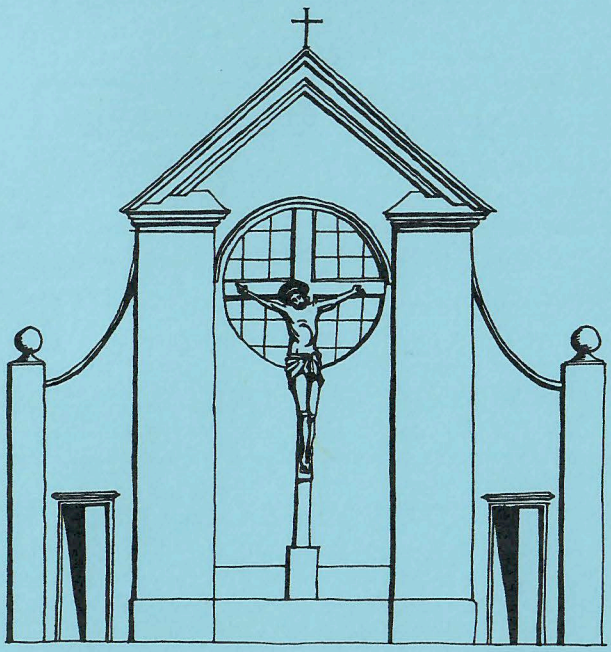
# FAIRACRES CHRONICLE



## Forty years of SLG Press

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*DEO GRATIAS*

**THE SISTERS OF THE LOVE OF GOD**

are pleased to announce
the election
on
1 June 2007
of

**SISTER MARGARET THERESA OF JESUS**

to serve as the next Reverend Mother of the Community
until the year 2012
and
ask all their friends to remember in prayer
SISTER MARGARET THERESA
together with the Community,
particularly on the day of her installation, 24 June 2007.

## EDITORIAL

FORTY YEARS OF SLG PRESS: for the present Editor, an anniversary keenly and consciously awaited, but which somehow has not yet revealed its true meaning. What *is* SLG Press now, in 2007? Like the Community which stands behind it and each one of us, it is changing and re-forming, sometimes imperceptibly, and we have the sense that this is a process continuing in 2007.

The Community itself is undergoing change. Following our Centenary year in 2006, fully documented in previous editions of the *Fairacres Chronicle*, we are (at the time of writing) in the last days before the election of a new Reverend Mother, and news of who has been elected to serve for the next five years is to be found on page 3. After a period of eleven years—about one-tenth of the Community's history—Mother Rosemary lays down her office at midnight on 28 May. She has earned the enduring thanks of us all for the gifts she has brought to the role, for her wisdom, dedication and perseverance and for seeing us through so many changes and for being alongside us in joy and in sorrow. It does not yet appear what we shall be (cf. I John 3: 2), but we have received many affirmations from outside that we are 'on course', to use a nautical metaphor which Sister Rosemary, as we shall now learn to call her once more, would appreciate. Despite the changing fortunes of the religious life in general, the vessel is as sound as we know how to make it, even if we are far from complacent.

SLG Press was founded in 1967 through the vision of Mother Mary Clare, and the then Warden of the Community, Fr Gilbert Shaw, and an article written by Mother Mary Clare for the *Fairacres Chronicle* in 1974 is reproduced here in a slightly abridged form. It speaks eloquently of the beginnings of SLG Press and of the unchanging hopes and aspirations behind its work. The first central focus on publishing the works of Fr Gilbert rapidly widened. The year 1967 was a momentous year in the history of the Community. As well as SLG Press, Bede House was also founded—again through the vision of Mother Mary Clare and Fr Gilbert. Then, amidst all this activity, came the death of Fr Gilbert on 18 August 1967 at Fairacres.

On his deathbed, he dictated the words which were his bequest to the Community he came to love so much and which have underpinned its life ever since, ones we have come to know as 'Fr Gilbert's Last Homily': our work is 'listening'; our work is 'standing'. These we also reproduce in this edition.

So many people have been touched by the work of SLG Press over the years. This edition gives some indications of that breadth in the contributions which are included: a short homily given to us on St David's Day by one of our regular celebrants at Fairacres, Roland Meredith, and another short contribution from our Priest Associate Douglas Dales on his travels in Latvia and Lithuania. We also include a study by a former celebrant, James Ramsay, now living in London, which explores a relationship between two different approaches to emotion, the discipline of *apatheia*, or 'passionlessness', as practised, for example, in early monasticism, and the modern interest in work on and with the emotions. Such an attempt to relate what we read in books containing the ancient wisdom of the Christian tradition to contemporary understanding is to be welcomed.

We are who we are, and the *Fairacres Chronicle* should, if it does nothing else, give some indication of the things which are concerning us as the Sisters of the Love of God. As Mother Rosemary reports in her Community Notes, we are at the time of going to press looking back upon the deaths of two Sisters in less than three weeks, Sister Patricia Thomas and Sister Ellinor, and also looking ahead to the election of the next Reverend Mother and the funeral of Sister Ellinor. Our Warden, David Barton, in his words at the funeral of Sister Patricia Thomas, showed once again his talent to find exactly the right words, for grieving family and Community alike, to tell it as it is. His opening words, 'It is a death we long expected, but it still leaves us all feeling wretched and empty', do tell it is as it is, but he then places our sorrow in the context of Christian joy and hope.

Being Editor is a living thing, involving entering into relationship with SLG Press, not imposing upon it, and it means that the Editor must be prepared to change! This edition might have

contained more about forty years of SLG Press, and perhaps the Winter edition of the *Fairacres Chronicle* will return to this theme. Yet underpinning SLG Press is the Community and its experiences and needs. Thinking much, as we are at present, about illness and death, the article which we include in this edition by one of our Oblate Sisters, Liz Koole, about her work with bereaved children and families also turns out to be timely. We cannot change the fact of death, but we can work towards turning it into something new.

A number of book reviews may be found at the end of this edition, covering a variety of themes and beginning with a lengthy review article written by Jeremy Swayne, a Priest Associate. Apart from commending, as it does, a book written as an 'exploration' of the mystical way, this article is to be welcomed for its helpful introduction to significant figures in the tradition of Christian spirituality who are included in the book, and for passing on to us the encouragement that the mystical way is for all, not for some spiritual élite. If we can pass on this message, then we are indeed continuing to further the hopes and intentions of those who founded SLG Press.

*Apology*: We apologise to Mother Rosemary for an error which crept into the Community Notes of the last *Fairacres Chronicle* (Vol. 39, No. 3, Winter 2006, p. 5). The third paragraph on page 5 is a continuation of the quotation from Fr David's address and should have been printed as such, in smaller type and indented.

## COMMUNITY NOTES

HOW DO YOU measure time? How long is old? We have made much of the first one hundred years of SLG, but, to put it in perspective, this year Oxfordshire is celebrating one thousand years, and that is less than nothing in comparison with *enstreptospondylus oxoniensis*, one of our local dinosaurs, whose one-hundred-and-fifty-five million-year-old skeleton is on display at the University's Natural History Museum. Human life is brief indeed, but this month in Eastertide, as I have watched at the deathbeds of two Sisters, it has seemed not so much brief as timeless, breath by breath, at that moment already part of whatever we mean by 'eternal life'.

The season of Pentecost is a time for reconnecting, in whatever way we can, with elemental energies, light, fire, movement, the Spirit who is breath and life-giver. So I have been remembering 'Luminox', a spectacular display in the middle of March which was part of Oxfordshire's millennium celebrations. Whilst doing an errand in town a few days beforehand I was puzzled by the appearance in Broad Street of some big iron structures like leftovers from the early days of the industrial revolution, and a huge, apparently basket-work, cone. Had I been there after dark in the days that followed it would all have made sense: fire! As an art form! Thanks to the imaginative vision and the skill of the French Luminox artists, the cone became a towering spire, glowing chandeliers lit up the street, streamers of flame cascaded from the Bodleian, fire pots flared into sculpture and there were fountains, braziers, lamps, and music—a veritable Pentecost of creative energy and beauty. Flame must be the purest, most mobile and most unpredictable of mediums. It is well worth visiting the BBC Oxford website to see photographs of the event. And to reflect on the endlessly apt and inventive genius of God's quickening Spirit, everywhere present, and making and moving every present moment.

The death of Sr Patricia Thomas of the Holy Trinity on 4 May was both timely and untimely. Timely in that it ended her suffering, untimely in that she loved life and, were it not for cancer, could

have expected many more years of vigorous living. In fact diagnosis of the disease ten years ago marked the beginning of a remarkable flowering in her community life, first at Boxmoor where she was the much-loved and respected Sister in Charge, and latterly at Fairacres as her limitations increased, and with them her determination to live to the full and her manifest delight in doing so. She reached her sixtieth birthday triumphantly on 31 March, and came to the Eucharist in chapel for the last time on Easter Day. To the end she remained the highly competent and matter-of-fact nurse, facing her situation squarely and finding her own ways of dealing with it. We knew that her passing would be a landmark for us all, and so it was. We did not sing at her funeral her own arrangement of 'I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of the Lord' (we would probably have been too choked up to do so) but the gladness was there as well as sadness, and a sense that she had achieved something very great by being a Sister of the Love of God in her own unique way. Her brother Michael and older and younger generations of the Burdis family were there with us at her funeral; we continue to remember them, to miss her horribly, and to be thankful.

Sr Ellinor of the Transfiguration died on 21 May at the age of eighty-three in the Manor House Nursing Home, Merton, outside Oxford. How do you measure time, and where is the chaos-subduing Spirit, when you have lost all bearings and the known world is a strange, distorted place, confusing and frustrating? For many years Sr Ellinor had been confined to a chair, unable to walk or do anything for herself, and verbal communication had been beyond her; and yet, visiting her, we have sensed that the old Ellinor was still somehow there. She has had such a long wait for death; what, we cannot help wondering, was going on? Sr Ellinor, with her background in the City of London Police and knowing a good deal of the seamy side of life, had always been a great interceder, and who knows what work has been accomplished through her in these difficult years, and what purifications she underwent in the conditions of 'silence' (but she could be very noisy!) and 'enclosure' she endured. It is a mystery.

Our funeral director's son, when we were arranging Sr Patricia Thomas's funeral, asked shyly if he could ask me 'a religious question' and he did: how come a Sister, who was presumably a good person, had got cancer and died relatively young? Nothing in the smattering of Sunday school teaching that he could remember seemed remotely relevant, though he felt it that ought to be. He was puzzled, and I don't think that in our brief walk across the lawn I was able to help him much. I would have liked him to catch more of the urgency of the question and, with that, some sense—or hope, or faith—that God is there in the puzzle and the pain, even more in the thick of suffering than we are. Anyone meeting death again and again, as this man must if he is to continue in the family business, deals daily in 'a religious question'. Will he find his own answers? I am glad that he was asking. Sr Ellinor would have found a salty riposte, or just *looked* at him with a look entirely equal to the challenge.

