.807

consequence as God's answer to prayer. He had a pure, naked faith which could be heroic. Even in the darkest hours, he trusted that a kindly, loving Providence was there, one which could be hidden in the ordinariness of daily life, where God's graces were often concealed.

As part of the bicentennial celebrations, the Anglican Vicar of Littlemore, the Reverend Bernhard Schünemann, gave a talk which was broadcast on the World Service of the BBC. He spoke of Newman's experience of deep loneliness during his illness and on the sea journey, and of his realisation that the future was in the hands of God. Fr Schünemann pointed out that a journey disturbs our lives and takes us to strange places. It can make us vulnerable and more open, more receptive to the call of God. It can help us to realise that, when nothing else is certain, it is God alone who sustains our life. 'The Pillar of the Cloud' is about being on a journey through much gloom and darkness, and the poet longs to learn to rely on God as guide. Christ, so much at the centre of Newman's life, is not mentioned, but during his illness Newman had had repeated visions of Christ as light, the 'kindly light' of the poem. At the end of it, after suffering in deep darkness and being brought to the realisation of his need of God to guide him, the poet is bathed in new light. Fr. Bernhard described the experience, which for Newman is one of angels smiling, as the feeling of being loved:

The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.⁸

Asking whether Newman had anything to offer to our new century, Fr. Bernhard suggested that relying on God liberates us from the fear of failure, and in a culture which increasingly denies death and views its onset as a failure of the medical profession, Newman can show us that our death is a homecoming. We can learn that our life is a journey and that our destination is Christ.

The parish of St. Mary and St. Nicholas, Littlemore adjoins the parish in which the Convent of the Incarnation is situated. Sister Judith and I were very glad to attend the Festival Eucharist at Littlemore on

⁸ *ibid.* p.807

the evening of 21 February. The celebrant was the Bishop of Oxford, the Right Reverend Richard Harries, and Dr. Petà Dunstan preached the sermon, which is included in this *Chronicle*. The post-communion anthem, the *Littlemore Tractus* by the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt had been specially commissioned for the occasion, at which he himself was present. He again heard the new work performed during Choral Evensong at Magdalen College on the following Saturday and on Sunday at Oriel College. It was also recorded by the BBC with the choir of St. Martin in the Fields, London, and broadcast on the World Service programme. Sister Judith has written the following about this music:

‘That music has the power to touch us deeply and exert a great influence on our soul has been recognised from Plato through to the Communist governments of the past century—for this reason they have justified censoring and banning music, as the Soviet government banned Pärt’s music in Estonia in the nineteen-seventies. Anyone present at the service at Littlemore could vouch for the above statement. The silence which followed the music was so profound and attentive; we had all been led through the music to another realm—the music being rather like an icon, a door or window into heaven. The famous words (printed below) were taken from a sermon Newman preached in Littlemore on 19 February 1843.

Arvo Pärt is a deeply prayerful, humble Orthodox man—the sort of person you feel you have been blessed when you leave his company. His current style of musical composition is simple melody but rich, bare harmony. The rhythm is slow moving with repetitive phrases which give a lulling effect. Listening to his work is a stilling, contemplative experience which has you expectantly sitting on the edge of your seat and almost holding your breath so as not to disturb the beauty. *Littlemore Tractus* was no disappointment on that score. It is hard and pointless to describe music in words, music speaks for itself in its own language. I can only recommend that if *Littlemore Tractus* is ever recorded for commercial distribution you buy a copy and see for yourselves—I doubt any will be disappointed. Someone

remarked after the service that it would be ideal for use at funerals, and indeed it would be, but you would need a very accomplished choir and organist to perform it.

Pärt is a very private man, and I do not know what, if any, his aims are in composing—but sitting listening to his music reminded me of a question put to me with some concern before my entry into community, ‘What about your violin? Your playing?’ My response was ‘the part that plays is the part that prays.’ Somehow Pärt’s music fuses the two so that the music is an expression of the prayer. Those of us who were privileged to hear and experience the music were transported into that realm of its prayer and were left awed and silent by it—proving Plato and all those who believe music has a power over the soul to be right.’
Sister Judith SLG

Littlemore Tractus

May He support us all the day long, till the shades lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done! Then in his mercy may He give us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last.

