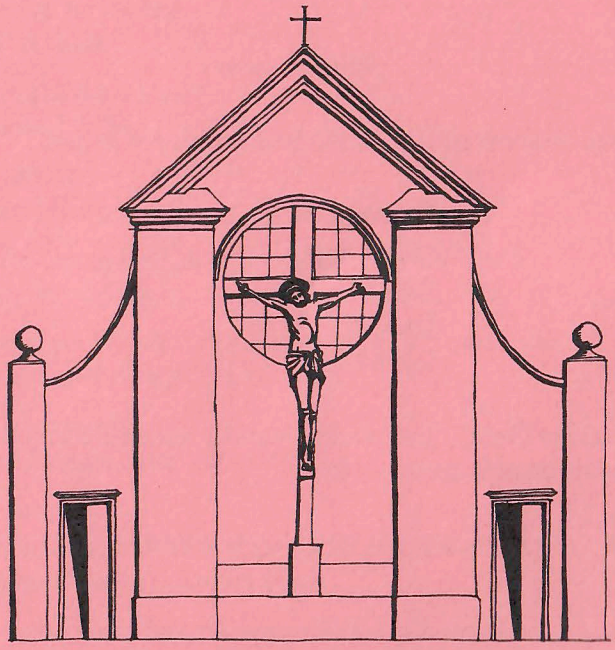
FAIRACRES CHRONICLE



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FROM THE REVEREND MOTHER

DEAR FRIENDS,

In November many Christians pray particularly for the repose of the souls of those who have died. We pray for our friends on earth, and we can ask God's mercy also for those who have died. Some Christians maintain that those who have died are so close to God that they have no need of our prayers. In SLG we observe All Souls' Day at the beginning of the month, and the intercessions at that Requiem include a long list of those who have died since the last Commemoration of All Souls. Some are the names of people known to individual Sisters, some are those for whom we have been asked to pray, and some have been gleaned from the news. It gives a snapshot of the past year and recalls both individuals and also those who have lost their lives in natural disasters and warfare. In the Chapter on Intercession in our Rule we have the following:

> The Sisters are committed to pray for the dead and dying, remembering the countless number of those who have passed from this life spiritually uncared for and who are in special need of prayer.

It was not long after the Community was founded in 1906 that the carnage of the Great War started. Sadly, the slaughter continues, and therefore also the need for prayer—both for its victims and for peace. Two Priests Associate, John Armson ('Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem') and Raymond Pelly ('Pilgrim to Unholy Places'), reflect in their articles on visiting places scarred by the horrors of warfare. This edition includes also obituaries of three longstanding Community friends: Alan Harrison, Kennedy Thom and Pat Trend. Oblate Sister Kathleen Madeleine of the Atonement, the first of our Oblate Sisters to be ordained, died on 7 November. She and her late husband did much to help disabled children, and throughout her long life she maintained her very dry sense of humour. Three other Oblate Sisters were able to attend her funeral in Bridgnorth.

The Community also has a Requiem for our departed Sisters in November. It is an awesome duty and privilege to pray for those

who have gone before us. And we pray not only for their repose, but also give thanks for their lives and for what they continue, in a mysterious way, to contribute to our life. Charles Wesley puts it very succinctly:

> Let saints on earth in concert sing
> With those whose work is done.

Also during November, some of our Oblate Sisters gathered at Begbroke Priory, a few miles north of Oxford, for a week of retreat. Sister Christine, the Oblate Guardian, gave three addresses and it was a blessed and fruitful time. During it, Oblate Sister Susan Mary renewed her promises; Oblate Sister Debbie renewed her promises earlier in the year, on the Feast of The Transfiguration.

Oblate Sister Mary has contributed to this edition a translation of a talk which she gave at Lisieux, and we are grateful that Sr Teresa Benedicta of the Berlin Carmel has given permission for us to include one of her poems. Moving geographically further eastwards, it is good to have Janice Broun's article, 'SLG Press behind the "Iron Curtain"'. In James Ashdown's article we are in the East End of London for a contemporary 'desert' word.

The Apostle Paul is thought to have been born two thousand years ago and Pope Benedict has declared this to be a Pauline Year. For those with internet access, more details can be found on the Vatican website. The sermon preached by Pope Benedict at the inauguration of this year forms part of this edition.

For many people in the 'developed' world, these last few months have included concerns about employment and financial matters. For both ecological and financial reasons, we are trying to use less energy. One of the bungalows, St Columba, has just been refurbished, and while we hope all will welcome the changes, some of the alterations are designed to help those with mobility difficulties. Sadly, four of the men who worked on this project have, on its completion, been made redundant. There have been some reports in the media of churches experiencing larger congregations since the onset of 'the credit crunch'. Whether this reflects a genuine turning to God, or desperate people trying God as a last resort, time will tell. But God can, and does, speak in any and all circumstances.

At the end of November we enter the season of Advent. In this hemisphere, Christmas falls at the physically darkest part of the year, and the first season of the Church's new year begins when the skies are often overcast. Its message of great hope can be in stark contrast to the grey skies. Lectionaries take us to the stirring prophesies of Isaiah, and the season has its own memorable hymns. For us in community, Advent has a very distinctive Office which comes to a climax with the 'Great O' antiphons that accompany the *Magnificat* on the days preceding Christmas Eve. Even in community, we can become over-busy in Advent, and these antiphons can be a timely reminder to refocus. The hymn 'O Come, O come, Emmanuel!' is a version of these ancient antiphons, which go back at least to the eighth century, and pondering it can be a fruitful preparation for the celebration of the birth of Christ—Emmanuel.

We wish all our readers a blessed and happy Christmas and New Year.

With all good wishes,

SISTER MARGARET THERESA SLG

BOOKING RETREATS

Contacting the Guest Sister

- If possible, use email, which is easiest for the Guest Sister;
  or
- telephone, using the Guest Sister's dedicated number;
  or
- write.

and when making initial enquiries, include a choice of dates if you are able to do so.

See the back cover for email address and new telephone number. Sometimes it does take longer than usual to respond to enquiries, especially if we are in retreat or if the Guest Sister is away, but we will attend to your request as soon as we are able.

THE MEANING IS IN THE WAITING:

A THOUGHT FOR ADVENT

PAULA GOODER

MANY ADVENT WREATHS have a fifth and final white candle, which is lit on Christmas Day and symbolizes Jesus Christ, the one for whom Abraham and Sarah, the prophets, John the Baptist, Mary and indeed we ourselves have been waiting for so long.

It is in Jesus Christ that we discover a perfect fulfilment of everything for which we have waited—as well as for those things for which we have not waited. Jesus brings both completion and surprise to our waiting, and points us forward to a life-long waiting that can only find fulfilment in the end of all things.

Perhaps most surprising of all, however, is the discovery that the one for whom we wait has been present all along; silently waiting with us in joy as well as in sorrow, in delight as well as in agony, drawing us further into the glorious paradox of God, who summons us to wait for that which has already happened and to remember that which is still to come.

It is this paradox that, as the completion of our waiting draws near, may cause us to pray with R. S. Thomas:

> Prompt me, God;
> But not yet. When I speak,
> Though it be you who speak
> Through me, something is lost.
> The meaning is in the waiting.

Taken from the Archbishop of York's Advent Book*:*
The Meaning is in the Waiting: The Spirit of Advent, Paula Gooder, Canterbury Press, 2008 (see p. 107).

WHO IS PAUL? WHAT DOES HE SAY TO ME?

HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

From a homily given at the Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls, Rome, at First Vespers of the Feast of Ss Peter and Paul 2008 for the opening of the 'Pauline Year'.

LET US not ask ourselves only: who was Paul? Let us ask ourselves above all: who is Paul? What does he say to me? At this moment, at the beginning of the 'Pauline Year' that we are inaugurating, I would like to choose from the rich testimony of the New Testament, three texts in which his inner features, his specific character, appear.

In the Letter to the Galatians, St Paul gives a very personal profession of faith in which he opens his heart to readers of all times and reveals what was the most intimate drive of his life.

> I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2: 20)

All Paul's actions begin from this centre. His faith is the experience of being loved by Jesus Christ in a very personal way. It is awareness of the fact that Christ did not face death for something anonymous but rather for love of him—of Paul—and that, as the Risen One, he still loves him; in other words, Christ gave himself for him. Paul's faith is being struck by the love of Jesus Christ, a love that overwhelms him to his depths and transforms him. His faith is not a theory, an opinion about God and the world. His faith is the impact of God's love in his heart. Thus, this same faith was love for Jesus Christ.

Paul is presented by many as a pugnacious man who was well able to wield the sword of his words. Indeed, there was no lack of disputes on his journey as an Apostle. He did not seek a superficial harmony. In the First of his Letters, addressed to the Thessalonians, he himself says: 'We had courage ... to proclaim to you the Gospel of God in the face of great opposition ... In fact, we never spoke words of adulation, as you know' (I Thes. 2: 2, 5). The truth was too great for him to be willing to sacrifice it with a view to external success. For him, the truth that he experienced in his encounter with the Risen One was well worth the fight, persecution and suffering.

But what most deeply motivated him was being loved by Jesus Christ and the desire to communicate this love to others. Paul was a man capable of loving, and all of his actions and suffering can only be explained on the basis of this core sentiment. It is only on this basis that we can understand the concepts on which his proclamation was founded.

Let us take another key word of his: freedom. The experience of being loved to the very end by Christ had opened his eyes to the truth and to the way of human existence. It was an experience that embraced everything. Paul was free as a man loved by God, who, by virtue of God, was able to love together with him. This love then became the 'law' of his life, and in this very way, the freedom of his life. He speaks and acts motivated by the responsibility of love. Here freedom and responsibility are indivisibly united. Since Paul lives in the responsibility of love, he is free; since he is one who loves, he lives his life totally in the responsibility of this love and does not take freedom as a pretext to act arbitrarily and egoistically. In the same spirit Augustine formulated the phrase that later became famous: *Dilige et quod vis fac* (*Tract. in I Jo.* 7, 7-8)—love and do what you please. The one who loves Christ as Paul loved him can truly do as he pleases because his love is united to Christ's will and thus with God's will; because his will is anchored to the truth and because his will is no longer merely his own, arbitrary to the autonomous self, but is integrated into God's freedom from which he receives the path to take.

In the search for the inner features of St Paul, I would like, secondly, to recall the words that the Risen Christ addressed to him on the road to Damascus. First the Lord asked him: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' To the question: 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul is given the answer: 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting' (Acts 9: 4 f.). In persecuting the Church, Paul was persecuting Jesus himself. 'You persecute me.' Jesus identifies with the Church in a single subject.

This exclamation of the Risen One, which transformed Saul's life, in summary already contains the entire doctrine on the Church as the Body of Christ. Christ did not withdraw himself into Heaven, leaving ranks of followers to carry out 'his cause' on earth. The

Church is not an association that desires to promote a specific cause. In her there is no question of a cause. In her it is a matter of the person of Jesus Christ, who, also as the Risen One, remained 'flesh'. He has 'flesh and bones' (Luke 24: 39), the Risen One says, in Luke's Gospel, to the disciples who thought he was a ghost. He has a Body. He is personally present in his Church, 'Head and Body' form one being, Augustine would come to say. 'Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?', Paul wrote to the Corinthians (I Cor. 6: 15). And he added: just as, according to the book of Genesis, man and woman become one flesh, thus Christ and his followers become one spirit, that is, one in the new world of the Resurrection (cf. I Cor. 6: 16 ff.).

In all of this the Eucharistic mystery appears, in which Christ continually gives his Body and makes of us his Body: 'The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread' (I Cor. 10: 16 f.). With these words, at this moment, not only Paul addresses us but also the Lord himself: how could you pierce my body? Before the Face of Christ, these words become at the same time an urgent plea: Bring us together from all our divisions. Grant that this may once again become reality today: there is one bread, therefore we, although we are many, are one body. For Paul, the words about the Church as the body of Christ are not just any comparison. They go far beyond a comparison. 'Why do you persecute me?' Christ ceaselessly draws us into his body, building his Body from the Eucharistic centre that for Paul is the centre of Christian existence by virtue of which everyone, as also every individual, can experience in a totally personal way: he has loved me and given himself for me.

