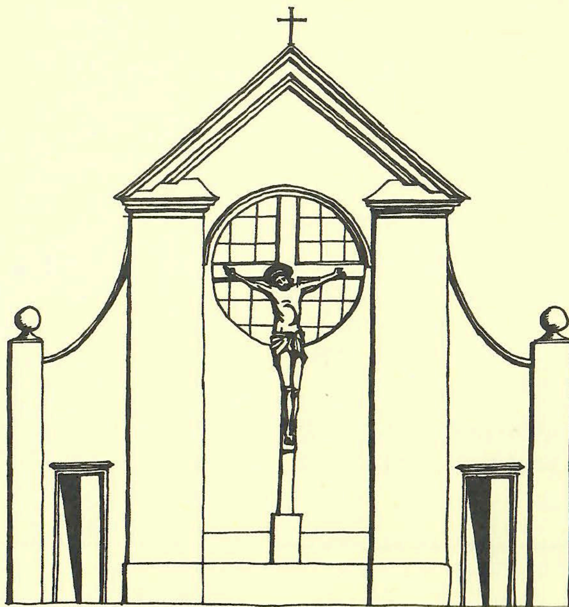
FAIRACRES CHRONICLE



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FROM THE REVEREND MOTHER

DEAR FRIENDS,

We have just said farewell to many of our Oblate Sisters who have been here for their triennial Chapter. Prayer, serious discussion, genial conversation and laughter all featured, and it was a fruitful and enjoyable time for all involved. At Vespers on 1 July, Mary Hannah received the habit of the Oblate Sisters and became Novice Oblate Mary Hannah of the Holy Trinity. Since the last edition of the *Fairacres Chronicle* three Oblate Sisters have made Life Promises: Liz on 27 January, and Katrina of the Sacred Heart and Dot of the Glory of God on 8 May. We have also received some new members of the Fellowship and a new Priest Associate. (Please see p. 8.)

In June, I attended the annual conference of leaders of the Anglican religious communities in the UK. Part of the conference centred upon some of the questions which religious communities are facing in the twenty-first century, but we also learnt something about 'Fresh Expressions' in the Church. I was particularly glad to learn more of '24/7 Prayer', and it was inspiring to hear how so many young people (often with no previous experience of Christianity) are being drawn to a relationship with Jesus. The very concept of 24/7 prayer resonates very much with traditional monastic life, and as I listened at the Conference I was reminded of a phrase in our Rule, 'ideally the whole life is to be made prayer'. Some are living together as communities and are considering long term commitment.

As we looked ahead to next year's conference, we discovered that many communities are seeking to live in a way which sustains rather than depletes God's world, or at least are trying to deplete it less. Sister Susan's article in this edition is surely timely; it was written as an essay for a New Zealand correspondence course. The unpredictable, unseasonable and often extreme weather which many countries are experiencing is for Christians a reminder both to respect God's creation and that some areas of life are outside the control of the human race. We were somewhat surprised to see

snow, not on Christmas Day, but on Easter morning! But despite the unusual weather the garden is both yielding delicious soft fruit and vegetables and looking beautiful.

The autumn edition of the *Fairacres Chronicle* included an article entitled 'On bringing a Right Spirit to the Old Testament' by Sister Edmée; this edition includes an article by Sister Gemma Hinricher OCD, which gives another view on the cursing psalms and psalms of vengeance, with particular reference to their use in the Divine Office. Many communities, and indeed denominations, do not include these verses in their worship; at present we include them, but it is something which some of us question.

The attitude of our society can be that the end of life should be as swift and painless as possible. Duncan Forbes, in speaking about 'enabling a good-enough death', is able to bring wider insights from his direct experience in palliative care. Two long-term Community friends have died recently. In the 1970s, Fr Robert Llewellyn was Warden at Bede House, and Bishop Kenneth Woolcombe was Visitor to the Community; they are remembered towards the end of this edition. Sister Avis Mary writes about the spiritual aspects of the modern-day quest to learn more about family history and ancestors, something made easier these days through the Internet.

Mary Gossy left us in December, having been a Postulant for three months. We are grateful for her time with us and wish her well as she seeks to know God's will for her. Some friends enquire after Sister Anne, so perhaps this is a good place to record that she remains at St Isaac's in New Zealand and is in very good health. This summer Sister Barbara June and our Warden, Fr David Barton, are both making visits to her. If you come to Fairacres in the summer, you may have seen that some of us are taking advantage of the option of wearing a brown dress with veil to match when it is hot. This is a help to some Sisters, both when engaged in practical work and when in Chapel.

We have received as we go to press the sad, though not unexpected, news of the death on 7 July of our Priest Associate, Kennedy Thom. An obituary will appear in the Winter Chronicle.

With all good wishes, SISTER MARGARET THERESA SLG

THE LAMB AND FLAG
HOMILY GIVEN AT FAIRACRES 20 JANUARY 2008

HUGH WYBREW

'THE LAMB AND FLAG' is the sign of one of Oxford's best-known pubs. Most of its clients probably do not know that it is also one of the best-known Christian images of Jesus. In Western iconography the Lamb holding a victorious banner is an image of the crucified and risen Christ; in Western liturgy the Agnus Dei accompanies the breaking of the eucharistic body of Christ: 'Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us'; and we are invited to receive the sacrament of Christ crucified and risen with the words, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; blessed are those who are called to his supper'.

That invitation combines the witness of John the Baptist to Jesus in St John's Gospel[1] with words from the Revelation to John, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb'. It is the Revelation to John which makes most use of this sheep image in the New Testament; and there it points to both the death and the resurrection of Jesus. The Lamb stands as though it had been slain;[2] and yet the Lamb is now alive and is with God in the midst of the throne. Together with God, the Lamb receives the worship of saints and angels: 'To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever!'[3]

The conquering Lamb of John the Seer, and the Lamb of God of John the Evangelist, gambol into Christian imagery from the Old Testament. There was the Paschal Lamb offered each year at Passover to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt. There were the lambs sacrificed daily in the Temple in Jerusalem, though none of them took away sin—sin was taken away by the goat sent into the wilderness each year on the Day of Atonement. Taking away sin

[1] John 1: 29-35.
[2] Rev. 5: 6.
[3] Rev. 5: 13.

was the job of the Lord's Servant of whom Isaiah speaks.[4] In another of Isaiah's Servant Songs, he was 'oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter ... so he opened not his mouth'.[5] Isaiah's Servant 'was stricken for the transgressions of [God's] people'; 'he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors'.[6] The Old Testament sacrificial lamb, the scapegoat, the Lord's suffering servant—all three come together in the person of Jesus, the New Testament Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Jewish religion, like most religion, was concerned with sin. Sin, however defined, is what separates people from God. Individuals commit sins which need forgiveness. Whole peoples can commit sins and need to be reconciled with God. Behind and beyond sins in the plural lies sin in the singular, the wrongness of things in which we are all caught up. Sin is the seedbed of sins, and sins strengthen sin. Sinfulness is the human condition from which we human beings cannot save ourselves: we can only be saved by a power beyond ourselves.

At the heart of Christianity is the belief that God, who creates all things, has rescued all things from sin. The New Testament is the story of how he has achieved that liberation. It's the story of Jesus, born of Mary. He was revealed as Son of God at his baptism when, says John, the Spirit descended and remained on him. Personally he was sinless and so did not need John's baptism of repentance. But his baptism identified him with our sinful humanity. Paul wrote strikingly to the Corinthians, 'For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.'[7] Led by the Spirit, Jesus followed the way that took him to the Cross. There, in obedience to the will of God, he gave his life freely; and that self-offering overcame the human sin with which he had been identified. 'As by one man's disobedience', wrote Paul to the Romans, 'many were made sinners, so by one

[4] Isa. 49: 1-7.
[5] Isa. 53: 7.
[6] Isa. 53: 10, 12.
[7] II Cor. 5: 21.

man's obedience many will be made righteous.'[8] 'For God ... sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin … condemned sin in the flesh.'[9] In the Revelation to John the living creatures and the elders fall down before the Lamb and sing a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God.'[10]

The Lamb stands as though it had been slain; and the death of the Lamb is our reconciliation with God. Yet the Lamb lives, carrying the banner of victory; it is death and resurrection together which save us from sin. Paul, again writing to the Romans, links the two: 'For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the *death* of his Son, much more, now that we *are* reconciled, shall we be saved by his *life.'*[11] Rescue *from* sin is only the beginning: what we are saved *for* is life. 'I came', says Jesus in John's gospel, 'that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'[12] The victorious Lamb is the life-giving Lamb: in the last chapter of the Revelation to John, God shows the seer 'the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb'.[13]

The death of the Lamb reconciles us to God; his resurrection gives us life. That is the essence of the doctrine of atonement, at-one-ment. But how does the death of the Lamb achieve victory over human sin and human sins? The New Testament tries to answer that question in terms of the various sacrifices of the Old Testament. They had failed to take away sin: the death of Jesus succeeds. How? Paul takes us to the heart of the matter in the Letter to the Romans: 'God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.'[14] We say that Jesus offered himself in sacrifice to God. Yet embodied in Jesus was the God who is love. In Christ, God

[8] Rom. 5:19.
[9] Rom. 8: 3.
[10] Rev. 5: 8-9.
[11] Rom. 5: 10.
[12] John 10: 10.
[13] Rev. 22: 1-2.
[14] Rom. 5: 8.

himself offers the sacrifice of love which frees us from sin. Through Christ, God himself reconciles us to himself and shares with us his own life. That life is the life of the divine Spirit, who came down on the Lamb at his baptism and remained with him. That same Spirit came down on us at our baptism and remains with us, the Spirit who is the Lord and the Giver of Life. From beginning to end it is the love of God which forgives sin and takes it away; from beginning to end it is the love of God which raises us from the death of sin to new life in the risen Lamb; from beginning to end it is the love of God which fills us with the life of God; and that life and that love strengthen us to 'follow the Lamb wherever he goes'.[15]

'The Lamb and Flag' may be a pub sign: but it is also the banner of the baptismal, and so of the monastic, life.

ASSOCIATES

NEW FLG

Andrew Teal
Helen M. Bush
Jo Ord

RIP

Kathleen Davies, Companion
Kennedy Thom, Priest Associate

[15] Rev. 14: 4

THE LORD'S PRAYER AND JUSTICE FOR THE EARTH

AN ECOJUSTICE HERMANEUTIC

SISTER SUSAN SLG

ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE in all parts of our planet is an increasing concern of many people. Ecojustice is one response. Its basic principle is that Earth has as much right to justice as the human beings who inhabit it. We are being challenged to change our way of life in order to preserve the environment, and as Christians we are also asked to consider whether our theology, and in particular our use of the Bible, has contributed to this abuse of Earth and the earth community. An ecojustice or earth hermeneutic is one which attempts to interpret the texts of scripture from the perspective of Earth. Norman Habel explains this by asking:

> Is Earth a theme or concept in the text which we plan to analyse? …. Are we asking what the text says 'about' the Earth? Or are we pursuing a hermeneutic in which Earth is a partner rather than an object of investigation?[1]

The last option is a big move, and he explains it as taking up

> the cause of Earth and non-human members of Earth's community by sensing their presence in the text—whether their presence is suppressed, oppressed or celebrated.[2]

The Earth Bible project has been developed by Norman Habel and a team at the University of Adelaide as a way of responding to this challenge. It works with six principles: it assumes the intrinsic worth of Earth and that all living things on the Earth are interconnected; it recognizes that Earth has a voice and will resist if ill-treated; it believes that each organism on Earth has a purpose, and lastly, that humans and Earth are mutual custodians.[3]

[1] N. Habel (2000), 'The Challenge of Ecojustice: Readings for Christian Theology' in *Pacifica* 13.2, p.127.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid. p.126.

There are three main criticisms of the way both the Bible itself and Christian interpretation of it have failed to recognize Earth's right to justice: they are said to be anthropocentric, hierarchical and dualist. I hope briefly to consider these criticisms and then, using at least some of the six principles, to look at the text of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew chapter 6.

To say that the biblical texts are anthropocentric seems to me to be true but inevitable; they are written by human beings for other human beings with their concerns in mind. What, I think, the critics are identifying is a self-interest which causes men and women to devalue the non-human parts of creation. A hierarchical conception of creation could be the cause of that distortion or result from it; either way humankind is said to be given the earth to 'subdue' and to have 'dominion' over (Gen. 1: 28), and so become, or assume they are, the peak of creation. The third criticism, dualism, is seen in the distinctions made throughout Christian literature between body and soul, material and spiritual, and heaven and earth. Has this contributed to our devaluing Earth and all its resources? When we consider texts like, 'Set your minds on things that are above, not on things of the earth' (Col. 3: 2) and, 'They confessed they were strangers and foreigners on earth. … They desire a better country, that is a heavenly one' (Heb. 11: 13-16), it is clear that, at least when taken out of context, they provide excuse for under-valuing Earth.

I approached the text of the Lord's Prayer by asking if Earth can be considered alongside the human being as the one who prays, as well as trying to sense Earth's presence in the text in less direct ways. I will begin by considering how we address God in this prayer, and then take the petitions in order.

'*Our Father'*: when Jesus opened the prayer in this way, he is depicted as teaching his disciples. Calling someone 'father' indicates that the caller is a son or daughter and that there is an intimate relationship. Can we extend our mental boundaries to include the whole of creation in this 'our'? If we can, would the non-human part of creation call God 'Father'? What sort of relationship exists between God and the non-human parts of

creation, and can it be equally intimate, but different? I think we in the 'West' have to admit that our imaginations cannot encompass these thoughts without help, but it is possible that people of cultures where close ties to the land still exist can enter this dimension more naturally. Iutisone Salevao writes that one of the Samoan words for land is the same as that for blood,[4] and this gives humans a truly intimate, life-sustaining relationship with Earth, enabling us perhaps to say 'our', and mean humans, Earth and the whole Earth community.