Another link with Estonia was a beautiful icon, also commissioned by Fr Schünemann, which arrived at the church with perfect timing immediately before the service began. Depicting Newman as a Cardinal, it was painted by the Estonian iconographer, Tiina Veisserik].

The full congregation included many who had travelled a considerable distance; among them were representatives of various Religious Communities, both Roman Catholic and Anglican. Whatever would Newman have made of it! He had so loved Littlemore. In his day it was attached to the University Church of St Mary’s of which he was Vicar. He had built the church at Littlemore in 1836, also taking over a row of stables and converting them into rooms, one of which he made into an oratory.⁹ At the end of October

⁹ These buildings, known as ‘Newman’s College’, have since 1987 been entrusted to the care of the Sisters of the Spiritual Family ‘The Work’, an international Roman

1842 Newman withdrew to Littlemore, and it became a place of retreat for him as he faced the momentous step which he must take. For most of the next three years there were visitors or disciples who joined him for periods of varying length. The regular rhythm of prayer which he shared with them, including the early morning Eucharist, was a kind of starting point for the regular religious life within the Church of England. He preached his last Anglican sermon in the church at Littlemore on 25 September 1843, and just over two years later he was received at Littlemore into the Church of Rome by Blessed Dominic Barberi, an Italian Passionist from Viterbo. Newman left Littlemore on 23 February 1846 for Old Oscott near Birmingham. Leaving his ‘monastery’, with old friendships breaking as a result of his conversion, it was, as Newman described it, ‘like going on the open sea’. He was on a journey once more.

It did not take Newman long to find his new home. He was a priest through and through. In June 1824 as a newly ordained deacon and curate in the Anglican parish of St Clement’s, Oxford—which at that time numbered two thousand souls—he calculated that within the first ten days he had visited a third of his parishioners. A few weeks later he had gone through the whole parish, visiting house to house. When he was ordained deacon he felt that ‘I have the responsibility of souls to the day of my death.’¹⁰ He never lost sight of this. After a time of reflection following his move away from Littlemore, he went ahead with ordination to the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church. During his ordination retreat in Rome in April 1847, he wrote: ‘... now I am much afraid of the priesthood, lest I should behave without due reverence to something so sacred.’¹¹

He had decided after much reflection that the way ahead for him was to found a house of the Congregation of the Oratory, a group of secular priests who lived a corporate life under a rule, but without religious vows. The Congregation had been founded in the sixteenth

Catholic Community of consecrated life with a particular attract to the doctrine and spirituality of Newman.

¹⁰ *Autobiographical Writings*

¹¹ *ibid.*

century by St. Philip Neri. It was he who provided Newman with his final model of priestly life. Newman founded an Oratory at Old Oscott, which after some years found its final home in Edgbaston, Birmingham. I was born not far away, and grew up in Birmingham, living for many years less than three miles from the Oratory Church. A school close to the one which I attended in Edgbaston was the Cardinal Newman School; one of the colleges of education in Birmingham is named after him. Newman was always *there* as I was growing up, and by a process of osmosis I absorbed his spirituality and teaching from that period of his life. The Roman Catholic Church to me in those days *was* Newman.

Newman wrote a number of hymns in honour of St. Philip, which were sung at the Oratory—and particularly at the time of the feast day of St Philip on 26 May. One verse in particular still comes back to me:

This is the saint of gentleness and kindness,
Cheerful in penance, and in precept winning;
Patiently healing of their pride and blindness
Souls that are sinning.

Even though it was a hymn in honour of St. Philip, the saint and his faithful disciple could not really be separated. As Newman's diocesan bishop, Bishop Illsley, had said:

Those who had seen and heard him and noticed the wonderful charms of his manner and holy sweetness of his smile were struck with the idea that the beauty of holiness which he had seen in St. Philip had become part of his own nature, for holiness beamed throughout his countenance and imparted sweetness and grace to all around him.