I would like to conclude with words St Paul spoke near the end of his life. It is an exhortation to Timothy from prison while he was facing death, 'with the strength that comes from God bear your share of hardship which the Gospel entails', the Apostle said to his disciple (II Tim. 1: 8). These words, which mark the end of the Apostle's life as a testament, refer back to the beginning of his mission. When, after his encounter with the Risen One, while Paul lay blind in his dwelling at Damascus, Ananias was charged to visit

the feared persecutor and to lay his hands upon him so that he might regain his sight. Ananias' objection that this Saul was a dangerous persecutor of Christians was met with the response: this man must carry my name before the Gentiles and kings: 'I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name' (Acts 9: 15 f.).

The task of proclamation and the call to suffer for Christ's sake are inseparable. The call to become the teacher of the Gentiles is, at the same time and intrinsically, a call to suffering in communion with Christ who redeemed us through his Passion. In a world in which falsehood is powerful, the truth is paid for with suffering. The one who desires to avoid suffering, to keep it at bay, keeps life itself and its greatness at bay; he cannot be a servant of truth and thus a servant of faith. There is no love without suffering—without the suffering of renouncing oneself, of the transformation and purification of self for true freedom. Where there is nothing worth suffering for, even life loses its value.

The Eucharist—the centre of our Christian being—is founded on Jesus's sacrifice for us; it is born from the suffering of love which culminated in the Cross. We live by this love that gives itself. It gives us the courage and strength to suffer with Christ and for him in this world, knowing that in this very way our life becomes great and mature and true. In the light of all St Paul's Letters, we see how the prophecy made to Ananias at the time of Paul's call came true in the process of teaching the Gentiles: 'I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name'. His suffering made him credible as a teacher of truth who did not seek his own advantage, his own glory or his personal satisfaction, but applied himself for the sake of the One who loved us and has given himself for us all.

Let us now thank the Lord for having called Paul, making him the light to the Gentiles and the teacher of us all, and let us pray to him: 'Give us even today witnesses of the Resurrection, struck by the impact of your love and able to bring the light of the Gospel in our time. St Paul, pray for us! Amen.'

SLG PRESS BEHIND THE 'IRON CURTAIN'
LETTER FROM A READER

Dear Editor,

Did you realize that some of your publications were circulating in the Czechoslovak 'underground'? While researching my book *Conscience and Captivity: Religion in Eastern Europe*, I was sent to Prague in midwinter 1985 by my publishers, the Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington. Through Keston College (as it then was), with which I have had contact since the early 1970s, I was given contacts, as well as a pack of books—not all of them strictly religious! As I stayed in a tourist hotel and it was my first visit, I was not searched. On the evening after my arrival, I slithered through icy streets to a house in Ceskomalinska Street to visit Jiri and Marie Kaplan, key figures in the unofficial underground church. I was aware that Jiri Kaplan had spent some months in prison, but had been released. I also took several SLG booklets. At that time, each denomination was limited to five publications annually, which was particularly hard on the majority Catholic Church. The 'official' Church news, *Katolické Novini*, was produced by a compromised organisation, 'Pacem in Terris', and censored—even some of Cardinal Tomaseck's articles were rejected.

When I reached the Kaplans' rambling house, which they had occupied to accommodate their ten children, I was first told to remove my shoes at the door and change into the flat sandals provided. There was to be a Taizé prayer meeting: it was a good evening on which to come. As I came from Keston, and would be taking *samizdat*[1] back to them, I was welcome. Marie Kaplan had visited Keston and spoke English well. When I produced the SLG publications, she was particularly interested. Material on prayer and the spiritual life were just what the more committed Church members who got involved in 'underground' activities needed. All the *samizdat* was typed and duplicated, so your publications were just the right length! Furthermore, as you no doubt were aware,

[1] *Samizdat* meant the clandestine copying and distribution of government-suppressed literature or other media in countries behind the 'Iron Curtain'.

religious orders had long been proscribed, apart from the sisters involved in caring for the acutely mentally and physically handicapped, and the older nuns locked away in a few 'concentration' convents and completely isolated from the outside world. Marie was well up in ecumenical contacts and interested in the Anglican Communion. Keston's director, Michael Bourdeaux, and many of its staff were Anglicans.

In return, Marie handed me the latest monthly, *Informace o Církvi* (or *Church Information*), a few densely-typed sheets of very thin paper, and advised me to 'stick it down your slacks', in case the police arrived during the Taizé meeting. The Keston Institute summarised each issue for the invaluable *Keston News Service*. The Taizé worship, with twenty or thirty mainly young folk in the spacious hall, was one of the most moving of my life.

I took more publications during subsequent visits, handing them to a new young friend. At that time I was unaware that her doctor father—later to be another dear friend—was a leader of unofficial seminars for young people searching for faith. Her brother was a clandestine Salesian! I also handed over a copy of *The Orthodox Way* by Bishop Kallistos Ware, which I was later told was ideal for the seminars, 'a wonderful book'.

I stayed with Marie and Jiri Kaplan the last time I was in Prague, in 2000. Marie was busy working with families with problems—drug addicts and inveterate gamblers included. She was a wonderful woman. Sadly, she departed this life in 2006, but not until after she had met the (murdered) Brother Roger of Taizé in a remarkable visionary dream which was a real foretaste of heaven.

May God bless you all.

JANICE BROUN

THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM (Ps. 122: 6)

JOHN ARMSON

An address given in August 2008 in Hereford Cathedral.

I VISITED an orphanage recently. To be amongst a hundred children of primary school age who were without family was very moving: so many little faces, some eager, some shy, but all wanting to show me round their home.

I was devastated to learn that the home has now been shut, its stores looted, its catering equipment trashed, and a women's workshop, which supported both the orphanage and the women, wrecked and plundered. I don't know what has happened to the children.

Who would do such a thing? Sadly, the answer is—the Israeli army. Why? Well, the orphanages are—were—in Hebron, a biblical city if ever there was one. Thousands of years ago, Abraham settled nearby and is buried there.[2] King David ruled from there before he moved to Jerusalem.[3] The city looms large in the Jewish consciousness.

But when the State of Israel was created in 1948, Hebron remained in Arab Palestine. However, a handful of Jews moved there—understandably but, given the circumstances, also provocatively. Today it takes 1500 soldiers to guard them and, in effect, the Israeli army rules a foreign city.

But why do such a thing *to an orphanage*? Because Hamas, one of the Palestinian political parties, plays a part in running the orphanage, and Hamas fires rockets into Jewish towns.[4]

The history and politics of the Middle East are very complicated, and I'm not competent to take sides here, even if this

[2] Genesis 13: 18.

[3] I Kings 2: 10.

[4] Towns on the Palestinian side of the border agreed back in 1948, which Jewish immigrants have built since they were allowed to return to the Holy Land for the first time since their banishment under Byzantine rule thirteen hundred years ago.

were the appropriate place to do so. So this is not about history and politics, but a response to an observation that on both sides the hawks of confrontation, rather than the doves of consideration, seem to calling the shots—quite literally. Indeed I got the impression that, on both sides, the 'tit-for-tat' tactics, where 'tit' hopes to provoke bigger 'tat', have been adopted. That way, things can only spiral upwards and so justify massive retaliation towards a 'final solution', a Nazi phrase which also has resonance in this context.

So maybe shutting an orphanage down is one step in the process—to demoralise, yet also to provoke indignation precisely because of its inhumanity. Of course, starting the home could be seen in the same light.

I was staying in Jerusalem, at an excellent conference on reconciliation, sponsored by Lord Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury. I heard voices of moderation and peace while there. And there *are* voices of conciliatory reason to be heard.[5] Sari Nusseibeh is one of these voices. He is a Palestinian Arab whose distinguished family has lived in Jerusalem for thirteen centuries, but whose lands have now been confiscated. He has reason to be bitter, but is not. An Arab Archbishop provides another voice.[6] He, too, though deeply wronged, speaks peaceably.

What voices like these are saying is, 'Jerusalem belongs to both Jew and Arab.' Thousands of years ago, long before Christ, Jews built the city—'the joy of the whole earth', as the psalmist says. But they were banished from it under Byzantine rule thirteen centuries ago. Then, after the Second World War, as the unspeakable horror of the Nazi death camps became clear, the new State of Israel was created. Jews returned 'home'. But for centuries, others had settled there, Palestinian Arabs.

So the city had to be shared. How to do it? The 1948 division of the city has long since been pushed aside. The only wall now is the infamous security fence which surrounds the whole city, and which cuts deeply and painfully into previously agreed Palestinian lands.

[5] *Once Upon a Country: a Palestinian life***,** Sari Nusseibeh, Halban, 2007, £20.
[6] *Blood Brothers,* Elias Chacour, Chosen Books, 2003, $12.99.

But let's go back to the orphanage and the now homeless children. I met some other people there. They were members of the Christian Peacemakers Team, retired men and women, from the UK and the USA, who spend periods of time living in the hot spots. Some were sleeping in the orphanage, in case trouble brewed up there—as it did. They are armed, but not with guns: with video cameras. And if trouble looks like breaking out, they very obviously get out their cameras. And if trouble flares up, everyone there knows that within an hour or two it will be on the world-wide web for all the world to see.

It takes a degree of maturity, as Kipling's 'If' tells us, 'to keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you'. But this is non-violent ministry of which I think any Christian might approve. And these people triggered in me the conviction which I share with you now.

I said Jerusalem has to be shared: so I believe, not least because within her are two holy sites of immense historical and cultural, and so political, significance to both Jew and Arab. For the Jews, the 'wailing wall', the western wall of Solomon's temple, is all that remains of that ancient and profound site of the Jewish faith. The rest was destroyed by the Romans just after the time of Christ. That wall is their 'holy of holies'. Day and night prayer is offered there. I found it deeply moving to add my prayers to the millions of others. It is certainly a place where, as T. S. Eliot wrote of Little Gidding, 'prayer has been valid'.

But immediately above it, on the plateau where Solomon's Temple once stood, now stands the Dome of the Rock, built by Muslims. The rock is the earth's navel, the spot on which Abraham bound Isaac, and from which the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven. This too is a place of 'valid' prayer—Moslem prayer. The Al Aqsa mosque is there, a Muslim 'cathedral'.

So, within feet of each other, two 'holy of holies', for Jew and Arab. An irreconcilable tension? Yes—but for the message of a third 'holy of holies'.

Deep within the old city (though once outside it, before the city grew to enclose it) there is another place hidden behind the stalls of the Arab *souk*. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre houses the tomb

from which Christ rose, and only yards away is Golgotha, the site of the Cross. So, it houses the symbol—and the reality—of non-retaliation; of absorbing, not reflecting, the hatred of the enemy; of trusting the heavenly powers to use that to heal and solve. And I want to tell Jew and Arab, and indeed divided Christendom, that. But, as Jesus himself lamented to the people of Jerusalem,

> Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!
> But now they are hid from your eyes.[7]

I wish I had the opportunity, wisdom and grace to convey that truth. Until those 'things that make for peace', until that truth, is grasped, the way, the political way, not of tit-for-tat, but of *non*-retaliation, Jerusalem will be divided and torn. Tit-for-tat means the innocent, not the guilty, suffer. Children become homeless orphans indeed. As Jesus wept,

> Ah, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets. How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing.[8]

So, as *you* hear the news and see the television pictures of fighting and rockets and bulldozers crushing houses, and orphanages and hospitals being closed or damaged, and children being shot, and innocent people caught up in suicide bombings, and blockades denying hospitals medicines and people food, think how God in Christ must still weep over Jerusalem. And weep with him. Let that *be* your prayer, if you have no words, and do not know how to frame a petition for this wounded and wounding country; and for the city which houses the shrines of our various faiths.