Heaven in biblical writing is usually located above Earth, and this seems to be the case in Matthew 3: 16, 'the heavens were opened' and 26: 64, 'coming on the clouds of heaven'. The phrase '*our Father in heaven*' belongs with these and, as we see confirmed in the third petition, to envisage heaven and earth as two distinct places with Earth, as a result, becoming the inferior. And yet, as Neil Darragh points out, 'if God became a human being (in the incarnation), this implies too that God became part of that which human beings are themselves part of, the Earth'.[5] So though we pray to a heavenly Father, God can be said to be located in Earth as well as heaven.

'*Hallowed be your name'*. We ask, 'may your person, your being, be held holy'. Is the assumption that it is human beings who will bring this about? If this is so, it is we who have to be converted, 'for the kingdom of heaven has come near' (Matt. 3: 2).

And this leads us into the second and third petitions, *'your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven'*. The simplest sense of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew seems to be that God is the ruling Lord, both present in Jesus and to come. These two petitions are very close in meaning, for it can only be that God's will is done when we live in a manner which accepts that God is the ruling Lord, and in the context of this essay it makes us ask how God does intend us to live in relation to Earth. Here I found Ellen F. Davis' Hulsean lectures helpful. She translates Gen. 1: 28:

[4] I. Salevao (2000), 'Burning the Land': in *Readings from the Perspective of the Earth,* ed. N. Habel, p. 221-3.
[5] N. Darragh, (2000), *At Home in the Earth*, Auckland, Accent Publications, p. 124.

And God blessed them and said to them:
'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and conquer it,
and exercise mastery among the fish of the sea
and among the birds of the sky
and among every animal that creeps on the earth.'

She asks, 'does the human "exercise (of) mastery among" the creatures necessarily make it impossible for non-human creatures to thrive?'[6] What might God, or the priestly author of Genesis, have meant by conquering the Earth and exercising mastery? The Israelites are told to go in and conquer the land of Canaan (Num. 32: 22, 29), but it is on strict terms. The mastery is seen in terms of management, there are food regulations (Lev. 11), and rules about land-use; there is a day of rest for the land as well as for humans once a week (Deut. 5: 12-14), a year of rest every seventh year (Lev. 25: 1-7) and a jubilee year of rest every fiftieth year, giving the land two consecutive years' rest (Lev. 25: 8-12). This gives an understanding of humankind's dominion of the land which is nearer the 'till and keep' of Gen. 2: 15 and, as Rosemary Radford Ruether claims, 'This vision of periodic redemption and restoration of right relation underlies Jesus's language in the Lord's Prayer. It is a vision of redemption more compatible with finitude and human limits …' [7] It is also, perhaps, important that the land itself is said to observe a Sabbath to the Lord (Lev. 25: 2), which opens a small door to the thought that it might be the land or Earth in partnership with humanity which puts these three petitions into practice.

'Give us this day our daily bread'. A person familiar with the Scriptures makes three connections: to the manna in the wilderness (Ex. 16: 13-30), to the feeding of the five thousand (Matt. 14: 13-21), and to the institution of the sacrament of Jesus's body and blood under the form of bread and wine (Matt. 26: 26-29). '*Daily'* reminds us of the conditions under which God gave the manna to the Israelites. They were to collect enough for each person's daily

[6] E. F. Davis, Hulsean Lectures, Lecture 1 Cambridge 2007, to be published by Cambridge University Press as *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible.*
[7] R. Radford Ruether (1999) 'Ecojustice at the Centre of the Church's Mission' in *IAMS, Mission Studies*, vol xvi – 1, 31 (Internet).

needs, and they were forbidden to store it. If that is a valid connection, we are asking for enough food for each day and no more. It is in line, too, with Jesus's teaching about anxiety—'do not worry, saying "what shall we eat?" … for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things' (Matt. 6: 31-32). The message surely is that we are not in control—it is God's 'kingdom'. We cannot use the Earth for our own benefit beyond a point. The feeding of the five thousand, however, can give a different message: there the surplus *is* collected up, and it is far more than the original amount. And yet this too is within the control of God and connects us back to Gen. 1: 11-12, where the repetition of the seeds makes for an impression of God's great bounty.[8] The association with the bread of the Eucharist, however, could point us away from Earth to some sort of mystical union, and so open the prayer to the criticism of dualism, though in fact what the sacramental tradition is saying is that the visible universe is a manifestation of God, it is God's sacramental body.[9]

'Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.' The words 'debt' and 'debtors', as opposed to the general word 'trespasses' in v. 14, connect the reader back once again to the seventh year when all debts were remitted (Deut. 15: 1-2). The teaching of the First Testament seems to be that no person has ever the right to take away completely the livelihood of another—indeed one should not even take a cloak as a pledge if it means that its owner will have no covering at night (Ex. 22: 26-27). There is a remarkable sense of compassionate justice, and presumably the author of Matthew expects his first audience to pick up the allusions. The reader can also go ahead and ponder the story of the slave who was forgiven a huge debt, but refused to forgive a fellow servant a minor one (Matt. 18: 23-35).

Are we in debt to Earth and, if we take into account v. 14, are these debts also 'trespasses' or sins—that is unethical or immoral behaviour? Even if all was well with the environment, we would owe recognition to God as creator and to Earth for its provision of

[8] E. Davis, op. cit.
[9] R. Radford Ruether op. cit.

our sustenance. But if we consider Earth has a right to justice, do we also owe real repentance for the way we have treated it? When Jesus teaches about forgiveness in the gospels, he is referring to sins against fellow humans, which may be partly due to the fact that in his lifetime men and women did not have the capacity to destroy the environment which we have today. But there need be no clear distinction, because the destruction of the environment for one's own supposed benefit hurts, becomes a sin against, our neighbours who are adversely affected by our behaviour. This is one illustration of the interdependence of all the members of the Earth community. But there is a further step to take, that of acknowledging that some of our treatment of Earth is sin in itself, without reference to its effect on other human beings; this is difficult for us and may be at least partly brought about by the thought in vv. 12 and 14 where we ask God to forgive our trespasses as we forgive others—we do not readily think of Earth as a reciprocal partner in this.

'*And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.'* At the time Jesus was speaking, the time of trial could have been interpreted as a time of persecution by the Romans, but the Greek word *peirasmos* is the same as that used to describe Jesus's temptation by the devil, and so can have a wider meaning. It would indicate that we can expect to be tested by our own instability and by exterior trials. *Peirasmoi* become in fact a way of revealing the truth of our commitment. So if 'times of trial' are agents of truth, why does Jesus tell us to pray not to be led into them? Perhaps he meant the ultimate test, as when God gave the devil permission to assault Job in every way but required him to spare his life (Job 2: 6), and maybe that is why the author of Matthew added his explanatory coda, 'but rescue us from the evil one'? The Greek word used in this verse for the evil one is a circumlocution for the Devil and appears again in the parable of the sower: 'The evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart' (Matt. 13: 19). This is a tenuous connection to Earth, but the parable does show that humans are vulnerable to a range of behaviour analogous to the fate of the seeds sown by the farmer.

I hope I have shown that for the author of Matthew and his Jewish audience there are sufficient allusions for the treatment of the land to be in their consciousness, so though the use of 'Father' to address God seems to presuppose that the prayer is made by human beings to a God who can be related to under the human image of fatherhood, nevertheless Earth could still have a place of sorts. Whether it is out and out dualist, I would also query. Certainly God is addressed as 'Our Father in heaven', putting 'him' at a remove from the inhabitants of Earth, yet it goes on to pray as though it is trying to redress that separation: 'your will be done on earth as in heaven'. It could still be talking about humans, but Salevao and Darragh have opened up ways in which we may begin to see that humans and Earth are, if not 'one' then partners, or, to put it another way, a human being can do God's will by becoming attuned to Earth's natural rhythms. The third criticism—that the text is hierarchical—seems to me to be valid only if one argues from an absence of evidence. There is no explicit indication that men and women consider themselves a higher order of creation than the rest of the Earth community, though the absence of evidence could point to that conclusion.

When I came to re-think the six principles that are the building blocks of the Earth Bible project in the light of what I have written, I found myself returning repeatedly to 'on earth as in heaven'. The desire to do God's will on earth as it is done in heaven seems to allow some space for the intrinsic worth of Earth; we are not just hurrying through it saying that how we live here doesn't matter because heaven is of supreme importance. Something similar could be said of purpose, the idea that everything has a place in God's overall design. The Bible gives us pictures of the heavenly order where, despite the strange and vivid imagery, there is a sense of all the inhabitants in their place (Ezek. 1 and Rev. 4). So when the author of Matthew prayed 'your will be done on earth as in heaven', he could be acknowledging a similar order on Earth where everything also has its place and purpose. The principles of mutual custodianship and inter-connectedness follow from this—if each has and keeps to its place there will be space for all. We recognize this

when we go on to pray for our daily bread. Earth will, in a sense, look after us if we look after it and take only the food that we need, but if we destroy that balance and inter-connectedness by taking too much, we have lost the gift of mutual custodianship. The last two principles, that Earth has a voice and will resist if badly treated, are absent unless one pursues the thought of Gene McAfee that creation has a dark side[10] and equate that with sin. It is too big an area to explore except to ask the question: who caused the earthquake or flood? Was it God, the Earth itself or human beings?

My reading has shown me that by allowing one text to critique another, many avenues of thought are opened up and the text can be allowed to carry multi-layered meaning. But, at the same time, I have found a constant temptation to moralize, to drift away from asking rigorously what the text says, and I will end with a thought of Ellen Davis:

> It is not always possible to do good exegesis as a first step. Sometimes important aspects of the text are not visible to an interpreter … until there has been a reordering of our minds and even our lives, until certain gaps have been supplied in the sphere of our 'active apprehension'. To put that in theological language, sin – lack of proper knowledge and love of God and neighbour – impedes exegesis.[11]

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TRACING THE ANCESTORS: A SPIRITUAL QUEST (Part One)

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

> *The peace of the dead is dependent on the living, and the wellness of the living is dependent on the dead. Accepting the possibilities and the limitations that come through your parents means submitting to the world as it is. That is a religious attitude.*
>
> Bert Hellinger[1]

How it all began

IT STARTED FOR ME with an email I received in January 2005 from Alan, the holder in the USA of a database on my mother’s family, McWhirter: ‘I have found your great grandfather in the English census returns, and I think your great, great grandfather too.’ We had had some brief correspondence back in 2000-01, but I had not been able to supply him with more than just patchy information about my family, little of it going back further than the end of the nineteenth century. Now he was suddenly on my case, and we opened up together a whole new branch of the family in the

[1] Bert Hellinger (originally Anton Hellinger) was born in 1925 in Cologne and now lives in South Eastern Bavaria. At first a Roman Catholic priest and religious, he took the name ‘Suitbert’ (shortened to ‘Bert’) and worked as a missionary in Africa, later leaving his order and the priesthood and marrying. He studied psychology and became influential for his work and methodology known as ‘Family Constellations’, understood by himself primarily as a way of helping people in their lives. Although this has attracted controversy, he has made a significant contribution to the study of the effects of family relationships in human lives. He has worked in Israel with AMCHA, the National Israeli Centre for Psychosocial Support of Holocaust Survivors and the Second Generation.

English West Midlands, the area from which I come, also known as the Black Country from the days when the area was blackened by heavy industry.

As a result, I discovered that the Internet resources for family research had increased substantially in just a few years, and it was now possible to begin a rewarding exploration sitting at the computer; since then, what is available has increased exponentially. From being able to name my four grandparents only partially and with difficulty—they all died within a period of just over two-and-a-half years in the mid 1960s while I was a schoolgirl—I have now been able to trace all twenty-eight grandparents, great grandparents and great, great grandparents, the earliest born in 1817, the latest in 1896. I have both used the extensive research of others and supplied myself considerable research to share, finding in the process many cousins. The *earliest* ancestors I found are Irish, Connall MacGowan and his wife Rose O'Donnell, both born around 1540. The *closest* relatives discovered are a second cousin, June, who still lives in Birmingham, and her siblings. I find that even with fourth, fifth and sixth cousins, we often have some sense of our lives overlapping and of shared experience. Undoubtedly, the oddest name found in the exploration has to be one Epaphroditus Dunn, born 1818, the son of Theophilus Dunn!

Not long ago, I realized that I had more than 3,000 persons in my family tree—now considerably more—and also access to information about many others who had not yet been entered into it! The numbers had crept up almost imperceptibly. It happens very easily. Many couples had eight or nine children in Victorian times. If most of these children were in turn to have a similar number of children, a couple could end up with something in the region of sixty grandchildren. Being a natural collector, all this appeals to me greatly, and also I enjoy a good hunt, putting together the clues, thinking it through, never giving up, until the 'jigsaw' fits—but unlike jigsaws, it does not have to be dismantled again!

Reflecting on the Meaning

We had the experience but missed the meaning.[2]

I could not pursue this without reflection on its deeper meaning. I wondered recently what to 'do', inwardly speaking, with so many people. I thought up the idea of hiring a football pitch and inviting them all along! Different families could have different areas of the pitch…

> Out beyond ideas of wrong-doing and right-doing there is a field. I'll meet you there. When the soul lies down in that grass, the world is too full to talk about.[3]

How would they get on together? Family history can bridge a great distance of time. My mother, aged eighty-six, remembers her grandparents, who were born in 1855 and 1862. Would I find that we understood one another's speech? I have often wondered how my great, great grandmother Jane McMuldroch from Colmonell, Ayrshire, would have sounded. Would she have had a southern Ayrshire accent, or a mixture of Ayrshire and Black Country? And would those accents have been similar to how they are now? I wonder too how I would have liked my great, great grandfather with the lovely first name, Elijah Grainger, an iron moulder from Netherton, Dudley who was born in 1835 and died in 1911. (Old Testament names were very common in the Black Country in the nineteenth century.)

There is currently a great deal of interest in tracing one's family history. This is obviously partly because it is now *possible*. With the advent of the Internet, online databases and ordering of certificates, with collaboration with others by email and with so many family history societies, plus the possibility of doing just a few minutes' work at a time, it is now an accessible hobby which can to a large extent be done sitting at a computer at home. Formerly, such a project tended to be saved for retirement; it was expensive and involved much travelling and extended time spent in the geographical area of search. It can now be done at different ages, in

[2] 'The Dry Salvages II', in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot*, Faber and Faber, 1969, p. 186.
[3] Saying of Jelaluddin Rumi (1207-73), Sufi teacher and mystic.

all weathers, and—unlike sporting activities—when not physically fit. Perhaps it is the new stamp and coin collecting.