Newman showed at times a playful sense of humour—like St Philip the jester—and he too had a profound respect for the mysterious dealings of God with particular souls. He wrote various prayers addressed to the Saint and it is worth reproducing part of one here, because it is in his prayers and meditations that Newman reveals most the beauties, secrets and deepest aspirations of his soul:

Thou, Philip, hast no anxiety about thyself, for thou art already in heaven, therefore thou canst afford to have a care for me. Watch over me, keep me from lagging behind, gain for me the grace necessary to keep me up to my duty, so that I may make progress in

all virtues, in the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity; in the four cardinal virtues of prudence, fortitude, justice, temperance; moreover in humility, in chastity, in liberality, in meekness, and in truthfulness. Director of souls, Patron of thine own, who didst turn so many hearts to God, pray for me.¹²

Humility, meekness, truthfulness, patience, the gift of a disciplined intellect, the desire to grow in wisdom and grace, personal, intellectual and spiritual integrity: all these things Newman possessed in great measure. His integrity had taken him on the journey from evangelicalism, through the Anglican *via media* (which he ultimately ceased trying to justify) between ‘popular Protestantism’ and ‘Romanism’ into the Roman Catholic Church. He forged a link between conscience and faith: where intelligence doubts, conscience is sure. He trusted peacefully in the final victory of truth: in the year 1876 he had chosen for his memorial the words *ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*, out of shadows and imaginings into truth, or as the character Charles Reding expresses it in Newman’s *Loss and Gain*, ‘coming out of shadows into realities’.

At the Solemn Mass held at the Birmingham Oratory on 21 February at which Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Birmingham was the preacher, the following extract was read from a letter sent by Pope John Paul II to the Archbishop. The Pope quoted Newman:

God has created me to do him some definite service; he has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission—I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next... I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good, I shall do his work; I shall be a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it, if I do but keep his commandments and serve him in my calling... O, my God, I will put myself without reserve into thy hands... What have I in heaven, and apart from thee, what

¹² *Meditations and Devotions of the late Cardinal Newman*, 2nd ed. Longmans, Green & Co, London and New York 1893, p.378

want I upon earth? My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the God of my heart, and my portion for ever.¹³

Pope John Paul wrote that Newman had been born at a particular time, in a particular place and into a particular family, yet the particular mission entrusted to him ensured that he belonged to every time and place and people. He was born in troubled times when old certitudes were shaken, but he came eventually to a remarkable synthesis of faith and reason, like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of the truth. Christ, the ‘kindly light’, was for him the light at the heart of every kind of darkness. Newman’s search, though, was shot through with pain. Once he had come to an unshakeable sense of the mission entrusted to him by God, he declared:

Therefore I will trust him. Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve him. My sickness, or perplexity, or sorrow may be necessary causes of some great end, which is beyond us. He does nothing in vain; he may prolong my life, he may shorten it; he knows what he is about. He may take away my friends, he may throw me among strangers, he may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide the future from me—still he knows what he is about.¹⁴

Pope John Paul concluded:

In the end, therefore, what shines forth in Newman is the mystery of the Lord’s Cross: this was the heart of his mission, the absolute truth which he contemplated, the ‘kindly light’ which led him on. As we thank God for the gift of the Venerable John Henry Newman on the two-hundredth anniversary of his birth, we pray that this sure and eloquent guide in our perplexity will also become for us in all our needs a powerful intercessor before the throne of grace. Let us pray that the time will soon come when the Church can officially and publicly proclaim the exemplary holiness of Cardinal John Henry

¹³ *ibid.*, pp. 400, 398-399

¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 400-401

Newman, one of the most distinguished and versatile champions of English spirituality.¹⁵

Although the ideal of holiness may be elevated and lofty, the means of attaining to holiness are humble and mundane. Newman advised those seeking perfection to perform the duties of each day as perfectly as possible, beginning with getting up at the right time. The self-denial which is pleasing to Christ consists not in great acts but in the little things. The veil between the natural things of daily life and the supernatural is very thin, and God is dwelling in the soul through grace.