But if you have followed me so far, there is a consequence. For to preach and to believe is to be committed to act on what we preach and believe. As well as speaking of peace, we should strive to *be* that peace, show it is possible. Our little lives can be places of peace—or not; places of reconciliation—or not. Great though the longing is in my heart for the peace of Jerusalem, of Israel and of Palestine, my sphere of influence—like yours—is tiny. But *because* my longing for Jerusalem is great, it is all the more crucial that I,

[7] Luke 19: 42.
[8] Luke 13: 34.

like you, try to *be* a place of shalom, salaam—peace—in our little lives.

> Behold how good it is [said the psalmist]
> when people live together in unity
> for there the Lord has promised his blessing:
> life for evermore.[9]

PILGRIM TO UNHOLY PLACES

RAYMOND PELLY

An address given in New Zealand at Evensong on Trinity Sunday, 18 May 2008, at Wellington Cathedral.

PILGRIMAGE is an age-old practice. People have gone on pilgrimages all through history. Today a steady stream of Christians visit Compostella in Spain, just as millions of Muslims make their way to Mecca, or Hindu holy men travel barefoot to the freezing headwaters of the Ganges in the Himalayas. The aim is to divest ourselves of all that stands between us and God and, at the same time, to absorb some of the holiness of a place where a saint or holy man (or woman) has lived a life of prayer and created a spiritual oasis. Now, in our sesquicentennial year, we in the Diocese of Wellington are seeking to do something similar.

It was perhaps in the 1920s and 30s that things started to change. People began to make what can only be called pilgrimages to First World War battle sites: the Somme, Passchendael, Ypres, the Messines Ridge, Verdun—and, of course, Gallipoli. Hardly 'holy places', because there hundreds of thousands of men, mostly young men, were slaughtered. People made these journeys of pilgrimage partly to remember the fallen, but also because they

[9] Ps. 133.

realized that these events were somehow central to what was unfolding in the twentieth century. These places also deeply contradicted what they had been brought up to believe about God. How could God allow such things?

With the coming of the Second World War, things got a whole lot worse. A racially-motivated, screaming homicidal maniac called Adolf Hitler gained control of the most powerful nation in Europe, Germany, with the express purpose of eliminating the entire Jewish people, the 'people of God'. Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibor, Belzec are monuments to how far he got down that track—which is where I come in with my notion of being a pilgrim to *unholy* places. In 1995 I visited Auschwitz and in subsequent years the above-named places and many others. I plan to visit more in October and November of this year.

I

So what does it mean to be a 'pilgrim to unholy places'? Let me briefly sketch the three nodal points around which this practice of pilgrimage revolves.

Firstly, the pilgrim needs to be *open-hearted, receptive or vulnerable*. This is about gaining a sense of reality. When you stand on the site of a death camp where hundreds of thousands of innocent people were murdered, what first strikes you is the *silence*. No human voice is audible. Just a big absence—absence of the hubbub of normal human life: people shouting, talking, praying, singing, and going about their daily business; loving and hating; being born and dying; and all the rest. Just a big silence, an absence. We can read about this in books, but to be there is qualitatively different. It's like the moment in described in Genesis, after Cain's murder of his brother Abel, when God says, 'Listen, your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground'. So there is a listening and a grieving to be done. The pilgrim is faced with that task. It is, of course, quite overwhelming.

Secondly, to be a pilgrim to unholy places is in some way to recapitulate the way of Christ. When the poet Dante visited the Inferno of his imagination, he took with him (as his companion and

guide) the great poet of antiquity, Virgil. In something of the same way, the pilgrim is companioned to unholy places by the Christ of Golgotha. For who else has the knowledge and wisdom to be a true friend and brother in such a place? Let me put it this way. In visiting unholy places in an open-hearted, vulnerable way, the pilgrim is inevitably emptied (or divested) of most of what he or she takes for granted: things like language, culture, world-view, wealth, property, privilege, work, education—all the things that make us who we are. None of this is adequate to deal with what the pilgrim experiences, rather as no words are adequate to describe God. As this emptying process makes its devastating way through our being, we begin to discover the authentic, self-emptying Christ of the New Testament. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul addresses his readers with these words:

> Let the same mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (2: 5-8)

If the pilgrim is divested reluctantly (and, inevitably, incompletely) of power and privilege, the self-emptying, self-limiting Christ was divested voluntarily, pro-actively and completely. We could put it like this: not only did Christ himself become a victim amongst all the other victims—including, of course, his fellow Jews in the Holocaust—he also acted out (or modelled) what it means, and what it costs, to be the caring, healing, redeeming presence of God amidst all that horror.

Which brings me to the third point: the aim of the kind of pilgrimages I am describing is not masochism or self-punishment. Sometimes along the way you can break off, have a good meal and a glass of beer! No; what it is all about has been well expressed by the German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas. He speaks of reaching ‘a deeper level of solidarity with [all] those bearing … human form’. In plain English, pilgrimage gives us a whole new depth of empathy with people who suffer; with those who are ‘out’ rather than ‘in’, who are discarded onto some social junk heap as

dysfunctional or useless. In the book I'm working on, *Pilgrim to Unholy Places*, I have put it like this:

> At this juncture in history we have to learn to hear the cries of the victims before we can hear the voice of God, see God's face. Here the … self-emptying Christ as redeemer-victim has a double function: to heal our deafness (restore our sight, loose our tongues) so that we get to hear what there is to hear, see what there is to see; and, at the same time, become aware of God's holy presence even (or especially) in unholy places.

There is, in other words, a tie-up (or link) between the *form* (the shape, the figure) of the self-emptying Christ, the *form* of the victims and what they suffered, and the *form* of the shambling, self-limiting figure of the pilgrim. This is the Christ who enables the pilgrim to see and to hear; who stands in solidarity with the victims; and, I dare to say, brings redemption as one victim-in-process-of-liberation to another.

II

None of this, of course, comes easily; and to attempt it on one's own is to invite disaster. With this in mind, we come to the final part of what it means to be a pilgrim to unholy places. Here the rule is: however much time you spend *on your feet* walking (or '*pilgrimming'*) over unholy places, you must spend an equal or greater amount of time *on your knees.* Or, to put it another way, for the pilgrim, prayer is a matter of sheer survival. You are not, in other words, a tourist, but a pilgrim.

But there is more to it than that. The greatest gift of my pilgrimages has been to discover that often, somewhere in the vicinity of the unholy places, there is a Carmelite community. These are groups of praying women (and, sometimes, men), contemplatives, who are the spiritual descendants of Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross or, in modern times, Edith Stein—a Jewish woman who became a Carmelite Sister under the name of Sister Theresia Benedicta of the Cross and who, with her sister Rosa, was herself a victim of Auschwitz. To my astonishment and delight, I found that these communities have a theology very similar to my own—with the big

difference that, whereas I am just an occasional visitor to unholy places, they are there permanently. These convents are not at all gloomy places (as you might imagine). Rather they are places of light and peace, with guesthouses where you can meet all sorts of interesting people. But they are above all places of *prayer.* Each day has big stretches of silence where you can begin to process what is happening to you, not running away from it or repressing it. Central and fundamental, however, is the daily Mass (or Eucharist). Here, ever and again, we unite ourselves to the self-emptying, ever-living Christ in his solidarity with all people (especially the victims), and in his great and continuing self-offering of himself and all life to our passionately-loving God. There is, in my experience, no more wonderfully enlivening place to be in all creation—one, moreover, that is deeply, and often painfully, in touch with reality, the world we now actually inhabit.

That is why I look forward to my next pilgrimage in October and November with trepidation, but also with great joy and in eager anticipation.

A version of this address was published in a recent edition of the New Zealand magazine 'Anglican Taonga'*, and this version is published with the permission of the magazine.*

‘URBAN FATHERS’

JAMES ASHDOWN

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN if the great giants of early monasticism, such as St Anthony, Arsenius and Moses the Black, happened to be living amongst us now? What if they turned their back on the Egyptian wilderness and came to live in a very different kind of desert—the urban wilderness of inner London? These might seem like strange questions, but they have intrigued me for many years, ever since reading Thomas Merton’s *Wisdom of the Desert,* whilst living in a tower block in south London. For although the rocks and sands of the Egyptian desert are a very different world from the concrete and traffic of modern London, there has always seemed to me a curious connection between the two places.

I sat with this connection for many years until I had the opportunity to take a long retreat in Wales. In preparation for this I read William Harmless’s account of the early desert fathers, *Desert Christians*, and something began to stir in me. Then during the retreat I slowly read Stelios Ramfos’ *Like a Pelican in the Wilderness,* and gradually these strange old men of the desert began to come into clearer focus. They were no longer so strange, their way of life no longer bizarre and humorous, but rather they appeared to achieve a unique engagement with what it means to be human. It seemed to me that rather than rejecting human life for some kind of abstract, spiritualised existence they were, in fact, exploring the limits of what it means to be human—no longer content with a mediocre human life enslaved to mean appetites and the winds of fate, they managed to grasp the mystery of life with both hands and live it to the full. My question then began to come into clearer focus—if these old men were living now, here in the midst of the inner London communities I have inhabited for twenty years, how would they live, what would they do and what would be the focus of their attention?

I found myself returning to Thomas Merton’s translations of the sayings and wondering if I could rework them into a contemporary idiom. From reading William Harmless it was clear to me that there

was something about the desert fathers and their ascetic life which their contemporaries found very attractive. This made me think about what would make 'urban fathers' attractive to our generation. It struck me that a group of people who took seriously the ecological crisis, and lived in a way which made peace with the earth rather than exploited it, could have a similar impact in our modern age. Yet, as with the original desert fathers, this asceticism would not be a remote and inhuman discipline but it would always live under the greater law of love. This gave me the key to start to reinterpret the desert fathers for the contemporary city.

Quickly, other ideas began to fall into place. The body was obviously central to the spirituality of the desert fathers. It struck me that their true path was not about rejecting the body in favour of the 'spirit', but rather developing an embodied spirituality which made the body part of the spiritual quest. This resonated strongly with my own interests as a person with a disabling chronic illness, and with the contemporary search for embodied spirituality. Also, although there were just a few desert mothers such as Syncletica, these 'urban fathers' would need to include women as well as men, with women taking a significant leading role. Similarly, talk of 'salvation' seems strange and arcane in the contemporary world, so the urban fathers (and mothers) would talk about 'happiness', even while investing it with a meaning far deeper than is normally allowed. And rather than losing themselves in the remote desert—for modern transport and technology means that few places are now genuinely remote—the modern seekers would view with suspicion the telecommunications, technology and media world which locks us into a lifestyle where the urgent overwhelms the important.

Finally, I began to think about what most fundamentally connects the desert fathers to our urban age, and wondered if it was the issue of Christendom. The desert fathers lived, in some ways, as a reaction to the first stirrings of Christendom, in which the way of Jesus began to be transformed into a state ideology. This is why the desert fathers so valued their independence and can appear at times to be proto-anarchists. Here is an immediate connection to our modern age, where Christendom is breaking down, and Christianity is no longer taken for granted as the foundation of the western state.

Maybe the ‘urban fathers’ are an exercise in imagining a post-Christendom spirituality.

Below I offer a few selections of my reworked sayings of the desert fathers.

> Holy Pandit asked Holy Tony, ‘How can I live a happy life?’ The holy man replied simply, ‘Don’t think you can always get it right. Don’t worry about a thing once it has been done. Keep your tongue under control and don’t believe that your needs are the same as your greed.’
>
> A seeker was talking to Holy Isao, who was one of the most respected holy men in East London, and he asked him, ‘Why do you seem to find it so easy to resist temptation?’ The holy man replied, ‘Since I began seeking God I have concentrated on not allowing my anger to spew out and cover other people with my vomit.’
>
> Holy Hyacinth said, ‘It is healthier to eat deep-fried Mars bars and binge drink than gobble up your friend with criticism and snide remarks.’
>
> A brother seeker who was looking to live a celibate life came early to a meeting at a church hall and stumbled on a group of young sisters having an aerobics class in leotards and lycra. He was flustered and embarrassed and clumsily fled from the hall. Later when the holy woman who was supervising the sisters met the brother she said to him, ‘If you truly had the calling for a celibate life, you would have been able to wait in the hall without embarrassment.’
>
> Holy Olu had a car. He went to Holy McKenzie to talk to him about it. ‘I have a small car and I find it useful for taking people to hospital, and other holy men borrow it to make visits and help people in various ways. But I am uncomfortable with owning it—what should I do?’ The holy man thought about it and then said to him, ‘How you use your car is good, but it is better to live the simple life and not be burdened with

possessions.' So Olu went and sold the car and gave the money to an environmental project.