I should record that on 17 January Mary Wheatley, who has known the Community for many years, was received as an Oblate Postulant and will be known as Mary Hannah. And that in February Bishop Michael Lewis, our Episcopal Visitor, conducted a Visitation of the Community, assisted by Mother Mary John OSB, the Abbess of West Malling, Sr Mary of the Holy Spirit OCD of Dumbarton Carmel, and Bernard Crean, a retired stockbroker. They and we had prepared very thoroughly, and we all made the most of the intense four days that they spent at Fairacres. We are grateful for their time and care, and for all that we expect to receive as we reflect and work on their observations and recommendations. As it is twelve years since our last Visitation (and that, in Visitation terms, is a long time), there was much ground to cover. The first question put to us in the personal questionnaire for each Sister was, 'Are there any significant changes in your life since the last Visitation?'—to which at least one Sister was tempted to reply that *everything* had changed. It does sometimes feel like that. And there is more change ahead for all of us.

As I write this, my time as Reverend Mother is running out, and I am grateful that the timing is right, my inner sense of being ripe

for retirement coincides with the time laid down in our statutes. How shall I end? I am told—and it is a good story—that one day in church, the parson said, 'Let us pray' and a very little girl (me) piped up in response, 'Oh yes, *do let's!*' I hope that that is true, and *do let's pray* is my last word now. 'Come, Holy Spirit.'

MOTHER ROSEMARY SLG

## ASSOCIATES

### NEW FLG

Peter Stobart
Maureen Jallon
Margaret Easteal
Revd Christine Bull

### RIP

Revd Paul Wakelin FLG
Audrey Aitken FLG
Nina Lahood FLG

# ADDRESS AT THE REQUIEM AT FAIRACRES ON 14 MAY 2007 FOR SISTER PATRICIA THOMAS OF THE HOLY TRINITY SLG

DAVID BARTON

*The readings at the Requiem were:*
*Zephaniah 3: 14-20; I Peter 4: 8-13; John 14:1-7*

> Sing aloud, O daughter of Sion;
> SHOUT, O ISRAEL!
> Rejoice and exult with all your heart…
>
> Zeph. 3: 14

TODAY WE REMEMBER someone deeply loved by all of us, family, Community and many friends. It is a death we long expected, but it still leaves us all feeling wretched and empty. In the face of that it may seem strange that our readings today should have begun with such a trumpeting of joy. *Sing, shout, rejoice*! But we belong to a deep tradition that teaches us to sing in the face of adversity. Zephaniah sang in the face of threat because he knew that praise, doxology, changes perceptions and evokes a deeper reality than the one into which we find ourselves locked. Doxology points to the energy and vitality of God, the only one who has the power to *bring us home, to gather us in, to restore our fortunes*. As we hear these words, we can take our loss and hurt and put it into the prophet's words and remember that God is a God of mercy, and compassion, whose eyes are always on those who are crushed by the seemingly random circumstances of life, a God who will lose no one. Zephaniah is the prophet of the little people, and in the face of death we often feel so small and insignificant. Doxology reminds us that we will never fall out of God's hands, that God will comfort us, and that we can be sure of it.

And God, we can also be sure, will make God's own doxology, God's own rejoicing, over the life of this Sister. She came to this

Community as an experienced, skilled nurse, with all the wisdom such a role brings. To that, over the years, she added the deep stability of a Sister experienced in the monastic life. It was a wonderful combination. And she loved this life and this Community. I remember her telling me once that one of her earliest jobs as a Postulant was to work in the kitchen and how much she had valued it. After that rather important nursing job, she was suddenly a junior alongside quite senior Sisters. The practical working together with a minimum of talk, the underpinning of prayer, above all, the way the task *became* prayer—it was all a revelation to her and she learned so much from it that lasted. And that was characteristic of her way of monasticism—not much expressed in words but always practical, earthed. Over the years she ran the infirmary, she advised on the layout of the new St Raphael's for the Sisters in need of care, was a wonderfully sane Sister in Charge of Boxmoor, and was wise in the counsels of the Community—much for the Community to remember her by.

But Sister Patricia Thomas also had a great gift of friendship, and there will be many outside the convent who have memories of her to ponder and conversations to treasure. It was not that she spoke much about faith and the spiritual life, but that combination of wonderful listener and wise observer always moved the conversation to the place where it needed to go. And the gift was also in her presence, the faithfulness that never ceased to shine through.

Why was it that such a treasured person should carry in her body a form of cancer that was never to relent? It is the question we ask, but I doubt if she spent much time on it. Her response on being told that the cancer was now moving beyond control was to say that she had had a good life, longer than she might have expected—her own way of doxology. The precariousness of life lived with cancer seemed to trouble her very little. And somehow that song went on singing in her, in the face of wearisome treatment, increasing limitation and all the trials and disfigurements of dying. She said once that her vocation was something she never fully understood—it always had to be taken on trust, (a link there to St Thomas that was so important to her). But she found that it was because of her

life as a religious that she could accept the cancer, and in that she found a deep gratitude. More than once I asked her about anointing. And she would always think about it and then suggest it might be later. Because, she would say, I am very blessed as I am. And that was her truth. Blessed in the love and care of her Sisters, blessed she would say, that the cancer was so benign. But, blessed also, I believe, by a truth that was in and beyond all those things.

When, a couple of months ago, we met to talk about this requiem, I discovered that the hymns had already been chosen and were carefully written out with various alternatives. The list insists that we do not miss 'Hymn 333' ('All my hope on God is founded…') as we take our leave at the gate[1]—and we won't! But when it came to pondering the readings it was as if we moved together into another place. We read Amos and Hosea, and then Isaiah 12, with its great shout of praise for the God who turns to comfort us, making it possible for us to draw water from the wells of salvation. This was the place that sustained her, a source of inexhaustible mercy, to which she turned again and again—all summed up for her in John 14, with its image of the house of infinite capacity. It was not possible for her to choose one small part of this great enabling vision. You decide, she said, and so we have used her own choice of Zephaniah, read at her Profession over twenty-six years ago—and it seems utterly right.

And all of that profound vision of God finds its grounding, its earthing, in her very deliberate choice of the passage from I Peter. In part it is her own golden text for the life of a religious: *maintain the love that can reach beyond fault finding; serve each other, and speak to each other, out of the grace of God; live out of God's strength and not your own.* Her response, perhaps, to the charge given to her by Fr Donald at her Clothing. Quoting Abbot John Eudes, he said, 'In your meditation ask yourself, "Where is the

[1] This is a reference to the Community's custom of processing, singing hymns, through the garden behind the coffin after the Requiem to the convent gates (sometimes for this reason called 'the golden gates'). Each Sister carries a small posy of flowers gathered from the garden, and there is a pause as the posies are placed one by one on the coffin, before it is placed in the hearse for the journey from the convent. It was at this moment that the hymn referred to was sung.

glory of God?" If the glory of God is not where I am, where can it be?' But the next verses of the text, moving into the next chapter, go even further. '*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place ... but rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings.'* These were, I think, her watchwords, words that helped her to make sense of what she faced from day to day, pointers to the offering she must make. And they also become our clue to understanding this experience.

The unsentimental acceptance of her illness, without resentment, and her simple offering of it to God, brought about a profound weaving together of her life with that of Christ. Curse and blessing were brought together in a baptism into his death that was a source of strength for us all. We should not doubt that such profound faithfulness is a blessing beyond the opposites that reaches the hearts of many. If in the end the loneliness and the isolation of death claimed her, and we were unable to say farewell as we might have wished, we need to remember that there are no rehearsals for the final surrender of death. It must go as it goes, and we have no choice. But the life of God was still woven with hers, as it is with ours, even in the dereliction and pain. And it is, if I may say this, an extraordinary example to us all.

It is now our task of mourning to recognize our own ache and loss, and make room for it, welcoming it in, learning how Christ will gather it up and weave it into his own glory. If we do that, then this death will also teach us how to manage the pain of our own death, our own letting go. And perhaps we too will learn how it is that the chance to share even a small part of Christ's sufferings is, by God's strange paradox, a way of discovering wonder and love and therefore an opportunity for rejoicing. So that with her, and the saints in heaven, we can join in Isaiah's doxology around the wells of salvation:

> Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously;
> Let this be known in all the earth,
> Sing aloud and shout for joy O Royal Zion,
> For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.
>
> Isaiah 12: 5-6

# CELEBRATING FORTY YEARS OF SLG PRESS

## FROM THE *FAIRACRES CHRONICLE*, WINTER 1974

I WAS WALKING along the Embankment to Charing Cross *en route* for our convent at Burwash with the late Fr Gilbert Shaw and, as so often happened, Fr Gilbert was expanding on the need for the recovery of the great tradition of prayer and, as a means to this end, how every priest and every layperson should be helped to know more of the riches of the Christian tradition. So absorbed was he in his thought that when we got to the platform barrier at Charing Cross Station, he had mislaid his ticket. This in no way stopped the flow of spiritual exhortation, so it was left to the ticket collector to point out that the lost ticket was safely tucked into the ribbon of his well-worn clerical homburg. I can hear him now saying, 'I'm always doing that—now let us get back to important matters—we must write something about prayer.' Looking back to that day in 1958, I can see that that was the moment that the idea of SLG Press was born, though it was not until 1966 that the early implementation began, through the generosity of Fr Gilbert himself.

For a year, we were content to use SLG Press largely as a means of co-ordinating the spiritual teaching on prayer and the essential ascetical preparation which Fr Gilbert was giving to the Community. At this time he was instructing Sister Marjorie and myself in the editing of his work, with a view to fulfilling his hopes that after his death his teaching could reach a wider public.

Fr Gilbert himself left in his will a generous benefaction which enabled the Community to erect at Fairacres St Teresa's Lodge and the adjoining premises for SLG Press, which as far as SLG is concerned is a permanent memorial to the years of Father's teaching and guidance of the Community.

The original setting up of SLG Press was a small mustard seed which, like its Gospel counterpart, has during the following years grown and expanded beyond anything he or I could have envisaged initially. This, I think, can be taken as a verification of Fr Gilbert's understanding of the need for publications on spirituality in its

different forms, primarily to meet the needs of those who, having started on the way of prayer, need guidelines and encouragement to go further and deeper.

Gradually more equipment was obtained, the greater part of which was donated by friends in memory of Fr Gilbert; and even though we became more mechanized, first a second, then a third, and finally a fourth Sister was needed to meet the expanding work. Before mechanization, the services of the whole Community at Fairacres had to be called on whenever there was a large issue to be collated, stapled, and folded—and everyone responded very generously.