In all circumstances, of joy or sorrow, hope or fear, let us aim at having him in our inmost heart; let us have no secret apart from him. Let us acknowledge him as enthroned within us at the very springs of thought and affection...¹⁶

Those who met Newman were inspired by him. Lady Lothian, a new convert in 1851, was struck most by ‘his childlike sympathy and humility, and next to that the vivid clearness with which he gives an opinion.’ Lord Chief Justice Coleridge wrote to a friend in 1882, ‘I cannot analyse it or explain it, but to this hour he awes me like no other man I ever saw. He is as simple and humble and playful as a child, and yet, I am with a being unlike anyone else. He lifts me up for a time and subdues me.’ Even after Newman had been made a Cardinal, he continued to live a life of great simplicity, completely dedicated to the day to day tasks of an Oratorian priest and to the pastoral care of those who sought him out at Birmingham Oratory. Despite his intellectual achievement, he was a true pastor and dedicated to the poor. He entered into vast correspondence with people of various religious persuasions, helping them with their religious and spiritual difficulties. When he became almost blind and could not read or write, he prayed the rosary constantly.

By his saintliness, his integrity and the profound spirituality of his writings, Newman had by the time of his death on 11 August 1890

¹⁵ Vatican 22 January 2001

¹⁶ *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, V

won over many English people, so that the country had become far more favourably disposed towards the Roman Catholic Church. Fifteen to twenty thousand people lined the streets along the eight mile funeral route from the Oratory at Edgbaston out to the Community's house and graveyard in Rednal. On the next day, there was a long obituary in *The Times*, and a leader which said:

Of one thing we may be sure, that the memory of this pure and noble life, untouched by worldliness ... will endure and that whether Rome canonises him or not he will be canonised in the thoughts of pious people of many creeds in England. The Saint... in him will survive.¹⁷

This has been prophetic. But *will* Rome canonise him? The Diocesan Process for the canonisation of John Henry Newman was begun by Archbishop Grimshaw of Birmingham as long ago as 1956, and it ended in 1986. Newman was declared Venerable on 22 January 1991:

For the next steps, beatification and canonisation, evidence of a miracle is required, and this is not as yet forthcoming. It has been said that the reserved English have not prayed hard enough! Nevertheless, the miraculous influence which Newman has had on so many souls cannot be doubted. Perhaps he was too 'English' to favour the more flamboyant forms of miracles! As a tribute to Newman, on Good Friday this year Pope John Paul II read from Newman's meditations and prayers, and there was speculation in *The Times* the following day as to whether the next step in the canonisation process could be imminent.

In any case, no single Church can claim Newman entirely for its own. On 13 August 1890, two days after Newman's death, Dean Church of St. Paul's began the obituary in the *Guardian* with this:

Cardinal Newman is dead, and we lose in him not only one of the very greatest masters of English style, not only a man of singular purity and beauty of character, not only an eminent example of personal sanctity, but the founder, we may almost say, of the Church of England as we see it. What the Church of England would have

¹⁷ *The Times* 12 August 1890

become without the Tractarian Movement we can faintly guess, and of the Tractarian Movement Newman was the living soul and the inspiring genius. Great as his services have been to the communion in which he died, they are as nothing by the side of those he rendered to the communion in which the most eventful years of his life were spent. All that was best in Tractarianism came from him—its reality, its depth, its low estimate of externals, its keen sense of the importance of religion to the individual soul ... He will be mourned by many in the Roman Catholic Church, but their sorrow will be less than ours, because they have not the same paramount reason to be grateful to him.¹⁸

Since that was written, Newman's influence has spread ever more widely and deeply within the Roman Catholic Church, so much so that the Second Vatican Council has sometimes been referred to as 'Newman's Council', because of the extent to which his writings, particularly on development of doctrine, were used for reference. Pope John Paul II gave an exhortation in a homily delivered in Coventry during his visit to England in 1982:

Imitate his humility and his obedience to God; pray for a wisdom like his, a wisdom that can come from God alone.¹⁹

We should do well to follow this injunction. John Henry Newman, pray for us.