Various programmes about family research have been broadcast on English television, and in this country it is now one of the greatest leisure pursuits. I am not convinced, though, by the reason often given for this. It is said that there is less stability in our lives now and greater mobility, and families are not staying together, with the result that people are less rooted and are therefore searching for roots. This is probably part of the explanation, yet I don't find the 'rootless' explanation particularly true for myself, or for many of the people with whom I have been in touch. Indeed, I don't think it really fits the profile of many of them: they tend to be between forty-five and sixty-five, and to be fairly settled—yet they have chosen to go on this quest at this stage in their lives.

A Spiritual Path

I believe that spending time with one's family tree has a positive spiritual value. At a time when there is a great interest in spirituality but a declining interest in organized church religion, I think that people who are connecting with their ancestors may be *seeking*—often unconsciously—and also *finding*, a spiritual path. Many cultures and religions have given attention to the ancestral family and recognized that the ancestors have affected, and continue to affect, the living family. If various religions and peoples have been thought to pay too much attention to ancestors, perhaps in the Western world too little attention has been paid to them, and we are now becoming more open to this wisdom. As David Furlong has written:

> For the Western mind, conditioned into thinking only in linear terms, it can be hard to grasp that at a spiritual level time and space impose no restrictions so, in a sense, your ancestors are living concurrently with you. Other cultures not so restricted accepted a much greater fluidity in the movement between past, present and the future. The ancestors were alive and connected to them. In Western culture we have forgotten much of this inner knowing.[4]

[4] *Healing Your Family Patterns*, David Furlong, Piatkus Books, 1997.

In his book *Karma and Reincarnation*, Dr Hiroshi Motoyama,[5] Head Priest of the Shinto Tamamitsu sect of Japan, says:

> The parent/child connection manifests as one link in a long chain of ancestral karma that stretches back through time. Your link to your family allows you to be born into that specific line—it is a link that needs to be understood and respected. ... Many find it absurd to think that the actions of an unknown ancestor could possibly have anything to do with what is happening to them today. ... Their spirit is not just an individual entity, it is also part of the family spirit that births and nurtures it.

In Ancient Egypt, time was set aside on a regular basis to consult the ancestors and offer up prayers on their behalf, and there is textual evidence of specific requests for assistance with daily problems. Is this not in some ways akin to our prayers as Christians to the saints—whom we believe to be in the nearer presence of Christ—asking them for their intercession?

The ancestors are regularly consulted in Taoism, which is made up from related Chinese philosophical and religious traditions with an awareness of the true nature of things and an emphasis on the relationship between people and nature. The Chinese character *Tao* means 'path' or 'way'—but this is understood to be indefinable. Chapter 16 of the *Tao Te Ching*, the core scripture of Taoism expressed in mystical and poetic terms, says:

> I do my utmost to attain emptiness;
> I hold firmly to stillness.
> The myriad creatures all rise together
> And I watch their return.
> The teaming creatures
> All return to their separate roots.
> Returning to one's roots is known as stillness.
> This is what is meant by returning to one's destiny.
> Returning to one's destiny is known as the constant.
> Knowledge of the constant is known as discernment.

Here we find the concept of 'returning to one's roots'. In Taoism, there are three jewels or treasures. The first, *ci*, is *compassion*, or

[5] *Karma and Reincarnation*, Hiroshi Motoyama, Avon Books, 1993.

tenderness, love, pity, mercy, kindness, gentleness, benevolence, and it is connected with the love of the nurturing parent and of the child for the parent. The second is *jian*, which is *simplicity*, or moderation, frugality, economy, restraint, an economy of nature which wastes nothing; in moral terms, this is simplicity of desire. The third treasure is *bugan wei tianxia xian*, or *humility*, modesty, daring not be first or ahead in the world (where one would be exposed and vulnerable to the world's destructive forces), but rather allowing the self time to ripen and bear fruit. I have found these three treasures helpful in reflecting upon my interest in researching my family tree. I ask myself whether connecting with one's family tree leads to compassion, simplicity, humility. I believe it can, and should, do so; otherwise, it could be little more than an exercise in collecting names—and these are, after all, not objects to stick into albums, but human beings who lived on this earth before us, or who live now, who deserve better than that. The same virtues are of course stressed in the Christian tradition. In the Letter to the Galatians similar qualities are presented, with slightly different names, as aspects of the fruit of the Spirit: 'love, joy, peace, patience, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control'.[6]

The Judeo-Christian Tradition

Genealogy is very much part of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The image of the (family) tree probably came from the image in medieval art—the earliest dating back to the eleventh century—of the tree of Jesse, which illustrated the genealogy of the Christ in terms of the prophecy of Isaiah, 'A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots'.[7] Christians interpret this as a reference to Jesus. At the beginning of the Gospels of Matthew[8] and Luke,[9] Jesus's lineage is traced back through his earthly father, Joseph, making it clear that Jesus is of God's chosen people by his descent from Abraham, and that he is

[6] Gal. 5: 22-23.
[7] Isa. 11: 1.
[8] Matt. 1:1-17.
[9] Luke 3: 23-38.

the ‘shoot of the stock of Jesse’ by his descent from King David, the son of Jesse. Matthew’s Gospel opens with the words: ‘An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham’. Luke traces the path right back to Adam.

A year or so back, we read in refectory the book *Jacob’s Gift: A Journey into the Heart of Belonging* by Jonathan Freedland.[10] It gives insights into some of the issues faced by the author, a columnist on the newspaper *The Guardian*, as a British subject who is also a Jew, including his ambiguity with regard to the modern State of Israel. The book begins with Freedland reflecting after the birth and circumcision of his son Jacob on what that ‘Jewishness’ which is a part of his son’s identity actually *is*, on the nature of the *gift* which he passes on to Jacob, both directly himself and through his ancestors. He writes, ‘A person is a Jew if he or she has a Jewish mother, making Judaism, in Jones’ words, “the most genetic of all religions”, but genes could not tell the whole story.’[11] Freedland looks particularly at three ancestors and the inner conflicts faced by them, interweaving their stories with key twentieth-century events. He tells of his great uncle Nat Mindel, recruited to the service of the British Crown and later in the century managing in British-ruled Palestine the immigration of Jews in flight from persecution, becoming increasingly unacceptable to British colleagues and Zionist pioneers alike and, in the end, alienated. Freedland tells of his great uncle Mick Mindel, born to another branch of the family, a lifelong communist and anti-fascist whose party loyalty was tested by the 1939 non-aggression pact between Germany and the USSR, and of his mother, Sara Hocherman, sent after her mother Feige was killed in London in the last air raid of the Second World War to an incompetent father in Israel. The author uses his imagination to amplify the story; although this at times seems to go beyond his actual knowledge, yet notable in the context of this article is his engagement with his ancestors and their conflicts, loves, hopes and

[10] *Jacob’s Gift: A Journey into the Heart of Belonging* by Jonathan Freedland, Hamish Hamilton (Hb.), 2005; Penguin Books, 2006.
[11] Ibid. p. 7, referring to the work of a geneticist, Steve Jones.

despairs, as a way of learning who he and his son are now, what they have inherited, and who they might become.

The First Native Peoples

The religions of the indigenous or first peoples across the world—for example the Australian Aboriginals, the Maori in New Zealand, the Native Americans—give great respect to the ancestors. What white people so often did, as they sought to conquer new territories, was to annex the lands of these native peoples. Because the lands are intrinsically linked with native spirituality and with their ancestors, the indigenous peoples have as a result been cut off and alienated from their ancestors, their religion, their culture. John Wooden Legs of the Cheyenne Native Americans said in the late nineteenth century with regard to their fierce defence of their land: 'Our land is everything to us. I will tell you one of the things we remember on our land. We remember that our grandfathers paid for it—with their lives.'

Australian Aboriginals

Kinship—the network of the relationships which hold a clan together—is integral to Aboriginal spirituality. Children are taught from an early age who they are and to whom they are related; each person has an inviolable spirit which is intimately related to the spirit ancestor. Aboriginal people attribute their origins to 'the dreaming' (originally 'dreamtime'), the time of creation, when spirit beings or ancestral spirits came to earth to create landforms, plants, animals, waterways, mountains and also rules and laws to govern the land and its inhabitants. Their journeys left long dreaming tracks which twisted their way through many Aboriginal clan groups. Aboriginals believe that the ancestral beings leave the world full of signs. They see the events of the dreaming recorded in the surrounding countryside and ancestral beings living in waterholes, rock formations, animals and plant life. The dreaming continues as a powerful living force to be cared for and maintained. The ancestors command respect; their role is to ensure that the dreaming stories

and rituals are passed on through oral tradition: picture, dance, song, story, poem and art.

Aboriginals relate their occupation of the land to the dreaming and regard the land as sacred. Not only does it sustain life and provide food and water, but it is also vital to their spiritual wellbeing, as the repository for their secrets, their sacred stories and practices and the activities of the dreaming beings. The land is alive with power and the ancestor spirits living in it. As long as the land lives, so the ancestors live. Specific places are of particular spiritual value, which may be because of the mythological lore connected with them, or due to past use as meeting places for special ceremonies, or because of mythological depiction through rock art, or as burial grounds for ancestors or places of the spiritual beings of the dreaming.

New Zealand Maori

The roots of Maori spirituality also lie deep in their ancestral heritage. For Maori, too, awareness of genealogy is something which is innate. There is also a strong sense of the imminence of the divine in the world. Put very simplistically, Maori culture tends to differ from Pakeha culture (the culture of New Zealanders of non-Maori descent, predominantly white) in the importance it attaches to history (viewed as the deeds of the ancestors), which requires *interpretation*, as opposed to concern for events and progress, requiring *rational explanation*. In Mirella Ricciardi's book, *African Saga*, we find these words, which have also been applied to New Zealand:

> Families, like trees, grow and develop with their surroundings. Seeds are blown by the wind and new trees are born elsewhere. Roots sink into the ground from which the new tree draws life. Children, like branches, stretch out. Families and trees have similar destinies.[12]

[12] *African Saga*, Mirella Ricciardi, HarperCollins, Australia, 1982, quoted in *Being Pakeha: An Encounter with New Zealand and the Maori Resistance*, Michael King, Hodder & Stoughton, Auckland, 1985.

We have lived as a Community at St Isaac's and interacted with the Maori culture, and we have also shared with the Maori something of the meaning and effect of the loss of their traditional lands. We have agreed that Sister Anne, a New Zealander by birth, could remain at St Isaac's after we withdrew from there as a Community for staffing reasons, and part of Sister Anne's own vocation is surely to be a bridge across these cultures. Sister Susan wrote in the *Fairacres Chronicle* in 2006:

> For the Maori people, the family is central. They have an awe-inspiring knowledge of their family trees—who was related to whom was the subject of frequent jokes, as well as being profoundly important. This is, though, more than just knowledge of relationship; it is lived out in daily life. There are huge family gatherings to mark anniversaries and at Christmas and Easter, and it seemed that no child would ever be left uncared for while the family system is functioning. Everybody grows up with siblings—cousins, if not brothers and sisters. This was extended to us sometimes, and Sister Anne and I were honoured to be invited to an eightieth birthday party last summer. When the Community was thinking about Sister Anne's request to stay at St Isaac's after the rest of us came home, it was reassuring to hear that the Maori community considered her *whanau*, family.[13]

Native Americans

There are similar concerns in Native American spirituality. Many nations make up the Native American peoples, and the names of many of them are familiar to us, such as the Apache, the Cherokee and the Incas. In the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, commissioned by the Government of Canada in 1974 to investigate the social, environmental, and economic impact of a gas pipeline which would run through the Yukon and the Mackenzie River Valley of the Northwest Territories, a voice was given to the aboriginal people through whose traditional territory it would pass. Mr Justice Thomas R. Berger, who conducted the enquiry, wrote:

[13] *Fairacres Chronicle*, Winter 2006, pp. 30-3.

> The culture, values and traditions of native people amount to more than crafts and carvings. Their respect for the wisdom of their elders, their concept of family responsibilities extending beyond the nuclear family to embrace a whole village, their respect for the environment, their willingness to share: all of these values persist within their own culture even though they have been under unremitting pressure to abandon them.

Eliida Lakota, who works as an artist, teacher and occupational therapist, is a third-generation Native American whose ancestors are Lakota Sioux and Yakama. She has learned instinctively by means of art and spirituality, often through a way of listening to innate messages, to deal with issues of loss and pain. She says:

> We are all wounded. I am wounded. … We all have instructions in our DNA that guide us. We have to learn how to hear those instructions. … Your DNA determines your eye color and your skin, but it is also the way you think, your body-mind-spirit connection. DNA holds the spiritual life of your people. If you are having trouble with your spiritual life, look into the spirituality of your ancestors. Every cell of your body has a memory. … Spirituality is not for Sunday, but is integrated into every activity we do. … People think they are physical beings who have a spiritual experience on Sundays. But we are spiritual beings who have a physical experience on Earth. In 100 years, all that will remain is the spirit. … If anything will save Earth, it will be nurturing and creativity. Earth needs women to stand together to save what is left. To do that, we need to stay in touch with our own spirit and stay in touch with the spirit of our ancestors.

A Haudenosaunee 'thanksgiving' prayer sums up the ancestral wisdom of the first American peoples:

> We gather our minds to greet and thank
> the enlightened teachers
> who have come to help throughout the ages.
> When we forget how to live in harmony,
> they remind us of the way
> we were instructed to live as people.
> With one mind, we send greetings and thanks
> to these caring teachers.

In the second part of this article, which will appear in the next edition of the *Fairacres Chronicle*, further consideration will be given to how we may encounter and practise the three treasures or virtues of compassion, simplicity and humility in family tree work.