### *To whom do the publications go?*

At first 'Fairacres Pamphlets'[2] got off the ground slowly, but they became known, as one person told another, and now they are distributed from Caithness to Cornwall, from Alaska to Florida. They are distributed to private individuals in America, Australia, Canada, South Africa, and all parts of the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic. They are stocked in four bookshops in Australia, one in New Zealand, and one in the USA. We hope they will soon be stocked in one in Canada.

### *Who writes our publications?*

We must not forget that one of the objects of SLG Press is bit by bit to meet the growing requests for Fr Gilbert's own teaching; for example, the *Pilgrim's Book of Prayers*, originally published by A. R. Mowbray Limited in 1945, has now with their permission been reprinted twice by us to meet a constant demand. We have also printed others of Fr Gilbert's papers, and we are hoping in the not too distant future to print an edited version of *The Face of Love*.

Naturally, many of the other publications are written by members of the Community and are the fruits of the life lived and the teaching of our Fathers Founder, especially Fr Lucius Cary SSJE and Fr Gilbert Shaw. We are also grateful indeed to contributors outside the Community such as our present Warden, Canon A. M. Allchin,

[2] very soon called 'Fairacres Publications'

Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, and Fr Dumitru Stăniloae, who have written original works for us. We are also grateful to Dr Michael Ramsey who, when he was Archbishop of Canterbury, allowed us to print the paper he read to the Anselm Society in Canterbury; to Professor Lampe and Br Michael SSF for their papers read at the Religious Life Conference in York; to Fr Christopher Bryant SSJE for a paper read to a group of Christians and Jews; and to Dr Lorna Kendall for a paper read to the Willen Urban Chapter.

As I write today, a further extension to the Print Room has recently been built which enables the Sisters responsible for preparing the type on an IBM Composer to work in comparative quiet instead of sitting cheek-by-jowl with a thumping Rotaprint, not to mention the bang-bang of the nearby folding or stapling machines. This is an opportunity to thank those who contributed so generously to the fund to mark my retirement as Mother, which SLG thought it fitting to use towards this extension, in view of the partnership between Fr Gilbert and myself in teaching and training the Community.

I would like to quote from a 'hand-out' called 'Guidance in Prayer' written by Kenneth Leech, who is now Rector of St Matthew's, Bethnal Green. He says:

> In learning to pray, no books are a substitute for practice. But we should not despise books. St Teresa of Avila said, 'For eighteen years, except after communicating, I never dared to pray without a book' (*Life* of St. Teresa, Chap. 4). Books can be used prayerfully … we read in order to awaken praise, wonder, joy and a silent contemplation of God, and we put away the book when it has helped us to reach this point of encounter.

Fr Leech mentioned, amongst other books, that Fairacres Publications could be used to this end—a purpose and a recommendation which would have been a cause of deep satisfaction to Fr Gilbert.

What I have written gives a brief outline of how SLG Press came into being, but there is another aspect with which it is right to conclude. Many of you will remember that in 1970 SLG Charitable Trust Limited was formed and duly accorded recognition as a

charity by the Charity Commissioners. One of the objects set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Company is:

> To print, publish, and sell periodicals, books, leaflets and other publications to further the objects of the Company [SLG] and the propagation of Christian knowledge and belief.

Long may we be able to fulfil this obligation!

MOTHER MARY CLARE SLG (1906-1988)

## FR GILBERT SHAW'S LAST HOMILY

## FAIRACRES 1967

*THE HOLY SPIRIT will never give you stuff on a plate—you've got to work for it.*

*Your work is LISTENING—taking the situation you're in and holding it in courage, not being beaten down by it.*

*Your work is STANDING—holding things without being deflected by your own desires or the desires of other people round you. Then things work out just through patience. How things alter we don't know, but the situation alters.*

*There must be dialogue in patience and charity—then something seems to turn up that wasn't there before.*

*We must take people as they are and where they are—not going too far ahead or too fast for them, but listening to their needs and supporting them in their following.*

*The Holy Spirit brings things new and old out of the treasury.*

*Intercessors bring the 'deaf and dumb' to Christ, that is their part.*

*Seek for points of unity and stand on those rather than on principles.*

*Have the patience that refuses to be pushed out; the patience that refuses to be disillusioned.*

*There must be dialogue—or there will be no development.*

# WORKING WITH BEREAVED CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

LIZ KOOLE

> How can you explain to a three-year old that their parent has been killed in a road accident?
>
> How do you begin to tell children that their parent or sibling has an illness they are going to die from?
>
> Isn't it too difficult for a child to know that their parent took their own life?
>
> What helps children when someone in their family has been murdered?
>
> Is it good for children to go to a funeral, see a body, wear the clothes of a dead family member?

I HAVE BEEN ASKED to write about my work with children and families with the child bereavement organization Winston's Wish, based in Gloucestershire, and these are some of the questions we are asked day by day, on our Helpline and in our meetings with families and professionals. Winston's Wish supports children who have been bereaved, either through illness, accident, suicide or murder, and it was set up fourteen years ago because of an awareness that when a parent died, no support was offered specifically to children.

Since those early days, we have learnt a lot about the experiences of bereaved children in different situations and what is helpful to them and their remaining parent, who has to care for them while also being engulfed in their own grief. We have learnt what helps by listening to families, to their stories, to their pain, to their confusion and anger and to their hopes. This, rooted in a sound theoretical framework, has helped Winston's Wish to develop a range of responses which can be made available to both families and professionals who support them, as and when they are needed.

**Understanding the needs of bereaved children**

Grief is a natural experience following a death, and Winston's Wish does not regard it as pathological. Most families require support and information, rather than therapy.

What most children need is:

*Honest information about what has happened, why it has happened, and what will happen next.*

This includes information which helps them understand the causes of death, what death is and what it means to them, and the rituals society has surrounding death. They need to be told what will happen at a funeral and what it will be like, and ways need to be found to help them participate. Then, in a situation in which they have no control, they need to be given choice.

*Opportunities to tell their story of what happened in a variety of ways, and for these stories to be heard by those important to them.*

This validates their experience of what happened, for they may have been at school, in bed or somewhere else when the person important to them died. There are often big gaps in a child's story, so it is not surprising if they are anxious, misbehave, or have made up their own story to fit what they know.

*Opportunities to express their grief and to understand the feelings and thoughts it evokes.*

Children often look to adults to see how they should respond, so if adults do not talk about the death or the person who has died, or express their feelings, then the child may do the same. Children also protect their parents and do not want to make them sad. They also need the opportunity to think about different ways of coping with loss, so that they can have some control over their own situation.

*Help to find ways of remembering the person who has died.*

The remembrance of the death can come to overshadow other happier memories. It helps both children and adults to be able to get

into contact with memories of events, holidays, things they have done together, what the person was like and what they meant to them. These are memories of their relationship with the person who died, and it is important that they reflect the true experience of living with that person, both good and bad. It is honesty that brings most relief to children.

*Encouragement for family members to talk openly with each other.*

Children are always helped by being able to talk about someone who has died and what has happened, and difficult or worrying behaviours often disappear when these conversations start to take place.

*Opportunities to meet other children and families with similar experiences.*

Children often feel isolated by what has happened and are very relieved to know that other children have similar experiences. Together they can learn that it is okay to have fun as well as be sad after someone has died.

Winston's Wish has moved on from its early roots in palliative care to include children bereaved by road accidents, other sudden deaths, suicide and murder, each of which have their own particular issues. Imagine how hard it is for a child to know that their parent took their own life, while violent deaths can be a cause of trauma, complications over burial, unwanted publicity and the involvement of many people outside the family.

Recent generations have sometimes felt it inappropriate to include children in funerals or to talk to them about what has happened and how people feel. Older children and adults tell us how this makes them feel isolated from the rest of the family, and fails to recognize or value their own relationship with the person who has died. It also denies them access to rituals which society has developed to help us recognize the reality of what has happened and to say goodbye. It is not surprising, then, that people who have been bereaved as children tend to have more mental health issues as adults.

In the course of our work, we have learnt that not telling children the truth or being unwilling to talk about difficult things does not protect children, but only makes the resolution of grief more difficult. Children *can* cope with difficult things, so long as they are well supported, and knowing, talking and being involved helps them come to terms with what has happened, just as it does for adults.

It helps to know something about the developmental stages which children progress through in order to understand something of how they experience grief. A useful exercise for adults supporting bereaved children is to think back to your own childhood and what it was like to be that age. What was important? What influenced you? What was happening in your life? Then to try and think yourself into the shoes of the child and see the world with their eyes. We then start to come closer to understanding what might help that child. It is also important to recognize how your own feelings may affect what you say—or more likely *don't* say—to a child.

**Some personal reflections**

I always hesitate to speak about my work. It seems that people are often impressed by it, but it is also a good conversation stopper. Maybe because it is related to one of our last taboos—death. Maybe because it combines two extremes and two irreconcilable things—childhood, newness and innocence, with the end of life and the unknown void beyond death, the thoughts or fears of which are so personal to each of us that they are rarely verbalized. And related to death are often suffering, pain and violence, both for those who die and for those who remain. And who can speak of these without fear and trembling?

Maybe people are relieved to be able to take a step into that place of death in safe company. I'd be interested to know, but mostly I am quite circumspect in keeping it in its place, for fear of taking others into places they do not wish to be, but also because I do not wish to be defined by my work, or to define myself by my work. I am trying to live out my vocation to be a contemplative in

the world, and to be a contemplative in its true sense means for me to enter that place of nothingness, to hold on to nothing, to be nothing and to desire nothing but to stand before God, to walk on the road of life with no props, not knowing where you are going, only trusting in God.

In talking about my work with bereaved children it may appear as if I 'know' many things, that I am an expert, especially if I talk about working with families where someone has been bereaved by suicide or murder. But if I think about it, the reason why I am drawn to this work is because this, for me, is precisely the place of unknowing, the place where all the props of life break down, the place where I have to stand with others who are fearful and who experience the absence of God, the place where none of us knows the answers to our questions. Death is the cutting of our ties with everything that has been meaningful or important in our life and the reaching out towards God in for some, a cry of hope, and for many, a cry of despair. This is my desert, a hard rocky place with no answers, and yet also a place, like any spiritual desert, that purifies intentions and motives with the burning fire of God's spirit. A desert where nothing of our own making has any value, a desert where, paradoxically, springs of living water welling up to eternal life can be found, that feed and nourish my life and faith and bring the joy of knowing, in the depths of my being, that God is God.

The time of death is a time for action to stop, and to stand in that place with people is an act of contemplation and humility. Our gift is our accompanying, our remaining with those who are dying or bereaved, at a time when expertise and status count for nothing, only our being human, on equal terms. Maybe what I bring to that place for them is the silent presence of 'God in me', accompanying them on this journey. My act of contemplation in this work is to stand in this desert place before God with the whole of humanity in my heart. If it ever becomes something else, then it is time for me to move on.