Holy Priya spent fourteen years in Dagenham, praying to God every day to learn how to manage her anger.

A holy man once said, 'There are two reasons why we do not achieve what we want to achieve. Firstly, we push ourselves too hard and go beyond our limits. Secondly, we want instant results, rather than patiently continuing with the work we have begun. Many people wish to live good lives which are healthy and environmentally friendly, but most wish to achieve this without regular sustained effort.'

A parliamentary commission on faith and social cohesion decided to come and visit Holy Mohindra, and so went off to Stepney to see him, because they had heard what an important influence he was in the community. Someone warned the holy man about this, so he sneaked away to his local pub for a quiet drink, but on the way he ran into the commissioners and they asked him where Holy Mohindra's flat was. He told them, 'What do you want with him? He is an extremist and a fanatic.' The commissioners carried on and came to a community house run by some seekers inspired by Holy Mohindra. They said to the people there, 'We heard about Holy Mohindra and wanted to come and talk to him, but we just ran into someone who told us that he was an extremist and a fanatic.' The people at the community house were horrified, and wondered who could have described Holy Mohindra like this. The commissioners gave them a description of the person, and they immediately recognized him as Mohindra. 'Oh, that was Holy Mohindra that you spoke to. He did not want to speak to you; he is not interested in recognition, so he described himself as a fanatic.' Somewhat perplexed, but—perhaps—a little wiser, the commissioners returned to Westminster.

A story was told about Holy John the small. One day he announced to his wife, 'I want to totally commit my life to God.

I want to live like the angels—constantly praising God, without getting caught up in the trivia which is always getting in the way of our prayer.' So he left everything and went to live on the streets. But after a week he returned to his wife. When he pressed the intercom, his wife asked, 'Who is it?' He replied, 'It's John.' But his wife replied, 'It can't be John. He has become an angel.' John carried on pressing the intercom, but his wife did not let him in, keeping him waiting for some time. Eventually she opened the door for him and said, 'If you are a man, you are going to have to start doing trivial work again like ordinary people, but if you are an angel, why are you so keen to come back to this home of bricks and mortar?' John realized he had been a fool and said, 'Forgive me, my darling, I deceived myself and made a bad mistake.'

The Mother came on a group of seekers arguing about what kind of people were closer to God—monks and nuns, the oppressed, or environmental activists. She interrupted them and said, 'Imagine three seekers living together. One concentrates on silent prayer, another has a chronic illness but remains thankful, and the third looks after the other two quietly and without complaining. There is no difference between these three, for they are all doing the same work.'

There was a seeker who in a humble manner encouraged the other seekers when Holy Tony was visiting. But when Tony spent some time with him on his own, he challenged him over a small matter and found him very defensive. Holy Tony said to him, 'You are like a house with an elaborate security system, but you go out and leave a window wide open so that burglars can come and go freely.'

One of the holy men used to say, 'When we began this adventure of seeking a holy life in the wilderness of the city, we used to get together and talk in a way which got right inside me and nourished my whole being—it felt as if we were really getting somewhere, recreating something of heaven here on

earth. But now we get together and we just criticize everything, no longer recreating heaven but inventing our own little hell.'

A seeker visited a holy man who lived a very solitary and obscure life on an estate in Hackney and stayed with him for a while. He found living with the holy man a very beneficial experience and stayed much longer than he had expected. When he was leaving he said, 'Forgive me, my friend, I have disrupted your way of life.' But the solitary replied to him, 'My way of life is to offer you hospitality and to see you on your way in a more peaceful frame of mind.'

A seeker asked one of the holy men, 'Imagine there were two seekers: one reads widely in all spiritual traditions, only eats organic, fair trade food and perfects his meditation technique; whilst the other cares for homeless people. Which one is closer to finding God?' The holy man replied, 'Even if that one who is so scrupulous never so much as set foot in a Tesco supermarket, he would not equal the one who cares for the homeless.'

A journalist came to see Holy Simone, but she was warned about it, so she put on her pinny, borrowed a cigarette from her neighbour and began mopping down the stairwell where she lived. When the journalist came, asking where the holy woman lived, she replied, 'There aren't any holy people living here, darling, we're all sinners.' So the journalist left. Sometime later the local Member of Parliament came to visit, but a friend warned the holy woman. She went down to the off-licence and bought a large bottle of cheap cider. Sitting on her doorstep in some dirty clothes, she greeted the MP with a cheerful wave and invited her to sit down with her and drink the cider. The MP was horrified and made a quick exit, saying, 'If this is what the holy people are like, we are better off without them.'

Holy Tony and some friends had gone to the park and were sitting under a tree talking, when a journalist came along and saw them. So he came up to them and said, 'I thought you were holy men. Why are you here relaxing and enjoying yourselves?

Shouldn't you be praying or doing good deeds?' Tony looked up at the journalist and said, 'Please lend me your mobile phone.' The journalist did so, and Tony proceeded to phone a friend and have a long conversation with her. The journalist started to get uncomfortable and Tony said to him, 'Is something the matter?' So the journalist said, 'I'm worried about my mobile phone. You will run down the battery, and I need to use it.' So Tony said to her, 'It is the same with us. If we spend all our time praying and doing good works, we will become exhausted and be no use to anyone. Human beings also need time to recharge their batteries.'

One of the holy women was asked by a seeker why she lived such an austere and simple life, and she replied, 'It is true that we live a simple, austere life, seeking, as the environmentalists say, to "reduce our carbon footprint", and that we live a very rigorous life without indulgence. We don't do this to be trendy and impress people, but because this is the life to which Jesus has called us. Its true value will only be realized after our deaths.'

Holy Miriam said, 'The person who knows how to be alone and spends time in quiet contemplation is like an organic tomato matured under the Italian sun, but the person who is never without company and gossip is like an industrial tomato force-grown in a Dutch greenhouse .'

Two seekers came to visit a holy woman who lived a very simple life and never ate meat. But when she heard that they were coming, she immediately went out and bought a chicken and cooked a splendid roast dinner, saying, 'Simplicity and vegetarianism are great, but hospitality is better, for then you set aside your own desire and celebrate your friends.'

This is the story of Holy McKenzie and how he came to East London. 'From an early age I found myself drawn to God rather than all the things young people generally get interested in. I was therefore persuaded to become ordained and eventually

became the minister of a small suburban church. But I didn't enjoy it, so I gave up the ministry, found myself a small flat in south London and became involved with a group of people seeking God. It so happened that we worked with a group of young people and one of them, a young woman of seventeen, became pregnant and said that I was the father. Everyone became very excited. Her parents insisted that I take responsibility for the child, so I looked to get a better job in order to have more money to fulfil my responsibilities. When the day came for her to give birth, she had a very difficult labour and in the midst of it admitted that I was not the father, but that she had been sleeping with her next-door neighbour. My friends brought me the news and were very happy for me. But I disliked the attention, and now that I had no more responsibilities decided to leave that place. This is why I ended up here in East London.'

A seeker once wanted to talk to Holy Ade of Finsbury. He wrote him letters, tried to find his phone number or e-mail address (but Holy Ade didn't have a phone or computer), and eventually came to visit him and knocked on his door. But the holy man refused to answer him so, eventually, disappointed and sad, the seeker left him alone. One of Holy Ade's friends asked him why he refused to speak to him, seeing he was so disappointed and sad. The holy man replied, 'I know that one. He's only interested in words. He's trying to make a name for himself by writing a book about us.'

* * *

I find this final story disconcerting. It challenges me not to re-imagine the desert fathers by writing about them, but rather to engage in a lived interpretation which reawakens them in the day-to-day realities of twenty-first-century London. Here, indeed, is an agenda for life. I think I have only half begun.

TRACING THE ANCESTORS: A SPIRITUAL QUEST
(Part Two)

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

> *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us*.[1]

In the last edition of the *Fairacres Chronicle*, I wrote of how I became interested in tracing my ancestors and spending time with them and with my family tree, and I said that I believed this can have a positive spiritual value. At a time when there is a great interest in spirituality, but a declining interest in traditional organized church religion, I think people who are connecting with their ancestors may be *seeking*—often unconsciously—and also *finding*, a spiritual path. I wrote about the importance given to the ancestors in various cultures and religions, and of the 'three treasures' of Taoism, the qualities of compassion, simplicity and humility. I should like now to say something of how I personally discover those 'treasures', which are also traditional Christian virtues, in family tree work.

Remembrance with Compassion and Thanksgiving

Our ancestors suffered many hardships, such as war, violence, poverty, famine, sickness, pain, disease and death. Often life was a sheer battle for survival, and they went through situations and ways of life incomprehensible to most of us in our comparatively comfortable lifestyles today. They struggled in what is for us now the past, and in and through them we have our present. We can be helped to understand them if we explore something of what their lives were like, learning from the social history of their times. There are many resources open to us, for example museums which seek to

[1] Heb. 12: 1.

give an 'experience' of aspects of ordinary lives in the past, including re-creations of typical workplaces and homes. I have Protestant Gowan ancestors from Ireland who belonged to the military and at some point over the centuries had pleased the Crown and been given lands. What made some of them leave Ireland, to end up in the heavy industry of nineteenth-century Birmingham? The Irish potato famine and the mass exodus from Ireland in the years 1845-55 provide some clues to that.

Asking myself the reason for my interest in the ancestors, the immediate answer which came to me was: 'so that I can *remember* them'. Our families are God-given: 'I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.'[2] Knowing *who* they *were* (and about the family members alive today) helps us to pray for them and to honour their memory, so that they are not forgotten, but cherished. This tunes in with Chapter 18 of the Community's Rule on Intercession:

> The Sisters are committed to pray for the dead and dying, remembering the countless numbers of those who have passed from this life spiritually uncared for and who are in special need of prayer.

By tracing our ancestors and placing them within our family trees, by learning about the times in which they lived and thinking lovingly about them and about what may have been of concern to them, we bring them into the context of eternity and grow in compassion for them. In Christ all times are one. We can be present to them, alongside them, and they can be alongside us. It occurred to me at one point how lovely it would be to hire a football pitch and invite them along. It would be (at least in my imagination!) a superb family reunion—but I guess I shall have to wait for the ultimate reunion to take place in heaven:

> [God] has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.[3]

[2] Eph. 3: 14-15.
[3] Eph. 1: 9-10.

We have, though, to guard against prurient curiosity or a drive to know all about our ancestors. To quote again from the same chapter of the Rule: 'The power of the prayer will [not] depend on any intimate knowledge or detailed exposition of the subject matter.' Neither need we feel over-responsible for them, since we are not responsible for all their problems; and conversely, we cannot simply blame them—as the ones who handed on to us their genes—for what goes wrong in our own lives. It is not for us to judge them, but to love and understand them:

> For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.[4]

Of course, not all of them will have been kind or loveable people. No doubt some of them were complete rogues. At my great football pitch party, I might find some of them arguing and wanting to 'rough each other up'. I know, for instance, of one relative who was in prison, released on condition that he went to fight in a war for his country, and of another who was tried in Maybole, Ayrshire, for culpable homicide. The latter was alleged to have pushed her husband down the stairs during a quarrel which took place when both were intoxicated. In fact the charge was withdrawn, due to the lack of admissible evidence, and the jury was directed to return a verdict of 'not guilty'.

Sometimes we may come to know things about our ancestors of which they themselves were probably unaware. There was James, who died in the Poor House in Irvine, Ayrshire, in 1911. He was quite possibly the illegitimate son of my great, great grandmother Jane McMuldroch, born before she met and married her husband. She died in the English Black Country in 1905 at what was for that time the unusually advanced age of eighty-five, only six years before her son. I suspect that she would never have known what became of him, hundreds of miles away.