ENABLING THE GOOD-ENOUGH DEATH

AFFIRMING THE NON CLINICAL ASPECTS OF PALLIATIVE DAY CARE

DUNCAN FORBES

I WANT TO BEGIN by quoting some comments from a patient who was attending palliative day care in April 2007. In talking about what her attendance—and in this case particularly diversional therapy—had meant to her, she said 'I felt myself healing inside'. Later in the conversation, following a description of the years she had spent as a carer, followed by a diagnosis of cancer, she said that in the day hospice 'I found some identity again'.

It is by no means uncommon for patients to report the benefits of palliative day care in these kinds of terms. The frequency with which experiences of this depth and intensity are described should raise questions for us about the function of palliative day care. Is it our job to help people to be 'healed inside', even when facing the end of their lives? Should we be helping people to 'find their identity again'?

On many occasions I have heard staff in palliative day units complain that very few people—particularly their fellow professionals in the National Health Service (NHS)—know what palliative day care is really about. The NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) guidelines, published in 2004, certainly did not know either. The short section on specialist palliative day care (from para. 9.40) is headed 'Specialist Palliative Care Day Therapy Facilities', and goes on to admit that 'there is

insufficient evidence to support the adoption of any particular model (or models)’. Day care is not seen as an integrated whole; commissioners are urged to agree the ‘types of interventions’ to be offered as part of specialist day care, which ‘might be delivered alongside other supportive care services such as complementary therapy and rehabilitation’.

Although it might be convenient for commissioners to isolate and pay for specific medical interventions and other readily measured episodes of specialist care, such activity is, as we know, only a part of the whole palliative day care story. Therapeutic interventions alone will not help people to heal inside or to rediscover their identity.

It is my belief and experience that at least some palliative day units lead a kind of split existence, and their staff do too. Because hospices relate primarily to the NHS and receive most of their statutory funding from that source, they are forced to justify their work both to commissioners and to fellow professionals in terms that the NHS understands. This inevitably skews the description of day care activity in the direction of clinical intervention, numbers of patients, measurable outcomes, and ‘specialist’ activity. At the same time, what is much less often acknowledged is that there is also a huge amount of value and benefit which is about transforming lives. Is this transformation simply an accidental by-product of palliative day care? If it has the value that patients and their families ascribe to it, and which most palliative day care staff know and acknowledge, then do we not have a responsibility to measure and to affirm this aspect—the non-clinical aspect of palliative day care?

In what follows I would like to step back from the conventional way of trying to describe palliative day care, and look at things through a different lens. The old social model/medical model type of analysis has yielded little by way of insights into models of day care. We are still in a situation where staff in palliative day care ‘know’ its value, but have largely failed to convince the rest of the NHS or indeed the wider community. The difficulty in attracting referrals or self-referrals from the point of diagnosis of a life-

threatening illness is for many of us an indication that we have so far not convinced people of what it is that we *really* do.

* * * * * *

Let me start with a quotation: 'loneliness is not so much a matter of being alone as of not belonging'. Some of you may recognize the author—if not, you may wonder what these words have to do with palliative care. They were written, of course, by Cicely Saunders, almost the last words of hers to be published. They come at the end of the foreword to the 2004 *Oxford Textbook of Palliative Medicine*, and the whole quotation is as follows:

> if people know that they are respected as part of the human family … the ending of life can be a final fulfilment of all that has gone before. As the modern hospice began by listening to patients let one patient have the last word: 'loneliness is not so much a matter of being alone as of not belonging'.

It is very significant that there is no reference here to the clinical aspect of care for the dying. Instead, Saunders' concluding thoughts are about loneliness and belonging. She is saying that the good death, when, in her words, the ending of life is a fulfilment, is dependent not primarily upon good clinical care, but upon the dying person's sense that they are respected, that they have value in themselves; and that, crucially, this value derives from the sense that they are a member of the human family, that they know they belong. Of course, Cicely Saunders would be the last person to deny the vital importance of first class clinical care; but her message here is that such care is not an end in itself but serves a higher objective. Saunders is pointing firstly to the need for *community*, which is the only context in which people can know that they 'belong' and therefore that they are valued; and, secondly, to the possibility that within community 'the ending of life can be a final *fulfilment'*. This should give all of us pause for thought. If we are to follow Cicely Saunders in placing such emphasis on the importance of overcoming loneliness at the end of life, then the implications for those of us providing palliative day care are profound.

If you ask the average person in the street what words they associate with a good—or at least a good-enough—death, I suspect that very few of them would mention *fulfilment* and *community*. Death is not part of our community; it is very far from a naturally accepted part of our social and cultural life. Nor is fulfilment generally recognized as a component of a 'good death', despite the writings by such diverse witnesses as Ira Byock, Anthony Bloom, and, of course, Cicely Saunders herself. The 'good death' is much more likely to be associated with a pain-free and, if possible, peaceful slipping away.

It is, though, gradually becoming accepted that a new openness about death is needed: that the realities of death and dying should become integrated into our normal social life. The fourth report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Health published in July 2004 states that,

> finally we believe that the right to a good death should be fundamental and that social attitudes contribute to problems in helping people achieve this. We hope that the Department for Education and Skills will address this area by examining the place of death education within the curriculum and within teacher training.

This theme is taken up by Age Concern in a policy position paper on dying and death published in November 2005. The paper states,

> several commentators and the Health Committee enquiry have suggested that it is only by removing the taboo of the discussion of death, throughout all stages of life, that a better understanding of the realities of dying and death, better communications and ultimately better service provision will be delivered.

Alan Kellehear is, of course, one of the champions of this proposed openness, which is part of what he sees as the necessary public health approach to palliative care. In his 2005 work *Compassionate Cities*, Kellehear argues for the care of those at the end of life to be returned to the community as a whole, rather than being seen as the preserve of specialists. Kellehear is critical of some of the ways that hospice care has developed. He says,

> research and policy work within hospice and palliative care services rarely include public education, community development, and workplace, school and municipal partnerships. Dying, death and loss are defined as personal problems rather than targets of social change in community attitudes, values and behaviour. This reinforces the view that clinical rather than community skills should take priority in palliative care education and training.[1]

Kellehear's arguments are cogent and important, but they perhaps underestimate the difficulties in reintegrating death into contemporary culture. We cannot do this simply by a programme of education or public information, important though these are. Resistance to the acceptance of death and dying as indeed a 'normal part of life' is not simply rooted in ignorance. In order to understand this, it is helpful to revisit the work of Emille Durkheim and Peter Berger, and their sociological perspectives on death, meaning, and culture.

Durkheim, working in France in the nineteenth century, developed the idea of *anomie*—meaninglessness. In Durkheim's view, all culture is a defence against *anomie*, a way of generating and legitimising a social structure which provides a sense of purpose and therefore of meaning. It should be noted that although Durkheim famously studied suicide amongst young men who apparently had no material reason to take their lives, his term *anomie* is primarily a sociological rather than a psychological one. What is important to note is Durkheim's conclusion that the collapse of a shared sense of meaning leads to anarchy. Societies are therefore very strongly motivated by instincts of self-preservation to maintain their structures of meaning.

Peter Berger, writing in the last part of the twentieth century, studied the sociological functions of religions. Berger noted the way that all the major world religions provided a 'meta-narrative', or overarching framework of explanation, which could provide some meaning and significance to suffering, death and dying. Berger's interest was not in whether the claims of religion were in any sense

[1] Kellehear, A. (2005), *Compassionate Cities*, p. 9, Oxfordshire: Routledge.

objectively 'true': he was looking at how religious belief operated within society, at what its social or psychological functions were. It might be thought that the abandonment of religious belief, with its concomitant ethical demands and in some instances the need to appease an angry God, might lead to a reduction in personal and social anxiety, but in fact the change from a predominantly religious to a secular way of explaining 'the way things are' has removed one of the defences against *anomie*. As Durkheim saw, the threat of meaninglessness is ever present, and secular ideologies have been less successful in offering explanations for traumatic personal events—including, of course, death—than the old religions, whatever the 'truth' of the latter. The deep need for security and 'ontological significance' is now being met in a variety of ways, perhaps most obviously through the consumer culture.

Religious discourse is familiar with the idea of 'theodicy'. From a psychological point of view—and again, without making any religious truth-claims—theodicies perform the function of enabling us to live with some kind of equanimity in a world where bad things often seem to happen at random, and in which we know we will all eventually die. The religious form of a theodicy puts things in religious language, using such terms as 'the attempt to explain how a loving and all-powerful God can permit the existence of suffering, evil and death'. But theodicies don't need to be specifically religious. For the purpose of our analysis, a theodicy can be seen as arising from the inherent and seemingly universal human need for justice, for the need to believe that there is ultimately some fairness in the way that apparently random events happen, even if this does not, on the face of it, seem to be the case. Theodicies are, therefore, a way of staving off meaninglessness at both an individual and a social level. Inherent in a theodicy is the search for *significance* for the individual person and the social group; after all, if people had no objective significance whatsoever, then trying to justify or explain the 'bad things' that happen would be completely pointless.

It has been claimed that for modern western society meaning is no longer provided by religion but through consumerism. It is often remarked that shopping is the modern religion, and that shopping

malls are contemporary cathedrals. This light-hearted observation contains a significant truth, which has been the subject of a good deal of recent study. People do not find their worth by reference to a god, but through what they own and consume. It is claimed that modern identities are structured around the experience of consumption. Tim Jackson at the University of Surrey has developed this theme, and has shown that consumption and ownership act to ward off terror and provide security, they perform some of the functions of a theodicy. He cites in support of his thesis President George Bush's injunction to Americans to 'go out shopping', after the atrocities of 9/11. But, as Jackson points out—and, of course, Berger reaches the same conclusion by a different route—the theodicy of consumerism is inadequate to deal with deep suffering and with death.

These analyses of contemporary society all demonstrate why death is not part of our social discourse; not simply because it is just an unpleasant subject, but more fundamentally because our current frameworks of social and individual explanation do not incorporate death, in contrast to the earlier religious frameworks. The purpose of Jackson's work is to examine how current patterns of unsustainable consumption in the west can be changed. He reaches the conclusion that this will only take place if people's sense of meaning and identity can be derived from some other source than the primary one of consumption and the possession of material objects. Looked at the other way round, it will be seen that, within the present cultural context, a diagnosis of a life-threatening illness is a threat to an individual's very identity. Death is therefore the elephant in the room. Because its existence undermines the very basis on which our consumer society is built, its *reality* (as opposed to its images on screen) remains unacknowledged and taboo. The meaninglessness that it threatens is a profound challenge, and an affront, both to the individual and to society. The nature of this challenge has been described by Coyle (2004) who wrote that a diagnosis of a life threatening-illness jars opens a door of awareness, the same door which, for most of our lives, comfortably allows us to keep thoughts about death in the background. For many

individuals the opening of this door precipitates a crisis, and an acute encounter with great total pain.

From the patient's subjective perspective, Mount (2003)[2] writes eloquently about these existential moments when he says:

> To our dismay, a crack appears in our carefully crafted concept of reality. These existential moments wrench us into a new way of perceiving. ... The existential moment … entails a paradigm shift, a jarring, visceral reframing of reality. The very nature of reality is experienced in a new way. We are sucked into the startling realisation that the rules of the game are not what we had imagined. Not only does life depend on unfamiliar rules, it never *was* defined by the terms we had always held to be reliable.

Given all this, the potential position and role of day hospices in relation to the rest of society becomes clearer. Hospices are expected by society to perform the function of 'holding death' on its behalf, because society can no longer hold death within its midst. The analogy with the old lunatic asylums is obvious: they are places in which the unspeakable is sequestrated, institutions which are essential but shunned. This means that hospices perform a vital function for society, but one with which most people want to have nothing to do. Hospices are a standing critique of social attitudes, but places which at the same time are needed. Every palliative day care leader is familiar with the extreme reluctance of people to come to the hospice early on in their disease journey, precisely because of the word 'hospice' and what it denotes. At the same time every fundraiser is familiar with the enormous emotive power of the word 'hospice' in generating donations, for precisely the same reason.

It is time to return to Cicely Sanders and her recognition for the need for hospices to be and to provide a community to which people can belong. It should now be clear that the day care community is not, potentially, just a pleasant environment in which the therapeutic work can take place, but can be the very *means* through which the

[2] Mount, B.M. (2003), *The Existential Moment: Palliative & Supportive Care* (2003) 1:93-96. Cambridge University Press.

work of preparing for death can be done. The consequences for our work of this understanding of community are considerable.

The ‘asylum’, the refuge, offered by the Day Hospice is an essential context for the labour of reconstructing shattered identities and finding significance. Our patients frequently refer to the ‘haven’ offered by day care. This haven, this safe space, is constituted by the offers of unconditional acceptance, backed up by the gifts of time and the development of relationship, which our staff make to those we care for. Without this place of safety many people would not have the courage to face for themselves and work through the deep questions and fears that follow the existential slap, and the total pain that often succeeds it.

I want to suggest at this point that perhaps the elephant in the room for palliative day care, the fact that we are all aware of but don’t openly acknowledge, is the dynamic of love. Love is a difficult word, in that it encompasses a huge range of experience and emotion: and it does not sit easily in the context of the provision of ‘professional care’. But if what I have said about palliative day care communities is true, if we offer unconditional acceptance, time, and the development of relationship, what is that other than the offer of love? Love in this context does not, of course, mean romantic love, in the sense of falling in love with our patients; though that happens, as Cicely Saunders herself experienced. The fact that Cicely Saunders did, twice, fall in love with a patient would probably be seen nowadays as an inappropriate crossing of professional boundaries; but it also shows that she was prepared to be open and vulnerable in the relationships that she developed with patients. She often said that patients gave her more than she gave them, which again indicates a relationship of equality and mutual respect. Love in this context, therefore, means a model of relationship which requires the professional carer to, as it were, take off the uniform and to engage with patients and families as a fellow human being.

This kind of relating is complex, very demanding, and difficult. It requires a great deal of self-awareness if it is to be done safely and without hurt either to the staff or to the patient. One of its

complexities is precisely the different roles that the staff have to assume. The essential clinical role is one where the nurse does have the knowledge and skills that the patient does not; the relationship is therefore unequal in the sense that the patient is the passive recipient of the treatment that is being offered. But outside the treatment room, or away from the discussions about symptoms and diet, the roles are different. If the ideal of community, of mutual acceptance, that I have described is to be realized, then the encounter must be one of mutual sharing, involving the valuing by the community of the gifts that the patients bring to it by virtue of who they are. They are significant because they are themselves and their presence is important just because of that, not because of what we can do to help them.