*Winston's Wish is a charity based in Gloucestershire which helps bereaved children and young people to rebuild their lives after a*

*family death, offering practical support and guidance to families, professionals and anyone concerned about a grieving child. Contact details are:*

Winston's Wish, The Clara Burgess Centre,
Bayshill Road, Cheltenham, GL50 3AW
Email: info@winstonswish.org.uk
Website: www.winstonswish.org.uk
Helpline: 0845 20 30 40

## THOUGHTS ON THE FEAST OF SAINT DAVID

ROLAND MEREDITH

I IMAGINE that it was chance which produced a Welshman to preside at your Eucharist this morning. You probably knew nothing of Meredith, Prince of Powys, nor of my own Welsh ancestry, stretching back at least to the sixth century to a small coastal farm near Borth, which is the northernmost parish in the Diocese of Saint David's.

Today is the feast day of Saint David, and my mind goes back to many visits to the lovely cathedral which bears his name, to the mini city of Saint David's, and to the gorgeous coastal scenery a couple of miles from Saint David's. We don't know a great deal about Saint David, who lived in the sixth century. Much of his history is mingled with legend, and he is believed to have been the founder of the monastery of Menevia, now Saint David's. The present building, including the ruined bishop's palace, is of course much later than his time, and the site of it was probably much nearer the coast. As well as being a monk, David was also bishop of the large diocese of Saint David's, which traditionally stretches right up from Saint David's in the south to Aberystwyth and Borth in the north. We don't know exactly how he combined his two roles as bishop and abbot, but he is reputed to have been an exemplar of the ascetic spiritual life, yet was also highly regarded for his compassion and kindness, particularly to the poor and the sick. He is said to have based the rule of his monasteries on those of the

Egyptian desert monks, with a strong emphasis on abstinence from alcohol, hard work and refraining from unnecessary speech. He died around 601 A.D.

Here are three brief reflections about Saint David.

First, it is good to be reminded that the Celtic Christianity of Ireland and Wales is much older than the style of faith brought to England by Augustine in 597. Augustine may have been surprised to find that Christianity and a Christian church already existed in Britain before his arrival, and it was not until the Synod of Whitby in 644 A.D. that the 'Latin system' prevailed. I sometimes regret the Synod of Whitby and wish that our church had remained more Celtic and less Latin. Whatever value we attach to the legend that Joseph of Arimathea came to Britain and established the first Christian church in England at Glastonbury, there was obviously a British Church in being which was represented at the Council of Arles in 315 by a Bishop of London and two other bishops. The Church in Wales has remained steadfastly Celtic in character, and it could well be argued that this is more suitable to the British character than the Italian model of Augustine.

Second, it is difficult enough to be a bishop—and I suppose also quite hard to be a religious—but to combine two vocations in one as David did must have been very difficult. There have been a few examples in the last century of men who combined these offices: Charles Gore, Walter Frere, Trevor Huddleston and, in the Roman Catholic Church, Basil Hume. I suppose that the pastoral care of a religious community can be translated into the care of a larger community of priests and lay people in a diocese, though it is not easy to do. Today as we thank God for David we pray for those who lead the church in dioceses and in religious communities. Perhaps in a few years there will opportunities for women to merge leadership of a diocese and a religious community, on the model of Saint David!

Third, a semi-political observation. Today is the national day of Wales, and the Welsh seem better able to celebrate their patron saint than do the English, with their rather shadowy figure of Saint George. I was reminded of this on a recent visit to Cardiff when I

toured the new Assembly buildings and also chanced to meet the Presiding Officer, whom I met doubling up as a sidesman at Llandaff Cathedral. There does seem to be a tendency to emphasize the nationality of smaller groups of people. The re-emergence of the Baltic states, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly; these are all examples of attention being focussed on smaller groupings. I sometimes wonder how far it is wise for this to go. We could lose something as a nation if the emphasis on smaller subverts our corporate loyalty to the larger nation. I think that Gordon Brown is right to stress the importance of Britishness—or even of the European identity—as well as these smaller Celtic loyalties.

Thank God, then, for Saint David, and pray for grace to follow in his footsteps.

## CHRISTIAN *APATHEIA* AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF EMOTION WORK

JAMES RAMSAY

‘“TIRED AND EMOTIONAL” suggests weepiness; “King Lear” inspires “profound emotion”.’ A ‘Big Brother’ housemate’s account of emotion might differ from that of a string quartet player, or a scientist working with artificial intelligence, or an asylum seeker awaiting the outcome of their appeal. Yet despite differences, there would doubtless be overlaps of meaning. A theologian and a sociologist may differ in their treatment of emotion, yet there might be a helpful synergy between them. In this article I explore how two different approaches to emotion—the early Christian discipline of *apatheia*, or ‘passionlessness’, and modern sociological interest in ‘emotion work’—might be helpfully, if critically, related.

Sociology observes rationally conceived structures and developments. Yet with the advent of feminist theory and history told through vernacular experience rather than dis-embodiedly from the perspective of the great, areas of life previously considered irrelevant to public affairs have also begun to be investigated.

‘Emotion work’ arises from this new focus on personal, metaphysical, non-rational activity.

The ‘Centre for Research into Emotion Work’ (CREW) based at Brunel University in West London publishes an *International Journal of Work, Organisation, and Emotion*. Its international scope highlights the recognition that emotions are manifested and understood differently in different cultures. The title also indicates an orientation to the workplace and organisational issues. In many ways this is relevant to Churches.

A starting tenet of emotion work is that emotions are not purely ‘natural’ biological instincts, but are in many respects socially determined. (Shame and pride, for instance, are considerably shaped by social norms—though one might ask the chicken-and-egg question, ‘what determines the norms?’) Emotions are expected to be ‘managed’ according to cultural ‘rules’, appropriately to gender and class: men do not cry, nice girls do not get angry. All societies and organisations, including Churches, have their unwritten ‘emotion rules’. Christian behaviour in Britain is governed by different traditions and theologies, as well as secular cultural determinants; nevertheless there is probably a core of general expectations—vicars never swear, religious sisters enjoy a life of untrammelled serenity—deconstructing such stereotypes itself generates codes of irony and challenge, rules within rules.

Over time rules change, consciousness of change is part of the process. Today’s radicalism is tomorrow’s orthodoxy—the Biblical prophetic tradition identifies the need of the authorities in each generation to ‘whitewash the tombs’ of those eliminated for criticising the authorities in the previous generation. Important to remember, impossible to demonstrate, is the unseen affective society upon which observable social rules are constructed. Collective experience of trauma and post-traumatic stress, dating as far back as the earliest days of the Church—to the death and resurrection of Jesus and early Christian persecution and martyrdoms—are part of the incarnational vernacular, so to speak, of the Church and of systematic theology. Psychic scars tend to be hidden in a Church Militant proleptically proclaiming the Church

Triumphant. Yet if we stand by the folly of the Cross—and confess the mark of the nails in the risen Christ—we cannot but be in touch, at a deep level, with the pain that is intrinsic to glory. Emotional behaviour rules are set by hurt as much as by positive moral vision. Contemporary British mores are also affected by an ancestral deposit of trauma that we can never empirically identify—inherited memories of feudalism, pogroms, martyrdoms, Civil War, Establishment suppression of Roman Catholic and Dissenting Christians, untold common cruelties (the press gang ... ). These are, as it were, just six feet away.

Emotion work research rightly focuses on recordable experiences within groups of individuals, analysed according to their impact on society, or as experiences typical across society which enable general trends to be predicated. Value judgements are suggested in choice of subject and reference: for example, a focus on social capital, a widely accepted term denoting the well-being and creative capacity of a community. Yet both 'hard' and 'soft' data are used: thus traditional hard *output* based research into the effectiveness of police strategy would look at crime and court statistics; soft *outcome* based emotion work might research how people feel the police are doing in their desire to reduce 'fear of crime'.

Emotion work has been described as work done in a conscious effort to maintain the well-being of a relationship. All of us, therefore, engage in emotion work: courtesy, neighbourliness, even—at its best—respectability, perhaps used to carry the same recognition that relationships need working at, not merely at an ideal, psychological level, but also in matters of physical space-sharing and bodily communication. At the altar, bride and groom promise to 'cherish' each other—suggesting the self-aware, practical exercise of affection with which emotion work also deals. Indeed the *commandment* to love, and the marriage *vow* to love, equally point to something very alien to the 'star-cross'd' erotic drama of box-office romantic anthropology.

Arlie Hochschild, Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, has probably been the most influential writer

in the field of emotion work. In *The Managed Heart: Commercialisation of Human Feeling*, published in 1983, she used the term to describe the conscious act of manipulation of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display. We all in some sense act who we are: the concept of 'persona', originally the mask worn by actors in ancient drama, will be familiar to many from counselling and therapeutic literature. Hochschild distinguishes between 'surface acting' (an understanding nod, a sympathetic noise—'the put-on sneer, the posed shrug, the controlled sigh') and 'deep acting' where 'display is a natural result of working on feeling, the actor does not try to *seem* happy or sad but rather expresses spontaneously … a real feeling that has been self-induced'. This becomes particularly interesting when businesses and professions develop institutional mechanisms for creating and working on feelings—the supermarket checkout employee inviting us, with a smile, to 'Have a nice day'!

Emotion work performed for payment is described by Hochschild as emotion labour. This obviously applies to the caring and hospitality professions, but it increasingly permeates the economy: bank personnel and solicitors, gallery administrators, in-flight attendants, marketing agents, human resource managers all have to brush up on client relations. Problems arise, however, when emotions become commodities benefiting organisations: reps have always crafted the appropriate emotional ambience for a sale, yet the highly researched deliberate manipulation of emotions by large organisations is a new phenomenon, raising new ethical concerns.

As Churches model themselves more and more on business lines, we need to take these concerns very seriously. In religious emotion labour, the benefit received is not primarily financial (though we should never underestimate the extent to which it is also that), it is nothing less than a seal of divine favour! In reality this 'favour' may reveal more about our desire to be the holy person we want to be seen to be, than about God. Similarly, at the institutional level, much ministerial training and organised activity is geared not so much to preaching Christ as to promoting Christianity. To look at

ourselves from a sociological perspective here would be no bad thing.

'Some institutions have become very sophisticated in the techniques of deep acting; they suggest how to imagine and thus how to feel' writes Hochschild in *The Managed Heart*. 'When the product—the thing to be engineered, mass-produced, and subjected to speed-up and slowdown—is a smile, a mood, a feeling, or a relationship, it comes to belong more to the organization and less to the self.' This can create 'emotive dissonance', a tension between an individual's personal emotions and the requirements of their paid—or in a religious context, vocational—position. To keep their job, an employee may go against their own feelings, even unconsciously adjust their own emotional responses. Vocational workers may do the same: though when God is the 'employer', part of the contract is to acknowledge that human emotions are disordered, and therefore we must *lovingly* work harder and harder to, as Jesus unequivocally says, 'be perfect'. Needless to say, this is a blasphemous conceptual image of God, of actual Love, yet one to which many of us offer daily sacrifice—the sacrifice of our genuine human complexity, our originality of emotions, our clay of instincts and intentions.