BOOKS

THE INNER KINGDOM. Volume 1 of the Collected Works, of Bishop Kallistos Ware. St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000. hb. £17.99, pb. £9.99 Bishop Kallistos Ware is well known as a gifted communicator of Orthodox theology and a scholarly spiritual teacher of insight and depth. Now in this volume he has prepared a selection from his many writings, including one from the *Fairacres Chronicle* in 1989. A

¹⁸ *The Guardian* 13 August 1890

¹⁹ Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, Vol V.2 (1982), p.1978

review of the sources indicated on page 217 will reveal the ecumenical and international scope of a very remarkable ministry, whose ripples of influence stretch far beyond the confines of Orthodox Christianity.

Bishop Kallistos was originally an Anglican layman, and in the first chapter of this book he describes how and why he converted to Orthodoxy. It is a fascinating and very fair-minded account in which he pays full tribute to all that he owed to Anglicanism. Like Newman before him, his was a case of 'export best'! This book is of real value to Anglicans in particular because its writer retains a temper and outlook utterly congenial, but also instructive, to Anglicans of orthodox belief today.

He was attracted by the fullness of belief and worship experienced within the Orthodox church, but his opening 'apologia' dispels any romantic or delusory notions about Orthodoxy. Bishop Kallistos was converted by both his head and his heart: tradition, martyrdom and stillness were the points of his initial engagement with Orthodox life and worship. In due time he became a priest, monk and finally a bishop, while pursuing an academic career at Oxford.

But words which he quotes from Vladimir Lossky about the paradoxical weaknesses within Orthodoxy apply also to the Church of England which he left:

How many recognise in 'the Man of Sorrows' the eternal Son of God? One must recognise the fullness there where the outward sense perceives only limitations and want ... May we be enabled to recognise victory beneath the outward appearance of failure, to discern the power of God fulfilling itself in weakness, the true Church within the historic reality. (p.20; from *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p.245-6)

Each chapter of this book is a gem. There is a moving and pastorally sensitive treatment of the Christian approach to death and resurrection, its inevitability and daily presence within our life. The discussion of spiritual communion with those already asleep in Christ is lucid and persuasive, and much the same spirit of informed wisdom permeates a lengthy discussion of the meaning of repentance in Christian life. For any priest hearing confessions this third chapter is a judicious and reassuring guide, close in spirit to the teaching of the late Bishop Michael Ramsey.

Two central chapters, 4 and 5, deal with the Orthodox approach to divine worship, and the role of education in kindling a sense of informed wonder and praise. Bishop Kallistos is a person moved by beauty, supremely the beauty of worship and of the Eucharist. This he communicates with great clarity and skill, and these chapters will serve well those called to lead services in church, or to educate the young.

There follow two major chapters close to the author's heart—those on prayer and hesychasm—the distinctive witness of orthodox monasticism. Bishop Kallistos writes as a practising monk, who has had close encounters with spiritual fathers on Mount Athos and in his own monastery on Patmos. As an introduction to this singular spiritual tradition these chapters are unrivalled in their lucidity, balance and good sense. It has been Bishop Kallistos' special charism to be able to serve as a sure bridge for many Christians outside the Orthodox communion into this spiritual realm.

The chapter on martyrdom at the heart of the Church's life, and at the heart of the Christian at prayer, is outstanding. The treatment of suffering seen in the light of Christ is perceptive and balanced, but at the same time deep and compelling. The next chapter on spiritual direction within the Orthodox tradition is again specific and revealing, yet also of universal scope. Finally the chapter on 'The Fool in Christ as prophet and apostle' provides another distinctive window into Orthodox Christianity, past and present.

The book concludes with a piece on the nature of Time, and its bearing on prayer and eternity, which reveals the breadth of Bishop Kallistos's reading and sympathies, with a sensitive and scholarly treatment of the haunting question, 'Dare we hope for salvation of all?'

DOUGLAS DALES

INTO YOUR HANDS: Prayer, and the Call to Holiness in Everyday Ministry and Life. Andrew Clitherow, SPCK, 2001, £8.99

It is nearly thirty years since the publication of Archbishop Michael Ramsey's invaluable little book, *The Christian Priest Today*. Much

has changed in society and the church since then, and sadly the ordination charges which make up that book now have a slightly dated air. Andrew Clitherow's new book does not replace Ramsey's book, but it explores some of the same themes. It is an account of the vocation, the personal life and the practical work of the priest or minister in today's changed conditions in which he combines a high and uncompromising view of the priestly vocation with a realistic understanding of how that vocation can be lived out in the circumstances of the modern world.