[4] Rom. 14: 9-10.

I have felt particularly sad when I have encountered 'my' war dead, and I have found it important to name them and grieve for them. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission performs a wonderful service via its website. There was Richard, who fought on the front line in the trenches from 1914 until the end of the First World War, dying in France of his wounds on 1 November 1918, just ten days before the Armistice. I learned that the Battle of the Somme, which I had thought of as taking place in 1916, in fact continued until 1918. It is moving to see commemorated by the Commission not only Richard's name, but also that of his widow, my grandmother Laura Leah. Had he not died, Leah would not have met and married my grandfather. I knew about Richard, of course, although I have more information now, and then there are the discoveries of the others, such as the cousin who bore my surname, Frank Grainger, and then George, and Frederick, who all fell in World War I, and Ronald and his second cousins, brothers Colin and David, who died as sailors in World War II.

Among those who died violently in accidents, there were my great uncle Gilbert, who died at thirty-four in 1918 after he was kicked by a horse, and my aunt Violet, killed by a tram at the age of six in 1920, the year before my mother was born. There were some who were orphaned as infants, such as my great, great grandmother Mary Price, and those widowed at a very young age, like great, great grandmother Mary Brooks, widowed for the first time by the age of twenty-four, and her daughter, my great aunt Florence, who lost her first husband when she was nineteen. There were those confined to mental institutions, like my great aunt Ethel. Some may have died feeling uncared for. There have been babies who were miscarried, aborted and stillborn. There could have been suicides or rapes.

What story of pain and want lies behind the statement on the 1871 census return with regard to Samuel Nock, the blacksmith: 'Unemployed, Paralysed'? And what was the story of Elizabeth Cox, left widowed with nine children, including two babies, whose nine-year old daughter Mary had to work as a nailer? I have learned of the shameful interference with regard to Eva Blake's son, illegitimate, and after her death in 1934 first placed in a children's

home, then shipped off to Prince Edward Island, Canada. He was one of the 'British Home Children', who were taken from children's homes by one or other of the children's charities at the age of fourteen or fifteen and dispatched to work in a destination country of the Commonwealth. A distant cousin of mine, Ken, attempts with commendable commitment and compassion to discover what became of the boy (but so far with no success). He wrote to me: 'I will not give up until I find out whether we have an unknown family somewhere out there.' Ken's father remembered the boy, with whom he used to play football in the street, but not his first name; the family had been told that the boy would write, yet no letter ever came.

Lifestyle and Simplicity

Many find that researching their family history can be compulsive at times, and it is very tempting, particularly for the twenty-first-century mind, to want immediate answers to what is ultimately a mystery. Yet our ancestors and their stories can teach us moderation, if we allow them to do so. Most of them lived simple lives by modern standards, and we have choices which they could never have imagined. Admittedly, there was the complex situation of my great, great, great grandfather Thomas Bright, who appears to have deserted his wife Margaret, to have gone through another ceremony of marriage in 1873 without divorce, and to have had a child by his second 'wife'! But such complications are comparatively rare. In the nineteenth century, people tended on the whole to marry someone from the same or a nearby village or city street and to stay together 'till death do us part', having seven, eight or nine children together. Life tended to follow a more constant pattern. When I visited Colmonell in Ayrshire to see where some of my ancestors came from, I saw a rather unusually-shaped hill rising out of the ground a mile or so away. I realised that they would have looked upon that same hill year in, year out, over 150 years previously, until they made the momentous decision to move to the English West Midlands.

The trades which were followed in those days were simple ones, and people were sometimes named after their occupations. I think of

my great, great, great, great grandfather, Nailer James Dunn, christened as such in 1768, and my great, great grandfather, George Wright, the wheelwright. Whole families pursued the same trade over decades, or even centuries. There were the Walsall basket makers—how did they find the raw materials in the industrial Midlands?—and there were the Birmingham jewellers and button makers, the Dudley nailers, iron moulders, chain makers and tube fitting manufacturers, the Stourbridge shoe makers, publicans and chemists. On the fringes of my tree were the Cornish tin miners, who, when the tin in Cornwall began to get scarcer, decamped from the south west of England to the north east and became coal miners in Durham.

Family Tree Ministry and Humility

We are indeed surrounded by 'a great cloud of witnesses', and they minister to us. Our forebears are an ongoing blessing to us, and we may need to become more aware of ancestral support for our happiness and well-being. We can ask ourselves who have passed on to us their gifts, who have given us life, who have struggled and have enabled us to become relatively well in health, and who have enabled us to have the opportunity of a better lifestyle and education than they had. God's blessings are transmitted down the generations, together with human faithfulness:

> But the merciful goodness of the Lord endures for ever on those who fear him, and his righteousness on children's children; on those who keep his covenant and remember his commandments and do them.[5]

At the same time as we rejoice in our ancestors' ministry to us, we have the opportunity to minister to them with our love and prayer. Inevitably many, or all, of them were wounded in life's struggles. There may be entanglements in ancestral issues which still need to be acknowledged and brought before God for healing—yet it would be arrogant, and the reverse of humility, for us to think that *we* are in a position to 'heal' *them*. We can look here to the example of Mary at the wedding feast at Cana. Without knowing the

[5] Ps. 103: 17-18.

situation in detail or coming up with a plan to remedy what she witnessed, she simply said to Jesus, 'They have no wine',[6] leaving the outcome to him.

This article would not be complete without mention of the pioneering work of the Anglican psychiatrist Robert Kenneth McAll (1910-2001) in the area of ancestral influences and 'healing the family tree'. Ken McAll's awareness of generational influences went beyond that of many Westerners. This was perhaps due to the years he spent in China, where he was born. He completed his medical training in Edinburgh in 1935, returning to what was by then Japanese-occupied China as a surgeon and the superintendent of a mission hospital, and joined a year later by his wife, Frances. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941, they and their daughter were interned by the Japanese. In the camps, where conditions were primitive and drugs in short supply, he witnessed several cases of healing through prayer. Returning to England after the war, McAll worked for some years in general practice and then took a degree in psychiatric medicine.

Dr McAll became increasingly convinced that much mental and physical illness was influenced by spiritual factors connected with ancestry, and that healing lay in prayer, intercession, confession, forgiveness, and above all in attendance at the Eucharist. He found that sometimes particular behaviours or illnesses had formed a pattern down the generations. Our connections with the dead go way back in time and are deep: 'He has made me sit in darkness like the dead of long ago.'[7] In the Old Testament, there was recognition of the reality of inherited situations:

> You shall not bow down to [idols] or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.[8]

[6] John 2: 3.
[7] Lam. 3: 6.
[8] Exod. 20: 5-6; Deut. 5: 9-10.

Sometimes, McAll found, there appeared to be disturbed souls from previous generations, or disturbed or haunted places, or insufficient mourning for family members. Any of these things could be the consequence of violent death, for instance through war, accident or suicide, or could be connected with stillbirths or voluntary or involuntary terminations, or to do with deaths where there was no proper funeral or disposal of the body or no time for the family to be present. McAll gives the example in his book *Healing the Family Tree* of a women in her early thirties who suddenly developed a fear of water. When she did some research into her family, she discovered that an uncle had died in the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. A healing service was held in which her uncle was 'committed to the Lord', after which her phobia ceased.

Dr McAll's preferred means of healing was to look at the family trees of his patients for possible connections between the problems of the living and things which had been left unresolved or unsaid in the past, things of which his patients would often not be consciously aware, and he would advise patients to ask forgiveness for or from the deceased. Just bringing stories to light would itself begin a process of healing, as secrets began to dissipate, together with their power. McAll would ask a priest to celebrate a Eucharist (or requiem Mass) for the healing of the family tree, also known as an ancestral Mass. There would be prayer for the healing of relationships and hurts, and any tormented ancestors would be commended to God.

At the time I entered this Community in 1978, McAll's work was perhaps better known than it is now, and I can recall a few occasions on which a requiem Mass was celebrated for the healing of a particular family tree. Clearly this is not a case of using some magic or fixed formula to achieve a particular result or control the living and the departed, but rather of asking the Holy Spirit to intervene, while always leaving the outcome to God. The effects of healing may include a greater sense of interconnection, continuity and compassion, even when family members were not known in this life, and there can be a harnessing of energies from the past for good in the present, to work also for the good of future generations. The sacramental element of Christ's blood can have a deep symbolism

in seeking the healing of the bloodline of a family. Ken McAll was developing his work in the 1970s at a time of recovery of the Eucharistic tradition in the Church of England. Emphases vary, and some thirty years later another sacrament—that of anointing, together with the laying on of hands—might possibly come more immediately to mind.

Ken McAll's work (and also that of those who followed him) has attracted controversy in some quarters but, rightly approached, there is nothing which is contrary to the teaching of the Church—in particular, prayer for and with the departed and the offering of the Sacrament of the Eucharist are in line with Church doctrine. It becomes a cause for concern when people adopt an attitude of power towards healing, as if healing lay in their hands or in a fixed methodology. A further difficulty—and again this stems from proceeding without humility—is when people begin to think that every sickness or demon must be the result of some ancestral influence, or of the sin of the sufferer. Jesus was asked by his disciples in respect of the man born blind, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' to which he replied, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him.'[9] At another time, Jesus again discounted the notion that certain misfortunes have come to particular people because of their sins, while others are spared because they are less guilty.[10] As in all spiritual life, the safeguards are to pray, to adhere to the spiritual teaching of the mainstream Church, to receive the sacraments with humility and to realize that God is not to be found in the exercise of power and control, but rather in the letting go of those things and in the not knowing. In the end, it is about submitting our wills and judgment to God in all the circumstances of our lives and to do with trust in God.

> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor

[9] John 9: 2-3
[10] Luke 13: 2-4

height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.[11]

'Teach us to walk the soft Earth'

I am aware that the Community of the Sisters of the Love of God also has its ancestors, whom we call our 'departed sisters'. For some years I have been looking forward to the publication, 100 years on, of the 1911 census, which should show the small group of members of the Community (which was at that time just four or five years old) together for the first time. That will, I realize, be in our second house on the Cowley Road in Oxford; it was not until the summer of 1911, after the census was taken, that we moved to our present home at Fairacres. It is no use looking at the electoral registers; our founding fathers had the vote, but at that time women did not!

We remember and name our Community 'ancestors' regularly and depend on their prayers and guidance.

All over the world the faces
of living ones are alike.
With tenderness they have
come up out of the ground.
Look upon your children
that they may face the winds
and walk the good road to the Day of Quiet.
Grandfather Great Spirit
Fill us with the Light.
Give us the strength to understand,
and the eyes to see.
Teach us to walk the soft Earth
as relatives to all that live.[12]

* * * * * *

[11] Rom. 8: 38-39.
[12] *Grandfather Great Spirit*, a Native American prayer.

SOME BOOKS AVAILABLE ON GENERATIONAL HEALING

By Dr Kenneth McAll:

Healing the Family Tree, Sheldon Press, 2nd ed. 1999, also available in German as *Familienschuld und Heilung*, Müller (Otto), Salzburg, 1991, and in Spanish as *La Curación Esotérica*, Queenship Publishing Company, 2001.

A Guide to Healing the Family Tree, Queenship Publishing Company, 1997.

Healing the Haunted, Queenship Publishing Company, 1997.

By David Furlong:

Healing Your Family Patterns, Piatkus, 1997.

The Healer Within: How to Awaken and Develop Your Healing Potential, Piatkus, 1998.

By Fr John H Hampsch CMF:

Healing Your Family Tree, Our Sunday Visitor, 1989.

The Healing Power of the Eucharist, Charis Books, 1999.