Time to consider *apatheia*. I'd like to suggest that in certain respects a modern secular parallel to *apatheia* is 'professionalism', with its talk of boundaries and inappropriate involvement. Christian *apatheia* properly understood means right control and integration of creaturely faculties under *nous*, the faculty of spiritual intelligence that renders us transparent to grace and love. Professionalism at its best involves dispassionate, though not depersonalised, relationship, in the interests of human dignity.

Unfortunately, *apatheia* (originally a Stoic term) often gets a bad press, if people have heard of it at all. 'Passionlessness' should denote freedom from those bullying psychic powers within us that abuse the soul. This freedom is achieved, in Evagrius's view, by a purgative process of subjugation of the passions, in order that through serenity love can possess one's being. Others' asceticism was less apophatic: Diadochus of Photike writes positively of 'the fire of *apatheia*'. In the Latin West, though John Cassian rendered it

'purity of heart', from Jerome on, it has been misconceived as a state of spiritual anaesthesia incompatible with the doctrines of the Fall and grace: achieving affective numbness, the contemplative in a state of *apatheia* thus presents a religious prototype of modernity's alienated, *apathetic* robot. For many modern Westerners spiritual detachment is a desiccated aloofness—a form of escapism, at best a yogic curiosity.

There is a serious need to correct this misrepresentation. In the world of *homo economicus*, where sensation is prized over feeling and meaning is replaced by efficiency, a post-Holocaust world that nevertheless is able to speak of 'ethnic cleansing' as though the phrase itself were not an obscenity, we desperately need to become emotionally re-sensitised. Paradoxically this can only start by our becoming more emotionally professional—that is, more dispassionate: less emotionally manipulable and less compulsively cynical. At the same time professionalism needs a human, not a purely theoretical (conventional) paradigm. 'Professionalism' requires dis-passion; yet humans are flesh and blood, passionate beings. Without passion there is no empathy, true understanding, original spark. Secular discipline, relying as it ultimately does on consensus jargon, cannot alone resolve the existential conflict between this 'gut' level of experience and detached social construction and the commodification that inevitably follows from that. In modern, globally dominant Western culture, fixated as it is on an exclusively financial economy, the loss of contact between these two essential levels of the overall economy of human experience has become critical.

Our capacity for feeling and receiving nourishment from our own deep emotions has become very poor, though we are no less driven by those emotions. As a society we have lost awareness of, and 'fear of' (in the Old Testament sense) our own inner, energising *daimon*. This is secularisation: a state of existence with no sounding board to give it resonance. Transcendence is the sounding board that enables humanity to understand its own worth. It is incarnate at the level of human economy in innocence, grace, trust—values inimical

to a culture committed exclusively to (empirical) experience, effort, and self-protective accountability.

The secular discourse of emotion work is a critical tool which can help Church communities evaluate honestly how they are living out their faith. At the same time theology can shed critical light on secular discourse, asking questions of emotion work. Are the most significant emotions discernible to a detached observer? What are the motives for corporate business interest in emotion work? Despite researchers' disinterested, perhaps even idealistic motivation, do their findings encourage us to 'cope' with rather than confront ecologically abusive environments and dehumanising systems? The developed world demonstrates narcissistic absorption in its own psychology—an absorption that saps our emotional will to tackle issues of global injustice and environmental devastation. To what extent does emotion work reinforce that self-absorption?

Marx's criticism of religion as 'the opium of the people' was not unjustified—and one could say that much religion in the developed world today is a sugared analgesic against the moral discomforts of privilege. However, religion does not have a monopoly on moral ambivalence. Without explicit orientation to the value-structure that supports the endeavour to state objective truths, truth all too easily conforms to the topography of the dominant power.

Dispassionate presentation of facts necessarily reflects the epistemology of those with the leisure and resources to research them. A very different tone is heard from voices that, without resources, have to shout (or shoot) to make themselves heard. From these voices we get a different sense of fact. Still vivid in my memory is a TV interview with a doctor—walking with a young reporter between rows of beds in a refugee hospital tent, saying, 'This child will be dead by morning … This one will be dead.' The reporter asked, 'How can you stand there so calmly saying that?' The doctor—who knows in what state of fatigue?—responded with silence, and a look.

The emotion-laden world from which the reporter came, and which she wished to inform, was very different from that of the

doctor living with scant resources, responsible for dispossessed, starving, sick people. The reporter's job was to present an intelligible account to her UK audience. Yet the facts of the horror—as opposed to items of fact about the horror—were emotionally unassimilable.

The professionalism of hi-tech news production shapes our outlook more subtly than the news itself. News is contoured to our own desire for responsible awareness—intellectual grasp/control—of the world. The control element, largely irrational, in turn generates a need to 'keep up with events'. And because all this happens within the terms of our own affective epistemology, it is boringly always-the-same—in compensation for which, we seek and require to *feel* shock-horror. This addiction blurs the border between fact and fantasy; a fog rendered all the more dense by that populist appropriation of highly perceptive and valuable philosophical deconstructions of 'fact' and 'fantasy' called post-modernism. The emotional build-up at this border, where we no longer have agreed definitions for the concepts we reject, pushes us into confusing one for the other. Private fantasies acquire political validity.

By contrast: 'The aim of terrorism,' a man from Northern Ireland reminded his radio listeners a few years ago, 'is to create terror.'

Unlike the TV reporter, the speaker on this occasion 'professed' truth in the sense that he lived with terrorism. It was, in a manner of speaking, his life. His lack of emotionalism was reassuring—truth can only, ultimately, be reassuring. Recall to the plain sense of a word, trust that language meaningfully connects two utterly disparate bodies of experience, heals. It disperses the miasma of emotive confusion that lends words like 'terrorism' their self-fulfilling power. The Father of Lies is tripped by the Word made flesh in the humble circumstances of a ruthless and ugly world.

The bearing of this Word in the poverty of language is theology; secular discursive thought is ontological reportage. Sociological insights in the field of emotion work are part of the economy of human experience which, if we believe in the truth of the Incarnation, we must take seriously to heart. Yet theology, with its

boundary beyond human nature—contextualising human environmental and ethical self-reference within a holistic perspective having at its centre not a superhuman, de-naturing idealism, but knowledge *felt* (rather than merely postulated) to be definitive of the good—relates the descriptive perspective of the world to its eternal vanishing-point.

Prayerful action, which includes thought, speech, and stillness, is the idiom of the Word in and through our lives. It is the only hallowing of the name of the Father. Secular wisdom rejects the notion of hallowedness/holiness, as also the necessity for innocence, grace, and trust; and therefore is content to busy itself with observing and describing as causative discrete phenomena that glint from the whole. Some Christians will understand the mystery of the holy in terms of moral and dogmatic rules teachable and applicable by more or less well-intentioned 'surface acting'. Some, God forgive us, mistake manipulative 'deep acting' for the work of the Holy Spirit. Yet the decisive emotions of life are not always observable, and cannot be subject to didactic formulation, until they are already more or less a trend. Concealed within the rather unexciting husk of *apatheia*, radical motivation is protected and nurtured.

What, then, is this strange, counter-cultural *apatheia*? The dichotomy between passion and dis-passion mentioned earlier is resolved, for Christians, by com-passion; of which the Passion of Christ is the supreme anagogic paradigm.

Christ on the Cross is not merely a moral or inspirational example for us to live up to, nor does he merely invite affective, sentimental identification with suffering—though such things are integral to the human dimension of the event, and we rightly respond at these levels in a human, thus wholly personal way. Ultimately it is the divine initiative, God's compassion for the world, that is the power of the Cross. The historical fact of Jesus's crucifixion has significance by virtue of the spiritual reality it uniquely and wholly embodies. It is 'anagogic' because it raises us spiritually: rather than educates, moves, and ennobles us, so that we can 'manage' our creatureliness better by, so to speak, being

distanced from the common ground of our mortality, it earths us immediately and for good in the reality of creaturely dependence and the divine compassion. As we take up our 'cross' of discipleship, we are not responding mimetically to an *experience of* the compassion of Christ, we are rather making manifest in our lives—witnessing to—God's redemptive power of grace in the world, by an act in which our will is engaged through Christ's salvific compassion.

Throughout the gospel, Emmanuel, God-with-us, is 'moved with compassion' to act. It is this same compassion that leads him to his final supreme act of self-giving. St John in particular stresses the sense in which the crucifixion is a positive action of Christ's, rather than a merely passive, dutiful living out of ordained suffering. In the contrast between the Synoptics' presentation of the human suffering of Jesus and the Fourth Gospel's vision of the 'dis-passionate' priestly self-offering, we wrestle with the humanly irreconcilable tension between the human and the divine (a tension evident in much of the disquiet over the doctrine of the impassibility of God expressed in certain twentieth-century theology). This is the essential dichotomy I have tried to identify in this article.

Only by grace can the seeming opposition between these two gifts of the divine economy be overcome. No human methodologies, material incentives, or 'mystical' alternatives can work the resolution. The dis-ease of the world will infect even the most exalted spirituality and the most rigorous professionalism if divine compassion—the action of Love that is, to the ages of ages, the constant, unalterable source of all movement—is neglected or denied. There is no truth without this passion, of healing engagement with the world.

So finally, *apatheia* becomes both a guardian and gate to truth: a guardian against sentimentalism, facile emotional resolution; a gate to at-onement with the unmoved source of all motion, the eternal Love, that 'fire' of joy, delight, bliss, than which no affect or realisation is greater.

Emotion work is part of the ascetic discipline that prevents us getting carried away by this heady stuff.

# RETREATS: AN INVITATION

THE WORK OF THE Sisters of the Love of God is to be at the heart of the Church in contemplation and intercession, and those of us who are associated with the Community also have a share in that vocation. One of the ways in which the Sisters and their Associates can join together in this work is through the experience of retreat. It is an opportunity to meet together at depth, in Christ, and to follow Jesus' own pattern of withdrawing for prayer at regular intervals. This year, for the second year running, the Community is offering two retreats in different parts of the country, in an attempt to draw in more of those associated with them to share in the experience. Certainly those who come on SLG retreats have told us how much they value them. So if you have not joined us in the past, this is an invitation to do so if you can. For this year we offer two weekends. Next year there will be a weekend retreat and one of five days at Llangasty.

We asked Brother Nicholas Alan SSF, who is an experienced leader of retreats, to lead the July retreat as a follow-up to the one last summer at Llangasty. One of the aspects of that retreat which people told us they valued was that we talked about different approaches to silence and meditation. This will be part of the retreat which Brother Nick will lead—so if you are looking for an introduction to meditation, or support for continuing in it, you would certainly find this valuable.