The sort of relationship I am describing is not without boundaries. It is crucial that the relationships and their emotional demands are contained within the day unit and, as far as possible, within the time spent at work, but it does involve vulnerability and therefore considerable personal cost. It must be recognized—and most people in day care do so, though those outside often do not—that this work of providing refuge and accepting the pain and suffering of others is hugely demanding on staff. It would not be surprising if defences were put up against it, both at the institutional and at the personal level. M. de Hennezel (1998) writes, 'How can we retain our humanity and be sensitive to someone else's suffering without losing ourselves in that suffering?'[3] She also writes that dying people arouse in professionals fear, the confrontation with ultimate *anomie*, 'particularly the fear of our own undoing in the agony of the other, of being submerged in or even disintegrated by suffering and chaos'.

I have, I believe, sketched out here not just an ideal, but also a description of what actually takes place day by day in many palliative cay units. And having described it, I am once again deeply impressed with the sheer quality of the work, in human, not just professional terms, that our staff undertake. But I also believe that

[3] de Hennezel, M (1998), *Intimate Death: How the Dying Teach us to Live*. New York: Vintage Books.

because the nature of this work is often not openly acknowledged, let alone recognized by commissioners or other health professionals, the demands on staff can be extreme, and that a retreat into a detached professionalism, or burnout, is a real and understandable risk. We owe it to them to work hard to affirm what I have described as the non-clinical aspects of palliative day care.

Palliative day care is therefore faced with choices: do we follow the 'safe route' of the medical model, offering what health commissioners can easily specify and measure? Or do we try genuinely to attend to death, with all the demands, seemingly limitless and therefore frightening, that such an intention will generate? Of course, the two objectives are not incompatible, provided, I would suggest, that the building of community comes first, and that medical interventions are seen within that context. Or do we continue to hover uneasily between the two, acknowledging to ourselves the merits of our 'non-clinical' work, but unable to find the words—let alone the evidential proof—to articulate and promote what we know to be so valuable?

It was one of the tenets of Cicely Saunders' beliefs that 'it is looking at the patient that will teach us how to care for the dying'. (*Letters*, p. 76). She says in a letter to a physician, 'Many times I have quoted you as preferring the phrase "dying with a sense of worth" to "dying with dignity".' (*Letters*, p. 344).[4] If we are to incorporate these aspirations in our own practice, then we need, we badly need, to have the courage of our convictions, and to insist that what we are doing is providing a community which enables people, to the extent that they are able, to find fulfilment, and therefore some healing, at the end of their lives.

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THE IMPRECATORY PSALMS AND PSALMS OF VENGEANCE IN THE DIVINE OFFICE:
REFLECTIONS ON THE EXPERIENCE OF CORPORATE PRAYER AT DACHAU CARMEL, GERMANY, 1965-1980

SISTER GEMMA HINRICHER OCD

Our experiences with the Divine Office, and above all with the so-called imprecatory psalms under discussion in this article, must be considered from two aspects. As Carmelites, we are bound to prayer in choir and we pray the entire Divine Office together. Additionally, we live on the site of the former Dachau Concentration Camp, which each year is visited by hundreds of thousands of tourists, some of whom also seek out our church. We must, therefore, consider the needs of these people who, individually or in groups, also take part in our prayer in choir. Our experiences with the Divine Office are thus shaped by our experience of prayer together and by life on the site of the camp.

I should like in the first part of this article to begin with our experience of prayer in choir since we first began to pray in the vernacular. In the second part the situation after the introduction of the new Divine Office will be considered; it is not entirely possible to avoid repetitions in doing so, since the difficulties of praying the imprecatory psalms and verses did not fundamentally change with the introduction of the Divine Office.

I

We received permission to pray the Office in the vernacular as early as 1965. Prayer in the vernacular, which was necessary and required of us by the needs of the tourists, did, however, bring considerable difficulties to our prayer in choir because of the so-called imprecatory or revenge psalms and imprecatory places in various psalms. We were soon tempted to go back to the Latin, since although the vernacular had brought us close to the riches of the psalms, drawbacks in praying the psalms had been cloaked by the

Latin. In the direct vicinity of the camp and in the presence of people inwardly shaken and deeply moved by their visit, we felt ourselves unable to articulate psalms which speak of a punishing, angry God, of the extermination of enemies (in often terrible images), or which contain desires for extermination and vengeance. It is indeed often the case that these people are not only affected by the cruelty and brutality which they encounter in the documentation of the camp museum and in experiencing the camp itself, but also by their own feelings of hatred and desire for vengeance for the terrible events which took place on this spot. Our church is the only still point on the site of the camp. After visiting the camp, the tourists walk through the northern watchtower into the forecourt of the church and convent. Many pause for a moment and seek peace in our church. It is surely understandable that neither cursing psalms nor cursing verses, neither desires for extermination nor desires for vengeance, can be spoken into such momentary pauses.

Our praying should be such as can prompt people to reconciliation, to forgiveness, to love. It should be such that the nearness of God can be experienced. 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'[1] In corporate praying and singing, Jesus Christ is experienced as present, as the loving One whose reconciling and forgiving love overcame hatred.

It was, therefore, clear to us that all biblical and theological, literary and hermeneutical reservations about leaving out imprecatory psalms and imprecatory places in the psalms would have to be put aside. For us here, pastoral service for the people who visit this place and our church has to come first. The Office is service, admittedly first of all service of God, but at the same time also service to the people, and performing this service in its entirety is the task of a community saying the Divine Office.

Thus, on the advice of Professor Jungmann[2] in 1965, we asked

[1] Matt. 18: 20.

[2] Editorial note: Josef Andreas Jungmann SJ (1889-1975) was known for his research into the history of liturgy, carried out in particular as a basis for studying the shaping of modern liturgy as a foundation for the renewal of the religious life. Prof. Jungmann occupied a chair at the Faculty of Theology in the University of Innsbruck 1930-1956. He was a member first

our local ordinary, Cardinal Döpfner, if we could omit certain psalms—those which are now also excluded from the Divine Office—and leave out some of the cursing places, at least in those liturgical Hours when a greater number of people was likely to be present. We received this permission on condition that after a certain time we would share our experiences with him.

When we put into brackets desires for extermination and vengeance or similar unprayable verses, we encountered many of the problems with such a course of action. We can understand why Notker Füglister[3] as a biblical commentator speaks of 'courage to take the Scriptures as a whole'. For as soon as we look at the psalms from biblical and theological, from literary and hermeneutical principles, there is no difficulty in taking the Psalter as a whole; seen in this way, every deletion and omission has its difficulties and gives one a feeling of distorting the text, of not doing justice to it. And yet there is a great difference between a biblical and theological perspective on the psalms and the corporate praying of them. There are many texts in the Holy Scriptures which are strange to us, which are unusable as prayer, but which do not on that account belong any less to the Scriptures than do others. The fact that the Psalter as a whole belongs to the Scriptures does not, however, signify that all parts of all psalms are suitable as the prayer of the Church. If we look at them from the point of view of their inception and formation and recognize that for the most part they originate from and are on home soil in a cult, then they cannot be transferred without further ado to entirely different situations and perspectives on life. Even if the Old Testament is seen as a direct lead-in to Christ, a number of psalms are hardly compatible with a Christian perspective on life. As the General Introduction to the Divine Office says, 'Even though all Christians agree in having the highest regard for the psalms, difficulty sometimes arises when [people try] to make these songs [their] own in prayer'.[4] Moreover,

of the German, then of the Austrian, Liturgical Commission and took part in preparatory work for the Second Vatican Council.

[3] *Vom Mut zur ganzen Schrift*, Notker Füglister, *Stimmen der Zeit*, 9, 1969, pp. 186-200.

[4] General Introduction to the *Divine Office* (GIDO), 101.

given the editorial history of the psalms, we cannot entirely regard them today as a uniform literary structure.

Yet deletions and omissions are naturally a risky business, and they must be undertaken only with the greatest sense of responsibility and extreme precision.

To get away from any problems which would have arisen if we had made greater deletions than were strictly necessary on account of our location, we obtained permission from Cardinal Döpfner to put together an Office of our own for the Hours when visitors were present. That was the case for Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline. Professor Jungmann had encouraged us in this direction by writing: 'In their heyday religious communities always ordered their prayer according to the best of their knowledge and belief.'[5] 'In the end, the "Church" is we ourselves, not the individual person and not the individual religious house either, but definitely a religious community which has created and is creating its own rule of prayer. Certainly in the future more will again depend on individual initiative, in which circumstances and the experience of prayer must play a decisive role.'[6]

The other aspect already mentioned which moved us to make omissions, to place texts in brackets and to create our own Hours, was that of corporate prayer. Praying the Divine Office privately oneself is different from praying it in community. There are certain criteria for corporate prayer which simply must be fulfilled. Prayer texts which are prayed together must also be capable of being put into effect together. A prayer which is said aloud has its own laws. There are certain limitations; when texts are prayed corporately, the contents are felt and experienced quite differently than in private recitation. Imprecatory psalms and imprecatory texts can just be glossed over in personal prayer. One allows oneself to be carried through them by an antiphon, and one can harmonize the biblical and theological understanding of a psalm with personal prayer differently from what is possible with the corporate rendering of the psalms. It is to be suspected that many people who defend the

[5] Letter, 15 August 1965.
[6] Letter, 28 November 1965.

imprecatory psalms and imprecatory texts do not say the Divine Office corporately, at least not in the vernacular. Desires for vengeance and extermination and similar statements are not acceptable for the Psalter said aloud, for the corporate praying of the psalms. Even with biblical and theological knowledge, it is not always possible to let offensive verses drop into the correct biblical and theological framework. In any case, the imprecatory texts and desires for extermination also produce certain psychological difficulties in corporate prayer; as the General Introduction to the Divine Office says, 'Such omissions are made because of certain psychological difficulties.'[7]

It is not for one person alone to decide what is prayed and what is left out. It is necessary to be clear about the criteria and principles for placing text in brackets, so that this is not done indiscriminately and arbitrarily, but with great seriousness. Personal taste must not become the criterion of selection and omission; therefore it is important for a community as a whole to decide what it can pray and what it cannot. In doing so, it may not in any circumstances fail to take biblical and theological considerations into account.

II

A new situation arose for us with the appearance of the new Divine Office—or rather the existing situation simply shifted to some extent. As Psalms 58, 83 and 109 no longer form part of the Psalter of the Divine Office, and similar individual verses of other psalms were omitted, the psalmody of the Divine Office can be performed entirely differently. Nevertheless, it still contains a number of verses in various psalms which do not appear to us to be useable as prayer texts and which we cannot pray *in this place*.

I'd like now to go into more exact detail with regard to the aspects mentioned above—corporate prayer, and the situation of this place.

[7] GIDO, 131.

An example of the contrast between the possible biblical and theological presentation of a psalm of vengeance and the practical impossibility of rendering it in corporate prayer is Psalm 18:

> I pursue my enemies and overtake them;
> I will not turn back till I have destroyed them.
> I strike them down, and they cannot rise;
> they fall defeated at my feet. ...
> You have put my enemies to flight.
> I destroy those who hate me. ...
> I beat them small like dust before the wind;
> I trample them like mud in the streets.[8]

These verses go back to a song of thanksgiving for victory by David or by another king. If one assumes, with Hans-Joachim Kraus, a later restatement of the psalm for the post-exilic era,[9] then what is probably meant here by King David is the David who is expected as the future King and Bringer of salvation.[10] It may be possible to pray these psalm verses from this perspective, since they are fulfilled in the coming of Christ, through which we are all rescued from the power of darkness;[11] for Christ disarmed the rulers and authorities[12] and is victor over sin, death and hell.[13] We as a community would also have been able to join in this song of thanksgiving for victory, had not entirely other factors played their part here, in this place. The fact that images are spoken about here which bring to life events in this or in other concentration camps makes us opt for restraint with regard to this and other similar places in the psalms. It is a known fact, for example, that in Auschwitz and other extermination camps, the ashes of those who were gassed were strewn over the site. It is, therefore, also readily understandable that we cannot pray here verse 42: 'I beat them small like dust before the wind; I trample them like mud in the streets.'

[8] taken from Ps. 18: 38-42.
[9] *Psalmen¸* Hans-Joachim Kraus, 1966, 1, p. 142.
[10] cf. Jer. 30: 9; Ezek. 34: 24; 37: 24.
[11] Col. 1:13.
[12] Col. 2: 15.
[13] cf. I Cor 15: 55 f.

It is similar with other places, e.g. amongst others, Psalm 2: 9; 3: 7; 10: 16; 11: 7; 44: 5; 68: 21-23, and with the other verses of Psalm 18 quoted above, which bring to mind graphically the suffering of the inmates of concentration camps: 'I strike them down, and they cannot rise; they fall defeated at my feet',[14] and, 'I pursue my enemies and overtake them; I will not turn back till I have destroyed them.'[15] Such destruction *has* taken place here in reality.

The reality simply is that it is often such associations which provide the determining factor in our not being able to pray a number of psalms and psalm verses in this place, associations which are based upon images which express the reality and the events of the concentration camps then and today and which are through our life and prayer held in present remembrance here in our Carmel. In addition to all that, we have to reckon with the fact that tourists often enter our church only briefly, and possibly these or similar verses are the only prayer they hear. What would they think of people who have come intentionally to this place to give people a sign of hope, to make it clear that death, not even violent, gruesome death, does not have the last word, but that the victory of Jesus Christ, his dying, his death and resurrection, have at the deepest level overcome all enemies and all enmity (even if we experience that so little in our brutal world)? How can we desire and seek from God for the same things as happened here to happen to those who perpetrated this barbaric wickedness or to those who even today in many forms still oppress and torture people in the world?