THE RESPONSE OF SOME ANGLICANS TO ST JOHN OF THE CROSS

OBLATE SISTER MARY SLG

I HAVE BEEN ASKED to speak on the Anglican view of St John of the Cross. I have not been able to discern any specifically Anglican view, but the contribution of some Anglicans to English language studies of his works has been significant. These works have been accessible to English speakers since the nineteenth century. They were translated by David Lewis (a Roman Catholic) in 1864 (Longman, Green). But in the twentieth century, a Professor at

Liverpool University (not a priest), Professor Allison Peers, was so moved by the spirituality of St John of the Cross that he devoted much of his life to publishing a series of translations and studies, of which the first, *The Spiritual Canticle*, appeared in 1934. Interestingly, these early editions received the *nihil obstat*, perhaps because the Professor intended his books as much for Roman Catholics as for Anglicans and Protestants in an ecumenical climate that was only just developing. His editions have remained classics, although since superseded by those of Kavanagh & Rodriguez which appeared in the USA in the 'sixties. His influence was immense, and through him that of St John's writings, as much with people of prayer as with students of Spanish.

In 1963, there was a thirst for prayer that often manifested itself in unexpected and even strange ways. An Anglican priest, E. W. Trueman Dicken, possibly to present a more orthodox point of view, published *The Crucible of Love*, a weighty volume of almost 550 pages. It remains a classic on the teaching of St John of the Cross and St Teresa on the ladder of prayer.

Many writers, however, have undergone the influence of St John of the Cross without ever writing specifically on his work. In 1933, Evelyn Underhill exclaimed joyfully, 'I've got a wonderful new edition of the *Sayings of St John of the Cross*—his Spanish text, with a crib opposite.'[1] She was exceptional in her time, in that she frequently conducted retreats, although she was a woman and neither a priest nor a religious, and she had a deep understanding and wide knowledge of writings on prayer. In her work as founder and director of a retreat centre, as greatly sought-after spiritual director, writer and contemplative, she was steeped in the teaching of St John. She wrote to one of her correspondents, 'I'm glad you feel you begin to like St John of the Cross—because I think he will be a lifelong friend to you. He does help with the bare, painful, self-stripping side ...', and to another, 'It is St John of the Cross's Night of the Senses you have come to.'

When she died in 1941, the works of the so-called 'Spanish Mystics' were already better known to the English-speaking world,

[1] Letters of Evelyn Underhill, 1875-1941, p.218.

and in 1942 a young musician, Edmund Rubbra, set to music the Dark Night of the Soul. His composition, which is very chromatic and mysterious, emphasises the contrast between light and darkness. He became a Roman Catholic in 1948.

More recently, in 1982, a Welshman, William Mathias, Professor of Music at Bangor University, who had gained some fame as the composer of a motet for the marriage of Prince Charles and Diana, composed his *Lux Aeterna* in memory of his mother. The work weaves together a number of elements: *Salve Regina*, *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, etc., parts of the Requiem Mass (whence its title), and some poems of St John of the Cross. It describes the mystic journey of the soul from dark night to union with God. Ten years later, he himself was dead, relatively young, after a battle with cancer, but strengthened, I am convinced, by confidence in the love of God of which this work is a moving expression. He had used the translation of a poet, Roy Campbell, whereas Rubbra had relied on that of Allison Peers, whose influence continued to be felt. Both saw in St John a path that led from the darkness, either of war (1942 was a year of deep despair, as those of us who are senior citizens well remember), or of mourning, to the light.

Dewi Phillips in his article 'From Café to Carmel'[2] trivialises St John of the Cross, reducing his writings to the level of a taste for coffee, as an example of impenetrability, a weapon in an argument with a former colleague over whether it is possible to learn to understand something that one is not capable of understanding in the first place.

Others, however, were also beginning to see St John of the Cross in a less forbidding light. At this period—that is, between 1980 and 1990—Canon Kenneth Leech, who had worked for a time among the drug addicts and homeless in London, a time during which he was a frequent visitor to the Community, published a number of articles, of which one bore the intriguing title 'Dark Night and Revolution'.[3] The subtitle is even more intriguing: 'St John of the Cross and Karl Marx'! For him, however, the Night

[2] *Philosophy*, no. 65, Ja. 1990, pp. 19-38.
[3] *Modern Churchman,* Vol.XXIX, no.4, 1987.

meant above all 'an ascecis of poverty and questioning', which are needful both in politics and religion. He emphasises the fact that St John of the Cross had long worked with the poor and victims of the plague. 'The dark night', he writes, 'is, paradoxically, the entry with [*sic*] the illuminative way. Here, light and darkness are seen as one'. This is one step further than the two musicians. Canon Leech follows directly the tradition of the 'Worker Priests', of whom Fr Joe, with his ministry among the prostitutes of the East End, and Fr Gilbert Shaw, among others, formed, as it were, an Anglo-Catholic branch. I will return to this later.

The present Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, in 1979 published under the title *The Wound of Knowledge* a brief resumé of Christian spirituality from the New Testament to St John of the Cross. In the last chapter, 'the Secret Stair', he makes an objective, detailed and balanced analysis and summary of the thinking of St John of the Cross, reminding his readers of its very practical basis:

> All of John's work is grounded in the practical—and political—struggle to create within his order a style of life authentically reflecting the poverty, the detachment and disponibility, which for him were the central characteristics of Christian 'interior' life.[4]

He is careful to note that 'It is a movement towards fulfilment, not emptiness, towards beauty and life, not annihilation' (p. 168), and he reminds us that asceticism 'is not to be confused with the morbid desire for or infliction of suffering' (p. 172). He compares it with the spirituality of Luther, 'for both of them, the test of integrity is whether a man or woman has lived in the central darkness of the paschal event' (p. 180). 'Christian peace', he affirms, 'is not negation. It is a peace in movement and exchange, the life-in-relation of God' (p. 181), and he ends: 'God is not destroyed or divided by the intolerable contradictions of human suffering' (p. 182).

To return to Gilbert Shaw: after a life spent in ministering both to the material needs of the poor and the spiritual needs of pilgrims on the path of prayer, and in particular of hermits and solitaries

[4] Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge*, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979, p.165.

living in the world, in 1964 when he was nearly eighty, at the pressing invitation of Mother Mary Clare, he became the Warden and spiritual director of the Sisters of the Love of God. He was steeped in the writings of St John of the Cross.

Of course, the Community was already rooted in Carmelite teaching. St Teresa and St John of the Cross were accepted as authorities on prayer, and the library was well stocked with their works. The house at Fairacres, after all, is called the Convent of the Incarnation. A Sister told me that the teaching of Fr Cary SSJE (Chaplain General of the Community 1914-50) had been 'deeply and deliberately imbued with the spirit of Carmel' and that the novitiate training which she had experienced included study of the *Way of Perfection*, followed by study of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*. But, she said, 'Fr Cary and Mother Mary Frances (Mother of the Community 1920-54) did not try to make Carmelites of us or to create a Carmelite community within the Anglican Church.'

Together, Fr Gilbert and Mother Mary Clare attempted to build up the spiritual life of the Community, while preserving its tradition, and to encourage those who felt they had a vocation to the solitary life. One consequence of their ministry was the foundation of Bede House and its hermitages. The oblate vocation within SLG was also developed at this time, for Fr Gilbert always maintained that it was not necessary to live in enclosure to practise contemplative prayer; he had directed too many solitaries 'in the world' to fall into that trap. Mother Mary Clare and Fr Gilbert always held that St John of the Cross is for everyone. In her pamphlet, *Carmelite Ascent*,[5] Mother Mary Clare wrote:

> Few realise that these 'nights' of which John of the Cross speaks apply not just to experience in prayer but also to the costly demands of the Christian way of life and give us a guide line by which to meet and to respond to the challenge of the way of the cross. (p.13).

and further on:

> So the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and the *Dark Night of the Soul* are not stages or theories of prayer but experiences lived through by

[5] Fairacres Publication 33, SLG Press, £1.25.

> suffering, experiences of a man purged and expanded into that all embracing love of one who has lost himself in order to gain all. The *Spiritual Canticle* and the *Living Flame of Love* give us the answer to these experiences. No longer is John of the Cross the Doctor of Nada, of nothingness, of negative asceticism but the freed lover of God. (p.14).

As for intercession, Mother Mary Clare affirms:

> Our intercessory prayer should be not so much telling God of the needs of mankind or of personal distress but it should be rather the prayer of faith as described by John of the Cross in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, with the stark determination to face the cost that this will entail. This is a far off echo of the prayer of Gethsemane and is initiated by a comprehensive and penetrating sense of the majesty and mercy of him to whom the prayer is made. (p.15).

and this is followed by a quotation from Roy Campbell's translation of the Poems, Harvill Press 1963. Finally:

> All of us at some point in our prayer or in our daily life reach a point which is a kind of death, but the great men and women of the Christian faith like John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila are living examples that it is at that point of nothingness that our emptiness will be filled with a new presence and power; and a new circuit of love will begin, remembering always that it can be but a foretaste of what is to come 'when we shall see him as he is' provided that in the here and now of daily life we are prepared to face the necessary metanoia, 'for every man that hath this hope purifyeth himself even as he is pure'. (p.16).

Among other Sisters who have written on St John of the Cross, Sister Eileen Mary (1921-99) published a book which has edified and inspired many of its readers, simplifying and popularising the teaching of St John of the Cross, namely *Door Through Darkness: St John of the Cross and mysticism in everyday life*.[6] SLG Press produced a pamphlet (now out of print) by Sister Eileen Mary on St John of the Cross called *Pilgrimage and Possession*.[7] Sister Jocelyn Mary (1915-89) gave a talk to Oblate Sisters in 1989 on 'The Sisters

[6] Sister Eileen Lyddon, New City, 1994. ISBN: 0-904287-51-3.
[7] Fairacres Publication 86, SLG Press, 1983.

of the Love of God and the Carmelite Tradition'. It ends with a quotation from the Rule of the Community, which is directly within that tradition:

> While the spirit of silence serves to separate each individual life unto God, the spirit of love must ever be binding all together in God, that in the unity of the Spirit all may seek their perfection by holy charity.

Sister Rosemary ended an account of a Symposium on St John of the Cross which she had attended in 1984 with the words, 'St John's doctrine is utterly dependent on revelation and for this reason it does not end in darkness but unending light'.[8]

The Anglican Church is very broad. St John of the Cross means very different things, none of which could be described as specifically Anglican, to its different members. For Allison Peers, it was a discovery, or rather a rediscovery, of an almost lost tradition, through his translations and editions. A first analysis came in particular through Trueman Dicken. For Evelyn Underhill, as for Gilbert Shaw, and indeed all who tried to find again, for themselves or for those they directed, the classic way of prayer, he was an essential guide. Kenneth Leech saw in him an example of total commitment, both in the practical support of the disadvantaged and in perseverance in prayer, whereas Rowan Williams underlined the importance of a detached and balanced view of his works, while emphasizing the positive side of his teaching. For the musicians I mentioned, the dramatic element, as well as the contrast between light and darkness was important, and for both, the tender love of God. We all go through our own nights in every aspect of life. A sensitive and intelligent reading of St John of the Cross can bring us to see in them light in the darkness.

This talk was first given in French at Lisieux in France, and it has been translated into English by the author.

[8] *Fairacres Chronicle* Vol. 17 no.3 Winter 1984.

You, who are there
hidden
in the desert of my life
reveal your name
speak to me
your word of love

You, who are there
hidden
in the deepest darkness of my night
reveal your name
lead me along the way
to your vast expanses

You, who are there
hidden
in the burning bush of my longing
reveal your name
let me recognize
who you are.

Ute Weiner (Sister Teresia Benedicta OCD)

Written on the occasion of her Solemn Profession in Berlin, 2005.

IN MEMORIAM

PATRICIA CHARLOTTE TREND (1919-2008)

Lady Trend, born Patricia Charlotte Shaw in 1919 and generally known to the Community simply as 'Pat Trend' or 'Pat', died peacefully on 25 September 2008, in full knowledge that she was, as she termed it, about to 'cross the river'. With her death, a chapter in the life of the Community also draws to a close. She was the daughter of our former Warden (1964-67), the Reverend Gilbert Shaw, who had a formative influence on the Community. It was 'Fr Gilbert' who, together with Mother Mary Clare, provided the inspiration for the foundation of SLG Press in 1967 (although he lived to see only the beginnings, rather than the realisation, of that vision). Pat continued to support this venture, and it was she who ensured that for many years Fairacres Publications were displayed prominently in Westminster Abbey, her 'church' for decades.