The second retreat will be led by Sister Edmée SLG, who needs no introduction. Sister Edmée will draw together her experience as a contemplative and her understanding as biblical scholar, and will address some of the difficulties we often have in relating to aspects of biblical text. It will, we hope, be of special interest to Priest Associates, though it is by no means confined to them. This retreat will offer an opportunity for discussion after the addresses.

I hope these brief introductions will encourage you to join us (see next page).

DAVID BARTON (Warden)

RETREAT OPPORTUNITIES IN 2007

Friday 20 July (evening) to Sunday 22 July (afternoon) at Chester:

The Retreat House, 11 Abbey Square,
Chester, CH1 2HU

*Still Mind – Open Heart*

An introduction to the practice of silent meditation, drawing from the Christian and Buddhist contemplative traditions. The weekend will led by Brother Nicholas Alan of the Society of Saint Francis, currently living at Glasshampton Monastery in Worcestershire. He has been involved in Buddhist-Christian dialogue for many years and has recently spent time in Korea at a Zen Buddhist monastery.

*Those who have visited Chester Retreat House previously may be glad to know that there is now a small lift to the first floor*.

Cost: £81

Friday 5 October (4 p.m.) to Sunday 7 October (2 p.m.) at Ely:

Bishop Woodford House, Retreat & Conference Centre,
Barton Road, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB7 4DX

*Prayer – a Key to opening the Bible*

Between our ordinary rational minds and the minds of the biblical writers there is a huge gulf. But, unlike the gulf fixed between Dives and Lazarus, we are enabled to pass from our side to their side, not by learning—as everyone thinks—but by the practice of prayer. Sister Edmée will focus on this subject in three talks primarily on the Old Testament, exploring the language of both the wrath of God and the eros of God. There will also be sessions on both days set aside for discussion.

Cost: £94 or (en suite) £104

Booking forms available from: Miss Judith Lloyd Thomas
32 Holcombe Drive, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 6DN
Telephone: 01597 823020

# REFLECTIONS ON A RETREAT

DOUGLAS DALES

IN THE WEEK before Lent 2007, I joined a group of Latvian Lutheran pastors to lead their first conducted retreat together. They are members of the Fellowship of St Meinhard, the German missionary who first brought Christianity to Latvia in the thirteenth century. We travelled along the frozen river Daugava, from Riga to Daugavpils, and then over the border into Lithuania to stay at the small Catholic monastery of Tiberiades, at Baltriskes near Zarasai, in the depths of the snowy forests and pastures of a vast national park.

What is the purpose of such a retreat? There were perhaps three goals to this particular meeting: to set aside time to give God absolute and undistracted priority, in silence, prayer and reflection; to allow Christ to care for his priests in fulfilment of his promise in Luke 12: 37; and to give time for each other, in the deepening of Christian *koinonia* or fellowship among those called to care and pray for others in Christ's name. This balance was struck—time spent in chapel or in conversation at a meal together was complemented by time for private silence, or amicable conversation in a congenial and beautiful setting. Words of St Augustine from the conclusion of his *City of God* set the tone: 'In resting we see, in seeing we love, and in loving we praise—in the end that is no end.' The themes of the addresses were 'Divine Remaking', six meditations on our Lord's encounters with individuals in the gospels: reflections on his compassion for us as well as for those in our pastoral care. Homilies at the Eucharist attempted to anchor the sense of vocation to ministry within the meaning of the sacrament itself. In the evenings we participated in corporate recitation of the Jesus Prayer, in English, Greek, Latin and Latvian, as a time of contemplation and intercession: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God: have mercy upon us.*

The retreat was deeply enriched by the welcome and gracious hospitality of the small monastic community which for the last five years or so has been turning a derelict collective farm into a centre of Christian prayer and mission to the young. The community comprises four monks from Belgium, all young and highly capable people, living a Franciscan life. They have been active in beautifully rebuilding the place in wood, and also converting a former priest's home into a centre for young people, using the large parish church as a meeting place, as well as using the small and lovely chapel attached to the guest-house where we stayed. Two nuns were also living there at the time, and a family lived nearby as active members of the worshipping community. It was a privilege to share in their worship, both the offices and the Mass, and also to enter into the deep silence of adoration of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. To this rich framework of corporate prayer we added a daily Eucharist in English, and Lutheran Vespers sung in Latvian to plainchant. Some of us joined them in a walking recitation of the rosary along the snowy path into a neighbouring forest. The deep winter was wonderful to English eyes: sparkling snow and trees etched in frost, and constantly altering light.

For all involved, community and guests, it proved a truly ecumenical experience: drawn closer to Christ, we came closer to the roots of the Christian traditions represented among us. The rosary and the Jesus Prayer became parallel, converging upon the presence of Christ in the sacrament and in the spirit of Christian hospitality. Here in lands that had endured bitter persecution, the blood of the martyrs is proving to be the seed of the Church. The youthfulness of the community and their love for the young bore out the wisdom of the Russian saint, Theophan the recluse, who once said 'that of all holy vocations, the care and education of the young is the holiest'. In our time together the essential unity of the Church could be sensed and shared in a rich symphony of spiritual diversity of tradition and inheritance. This was perhaps symbolised by the three saints, who in their icons watched over our worship: St Francis of Assisi, St Seraphim of Sarov and St Thérèse of Lisieux.

*Recent from SLG Press*

**Suffering**

*Why all this suffering? What do I do about it?*

REINHARD KÖRNER OCD

Christians have frequently suffered from a distorted and ambivalent image of a God with two sides, one light, loving and forgiving, but the other dark, threatening and punishing, and the side encountered may be entirely arbitrary, or at best dependent upon personal behaviour and taking appropriate action to avert God's wrath and punishment. Dr Reinhard Körner, a Carmelite well-known across the denominations in Germany for his many published books and for his retreats and courses, is a leader of a movement in Germany away from such an image and its consequences, including the ascription of suffering to God.

No one in the history of humanity has yet found a satisfactory answer to the question of suffering. Dr Körner makes no attempt at slick answers, but wrestles honestly with the theological issues—not just from a theoretical point of view, but from personal experience of grave illness. He preaches the God of unconditional love whom Jesus proclaimed and addressed as Abba, 'dear Father' and points the reader to Jesus, as a pattern and example for suffering humanity.

Fairacres Publication 150 ISBN 978-0-7283-0168-9
Price £3.00

## BOOKS

*Awake to God: Explorations in the Mystical Way*, Melvyn Matthews, SPCK, 2006, £12.99. ISBN 0-281-05801-6.

A recurring theme in Melvyn Matthews' books is the importance of reviving the Christian mystical tradition in the life of the Church; his insistence that mystical God-consciousness is a normal, lively and essential attribute of every Christian life, perhaps we should say every human life, but marginalized and neglected, even disdained. And in this book he argues that our present 'post-modern' condition

is, surprisingly, particularly conducive to this rehabilitation. If the term 'post-modern' strikes dread into your heart, please don't be put off! This is a very readable and uplifting book. It is about *living* theologically, 'before God', not just thinking and talking theologically about God. It is about the theology of 'presence' and of 'participation', forms of awareness of God which Melvyn Matthews finds tragically lacking in the Church today.

The book is, as it says, an 'exploration' of the mystical way. It does not tell us what it is but shows us, by exploring the lives of some who have lived it. It is introduced as a work of *haute vulgarisation*, making available and accessible the work of others. Its aim is both academic and pastoral. For those of us whose academic theological background is limited, this recycling of others' ideas, together with the author's own penetrating insights, is very helpful. Pastorally, the book affirmed and expanded my own exploration of 'the way', and equipped me better to accompany others on their journey. I believe it will do so for any who read it. It wears its scholarly attributes lightly, using them to convey a deep understanding of its theme with clarity and style.

After explaining 'The promise of post modernity', successive chapters explore, 'Meister Eckhart and the negative way', 'Julian of Norwich and the body politic', 'Thomas Traherne and the reinvention of the world'; then, in one chapter, the lives and writing of Paul Celan and Etty Hillesum, before a final conclusion.

So, what is mysticism anyway? This question is not merely facetious, but reflects the slightly ironic tone with which the author points up some common misconceptions—that it necessarily involves solitude or separation from worldly affairs, that it requires an ascetic lifestyle, involves esoteric transcendental practices, or is a kind of self indulgence. The individuals portrayed here were the complete contradiction of these misconceptions. Mysticism can go along with ordinary everyday life.

Eckhart was an establishment man in the fourteenth-century Church, busy in teaching and administration until his radical insights, threatening to the authority of the establishment, led to the charge of heresy. He died on the return journey from defending

himself, unsuccessfully, against the charges. Traherne was a conscientious parish priest, as England passed from puritan commonwealth to restoration, making a real contribution to the theological, political and intellectual life of his time, and in touch with the first beginnings of the scientific movement represented by the Royal Society. Celan and Hillesum were Jews caught up in the holocaust. Paul Celan survived, and went on to win several literary prizes, but tragically eventually committed suicide. Etty Hillesum died in Auschwitz after working tirelessly among the Jews of Amsterdam before being deported. She was previously a very free spirit and had many lovers. None of these stories conform to the popular image of the mystic, and among the pleasures of the book are the historical and biographical vignettes, which illuminate the lives and times of its characters.

Julian of Norwich is perhaps an exception—an anchorite who deliberately sought her 'wounds'. But she was certainly no lone visionary, nor was her prayer for the 'wounds' that initiated her 'showings' a plea for individual mystical ecstasy. Her writing was politically subversive in its representation of the egalitarian relationship between Lord and servant, and her theology was radical. She too could well have been condemned as heretical, and that she didn't fall foul of Bishop Henry Dispenser, who was burning Lollards more or less round the corner from her cell, is something of a miracle.

The nature of the God-consciousness (a term borrowed from elsewhere), that qualifies these five people of the fourteenth, seventeenth and twentieth centuries as mystics in Matthews' account, can, I hope fairly, be summarised thus: in Eckhart the soul is, as it were, subsumed into God, who is the ground of our being. It is the birthplace of the eternal in each person. He speaks of the way in which God 'boils over' and pours himself out in his creation, in an intensity of mutual self-giving, but his language of 'nothingness', 'simple silence', 'darkness' expresses a reality that is beyond the capacity of language to comprehend. This 'negative' mystical way derives not so much from a loss of awareness of God but from an excess of awareness; a proximity to God that brings about a sense of

absence; a special kind of wakefulness, which is obscured by our need for answers and certainties. God is not there to be examined but to be known as the source of all being.

By contrast, Julian's consciousness of God was of an all-inclusive and enfolding love, unfailingly attentive to all that is; reflected in the metaphor of God as Mother. For her, Christ dwells at the root of every human soul, and there is a point in every soul which has not actually assented to sin. The pain of sin is self-generated, for God does not blame us, and does not forgive us, because it is not in his nature to be angry in the first place.