The author is very conscious of these circumstances: of the pace of modern living, its goals of success and material prosperity, and its tendency to de-humanize; of the pressures and relentless demands on the priest, especially in a busy urban parish, and 'the harsh realities of the parish based ministry'; and of changes in what is expected of the parish priest—the emphasis on effective marketing and management techniques, on reports and results, and the successful maintenance of the institution. In this context he presents a picture of a priesthood which is not shaped by these pressures and expectations, but by a response to the covenant love of God.

Fundamental to all else in the life of a priest is prayer. This may seem obvious, but the vibrancy and even the discipline of prayer can be eroded by the pressures of administrative and pastoral work. Clitherow is clear about the need to set aside special times for prayer; but he also helpfully explores ways of maintaining something like the 'constant' or 'unceasing prayer' of the Eastern Fathers, calling it 'the prayer of the beating heart'. Also important is his emphasis on the need to be totally honest in prayer, to 'stand naked before God', and so increasingly to discover one's true self. The resultant reminders of our vulnerability, together with the experience of falling flat on our faces from time to time, and even of having our lives 'reduced to rubble' are unavoidable elements of the personal life of the priest (and of other people of prayer) which God uses for our spiritual growth.

Throughout the book there is an emphasis on the fact that God is at work not simply in the church, but in the lives of people and the world round about. The task of the priest, and of the church as a

whole, is not to drag people in, but to be open to the many-sided and mysterious operations of the Spirit in people of all kinds. Mission is not ‘high pressure selling of a belief/value system’, but a matter of listening to the voice of Christ in the world, of walking with others and sharing the suffering of the world. It involves recognizing that people outside the church may be closer to God, and can indeed bring Christ into the church. This is a wholesome emphasis and a useful corrective to the all-too-common tendency to draw a sharp line between the church and the world.

The book includes much down-to-earth advice about the ordering of the priest’s life—managing the diary, the use of time, relationships with family and others. There is much here that is useful and practical, although inevitably people will differ in the way they organize their practical lives, and some may not find all of Clitherow’s suggestions appropriate to themselves.

It would, I think, have been consistent with the general thrust of the book if there had been a clearer recognition that the priest or minister in the modern world may find himself or herself struggling with doubts and uncertainties about the faith itself. Priests are not immune to the acids of modernity (or post-modernity) which have eroded many of the traditional ways of holding and expressing Christian belief. Perhaps more than others, they should be people who wrestle with the faith, with its truth and its meaning for themselves and for others. To find oneself torn between faith and unbelief is not a failing or a weakness, but is often a part of the calling of the priest to stand before God both in the church and in the world.

All in all, this is a timely and welcome book. The current emphasis in the church on the participation of all members and the shared nature of ministry, good and important though that is, can have the effect of casting doubt on the nature of the priesthood and can leave priests uncertain about their role and identity. If this book has the effect of clarifying the essential priestly vocation and task within the whole body of the church, it will have served a very valuable purpose.

SANDY RYRIE

EDITH STEIN DISCOVERED, A Personal Portrait. Pat Lyne OCDS.
Gracewing, 2000. £7.99

This is a book written from love. While the author's sense of kinship with Edith Stein can lead to an over-identification with her subject and a degree of authorial invasion, which at times impairs an objective view, at its best, this sense of affinity produces a good narrative. At its worst it introduces asides which are merely distracting. The portrayal is a good short introduction to Edith, though it does not pretend to offer an account of her achievement as a philosopher.

In outline Edith Stein's biography goes like this: born in 1891, she was a Jew by birth; she converted to Roman Catholicism; she was a philosopher and writer and lecturer; and in middle age she became a Carmelite nun. Edith died at Auschwitz together with her sister Rosa in 1942. This book amplifies the biographical frame for the most part effectively, focusing on various phases of Edith's life, for example, her university days, her career as a lecturer and her entry into Carmel.