Precisely here in this place the words of the Lord, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing',[16] should become a reality. And precisely through our community a sign of reconciling love should be offered, not just to the poor and oppressed, but also to the oppressors and 'enemies'.

If we *are* here in a particular way for people who today suffer from violence, oppression and terror, just as much as for those who

[14] Ps. 18: 39.
[15] Ps. 18: 38.
[16] Luke 23: 34.

suffered in the past in this and in similar places, then we also do not want to overlook in our prayers those who by reason of their guilt stand in a particular relationship to this place. And we also want to include in our prayer those who wreak havoc today in similar atrocious forms of terror and violence. 'Lord, forgive them' should, then, be our constant prayer, even though, humanly speaking, when thinking about and imagining the atrocities which have happened here, one would sometimes also be inclined to express desires for extermination and vengeance with regard to the perpetrators.

The suggestion has been made again and again that the relevant psalms and psalm verses can be prayed with a *transferred meaning*, that is, in them saying 'no' to Satan and the demons, 'no' to all evil. But in my view that is nothing but an evasive device, and it doesn't contribute to true, genuine and honest prayer. For if we ask who are the enemies of those praying in the Old Testament, then we can hardly reduce them to Satan, demons and mythical forces. The enemies in the psalms are not myth. According to Hans-Joachim Kraus,[17] they are enemies of the people, enemies of the king. The enemies are the 'nations' or 'peoples',[18] who have not known Yahweh,[19] the 'kings of the earth and the princes',[20] who wage war against the people of God. The enemies are the 'wicked in the land',[21] the 'proud',[22] the 'mockers and blasphemers',[23] the 'avenger'.[24] They are enemies of Yahweh,[25] enemies of God's people, enemies of individual Israelites. The enemies of individuals are referred to as the godless and persecutors, and their thoughts and endeavours are depicted in numerous places in the psalms.[26]

Nevertheless, in a number of places in the psalms, the enemies do bear within themselves 'characteristics which transcend

[17] *Theologie der Psalmen*, Hans-Joachim Kraus, 1979, pp. 156-170.
[18] Ps. 2: 8; 18: 47; 45: 6; 144: 2.
[19] Ps. 79: 6.
[20] Ps. 2: 2.
[21] Ps. 101: 8.
[22] Ps. 123: 5.
[23] Ps. 44: 16; cf. 79: 4; 123: 4.
[24] Ps. 44: 16.
[25] Ps. 74: 9; 10: 13; 83: 2.
[26] Ps. 4: 2; 5: 8-10; 10: 7; 12: 2-5; 22: 7; 26: 4; 27: 16; 35: 11, 15-16, 19-21; 39: 9.

everything that is human and earthly',[27] which break open the human image of the enemy. Kraus warns against softening 'the historical and human contours of opposing peoples and of persecutors of the individual' through a hasty interpretation of enemies as mythical forces.[28] He says: 'Connections in the history of forms and institutions which research has opened up prevent any kind of premature mythologisation of the hostile forces which appear in the psalms. What must be explained to others first and foremost is that the enemies of the individual are human beings.[29] The enemies are human beings, therefore, although their deeds and activities are surrounded by a darkness which we cannot illuminate. Wherever there is hatred, revenge, enmity, there are always dark powers at work too, but they are at work together with people, who in various forms witness to what enmity is. Thus people were also the enemies in the concentration camps, even if precisely here one can speak of the working of satanic and demonic powers which strike terror into people's hearts in and through human beings. These powers are also at work today wherever people are persecuted, tormented and tortured. It is, however, *people* who do such injustice and carry out atrocities and there is no getting away from that. Therefore this so-called praying with a transferred meaning is not a real possibility, not even if one puts these shocking verses into the mouth of Christ and in doing so thinks of his struggle with Satan and the demons. In most cases, such interpretations are lame ones, and above all do not serve for the shared recitation of the psalms, in which these verses are prayed out loud and so enter the ear and heart of the hearers.

Shared praying as a second important criterion should now be looked at again. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of Vatican II speaks of the Divine Office as a 'source of piety, and nourishment for personal prayer'.[30] And those taking part should 'attune their

[27] *Theologie der Psalmen*, Hans-Joachim Kraus, 1979, p. 168.
[28] Ibid. p. 169.
[29] Ibid. p. 166; Ps. 9: 13; 10: 10; 12: 8; 56: 2; 76: 9, etc.
[30] Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1963, (SC), 90.

minds to their voices when praying'.[31] That, however, is only possible if the person praying can identify with the prayer, if that person can apply or put into effect the content of the prayer. Accordingly, it says in *Laudis Canticum*, the Apostolic Constitution of 1 November 1970 promulgating the revised book of the Liturgy of the Hours, that 'there can be no opposition between the prayer of the Church and the personal prayer of the individual', and, 'rather the relationship between them must be strengthened and enlarged by the Divine Office'.[32] It says there that, 'If the method and form of the celebration is chosen which most helps the persons taking part, one's personal, living prayer must of necessity be helped. If the prayer of the Divine Office becomes genuine personal prayer, the relation between the liturgy and the whole Christian life also becomes clearer.'[33]

'Community prayer, however, has a special dignity.'[34] Here too—not only for the individual person praying—the mind must be attuned to the voice.[35] In the celebration of the Divine Office, Christ is present, and in it he also accomplishes his work of 'redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God',[36] the work of reconciling, forgiving love. This work must also now find its expression in words, and it may not be concealed by incomprehensible or not easily applicable psalms or psalm verses. The God of compassion and love 'speaks to his people', and the people answer this love 'both by song and by prayer'.[37]

'Not only when things are read "which have been written for our instruction",[38] but also when the Church prays or sings or acts, the faith of those taking part is nourished and their minds are raised to God, so that they may offer him the worship which reason requires and more copiously receive his grace.'[39] Always, therefore, 'the faith

[31] Ibid.
[32] *Laudis Canticum*, 8.
[33] Ibid.
[34] GIDO, 9.
[35] cf. GIDO 19.
[36] SC, 5; GIDO, 13.
[37] SC, 33; GIDO, 14.
[38] Rom. 15: 4.
[39] GIDO, 14.

of those taking part must be nourished.' In a praying community each one lives quite perceptibly from the faith of the other. And it is a matter of strengthening one another mutually in faith and absorbing —also in pre-formed prayer—the Word of God which awakens our faith. But the prayer must then also be one which awakens faith, promotes and deepens faith. Can one say this in every case with regard to the psalms? Hardly! As has been said, the 'heart' must be able to be in harmony 'with the voice'. 'Those taking part in this prayer should make it their own so that it becomes a source of devotion, abundant grace and nourishment for personal prayer and apostolic activity.'[40] Thus the corporate prayer—which makes Christ present, which makes the Church visible, which in a particular way makes it possible for the praying community itself and for the people who join in this prayer to feel and experience the presence of God—is also the criterion for the content of the prayer.

For the sake of clarity, it is as well to say again that this should not be an encouragement to arbitrariness. For a community, it is particularly important, and essential, that study takes place outside the Divine Office, in shared bible study and meditation on the psalms. And it is important, precisely in shared bible study, to bring into the conversation in their entirety psalms from which verses have been omitted, in order at least not to lose or forget completely the understanding of a psalm and its colour as a result of the omissions. The Divine Office is greatly enriched if we do this again and again, and if we also study the historical background, the biblical and theological, the literary and hermeneutical questions raised by the psalms. In this connection it is regrettable that certain verses have simply been omitted instead of putting them into brackets in the text of the new Divine Office. Through the simple visual noting of these verses, which actually do also belong to the relevant psalm, a completely mistaken or skewed interpretation of certain psalms could be avoided.

Because we are Church—and this becomes particularly clear in a religious community—and we pray in the name of and on behalf

[40] Ibid. 19.

of the Church, sheer subjectivity cannot be allowed to proliferate. The Office, of course, cannot always correspond to the mood of the person praying. It is axiomatic that psalms of praise, thanksgiving and trust are also required to be prayed in situations where we do not feel like it, and just as much that laments are also to be sung when other things seem to us more appropriate; for 'whoever says them in the name of the Church can always find a reason for joy or sorrow'.[41] It is important to hold on to this basic perspective. That does not mean, however, that cursing psalms and cursing texts should be omitted because they do not correspond to the mood of the person praying. The praying, or otherwise, of the imprecatory psalms is simply not a matter of personal mood, but a question of the possibility of praying certain texts of the Old Testament, a question of specifically Christian prayer and a question of the truth and genuineness of our praying.

For our praying should be true and genuine; and part of that is appropriateness for the person of today. 'For in the measure that [the liturgy] contains forms which change and must change, it appears as if made for [the person], and not the other way around. It is therefore an adaptation of the Office to the reality of the person of today.'[42]

Many people come into our church for the celebration of the Eucharist and the Divine Office, young people too. They like praying the psalms with us, and the liturgy gives them something, as we see confirmed again and again. Isn't that also because we have made an attempt to suit our liturgy to the place, to corporate prayer, and to the realities of people today? Precisely because it is so important that the people do take part, the Office must also take account of them.

It is expressly enjoined upon the monastic and contemplative communities in the Synod paper, *The Orders and Other Spiritual Communities,* that their liturgy should be so 'meditatively and communicatively formed, that people who are also seeking, not least young people, can take a lively part in it and experience a faith

[41] Ibid. 108.

[42] Beharrung und Wahrheit in der Erneuerung des monastischen Offiziums, Jean Leclercq, in *Erbe und Auftrag*, (1969) 45, p. 282.

community. The religious houses would have to take part actively from their tradition in the forming of a language of prayer and symbolism appropriate for the times.'[43] The Christian 'should be given sufficient and appropriate aids to prayer'.[44] Should it not be a pressing call to shape prayer in choir in content and form in a manner which shows the person of today a way which really helps that person in his or her life with God?

In a very stark way, in this place, at Dachau, what (adapted to the situation) is basic to all shared praying of the psalms, becomes clear: if it is to remain alive, the particular place, the corporate element of prayer, and the people of the particular time cannot be ignored.

This article originally appeared in Bibel und Kirche*, 2/1980. It has been translated by Sister Avis Mary SLG.*

Christ within Me: Prayers and Meditations from the Anglo-Saxon Tradition, selected, translated and edited by Sister Benedicta Ward SLG, Cistercian Publications, 2008, £6.99. ISBN: 978-0-87907-213-1.

This new pocket-sized volume contains a selection of texts, together with artistic images, from Anglo-Saxon times, sometimes referred to as the golden age of English Christianity. (See also p. 67 for a review of a book on English spirituality.) It was first published by Darton, Longman and Todd in 1999 in the 'Enfolded in Love' series, and it now appears in a new edition with illustrations.

SLG Press has a small quantity of copies of the book to sell to individual readers at £7.00 per copy, plus actual shipping costs (invoice to be sent with goods.) Customers in North America should obtain their copies directly from the USA.

[43] *The Orders and Other Spiritual Communities*, 3.1.3.
[44] Ibid. 3.1.5.

IN MEMORIAM

THE REVEREND ROBERT LLEWELYN

The Reverend Robert Llewelyn was born on 6 July 1909 in Exmouth, Devon, and he died in Norwich on 6 February 2008, aged ninety-eight. The life of this remarkable priest—who, like Lady Julian of Norwich, taught that 'we are enfolded in love'—was interwoven with the life of the Community of the Sisters of the Love of God in two significant respects. Fr Robert was warden for three years, commencing on 1 July 1972, at the Community's house in Kent, namely Bede House. He is also the author of two publications from SLG Press, which some years ago were consolidated into a single book, *Prayer and Contemplation & Distractions are for Healing*.

Robert Llewelyn had a rich and varied ministry as priest, teacher and author, both in England and overseas. Among his many gifts was that of being almost perfectly numerate. An illustration of this is that he gave out from memory on his deathbed the full telephone numbers of dozens of friends whom he wished to be notified! He read mathematics at Pembroke College, Cambridge, after which he joined the teaching staff of Westminster School. Although he said that he did not wish to teach, he spent the first thirty years of his ministry as a schoolmaster. He also gave an increasing proportion of his off-duty time to prayer and meditation.

He was ordained to the priesthood in 1936. Given a year's leave to work for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and be with the Cawnpore Brotherhood in India, he sailed in August 1939. War was declared while he was still in the Indian Ocean, and he was unable to return to England until 1945. Instead he became headmaster of a school set up for those unable to travel to schools in England. Although Fr Robert returned to Westminster in 1945, he was soon off again to start a diocesan school in the Bahamas. He returned to India in 1951 to become headmaster of Sherwood College, the Lucknow diocesan school. When he was back in England in

1966, he was immediately asked to return to Poona, where he became chaplain to a religious community, as well as being a parish priest. To his surprise and delight, he was appointed Archdeacon of Poona.

In 1972 he was once more in England and went to Bede House as Warden for the few years which remained until he reached retirement age. An invitation was extended to him to go in 1976 to Norwich as the chaplain of, and to be a praying presence in, the cell of the fourteenth-century English mystic, Dame Julian of Norwich. The actual cell had probably disappeared at the Reformation, and the church to which it was attached had suffered bomb damage in World War II. When the church was rebuilt, an adjoining small chapel was also built on the site of Julian's cell. It had not been much used before the arrival of Fr Robert, but in the last third of his life he was to make 'the Julian shrine' known all over the world and to introduce many people to the writings and spirituality of Lady Julian. He was chaplain for fourteen years until his eventual final retirement in 1990.

Other influences on his life and spirituality included his connections with the Marian shrines of Medjugorje and Lourdes, Zen Buddhism, the healing ministry of the Church and various contemporary spiritual movements. His many published books include his 1998 autobiography, *Memories and Reflections*, and *With Pity not with Blame*, *A Doorway to Silence: The Contemplative Use of the Rosary*, *Love Bade Me Welcome* and *Thirsting for God*, all published by Darton, Longman and Todd. In 1994 he was awarded the Templeton Prize for his contribution to the advancement of religion in the field of spirituality.

* * * * * *

Fairacres Publication No. 46, *Prayer and Contemplation & Distractions are for Healing* by Robert Llewelyn is available from SLG Press, £5.95.