For Traherne, life and creation are gifts. We are part of the gift and can live within it as part of it. Everything communicates with, and in a real sense is part of, everything else. This understanding opens our eyes to a different way of seeing things, a different set of perspectives. The result is a life of joy, springing from a sense of 'the love with which into the world I came. An inward, hidden heavenly love.' A joy by no means ignorant of or insensitive to evil and suffering, but without which we are not fully alive. All these five exemplars, with the exception of Paul Celan perhaps, share this experience of joy in even extreme adversity. How could Julian witness the terrible things happening in her century and write of God's goodness 'filling all creatures and all his blessed works full and endlessly overflowing in them'? How could somebody faced daily with 'persecution and unspeakable horrors', as Etty Hillesum was, write in the same paragraph that 'life is beautiful and so rich … that it makes you want to believe in God'? These are mysteries of the affirmative mystical way that Melvyn Matthews unfolds for us.

Paul Celan exemplifies the negative mystical way. The holocaust must make a significant difference to the way in which theology can be done. Words of explanation are required, but also silence—silence in reverence for those who died, silence before God, for at this point even God is silent, and nothing can be said by him or to him. So typically one of Celan's poems is addressed to 'No-one', 'Nothing', the God who cannot be spoken of.

These are core themes in the mysticism of the five key characters, and make very clear the distinct nature of the 'negative'

and ‘affirmative’ ways. A point I would like to take up is the impression given that our mystical attributes are *either* of the negative *or* of the affirmative tendency, as may be the case with some. But may not others experience both intermittently from time to time?

Other themes, just as rich, emerge—the importance of the Cross in Julian and Traherne’s vision, including Julian’s extraordinary insight regarding the Trinity in relation to it; Traherne’s (currently very topical) views on good-quality childhood; his easy integration of science and religion; discussion of God’s vulnerability, his ‘wanting’ of us, and the Eros of God. And there are many references to, and quotations from, a wide range of other writers.

And finally, what about postmodernism? This was an argument that through unfamiliarity I found hard to follow, but ultimately persuasive. Matthews says, ‘The word “postmodern” is no more than shorthand for the present fragmented condition of humanity in the western world. … We are no longer part of a single culture … of a single tradition. … there are apparently no boundaries … no single principled standpoint … Identity is not substantial … relative to the circumstances of the moment. … What is good is what is useful.’ But, he argues, this condition, which we believe to be an affliction, is actually a gift. The demotion of the ego-self and of the belief in the centrality of reason and the inevitability of progress, allows a shift of emphasis to what is ‘other’, to the primacy of relationship, not just relativism; to the return of imagination and metaphor in our discourse. Truth can now occur in different forms. The end of certainty is the beginning of trust. Opening ourselves to the unknown, we open ourselves to God. He quotes Sebastian Faulks’ writing in *Human Traces*, saying how the insoluble knots and mysteries of life will be resolved not by finding an ‘answer’ but by developing ‘a different perspective’. These are the consequences of postmodernism that are conducive to the mystical way, and although this is an inadequate précis of a challenging argument, I am sure you will recognize sufficient echoes of the core themes of mysticism outlined above to justify it.

I am no great theologian, but writing as an 'even Christian' I am confident that this book will encourage those of us who may have glimpsed the mystical way to rejoice in it and grow in it, and those of us who have not, or who, more likely, think we have not, to be open to it.

JEREMY SWAYNE

*In Search of the Lost: The Death and Life of Seven Peacemakers of the Melanesian Brotherhood*, Richard Carter, Canterbury Press, 2006, £12.99. ISBN 1-85311-780-3.

The author, Fr Richard Carter, an English priest, was engaged by the Melanesian Brotherhood between 1990 and 2005 to minister as Tutor, Chaplain and Mission Coordinator. This brotherhood is the largest Anglican religious community in the world and is growing and flourishing; it now has over 300 brothers and more than 300 novices. The mother house and novitiate is at Tabalia on the Solomon Island of Guadalcanal, a place notorious for the bloodshed in Second World War battles between Americans and Japanese. Richard Carter subsequently became a brother for a time, and he is currently Assistant Priest at the Church of St Martin-in-the-Fields in London. (It is possible for a brother to be ordained and to make vows for life, but the expectation is that most will be laymen and make temporary vows, leaving after some years of service.)

The brothers live a simple, prayerful life and are known for their peace work throughout the South Pacific and beyond; they have received a United Nations award. Melanesian history has been full of blood feuds, tribal wars, head hunting and pagan practices. In September 1871 the founder Bishop of Melanesia, John Coleridge Patteson, was clubbed to death in revenge for raids carried out by Western slavers; at other times, his converts and colleagues were killed. Bishop Patteson had believed passionately that the Solomon Islands should be evangelized by the islanders themselves, and the Melanesian Brotherhood was founded in 1925 for this purpose. As in the Gospels, the brothers are usually sent out to evangelize in pairs, without food, money, shoes or much clothing; perhaps even without knowledge of the local language.

In recent years, tension between two different peoples has escalated into attempts at 'ethnic cleansing'. Attempting to restore peace, the brothers have made appeals to individuals and crowds, transported women and children to non-combat zones, tended the injured of both sides, buried the dead, negotiated the release of prisoners, persuaded combatants to lay down their arms and even dumped those arms far out at sea. They have counselled the participants in atrocities with the Gospel of forgiveness. The brotherhood was consequently accused by each side of not confining itself to spiritual matters, of interfering in politics and of siding against the side in question. Some of the brothers were beaten up for their attempts to persuade fellow Christians and fellow countrymen to live in love and peace with their neighbours.

In 2003 Christians throughout the world, including those living the religious life, were stunned by news on 24 April that seven brothers had been taken hostage and then some months later (on 8 August) by the further news that they had been brutally murdered. I well remember the sad, suffering, email messages arriving (for SLG and for others) from the author as the story unfolded.

Richard Carter's book is based on his diaries and tells the harrowing story of the loss of these brave, talented and much loved young men and the aftermath of their deaths. He does not flinch from describing the times of pain and uncertainty through which the community had to pass. There are photographs in the book to aid the imagination. The cover picture is of a beautiful sandy beach, with a man standing with his back to the sea and his arms outstretched as if on a cross, a visual image of the historical collision of beauty and violence in this place, of war and tragedy, of redemption and light, of despair and the triumph of hope. This moving and powerful account documents the challenge of how to make sense of and live out the Christian faith when there is conflict, fear, trauma and tragic loss and sacrifice—a journey which in some form every Christian has to make. Our horizons and our vision are expanded by books like this.

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

*Let the Children Come to Communion*, Stephen Lake, SPCK, 2006, £10.99. ISBN 9780281057955.

Looking back, 1997 seemed such a bright dawn. Things could only get better. Out with old and bring in the new. Now, nearly ten years later, there is more uncertainty about the future. Can the momentum launched then be maintained? 1997 was not only marked by the advent of Tony Blair as Prime Minister but, just a couple of months before his stunning election victory, the Church of England's House of Bishops issued its guidelines for the admission of children to Holy Communion before Confirmation. This was but a further stage on a journey that had begun decades before in re-evaluating the place of baptism in the life of the church. The mantra of the reformers was that 'Sacramental Initiation is complete in Baptism', and the Liturgical Commission was beginning to prod bishops into recognizing that their primary role in Christian initiation was not in administering the rite of confirmation but that, principally, they should be ministers of baptism. The consequences of this re-evaluation were also becoming painfully apparent. If baptism is at the centre of initiation and there is no theological reason to add to it, then those who are baptised must be full members of the body of Christ. It follows that admission to communion is not dependent on confirmation or a wish for confirmation, but is conferred in the waters of rebirth. So if children are baptised members of the church how can they be refused full participation in its sacramental life?

Stephen Lake has written a stirring defence of the movement that has, as yet, failed to sweep across the whole of the Church of England. Indeed, in ten years, only 10 per cent of all congregations have availed themselves of the permissions granted by the regulations. Nevertheless, Lake believes that these pioneers will be joined in the future by the vast majority of parishes, particularly if they wish to maintain a healthy all-age range in their congregations. Both the Archbishop of Canterbury in his foreword and the author remind us that children are not to be regarded as the 'Church of the future', but are the 'Church of the present', capable of enriching the worshipping community as a whole. Lake gives a brief history of

the course of the reform from the Keele National Evangelical Congress in 1967 to the Regulations which came into force in 2006. His review of the biblical evidence is open to some debate, particularly in his understanding of the use of the term 'little ones' in the gospels, but he is on firmer ground in his detailed review of the millstones and milestones that have brought about these changes. A major section of the book is devoted to interviews with some of the leading lights in this movement. David Stancliffe, Diana Murrie, Mark Russell, Stephen Venner and Margaret Withers are strong voices, but they do represent a Southern Province bias; it would have been good to have heard from a Bradford diocesan representative, where over a hundred churches have sought permission under the regulations. Lake gives his own personal reflections in admitting children to communion both in a parish in Dorset and in St Albans Cathedral where he is sub-dean, and he concludes his work with some practical suggestions for those setting out on this course.

Stephen Lake is a persuasive advocate that the movement should expand until children are welcome at the Lord's Table in every parish in England, and clergy and Parochial Church Councils thinking along these lines will find the book convincing and a useful step-by-step guide. In particular, there is a brilliant suggestion for a Candlemas all-age talk. However, his hope that age restrictions may be lifted is perhaps a permission too far, not only for parishes but also for several members of the House of Bishops. Perhaps the charming appendix to the book called 'Wendy's story' might soften their hard hearts to let the children come to communion.

IAN COOPER

*The Eucharist in Romanesque France: Iconography and Theology*, Elizabeth Saxon, The Boydell Press, 2006, £50.00. ISBN: 9781843832560.

Personality and anonymity blend here. By the end of the book, the names of Berengar, Anselm of Canterbury and Pope Gregory VII will be very familiar to readers, although the effect of their various theologies given visual expression in the great quantity of

Romanesque carving lies in the hands of largely unknown patrons and craftsmen. Saxon charts the way for us through lengthy Eucharistic debate which arose through a desire to counter the somewhat spiritualizing views of Berengar of Tours ('the first to analyse the process of Eucharistic change', p 29).

Some may find themselves naturally resistant to reading of this in detail, but as the debate continued, so it had its effect in the work of St Anselm. His great work on the atonement, *Cur Deus Homo*, may be built on strict logic, yet sits beside the body of his deeply penitential and affective prayers. As Saxon points out, the somewhat cosmic theory of atonement, which can be detected not least in the Fathers, had a tendency to remove the whole process of redemption from human involvement. Anselm, however, placed great stress on penitence and was able to associate this with the Eucharist which was being seen as the focus of Christ's substantial presence. This, of course, was a sign of hope ('Before c. 1050 purgation was seen as for the few, and those mostly monks. The majority were going straight to hell.' p 75). Churches great and small might have impressive tympana with images of judgment, but figures within them from both Testaments pointed to the possibility of salvation through penitence; and such a tympanum stood above the door, as an invitation into the church, and to the Eucharist.