Pat was involved not only with the Church, but also in political life; she had married Burke St John Trend in 1949. Lord Trend (1914-87), a senior civil servant, became Cabinet Secretary for a decade (1963-73), serving under four prime ministers (Harold Macmillan, Alec Douglas-Home, Harold Wilson and Edward Heath), and he was created a life peer as Baron Trend of Greenwich in 1974. They had two sons and a daughter; one of their sons, Michael, followed his father into political life and was Conservative Member of Parliament for Windsor (1992-2005).

As a result of her father's connection with SLG, Pat also became a close Community friend. For many years she made regular visits to Fairacres, helping to support the Community and the legacy and on-going ministry of her father. She worked as a volunteer in SLG Press and was invited by Mother Anne to undertake the work of bringing into good order the archives pertaining to her late father. Pat spent many hours on this latter task over several years. Gradually she began to feel that her work had been achieved and that it was time for her to make her last visit to Fairacres; now in her 80s, the bus journey from London was simply

becoming too taxing. This was, however, only after she had ensured that her father's literary heritage was in the safe hands of the Community.

She retained a deep sympathy with her father's expression of the Christian faith and continued to use his *Pilgrim's Book of Prayers*.[1] The passage which she selected to be read at her brother Bill's funeral some years previously was also read at her own funeral, (using the original version):

O Jesus,
blessed Jesus,
hear me,
nor ever let me be separated from thee.
Thy mercy is so plenteous;
pardon my guilt.
Thy love is so compelling;
draw me to thy feet.
Thy stripes which are for my healing
bid me come closer.
Thy Flesh broken for me,
thy Blood freely offered,
are my pledge and my hope.
Saviour most patient, strong, and kind,
mercy of God so near to me,
mercy that would warp me round
and shield me,
and take me,
and bind me
in newness of life,
draw me, unite me to thyself
that I may come to fullest love,
and live and love with thee.

(p.67).

Pat undertook a further valiant work for the Community. In the years before online ordering of certificates of births, marriages and deaths became possible, she made many trips to what was at the time the Family Records Office in Islington (now relocated to the Public Records Office at Kew), looking up the records of our

[1] *A Pilgrim's Book of Prayers* is available from SLG Press in a modernised form, £5.75.

'departed sisters' and obtaining a full set of death certificates for our archives. She frequently arrived for her work on her father's archive bearing also the generous gift of a handful of certificates which she had painstakingly searched out and ordered.

Lady Trend was able to make one last visit to Fairacres for the Centenary celebrations in 2006. Her life beyond our immediate sphere was equally rich, and she was involved in many charitable works. She continued, for instance, her interest in Lincoln College, Oxford, where her husband had been Rector (1973-83), and she was a Vice-President of the charity the Friends of the Elderly. Her funeral took place on 9 October at Westminster Abbey and her ashes are to be interred with her husband in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey.

During the course of her life, she mixed with many of 'the great and the good', to us she was chiefly 'Fr Gilbert's daughter' and loyal Community friend; a remarkable lady.

ALAN GEORGE HARRISON (1920-2008)

Another Community friend and supporter, the Reverend Alan George Harrison (known to many simply as 'Fr Alan'), died recently. He died peacefully in Woolwich Hospital on the morning of 6 October 2008 at the age of eighty-eight as the result of cancer, having been admitted the day before. Although the progress of the illness had been relatively slow, the end was quite sudden.

Fr Alan had had a rich and varied ministry, and a community such as SLG will remember him chiefly for all that he contributed to the religious life, though not a religious himself. Born in Stafford in 1920, he was precisely of an age to be called up for service in the armed forces in the Second World War. He spent 'his war' on minesweepers in the Royal Navy, clearing naval mines.

He had received his sense of vocation to the priesthood at the age of ten, but due to the war he had to wait until he was thirty. He was trained by the College of the Resurrection at Mirfield and, hearing a further call from Central America where the need for priests was great, he became Rector of Corozal in Belize (1955-61). On his return to England, he continued his parochial ministry as Vicar of St Francis of Assisi, Bournemouth until 1968 and Vicar of

Eastleigh until 1972. During this period another call, this time to the ministry of healing and deliverance and to support the religious life within the Anglican Communion, deepened and grew.

Fr Alan became Chaplain of the Guild of Health, Chaplain to the Community of the Sisters of the Church at St Michael's Convent, Ham Common and also, very significantly for Anglican religious communities in general, he was Secretary to the Advisory Council on the Relations of Bishops and Religious Communities, more commonly known simply as 'the Advisory Council' (1976-86). He was also the first Secretary of the Communities Consultative Council, an umbrella organization for religious communities within the Church of England and their members, the forerunner of the present charity 'Anglican Religious Communities'. A further dimension of his unfailing support of the religious life was his membership (1975-94) of the Commission on the Economics of the Contemplative Life. This was a group set up to enable contemplative nuns to implement the ideals of the Second Vatican Council, in particular by the sharing of common difficulties and experience relating to matters of financial management—a group always composed of Roman Catholic and Anglican members working together. For many years he acted as confessor and spiritual guide to the Sisters of the Love of God.

In 1986 he retired, living first at Goring-on-Thames in Berkshire for six years, and then for the last sixteen years of his life, at Morden College in Blackheath, South London. Throughout his time at Morden College, he ministered at All Saints' Church, Blackheath, where a Solemn Requiem Mass was held on 18 October 2008, celebrated by the Bishop of Southwark, Tom Butler, and followed by a private cremation.

How to do justice in this short obituary to the irrepressible, charming, caring, loving, life-giving Alan? Perhaps it cannot be done, and only gratitude is possible. He helped untold numbers of people with his wisdom, common sense, spiritual insight and humanity—and very many of them are now also on the other side of the grave. The Vicar of All Saints, the Reverend Dr Nicholas Cranfield, has written: 'He will be greatly missed, as much for his humour and good sense as for his forthright, caring love.'

THOMAS KENNEDY DALZIEL THOM (1929-2008)

On 7 July 2008 the death took place of another friend, the Reverend Thomas Kennedy Dalziel Thom, a Priest Associate of the Community. He too had learned that he had terminal cancer. For him the news came at the end of 2006, just as he was about to come for his annual visit to spend Christmas at Fairacres. The news came almost out of the blue, and here at Fairacres he was able to begin to come to terms with it. In the event, medical science enabled him to live for eighteen months, which was months longer than initially forecast, and he lived this time to the full. His funeral was held at the church of St John the Divine, Kennington, South London, on 26 July. He had planned much of it, and when he asked the Reverend David Barton to preach at his funeral, he said, 'But before you say yes, you might like to ponder one condition: I don't want a sermon about me. It has to be about the Risen Life.' And it was:

> The truth of God to which we need to wake up is that He who chooses us and calls us in Christ will never abandon us, not even in the darkness of the grave. (Fr David Barton).

One of the things which Kennedy did in the months following the diagnosis was to write and publish privately an illustrated autobiography, *Not choosing but chosen: an account of the life of Kennedy Thom*. This book was his way of tracing the divine call throughout his life up to the present. At the end of the book he quoted from Karl Rahner: 'In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable, we finally learn that in this life all symphonies must remain unfinished.'

Born in Lanark, Kennedy was baptised according to the rites of the Church of Scotland, and his first name was Thomas. As his surname was Thom, it soon became clear that his parents had potentially landed him with the taunt of the nursery rhyme 'Tom, Tom, the piper's son', and thus it was that he became Kennedy. His school years were followed by National Service in the army. Then in 1950 he went up to Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he read history and modern languages (French) and became Production Secretary of Cambridge Footlights in 1951 and its Vice President

the following year. During this time he was confirmed as a member of the Church of England.

He joined Shell International in 1953 as a marketing trainee, a job which took him to foreign parts, including the Argentine and Nigeria. It became clear to him that he should seek ordination, and he resigned his post and began training. Ordained priest in 1962, he offered himself for overseas service to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and was sent to Ghana, returning in 1970 and entering the novitiate of the Society of St John the Evangelist in Oxford, where he spent a few years. Then followed a time as Anglican Chaplain at the University of Essex (1973-80). He joined the Board of Education of the General Synod of the Church of England in 1981 and some years later was appointed Partnership Secretary to what had now become the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. After some restructuring at USPG, he became Chaplain to Burrswood Christian Centre for Healthcare and Ministry in 1992 until his retirement in 1995. Possibly as a result of this experience, he wrote the following for *The Bridge*, the magazine of the Diocese of Southwark, in 2002:

> There comes a moment in everyone's life when it seems there can be no more healing. We are all bound to die. Paradoxically the Gospel teaches that this fact, so far from being the ultimate disaster, is the point of ultimate healing. As Jesus entered on his Passion, he said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him'.[2] The passage through death to life eternal may be terrifying and painful, but it has been opened for us by Jesus who as Healer and Friend accompanies us on the way. One of the ways in which we can prepare for this time is to support and pray for and with the dying. In so doing, we help both ourselves and them to face up to mortality and to look beyond to what lies in store.[3]

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE.

[2] John 13: 31.
[3] *The Bridge*, vol. 7 no. 5, June 2002.

BOOKS

The Life and Work of a Priest, John Pritchard, SPCK, 2007, £9.99. ISBN: 978-0-281-05748-1.

Among the many books and pamphlets that describe and encourage the ministry of Anglican priests today, John Prichard's book stands out as one that deserves careful attention. John Prichard is the new Bishop of Oxford and was previously Bishop of Jarrow in the Durham Diocese. He has also been a parish priest as well as youth advisor, archdeacon and theological College principal. He writes with deep theological insight as well as with much practical experience. The book is both encouraging and inspiring.

Prichard, himself an evangelical with a strong sacramental outlook, sees his writings in the tradition of Martineau's book *Office and Work of a Priest*.[1] Prichard views the life and work of a priest through three distinct prisms: a priest seeks to honour the glory of God; a priest needs to be present in the needs of the community; and a priest is at the heart of the renewal of the Church. Throughout the book Prichard emphasises the need for the priest to live an attractive spirituality which is transparent unto God; priests need to be able to lead people to the 'thin places', a concept that I have first heard mentioned by Rowan Williams.

In the first section the priest's role as leader and facilitator of liturgy are discussed and the mystery of preaching is given prominence. Prichard draws our attention to the pastoral cycle of 'experience, exploring, reflecting and responding'. And here he touches for the first time on his idea of maintaining a sixth-day ministry, elevating other interests and hobbies to a status that can renew and inform pastoral leadership.

In the middle section Prichard describes the importance of pastoral visiting and community involvement as well as the prophetic role priests can and must play within their community.

[1] *Office and Work of a Priest*, Robert Martineau, Mowbray, 1981. ISBN: 978-0264665283.

Prichard draws our attention to some of the innovative projects and possibilities of bringing healing to communities, an area where ministry and mission need to carve out a new role, since much of the traditional 'social involvement' work of the Church is now done by the State (education, health and care of the elderly). Prichard encourages us to look at innovation of approaches and collaboration with other agencies as a way forward.

The final section, which he entitled 'the renewal of the Church', mercifully does not deal with ecclesiology, but instead it focuses on missiology. The priest in this enterprise is far from alone—ministry and leadership is shared amongst all the baptised—but Prichard defines the priestly role as that of a 'motivator of change' and 'faith coach', who no longer regards 'thinking outside the box' as a luxury but as essential. Prichard has little to offer by way of engagement with postmodern realities, short of humility and openness and a number of practical initiatives that join in with the general post-modern confusion. It is in this final section that Prichard is in danger of painting too gloomy a picture of the Church in decline. This is a scenario much beloved by some evangelicals and church leaders in our current climate. Clearly the Church is declining in its role in public life, and its impact on society appears to be decreasing. But on a parish level it is my experience that the tide of decline has turned for some time now. My own Archdeacon now maintains that, while he was trained for decline and he was fully expecting to manage decline, he has now noticed that every single church in his archdeaconry is growing, and he finds it difficult sometimes to adjust to operating under these 'new conditions'.