The word 'contemplation' is used here to signify the prayer and relationship with God into which all committed Christians can expect to be drawn as they seek to co-operate with God's will for their healing and integration. Robert Llewelyn, convinced that the

key lies within the great tradition of Christian spirituality, seeks to provide encouragement and guidance. He believes that the healing which comes to the individual in prayer is also mysteriously effective for others. Llewelyn discusses petition, intercession and the various forms of vocal prayer before turning to contemplation. In the second part, he suggests how the wandering thoughts which beset everyone in prayer may be used for good.

* * * * * *

THE RIGHT REVEREND KENNETH WOOLLCOMBE

Bishop Kenneth Woollcombe was born on 2 January 1924, the son of a prominent clergyman, and died on 3 March 2008, aged eighty-four. He was ordained in 1951, having attended St John's College, Oxford, and he later held various major posts. The most significant, not least for SLG, was that in 1971 he became (at the age of forty-seven) the thirty-ninth Bishop of Oxford and Visitor of the Community, in succession to Bishop Harry Carpenter. He conducted an Episcopal Visitation of the Community in 1976.

After the death in 1976 of his first wife, Gwendolyn Hodges, he felt increasingly unable to continue as Bishop of Oxford and resigned the see (and incidentally resigned as Visitor of SLG) in 1978, becoming an assistant bishop in the Diocese of London. He married his second wife, Juliet Dearmer, (who survives him) in 1980, and from 1981 until his retirement in 1991, he was Canon Residentiary and Precentor of St Paul's Cathedral. He retired to the Diocese of Worcester, where he acted as an assistant bishop, in 1998 moving to Pershore. His wife Juliet was ordained to the priesthood in 1994. He produced a survey of the Dudley area (which borders on three dioceses), preparatory to the transfer of one deanery from the Diocese of Lichfield to the Diocese of Worcester.

While he was Bishop of Oxford, he gained a reputation as something of a 'talent spotter', able both to use people well within the diocese and to bring in gifted people from outside. The current Bishop of Oxford, the Right Reverend John Pritchard, has said:

> Bishop Kenneth was a distinguished Bishop of Oxford, noted for his scholarship and his profound gifts as a thinker. He took the diocese through the 1970s with confidence and clear leadership. After the sad death of his first wife, he found new contentment in his marriage to Juliet and his new role at St Paul's Cathedral. The diocese remembers him with affection and respect. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

After he served his title at the beginning of his ministry, he was successively Tutor at St John's College, Oxford (1953-60), Professor of Dogmatic Theology in New York (1960-63) and Principal of Edinburgh Theological College and also a Canon of St Mary's Cathedral (1963-71). He was active, too, on the ecumenical front.

He was dogged by ill health all his life. His last years brought him much suffering, including breaking his hip, throat cancer and then the onset of dementia. Although he became increasingly frail, he nevertheless retained his great gift for friendship and charm and for connecting with people.

May they rest in peace.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

HUGH WYBREW, a Priest Associate of SLG, was Vicar of St Mary Magdalen, Oxford. Since 2004 he has lived in active retirement next door to the convent at Fairacres.

DUNCAN FORBES is Chief Executive of the Shakespeare Hospice in Stratford-upon-Avon, and has a particular interest in the contribution made by hospices to contemporary perceptions of death and dying. With his wife, Angela Duncan, he worshipped for a year at Fairacres, when Angela was receiving treatment for cancer in 2002, and he remains in touch with the Community. Duncan would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of Dr Paul Ong, of the Shakespeare Hospice and Warwick University, to the background thinking of the article.

SISTER GEMMA HINRICHER OCD (1932-1990) studied theology and philosophy before entering Carmel in Pützchen near Bonn in 1959. In 1964 she went to Dachau for the foundation of the Carmel in that place, and she moved to Berlin in 1982 for a further foundation. She was Prioress at Dachau 1970-1982, and in Berlin 1982-1990.

DAVID BARTON is Warden of the Community.

JOHN PORTER is an Anglican priest and a member of FLG, and has retired to Northern France after nearly forty-five years of active ministry in Britain, mainly in the Lichfield Diocese. He now gives occasional help to the Pas-de-Calais Anglican Chaplaincy and assists ecumenically in the local Roman Catholic parish. He is married with three sons, one of whom is a priest in the Blackburn Diocese. He is the author of a forthcoming book from SLG Press, *Being There: Caring for the Bereaved*.

JOHN SCOTT (formerly Chaplain at Bede House) is presently Pastoral Assistant in the Roman Catholic parish of St Mary, Cadogan Street, Chelsea.

NEW FROM SLG PRESS

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BEN DE LA MARE has been in touch with the Community for many years and has contributed to the Fairacres Chronicle. He lives in Durham, where he served for over twenty years as a parish priest. He is glad to live within reach of cathedral and university library, an environment which has helped to nourish his continuing study of the poetic and pastoral art of George Herbert.

Fairacres Publications 153. ISBN 978-0-7283-0172-6.
Price: £3.00.

THE JESUS PRAYER

GOSPEL SOUNDINGS

SISTER PAULINE MARGARET CHN

The invocation of the name of Jesus in prayer, often referred to as 'the Jesus Prayer', can be the simple attentive repetition of the name of Jesus, or some longer form such as 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner'. The author encourages all Christians in the use of this prayer. No-one need feel inadequate or excluded; all may be regarded as 'amateurs' when it comes to prayer, since the amateur—the literal meaning of which is 'lover'—is one who practises for love.

Sister Pauline Margaret provides wise guidance in this loving practice, drawing on the tradition of the gospels and on her own experience with the Jesus Prayer and of sharing her reflections and insights in giving retreats, prayer workshops and quiet days.

Affirming the Lord's Prayer, given by Jesus as the primary pattern prayer, she hopes through these reflections to point to one of the ways in which we may nurture our relationship with Jesus. For it is by this relationship that Jesus enables and invites us to pray as he prays, calling God our 'Father'.

SISTER PAULINE MARGARET is a member of the Anglican Community of the Holy Name, the mother house of which is in Derby, England.

Fairacres Publications 154. ISBN 978-0-7283-0173-3.
Price: £3.00.

BOOKS

Common Worship: Daily Eucharist Lectionary, edited by Simon Kershaw, Canterbury Press, 2008, £30.00. ISBN: 978-1-85311-896-8.

The long awaited *Common Worship: Daily Eucharist Lectionary* is here! It is a beautifully produced book. The introduction is excellent, clearly and concisely explaining various aspects of the book and how it can be used. The headings within the text are well laid out so it is easy to follow and understand how to negotiate the pages.

The *Daily Eucharist Lectionary* completes the annual cycle of Eucharistic readings in the *Common Worship* lectionary, complementing *Exciting Holiness* (Saints) and the *Word of the Lord* volumes (Sundays). Because the Daily Eucharist Lectionary covers the entire year, it is unavoidably a large book, and some may find it too heavy. This book will be an asset for anyone who attends the Eucharist frequently. It can also be used fruitfully for personal *lectio divina*.

Living Through Bereavement: With the Help of Christian Thought and Prayer, David M. Owen, SPCK, 2008, £9.99. ISBN: 978-0-281-0593-4.

There is much that is good and profitable in this book, the fruit of many years of pastoral experience by Dr. Owen, a retired United Reformed Minister. The book begins with a valuable overview of Biblical teaching about life after death in both the Old and New Testaments, while other chapters deal with such ideas as the concept of the soul, untimely death, the cost of war, solace in grief and preparation for death. Each chapter consists of a short introduction, usually of between two or three pages, followed by a broadly chosen selection of passages for reflection, and then some suitable prayers. Some of the short introductions are rather too short to be of real benefit, but I found the chapter ‘Coping with Disaster’ particularly helpful. Very often the passages for reflection and the prayers which followed were much more useful and helpful, and

had more content, than the chapters themselves. The publishers state that the book is divided into two sections, but there is no clear indication where one section is supposed to end and the other begin. The final chapter, 'The Eternal Company', gives a good but all too brief summary of the value of All Saints and All Souls-tide and of the Eucharist as an opportunity of fellowship with the Faithful Departed, and one could wish that it had been developed more deeply and extensively. I have often found in my own pastoral ministry that a realization that we are one in Christ with those who have gone before can be a strength for those who are 'Living through Bereavement', and I have a vivid memory of an elderly home communicant telling me that she felt close, as in no other way, to her dead husband when she received Communion.

It is difficult to decide for whom exactly the book is intended: the 'blurb' states that it 'offers consolation and affirmation to those of us trying to cope with losing someone we love', but I would find it generally difficult to put the book as a whole into the hands of most people living through bereavement. However, the book can be commended as source of useful prayers and material for the bookshelves of anyone seeking to give particular help in individual situations.

JOHN PORTER

Holy Anger: Jacob, Job, Jesus, Lytta Basset, Continuum Books, 2007, £16.99. ISBN 978-0-8264-8072-9.

'Any reflection on holiness can only be renewed by considering the theme of anger'. (p. 257) Given much Christian teaching on anger, this is a startling claim, but it is the author's conviction that we must all eventually own our violence, however well-controlled and perhaps hidden it is, if we hope to move towards holiness and 'perfect Love'.

Starting with Cain and Abel and progressing thorough Job to Jacob and finally Jesus, Basset uses the stories we all know to illustrate how it is possible to free ourselves from suffering and the sense of being cursed into a state in which we have a real sense of freedom and blessing. In our passage through life, we try at first to

conform, to appease others, to keep the peace, stifling bits of ourselves in the process so that we are never in a true relation with any one. But then, like Jacob at the brook of Jabbok, there comes a point when we may turn and fight back and, if we have the courage to go to the 'limit of our anger', we will go through life 'limping', but we experience freedom and blessing and we are in true relationship with God, others and ourselves.

But how does this happen without damage to others? In Chapter 1 of Part 3, Basset introduces the concept of 'the sword passing', referring to Matt. 10: 34-35: 'I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a son's wife against her mother-in-law.' Yes, we have to find our anger to free ourselves from those with whom, despite affection, our relationship is unreal, but the basic struggle is with God who, as Creator, is ultimately responsible for our situation. Basset maintains that God *wants* us to enter into this struggle: Job finally does so, as does Jacob, who is shown in the book as caught in the web of a dysfunctional family, but Cain fails, and instead murders his brother. The reality of our relationship with God, which results from passing through that struggle, brings with it a feeling of blessedness, even though we are wounded.

To me this is an important book; indeed the French edition has won the Prix Siloe and Basset herself is described here as a spiritual master. However it is not an easy book. Some of this may be due to the translation—there are too many sentences which one has to read several times, and indeed sentences which aren't sentences. It is also repetitive. But it is still an important book. I ended it with a vivid sense of the Old Testament in my own life and some gloriously unconventional exegesis. It brought too an increased awareness of the dependence of the New Testament on the Old. God is defined as Love in the New Testament and Basset ends the book making the connection between anger, holiness and love.

For Christians, the commandment to love that is at the heart of the New Testament and that comes to us straight from the Jewish Scriptures presupposes a passage through violence. The *One* Lord to whom we are invited to attach ourselves had to eliminate all that

was not of Him, to uproot his people from that Egypt that was alienating them, to have them emerge from the confusion of the desert and its mirages. …. And what Jesus calls the second commandment …. is the outcome of Lev. 19: 17 which asks us *first* to 'reproach' the other so that we 'do not hold anger' towards him and do not 'hate' him. However, to reproach someone does not occur without a passage through the pain of the wound, keeping our distance, opposition, resistance, differentiation. That is why an ever deeper reflection on Love—and on the human process of sanctification that leads towards perfect Love—could not, in my opinion, happen without the passage through anger.

SISTER SUSAN SLG

Wondrous Depth: Preaching the Old Testament, Ellen F. Davis, Westminster John Knox Press, 2005, £13.99. ISBN: 978-0-66422 859-0.

There was an incident during my post ordination training that lodged in my mind, and from time to time causes me mild amusement. On one occasion we were wrestling with the problem of preaching. We were, I remember, deeply sceptical about the value of the sermon. Products of the sixties and therefore critical of most things, we saw so many other forms of communication that would be better—discussions, question and answer sessions, film, slides, recordings. Our wise tutor Wilfred Browning heard us out in silence and at the end summed up with a sigh: 'It seems to me however, that from the New Testament onwards the sermon has been the characteristic form of Christian communication. I doubt if it will be easily changed.'

Forty years later the sermon still remains the 'characteristic form of Christian communication'. Indeed, it flourishes. Think of the competition for the best sermon, with an annual book, the persistence of Thought for the Day at peak listening time on the BBC, collected sermons still eagerly bought. And, anecdotally, on the church door at the end of the service, it is the sermon that seems

to contribute most to the feel-good factor of worship, much though some of us might wish it to be otherwise. But of course those same factors place a burden on the preacher that is probably greater now than that felt by preachers in earlier generations. Hence the value of this book to those who must expound the Word, week in week out.

The author is a regular preacher and, judging by the sermons at the end, an effective one. Interestingly, she was previously the co-editor of *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Westminster John Knox Press 2003). This was a book of essays that emerged from 'The Scripture Project', a group of fifteen scholars from different traditions whose hope was that, together, they might recover something of the riches of historical biblical interpretation in our dramatically changed cultural environment. This book stays with that idea of historical biblical interpretation. It sets the sermon in its long history. But its strength lies in the way that it treats preaching as an *art*, 'the art of astonishment', to quote one of its chapter titles. Augustine's phrase, 'The wondrous depth of your utterances, ... my God, the wondrous depth' deeply informs what is written here. Most importantly, it assumes a view of the Bible that reaches beyond all the ways we might read it—critical/historical, feminist, liberationist, post modern and so on. None of the insights that might come from such readings are denied. But the text of scripture lies beyond them. The Bible is 'an immediate and insistent presence, thrust into the life of the church', transformative and challenging. It calls us into a process of change that is never ending and regularly painful. The preacher's task is to be 'read' by this text and to enable those who listen to undergo the same process.