While the portrait outlines Edith's journey as a philosopher and significant member of the phenomenological school of thought the author does not attempt to penetrate the matter and significance of her academic context and research. To describe this as a serious shortcoming would be unreasonable in what is after all, a short book and a *personal* portrait. However, a reader unfamiliar with Edith Stein's work, will not be made aware of the extraordinary richness of her intellect. She was a deep and original thinker, but this book, overlooks this important aspect of her being.

Edith Stein was part of a new philosophical school of thought, which 'attempted to describe the structure and essence of all phenomena'. (F.M. Oben: *Edith Stein: Holiness in the Twentieth Century*) As a method of philosophical speculation it was not only fundamental to her doctoral thesis but continued to influence all her work right up to her final study of St John of the Cross (*The Science of the Cross*). The pursuit of truth which began with philosophical speculation was transformed by the Holy Spirit into that exceptional interplay of mind and soul which inspired her finest works. Pat Lyne

by-passes any appraisal of Edith's doctoral thesis on the subject of 'Empathy'. Thereby we miss out on a remarkable study of an elusive and difficult subject by one whose warm and understanding relationships with others brought into vivid focus the other side of an exceptional intellectual grasp of theory. Edith herself put heart before intellect, as her life story demonstrates, but interestingly she herself argued that empathy stops short of a total 'at oneness'—access to the inmost being of another. This is, if anything, confirmed by the author when, describing her exploration of Göttingen where Edith spent her student days, she imagines herself sharing a *torte* with her in a famous pastry shop. While we can accept some sense of affinity with the subject, this imagined encounter disturbs sensible thought about Edith by diverting attention to the author instead, while her frequent exclamations of 'poor Edith!' are both inappropriate and intrusive.

The portrayal of Edith's relationships with others brings into focus Edith's compassion and her readiness to listen and respond from the heart. There are tantalising glimpses of Edith's most important relationships: those with, for instance, Edmund Husserl, leader of the new school of phenomenology; Mother Petra Brüning, Superior of the Ursuline Convent of Dorsten; and above all her mother Auguste Stein, arguably the strongest moral and spiritual influence on Edith's life.

The account of Edith's entry into Carmel is informed by the author's experience of the Carmelite way. She alludes to the possible difficulties that Edith may have encountered on entry: the strict nature of formation, learning to be a student again, being so much older than her novitiate group, and being given domestic work for which she had little aptitude. At the same time she sees the Cologne Carmel as providing 'the right environment' for someone like Edith, for without an imaginative response to her gifts from her sisters, Edith's intellectual adventure would have ended there, possibly at considerable cost to her spiritual journey.

This book was written in response to the canonisation of Edith Stein in 1998, an event which has proved controversial. So it would have been interesting to learn the author's thoughts on the meaning of Edith's life and death in that context. What she does do, however, is

trace the unswerving loyalty of an exceptional woman and now beloved saint ‘to family, friends, scholarship, Carmel and ultimately, to her God’, who revealed himself to her in the Cross of life.

SISTER JESSICA RUTH CSC

INHERITING PARADISE: Meditations on Gardening by Vigen Guroian. Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 2001. pb. £7.95

As the writer of this book rightly points out, God’s creation cannot subsist without God’s abundant grace, although human science and technology are tempted to think so.

Gardening teaches us that we belong to nature and have a responsibility for its preservation, and to rectify the harm done to it through sin. As we live through the cycle of the Church’s year with its fasts, feasts and ordinary time, so in the garden there is the slog of digging out deeply rooted weeds—the fasts, the weeding, watering and often uninteresting jobs of ordinary time. Then after much toil the feasts of beauty in fruit, flower and vegetable, the riot of colour, the fragrance which makes the garden a place where body and soul can be in harmony.

To those unfamiliar with, and without access to, the Armenian Orthodox Liturgy, the author’s frequent references to it may not be as helpful to the reader as he assumes. It will be for each one to bring to their meditation what the worship, prayer and sacraments in their own tradition have revealed to them of God’s creation and of their realisation of it in the garden.