The reforms of Gregory VII, seeking to purify the Church's life, had their effect, but also raised unsustainable expectations. The clergy, for example, were neither to be persuaded to celibacy nor dissuaded from simony overnight. Gregory's demand, therefore, that the sacraments of unworthy priests be rejected by the people can be seen to have fuelled, at least, the rise of heretical movements which sought (as always!) pure, spiritual religion. Peter de Bruys, for example, preached fervently against the Cross, which he saw purely as a sign of shame ('It was perhaps poetic justice that whilst inciting the people of St-Gilles to burn their crucifixes he was himself pushed into the bonfire and burnt to death.' p 237). Another side of the reforms showed itself in increasing devotion to Christ in his humanity, a devotion which could easily be expressed at the

Eucharist, albeit not by any means necessarily through the reception of holy communion.

This is, it must be said, a scholar's book which will most profitably be read by those with access to good scholarly and art libraries, since the great majority of the churches to which reference is made for their sculpture cannot be illustrated in a book of this size. Six pages of primary and nineteen of secondary bibliography set us on course. Most of the twenty-five plates are clear, but, alas, in black and white. Proof-reading and quality of production, however, are high. How has your reviewer profited from reading this book? Fascinatedly, by learning much about early medieval Eucharistic theology and practice; and penitentially, by realizing how superficially he has gazed at the sophistication of Romanesque sculpture in France and Spain.

JOHN SCOTT

*Prayer by Abhishiktananda*, Canterbury Press, 2006, £7.99. ISBN 978-1-85311-750-3.

In 1967 Abhishiktananda published, in English, a short book on prayer, a book that was asked for by a group of his English speaking friends in India. Abhishiktananda's writings up to then had explored the interface of Christianity and Hinduism in some depth. But he had become aware of problems in communication between himself and his readers—how hard it was to convey his message through the written word. Throughout the early sixties he was constantly at work on his manuscripts, looking for ways for avoiding misunderstandings. The request for this book, from people like Murray and Mary Rogers, was for something quite simple on the basics of prayer that would come from the heart of his particular experience. He took care with it—after all, it was in a sense written for friends—and it was a book that, when it was published, made a great impression. The references to Hindu practice were of course to be expected by those who knew him, and who had asked for the book. But it was, when it arrived in Europe, something of a surprise, and totally unlike the usual books on prayer that we all read at the

time. This was after all the era of Michel Quoist, and of Malcolm Boyd's *Are you running with me, Jesus?*, books that captured our imaginations because of their freshness and difference. *Prayer* was certainly a return to the tradition. But its most striking quality was the inescapable fact that it was clearly written out of authentic experience. However surprising the references to the Upanishads in a book on Christian prayer, the words rang out of a depth of understanding that was deeply rooted in Christ. Many people were greatly challenged by reading it.

The book quickly went through a number of reprints, and requests soon came from France for a French edition. To provide this Abhishiktananda made a revised version himself, published in 1971 under the title *Éveil à soi, éveil à Dieu* and it is this version of the book that is now published for the first time in an English translation. In many ways it is the better book. In part that is because he was able to write in his own language. But there is, I suspect, a deeper reason. The (English) text of *Prayer* emerged from an extraordinary period of pilgrimage. At the time of its writing he had spent a long time in the Himalayas, for a while with Raimon Panikkar, but for much of the time alone. The experiences were profound. As a result there was a rawness and directness about the original, which still speaks, despite the fact that the language can often now seem very dated. The two or three years that passed before Abhishiktananda's revision of the text into French allowed those experiences to settle and mature, though with no loss of the power of the original. In some places the text is expanded and rearranged, so that the flow of ideas is smoother, and the extensive footnotes are either abandoned or incorporated into the whole. We are probably indebted to a translator for more inclusive language, and that small change alone makes a considerable difference.

And the change of title (alas not used in this republication) indicates the way his mind had moved. No longer just *Prayer*, with its implications of something that we 'do', but 'Awakening', with its sense of being rudely shaken by God into a whole new way of living and looking at life. That lay at the heart of his experience and more than anything he wished to convey that simple fact to the

world. It is his great legacy to us. The result is a wonderful book from one of the twentieth century's great masters of the spiritual life.

DAVID BARTON

David Barton is co-author with Murray Rogers of *Abhishiktananda: A Memoir of Dom Henri Le Saux*, Fairacres Publications 142, £2.50.

*Mount Athos—Renewal in Paradise*, Graham Speake, Yale University Press, 2002, £16.99. ISBN 0300103239.

This is a first class book in every way; its author is the founder and honorary secretary of the Friends of Mount Athos, a body based in England that gives active support and encouragement to the renewal of Orthodox monastic life that has been underway on the Holy Mountain for the last twenty years or so. Dr Speake has made several visits to monasteries on Mount Athos over a number of years and has clearly won the trust of the monks. He has collaborated with Bishop Kallistos Ware to produce a remarkable history of the Holy Mountain that is also lavishly illustrated, but in a very judicious and revealing way.

This is a serious history book that is both sympathetic and frank. The story is by no means bathed in hagiographical light. It is rather a record of growth and decline, of scandal as well as of sanctity. The long and remarkable history of monastic life on the Holy Mountain is told 'warts and all'. As such it sets a fine and thought-provoking example for other investigations into Church history. The monks would be the first to admit that 'we have this treasure in earthen vessels', and as a result the light and life of Christ has shone through considerable gloom as well in hidden moments of life-giving glory. One of the most remarkable and almost fatal tendencies on Mount Athos has been relapses into an idiorrhythmic or individualistic life-style that all but destroyed genuine monastic life on several occasions. The recovery of corporate monastic life in recent years, after the precipitate decline in numbers that followed the First World War, is a great beacon of hope to the Orthodox Church, indeed to the whole Church.

This book is also a vivid picture of the ups and downs of history in the eastern Mediterranean: during the Byzantine Empire and after the fall of Constantinople; during Turkish rule and its decline in the nineteenth century, and the resurgence of Greece as an independent country, whose identity was carefully nurtured by the Church. There were pirates, moneylenders, mad monks, corrupt abbots, great artists, predatory bishops and a whole tapestry of human nature swirling around this holy and beautiful peninsula dedicated to the Mother of God. For more than one thousand years this place has been set apart for the life of prayer, an earthly paradise with its own rich ecology, an oasis of Orthodox Christianity embracing many of the nationalities that comprise that part of Christendom. Therein have lain dangers, however, notably in the later nineteenth century when the Russians came to dominate the Holy Mountain: fear of this has left its mark on the Holy Mountain until today. Now the Holy Mountain is the beneficiary of European Union financial aid as part of Greece; but with it come dangers in terms of loss of independence, diminished austerity, tourism, roads and perhaps, one day, women as well.

Dr Speake is a shrewd and sympathetic observer of current monastic life and this book gives practical advice on how to visit the monasteries as a pilgrim, explaining the inner life of the monks and its spiritual significance. He does careful justice to recent holy men who have given great leadership and maintained the faith. He also makes the hesychast tradition of prayer accessible and intelligible. He shows how this hidden work of prayer, using the Jesus prayer, has been one of the true threads of Athonite identity throughout the ages. For those who are able to visit the Holy Mountain and for those who cannot, this book is a true *vade mecum*, for the secret of Mount Athos is enshrined in the Jesus prayer that can become the heart of Christian life anywhere. This glimpse of the miracle of prayer, that has sanctified this holy place through so many lives and ages, will kindle in the memory a true seeking after Christ, the love of *Jesu dulcis memoria*.

DOUGLAS DALES

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

DAVID BARTON is Warden of the Community.

LIZ KOOLE is an Oblate Sister of the Love of God; she lives in Slimbridge in Gloucestershire and works with the charity Winston's Wish, which is based in Cheltenham.

ROLAND MEREDITH is an Honorary Canon of Christ Church, Oxford and has been a celebrant at the Community's Eucharist for the last ten years. He was formerly Team Rector and Rural Dean of Preston, Lancashire, and then of Witney, Oxfordshire.

JAMES RAMSAY is priest-in-charge of St Barnabas, Manor Park, East London, and part-time chaplain at the University of East London. He was previously Anglican chaplain in Bucharest (Romania), and prior to that he served between 1989 and 2002 at Holy Family, Blackbird Leys, Oxford, during which time he was a regular celebrant at Fairacres.

DOUGLAS DALES has been Chaplain of Marlborough College since 1984. He has published many books of history and theology, and he has strong ecumenical and monastic connections with Catholic, Orthodox and Lutheran churches. He is married with three grown-up children and has been a Priest Associate since 1978.

JEREMY SWAYNE qualified in medicine in 1966 and was in general practice in Yeovil and the Forest of Dean. He later introduced homeopathy to his practice, and has been Dean of the Faculty of Homeopathy. Ordained in 2000, his particular interests are wholeness and healing and the relationship between science and religion. He is a Priest Associate.

IAN COOPER, a Priest Associate, is a Deanery Lay Training Officer and Team Vicar in Marlborough. He first got to know the Community at Boxmoor when he was Team Vicar of St Mary's, Hemel Hempstead. His particular interests are Biblical studies and Liturgy.

JOHN SCOTT seeks to guard silence and space at the English Chapel, Christ the King, Gordon Square in central London, for students and office workers, tourists and travellers.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

**From Canterbury Press**

*Door to Silence: An Anthology for Christian Meditation*, John Main, edited by Laurence Freeman, 2006, £8.99. ISBN 9781853117497.

*Word into Silence: A Manual for Christian Meditation,* John Main, edited by Laurence Freeman, 2006, £8.99. ISBN 9781853117541.

*The Monastic Way: A Journey Through the Year,* Hannah Ward & Jennifer Wild, 2006, £16.99. ISBN 9781853117572.

*Tokens of Trust: An Introduction to Christian Belief*, Rowan Williams, 2007, £9.99. ISBN 9781853118036.

**From Cistercian Publications**

*The Lives of the Northern Saints by Aelred of Rievaulx*, translated by Jane Patricia Freeland, edited with introduction & notes by Marsha L. Dutton, US $24.95, 2006. ISBN 9780879074715.

**From Gracewing**

*Prayer in the Workaday World*, Arthur Middleton, 2007, £9.99. ISBN 9780852446775.

**From SPCK:**

*Praying the Lectionary: Prayers and Reflections for Every Week's Readings*, James Woodward & Leslie Houlden, 2007, £9.99. ISBN 9780281058549.

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For further information or assistance, including suggested wording of legacies, contact Mrs Anne Champness at:

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email: annechampness@slg.org.uk