Ellen Davis lectures in the art of preaching, and it is a book that reflects the wisdom of an experienced teacher. In the course of it, she also makes out a good case for a greater use of the Psalms in preaching than is the custom. It is a timely reminder. I found it hard to remember when I had last heard (or preached!) a sermon from a psalm text. I was particularly grateful for the emphasis Davis places on the preacher's need to develop 'imaginative precision'. In part what is meant by this is a respect for careful biblical exegesis, with its 'impressive amount of science'. But it is also about engaging

literary criticism and non-discursive forms of thought, the aesthetic faculty alongside the rational. We also need to be ready to be caught off guard by a text, allowing it to 'blast through' accustomed notions. And at the same time we are to be alert to the connections between ancient contexts and our own. The density of this concept is typical of the way the book develops. The context here, and throughout the book, is of course that of the title, *Preaching the Old Testament.* Davis barely touches on the thorny question of the christological interpretation of OT texts. But she is surely right in saying that the freedom to preach texts christologically is precisely that: freedom, not a requirement for responsible preaching.

Not least of the encouragements of reading this book is the fact that it reminds us of the significant heritage of specifically Anglican preaching. Two chapters are given over to extracts from Donne and Lancelot Andrews, and there are quotations from others. At a time when the Anglican Communion seems to be threatened with fragmentation, a book that comes with a reminder of the depths and historic vitality of our own tradition is welcome. If I have a criticism at all, it is that the sermons put forward here are really sermons for the academy, and though good models, I would not take them as a norm for all the congregations to whom I preach regularly. I found myself wondering what those who preach week by week in housing estate churches, whose skills at holding an audience are often to be greatly admired, might take from this. What, too, of the place of story as part of the preacher's art? In one place it certainly gets short shrift.

But none of that detracts from the value of what is to be read here. It is one of those rare books that combines scholarship and spirituality in a way that is universal. I was certainly taught by it, and have valued returning to it again to discover things missed on first reading. But the further value of this book is that, like good art or good music, or indeed like the good sermons it holds up to us, it shifts the reader's viewpoint at a much deeper level and opens up imaginative possibilities that had not been noticed before. That is what we need if those of us who preach are to live up to our calling.

DAVID BARTON

Edward Caswall—Newman's Brother and Friend, Nancy Marie de Flon, Gracewing, 2005. ISBN 0-85244-607-1.

The Author Index of the English Hymnal tells us much, in its staccato way, about some of the leading figures of Victorian church life in England. Newman—three hymns, each a classic. Faber—ten hymns (but what doggerel ones were excluded!). J. M. Neale—nearly half a column needed to list his translations and original compositions. And Edward Caswall?—eleven translations and one original hymn. If that suggests, perhaps, a lesser figure, then de Flon sets out to show us that Caswall should not be neglected.

Some aspects of his early life are familiar to us from the backgrounds of other Tractarian converts to Catholicism: Oxford education, an Evangelical family tradition, ordination, marriage and appointment to a country living. He was also a known figure, having published some satirical work whilst an undergraduate. The sense of humour may have stayed with him, but writing of a more serious kind soon came naturally, *Sketches of Young Ladies* being followed by *Morals from the Churchyard*. Like other country clergy influenced by the Oxford Movement he was assiduous in pastoral ministry. *The Child's Manual* remains as testimony to the serious level of prayer which he attempted to instil into the young of the parish. However, as antidote to the picture often presented of the country labours of John Keble and others, Caswall felt himself to be beaten. Resigning his living of Stratford-sub-Castle to the Bishop of Salisbury he confessed that the daily services he had introduced were 'a source of annoyance and suspicion to the people'.

In 1846, having resigned his living, Caswall spent that year in a journey of conversion. Whilst it certainly had its intellectual side, that journey, recorded in a discursive journal, focuses much on his experiencing at home and abroad the ordinary life and worship of Catholics. In contradistinction to those Tractarians who were busily promoting the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer as a vehicle of spiritual renewal, Caswall found that the use of Latin in Roman Catholic churches promoted more fervent and varied prayer. Why should everyone be doing and saying the same things at the same

time? Once ‘the great idea of sacrifice’ was in people’s minds, ‘comfort, freedom, ease and spontaneousness in public prayer’ followed.

If conversion to Catholicism in early 1847 seemed a great step (his family were largely and strongly opposed), then at least he had the support of his wife, Louisa, who took the same step within the week. Two-and-a-half years later, though, she died suddenly. The loss, indeed, was great for him, yet seems to have been understood providentially; within a year Caswall had joined the novitiate of the Oratory in Birmingham, where he would live out the rest of his life. De Flon is helpful in giving a full account of his contribution, spiritual, financial and administrative, to the still fledgling community. Fr Ian Ker’s biography of Newman has only three mentions of Caswall, two of which are to do with his death; one would not have realized without this present volume the extent to which Newman relied on Caswall to sustain and guide the Birmingham house in long absences of the Superior.

We are also given by de Flon some serious consideration of the theological influences behind Caswall’s writings. The sacramentality of the universe and the continuity between the visible and invisible worlds are continuing themes. Yet there is little withdrawal from engagement with the immediate needs of the people. Just as Caswall sought to succour the poor of the parish as an Anglican perpetual curate, so as an Oratorian priest he cared for and supported financially the Smethwick mission. Conversion had no need to affect the pastoral heart.

Perhaps Newman should be allowed to sum Caswall up for us: a ‘great and loyal friend’, he called him, ‘If he had a fault it was that of optimism. He looked at everything from its best side, discovered virtues invisible to people of weaker faith, and was always slow to believe in the wickedness of human nature.’ You may not need to have a life of Edward Caswall on your shelves; but it may well do you some good to read of a good man. And Caswall’s life could make us ask: Had Louisa Caswall survived, would the Birmingham Oratory have survived without Edward’s membership and all the support that he gave? Behind that, however, looms the greater

question: What if Mrs Manning, wife of the future Cardinal, had survived? Would the Catholic Church in this country today have looked rather different?

JOHN SCOTT

English Spirituality: Volume 1: From Earliest Times to 1700, Gordon Mursell, SPCK, 2008, £19.99. ISBN 978-0-281-05991-1.

For readers of this magazine with some funds, albeit not unlimited ones, to spend on a book or books to assist them with the Christian life in general and with the life of prayer and study in particular, here is a suggestion: buy this book this year, and its sequel (which will be reviewed next time) at a later stage. For an outlay of £20 for this large, dense book of 548 pages (published in hardback in 2001 and now appearing for the first time in paperback), the reader will find veritable treasures; and for anyone for whom the size and readability of text is an issue, the actual text on the page is very acceptable.

First of all I should declare a particular interest in the subject and purpose of Gordon Mursell's work. About thirty-two years ago, a priest put into my hands Martin Thornton's *English Spirituality*, with the now rather dated subtitle *An Outline of Ascetical Theology according to the English Pastoral Tradition*, (SPCK, 1963), saying to me, 'Which way do you want to go?' That priest's intention was to show me something of the wonderful riches of the spirituality of England, and of the influences upon it from other lands, so that, fortified by such knowledge, I would be enabled to find my own spiritual *attrait*. Although I responded, after reading Thornton carefully, that what was chiefly calling me was the spirituality of Carmel, yet I had been given a great gift. Thornton's book was formative in my understanding of the Christian tradition and of the English spiritual heritage.

Gordon Mursell, the author of the present book—a far more detailed, extensive and balanced work, and just as enthralling—is currently Bishop of Stafford and has had experience as Dean of Birmingham Cathedral, with teaching spirituality at Salisbury and

Wells Theological College, and in parochial ministry. Almost the entire book was researched and written while he was engaged in parish work. Perhaps this is some of the secret of its appeal, that he wrote about spirituality whilst also being anchored in practical concerns. It is a book which strives to do justice to the breadth of the topic, giving due weight to, for instance, cultural, political, ecclesial and sociological influences and making use of the historian's craft:

> By whom, and for whom, was this text or artefact produced, and in what social and theological context? What was it intended to convey, and why? What does it *not* say: what is the author or artist choosing to omit? What was its influence, and by whom was that influence shaped or transmitted? To whom does it speak today, and why? What impact does it have on *me*, and why? (p. 19).

Mursell begins with necessary definitions and explanations, for example of 'spirituality' and 'mysticism', and makes no dogmatic statements. It would be difficult to define the 'English character' precisely, he says, but perhaps there is 'a pragmatic combination of eclecticism with a certain stubborn independence of spirit which has inevitably influenced its spirituality' (p. 1). He stresses, too, that the island of Britain is also home to the states of Scotland and Wales, with their own distinctive spiritual traditions, and that being an island has never prevented continual contact with other nations and cultures beyond the seas.

Naturally I cannot pretend to be equally knowledgeable about all parts of the era covered by this work, but an advantage of this is that I write as a reader rather than a scholar. In my view, the author succeeds in his aim of producing a serious and balanced contribution towards the study of English spirituality.

It would take a lengthy review article to tease out much of the dense yet gripping content of the book, so I must confine myself to somewhat general remarks. It is not a simplistic book, and Mursell makes use of various literary devices. For instance, after a consideration of key concepts and also of the spirituality of the Bible and early Christianity, he divides the book's main content into four chapters, most of which have rather cryptic titles: 'The Seafarer: Anglo-Saxon

spirituality', 'St Godric and the Deer: medieval spirituality (1066-1300)', 'The Quest for the Suffering Jesus: late medieval spirituality (1300-1500)' and 'The Fellows of St Antony: spirituality, reformation and revolution (1500-1700)'. Mursell leaves the period from 1700 to 2000 for the second book. He has sought out some motifs to give a flavour to each chapter. Using the image of the sea-farer, for instance, he shows how in Anglo-Saxon times the pagan past was built upon, and there was a dialectic between home and wandering exile, a setting forth on a journey which can be as harsh as a sea journey, and a longing for the experience of that journey, but also for the eternal home which is the ultimate destination. Each chapter is concluded with a few 'individual studies'. In the Anglo-Saxon section, having noted how much of what has been handed down from the era is from monastic rather than lay sources, he looks in greater detail at St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, the Venerable Bede, Alcuin and St Ælfric.

The chapters become progressively longer—the final chapter is twice as long as the preceding one—and the titles chosen for two of them do require further explanation. The story of the sheltering by the layman and solitary Godfric of a stag which was being hunted by men and hounds is used by Mursell 'to introduce us to some of the principal themes of English medieval spirituality: the discovery of the self, the theology of love, the rise of lay piety, and the cult of the saints' (p. 89). The 'Fellows of St Antony' refers to a story from the early Church of a holy man (said to be St Antony) who, after a long stay in the wilderness, thought himself to be of unparalleled holiness. When he asked God who should be his fellow in heaven, God gave him to understand that he should visit a cobbler in Alexandria. St Antony did so and, much edified, laid aside his pride and presumption. Mursell uses Hugh Latimer's interpretation of this ancient story to illustrate the changing times covered in the chapter. In this period, English spirituality became something which people had to decide for themselves. The old order had lost its authority and truth was no longer something 'out there', but it had rather to be appropriated by the individual. 'Religious faith and experience was to become rather less a matter of culture, context or conditioning, and rather more a matter of choice' (p. 294).

I hope that I have been able to whet the appetite of the reader. To learn more, there is no other way than to read the book. It is well worth the outlay: in this book you gain a library of information and material for study, reflection and prayer and suggestions for further work. Might I hope that pastors of another generation are, and will be, inspired to lend this book to others, suggesting that they read it and reflect as to which spiritual path is calling to them!

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

BOOKS RECEIVED

From Ave Maria Press Notre Dame / Alban Books:

Facing Forgiveness, Laughlan Sofield, Carroll Juliano & Gregory M. Aymond, 2007, £5.99. ISBN: 978-1-59471-122-0.

From Canterbury Press:

(DVD) Seeing & Believing: Praying with paintings of the life, death and resurrection of Christ, Christopher Herbert, 2008, £9.99. ISBN: 978-1-85311-857-7.
The Heart of Creation, John Main, 2007, £8.99. ISBN: 978-1-85311-848-7.
We Don't Do That Tune Vicar! More Disharmony in the Stalls, Reginald Frary, 2007, £7.99. ISBN: 978-1-85311-837-1.

From Cistercian Publications / Liturgical Press

Benedict of Aniane: The Emperor's Monk (Ardo's Life), translated by Allen Cabaniss, 2008, £8.99. ISBN: 978-0-87907-320-6.

From Continuum:

Touched by God: Ten Monastic Journeys, edited by Laurentia Johns OSB, Burns & Oates, 2008, £12.99. ISBN: 978-0-86012-451-1.
Before the Living God, Ruth Burrows, Burns & Oates, new edition 2008, £8.99. ISBN: 978-0-86012-439-9.

Deep Calls to Deep: Going Further in Prayer, David Foster OSB, 2007, £9.99. ISBN: 978-1-8264-9774-1.
Living free, H. A. Williams, Mowbray, 2007, £8.99. ISBN: 978-1-9062-8608-8.
Conversations on Religion, edited by Mick Gordon and Chris Wilkinson, 2008, £12.99. ISBN: 978-0-8264-9909-7.

From Darton, Longman & Todd:

The Four Steps of Love, Fiona Gardner, 2007, £11.99. ISBN: 978-0-232-52716-2.

From Dimensions for Living / Alban Books

Jesus' Parables about Making Choices, 2007, James W. Moore, £5.99. ISBN: 978-0-867-49133-9.

From Edition-Ruprecht, Göttingen, Germany:

Assist Me To Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, John R. Tyson, 2008, £11.07. ISBN: 978-3-7675-3052-2.

From Gracewing:

Frederick William Faber: A Great Servant of God, Melissa Wilkinson, 2007, £20.00. ISBN: 978-0-85244-135-0.

From Hendrickson Publishers Inc. / Alban Books

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: an introduction to his thought, Sabine Dramm, translated by Thomas Rice, 2007, £10.99. ISBN: 978-1-56563-762-7.

From Paulist Press:

Finding the Monk Within: Great Monastic Values for Today, Edward C. Sellner, 2008, £14.99. ISBN: 978-1-58768-048-9.

From SPCK (and see review of Vol. 1 on p. 67)**:**

English Spirituality: Volume 2: From 1700 to the Present Day, Gordon Mursell, 2008, £19.99. ISBN: 978-0-281-05992-8.

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