My one minor criticism is, that as this book follows the liturgical year there, does seem to be every reason for it to begin with Advent, rather than end with it. Before the flowering there must be the preparation and all that that entails, and so it is with the life of the Christian. The ‘advents’ of our new beginnings will bring us eventually by God’s grace to the autumn of life and the final harvest.

To those who enjoy gardening this book will speak of the experience of seed time and harvest both in creation and the life of the soul. To those who have no garden or who dislike gardening what is written here can be a reminder that the Bible begins and ends in a

garden. Our Lord rose from the dead in a garden, and it seems that He frequented gardens—all food for meditation whether one gardens or not.

SISTER FREDA SLG

THE MILLER'S TALE AND OTHER PARABLES by Margaret Silf. Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 2000. Paperback, £7:95

Margaret Silf has been trained by the Jesuits to accompany others in prayer. She also leads retreats and quiet days and has written several books on prayer, notably *Landmarks*, which is a personal and practical exploration of how the insights of St. Ignatius Loyola can help people to deepen their relationship with God.

The Miller's Tale is a short, very readable book written in Margaret Silf's characteristically warm, accessible style and consisting of seven 'parables'. Each of these is really an imaginative story triggered by some apparently insignificant incident or observation which the author has developed in rich, often unexpected ways to reveal a deeper meaning about her faith in the belief that every event in our daily lives has within it the potential to disclose something of God and God's kingdom.

The titles of the stories are intriguing; for example, 'The Necessary Rice', 'Conversations with a Pumpkin', and 'Pan Piper'. Since these do not immediately reveal what they are about, it encourages us to read on. Some like 'Pan Piper' and 'The Necessary Rice' work well, I think, but I find that phrases like 'I met my inner pumpkin during the course of a winter walk with a friend ...' rather irritating and not particularly illuminating. Most of the time the originality and richness of Margaret Silf's imagination in seeing hidden layers of meaning in everyday happenings leads the reader to surprising places, while her deep concern for the brokenness of humanity and of our world make some of the stories very moving. All of them are permeated with a sense of God's love and compassion, and the possibility of restoration and transformation through Christ. This is always linked with the need for each of us to play our own tiny

part in bringing in God's kingdom. These stories can be enjoyed because they are easy to read and at one level not too demanding, but they may also spark off our imagination to find new ways of looking at ourselves and the world.

Ignatian spirituality is becoming increasingly popular through the writings of people like Gerard Hughes and Margaret Silf, while the corresponding increase in the number of individually guided retreats and weeks of guided prayer means that people from different Christian traditions are able to experience something of its riches. This book would be a delightful introduction to Ignatian spirituality as well as being interesting to others who are seeking to relate their faith and life more closely. The Ignatian way is not for everyone, of course; for some it is too 'busy', too structured, while others are called to a more contemplative spirituality; but in whatever way God calls us to follow him, we know that our prayer and our daily lives must flow into each other, and that we can seek and find God in all things.

OBLATE SISTER CAROL SLG

BOOKS RECEIVED

Jesus in his own Words: compiled and edited by Teresa de Bertodano. Hodder & Stoughton 2001. £9.99.

A Manual of Anglo-Catholic Devotion, Andrew Burnham. SCM-Canterbury Press, 2000 £20.00 hbk.

The Only Necessary Thing: Living a Prayerful Life, Henri Nouwen DLT 2000. £10.95.

The Saints of the Anglican Calendar, Kathleen Jones. SCM Canterbury Press, 2000. £16.99

In All for All: An Offering of Peace and Sacrifice of Praise, a Monk of CSWG, 1999.

An Adaptation of the Liturgy of St James, with an Introduction,
offered for ecumenical occasions and possibly for special feasts.
Copies can be obtained from the Community of the Servants of the
Will of God, Monastery of Christ the Saviour, 23 Cambridge Road,
Hove, East Sussex BN3 1DE

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Please make cheques payable to SLG Charitable Trust Ltd

Do you require a single room(s) or a double room?

Do you have any special dietary requirements?

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extra pillows/ or any other physical arrangements?*

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