This book is full of fine quotes and some nice stories and metaphors to demonstrate his points. But the quote that Prichard most often returns to is like a *leitmotiv* for this book: it is the saying by Irenaeus that 'The glory of God is a human being fully alive'. The greatness of the task for us is often matched by the greatness of the privilege and the very real freedom to make the ministry flourish according to the gifts that we have, a freedom that we should perhaps be wary of relinquishing.

BERNHARD SCHÜNEMANN

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

As a small boy Dietrich Bonhoeffer had an arrangement with his twin sister, Sabine, which required each of them before going to sleep to knock on the wall of their adjoining rooms. This was the agreed signal to 'think about God'.

Dietrich would continue to think ever more deeply and single-mindedly about God for the rest of his life. The decision of the brilliant schoolboy to study theology, which took his parents aback and dismayed his older brothers, was acted on decisively when at seventeen he embarked on his university career at Tübingen. There he received a thorough grounding in the methods of biblical criticism both textual and historical and after a further two years' study in Berlin, presented his doctoral thesis in 1927. By the age of twenty-three he was fully qualified to teach in the university and by the following year had published both of his theses as books.

The Liberal Protestant school of theology in Berlin which had long enjoyed unchallenged pre-eminence was already in decline by the end of WWI and within ten more years would prove hopelessly ineffectual as a bastion against the rise of National Socialism. Dietrich's direct encounter in 1930 with the dialectical theology of Karl Barth offered him an escape into fresh air, and from then onward, as a convinced but not uncritical Barthian, he would develop his own thought in works of striking originality. Meanwhile, lecturing and preaching extensively, devoting time and energy to social and parochial work, as well as serving for a time as Youth Secretary of the World Alliance of Churches, he was making his mark both as a Lutheran pastor and an academic. But chiefly, as the political landscape darkened, he took responsibility along with Barth and Niemöller and others within the Confessing Church, publicly to repudiate the infamous tenets of the *Reichskirche* and the self-styled German Christians. Later he was prepared to act as an undercover agent conspiring with his friends and relatives in the *Abwehr* to overthrow the regime and kill its elected leader in the hope of ending the war and averting total calamity for his country.

Thus from its beginnings he was both at the heart and on the periphery of the resistance to Hitler and presented an open invitation to the Gestapo.

Sabine Dramm's well-researched book, with its prolific quotations from Bonhoeffer's works, addresses a wide readership, including those who know little of Bonhoeffer or of theology. She gives due weight to the advantages enjoyed by a boy brought up within a secure and loving family and a privileged intellectual elite, and sketches in many of the sinister developments of the 'twenties and 'thirties. At the same time she has chosen to present 'the life and death he encountered and accepted in resistance and open-eyed surrender as the *backdrop* [my italics] against which his faith and thought become comprehensible as a whole' (Foreword p.3). The deliberate concentration on his thought demonstrates the inadequacy of such an approach.

Of course, the whole span of Bonhoeffer's adult life covered a period of acute crisis, in which many, even of the best, struggled—and failed—to think straight. Bonhoeffer's own unwavering course is fully documented in a large body of material which testifies throughout to the extraordinary consistency of his conduct. His life and death were never merely a 'backdrop' to his thought; all three together form an indivisible whole. The value of this book would have been enhanced by the provision of an index, not to mention a chronological table, but in their absence readers may yet be able to trace that wholeness and consistency to its source along another path.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was first and foremost a Lutheran theologian, albeit of robust independence of mind. Notwithstanding his sympathy for traditions other than his own and the breadth and diversity of his reading, only Luther and Karl Barth were really decisive influences on his thought. In common with all human children, even the most hapless, Bonhoeffer came into this world 'not in entire forgetfulness' but 'trailing clouds of glory'. Nurtured in his most receptive years on stories from both Old and New Testaments, he remained all his life a fascinated and deeply attentive reader of the Bible. That was the never-failing source which sustained his innate attraction to the divine mystery revealed

in the Incarnation and proclaimed in the universal Church. Otherwise, his was not a conventionally pious life. But in 1931, the confident young theologian who outstripped all his contemporaries and could argue fluently with his masters and mentors underwent a transformative, interior revolution which he never described and to which he would only rarely and obliquely allude, referring in one of his last letters from prison to a point in time 'when I abandoned phraseology for reality'—the same time at which the Sermon on the Mount became his guiding text. It seems that at this decisive moment, Dietrich was led by the Holy Spirit to 'descend with the mind into the heart and stand there before God' (Theophan the Recluse). The fruits of this entirely inward and spiritual grace would include not only the remarkable insights which informed his preaching and his brief leadership of the illegal seminary at Finkenwalde, as well as *The Cost of Discipleship, Letters and Papers from Prison* and the posthumous *Ethics,* but also the 'radiance rare and fathomless' which others observed in Dietrich as the tyranny which had his country by the throat deprived him piece by piece of all his rights of citizenship, his expectations, freedom of speech and action, and finally of his life, leaving him only with the desire to be a disciple of Christ.

While Sabine Dramm's book is well-informed and substantial it is fair to suggest that no external critical introduction to Bonhoeffer's thought could be a substitute for reading his own words, just as no fragmentary sketch of his life-story could stand beside Eberhard Bethge's incomparable biography.

SISTER ISABEL SLG

Touched by God: Ten Monastic Journeys, edited by Laurentia Johns OSB, Burns & Oates, 2008, £12.99. ISBN 978-0-86012-451-1.

This is a truly excellent book. It is true to its title, but what can be added is that these ten beautifully-written accounts of monastic journeys are all autobiographical and all written by Benedictines. The monastic communities involved are the Abbeys of Stanbrook, Worth, Douai, Downside, Glenstal, Belmont, St Louis (Missouri)

and Curzon Park, together with the Lay Community of St Benedict, originally founded at Worth Abbey. The book is edited by Dame Laurentia Johns of Stanbrook, who also contributes one of the accounts, 'A Tune Beyond Us'. Each author uses a phrase to sum up his or her journey, which is different for each of them, and in the case of Laurentia Johns, the theme is a musical one:

> A tune beyond us, yet ourselves: this theme tune has run right through my monastic life to date and I suspect will run and run, for it is the tune of our Benedictine vows of obedience, *conversatio* (or conversion of life by the monastic way) and stability, vows which are themselves rooted in Christ's own obedience to the Father, his journey from this world to the next, in the lee of which the Christian follows and is taken up. (p. 75).

To whom would I recommend this book? I'd recommend it to anyone seriously wishing to deepen understanding of a life of prayer and to draw on the tradition of St Benedict and of the monastic life in general. Those responsible for the book are seeking to harness the success of the BBC series *The Monastery* televised a few years ago, when a small group of laymen lived with the monks of Worth Abbey and their story was followed on camera. Programmes such as this, together with the increase in the appeal of retreats and forms of association with religious communities, show that there is a deep hunger for the age-old wisdom of the monastic tradition.

The accounts are deeply personal and seeringly honest. All are written from a perspective of perseverance, and of intended ongoing perseverance, in the way chosen, and in this respect the book differs from the more common 'show and tell' stories of those who have left communities. The joys and sorrows are told frankly, but with a concentration on inner responses to vocation and to trials. This is not just a book to read quickly once only. Indeed, reading ten stories at once can lead to some confusion and inter-mingling in the head! More than that, though, the focus on the inner journey in this book makes it suitable for pondering spiritual reading. Some of the quotations which the writers have used at times to express their journeys are wonderful, such as this one from Laurentia Johns:

> The unfinished tasks we have tried to do, the dreams and hopes and aspirations after which we have striven, the relationships we

> have vainly sought to perfect and complete, the experiences which have lifted us and laid us low, moulded us and made us—all these will not be lost or left behind, but will be the notes by which we render harmony to the music of the City of God.[2]

This book will appeal to very many people. It is a book to buy, and one to lend to others who may be helped. The Benedictine tradition comes across in its radiant glory and in its gentle subtleties in these pages. More than thirty years ago, when I was considering a monastic vocation, I'd gladly have bought and absorbed this book, even though I knew I was not called to be a Benedictine. Now, after more than thirty years in the monastic life, I can recommend it not only to those outside the monastic tradition, but also to my sisters and brothers in this way, with just one small reservation: these are in no way stories of what one might call 'failure', of people who simply haven't 'made it', of the marginal in that sense of the word. But the book is authentic, and the wisdom expressed can provide fresh food for thought and prayer.

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

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

Revisionism is all the rage in ecclesiastical history. Eamonn Duffy's *Stripping of the Altars* has been a powerful catalyst and, now that John Henry Cardinal Newman is about formally to be numbered among the *Beati*, the field is clear for the reputations of Cardinal Manning and Fr Faber, with both of whom we have always believed him to have clashed, to be reassessed. Melissa Wilkinson has written her doctoral thesis (more on this later) on Faber, and this book's title quotes Manning's judgement of him: 'a great servant of God'.

We are given, of course, a fuller understanding through the filling in of biographical detail. His mother died when he was fifteen, and his father when he was nineteen and had started at Oxford. Calvinist by training and tradition, his time in the

[2] *Interpreting the Resurrection,* N. Clark, SCM Press, London 1967, quoted on p. 75.

University saw him develop a fuller understanding of the nature of the Church, through a growing distrust of emotional spirituality and doctrinal weakness. Wilkinson sees him here, and throughout his life, as influenced, though often greatly with reservation, by Newman. Both failed to take Firsts and both obtained Fellowships, although Newman's abiding love of Oxford contrasts with Faber's often-expressed dislike. Those who only associate Faber as an Anglican with the parish of Elton will learn that his preceding curacy at Ambleside was crucial to his spiritual growth, as well as poetically productive to the extent that he can be at least associated with the Lakeland Poets.

From the early years of his life, a recurrent theme is that of sickness. Undoubtedly he was not a strong child. Wilkinson is concerned to stress the evidence that he may have suffered from Bright's Disease, or at least from mercury poisoning through the medication which he frequently took—so-called 'Blue Pills', which Newman begged him not to take; a 'most shattering medicine' he calls them. Her conclusion is both that his life was shortened (he died aged forty-nine 49) and that his personality was seriously affected.

We are offered a seven-stage analysis of Faber's spirituality. Wilkinson would see Faber as the truer founder of the Oratory in England. To suggest this on grounds that he asked permission of Wiseman before Newman did, and was turned down by the Cardinal, seems weak; his insistence, however, that the brethren should be cheerful and observe 'playful ways and sweet manners' is wholly in the spirit of St Philip Neri. Both through his preaching and writing we have come to think of Faber as given to emotion and excess. Those elements are to the fore, but Wilkinson places them within the context of Faber's long love and practice of Ignatian spirituality. She also emphasises an underlying pessimism in his work. The spirit of the age is condemned again and again in the clearest possible terms as a danger to the Christian, whilst in his personal notes he warns and examines himself against self-will (Blessed Dominic Barberi described Faber's first community, the Wilfridians, as 'Brothers of the Will of Faber'). Whilst his early work goes so far as to warn against contemplation, Wilkinson

suggests that the last decade of his life, following a serious decline in his health ('they say I send people to heaven lolling on a sofa', he notes), is marked by a move towards a more contemplative vocation. A fascinating suggestion is that one or more of his books may have been read by St Thérèse of Lisieux, for they were available in French translation and some common themes resonate.

All this said, a warning has to be sounded for potential purchasers. The book is a doctoral thesis, rather lightly revised, whence its particular structure. You will be buying, as well as the text, 1,917 footnotes spread over some 75 pages. Wilkinson has been diligent in reading Faber's correspondence (how did the sickest of Victorians manage to pack so much writing into even short lives?) and a complaint would be that she lets us read so little of it. It is frustrating to be told of so many letters recording illness, for example, but not to have any of them printed in full.

And a final point. Faber valued childlikeness; and allegations as to his 'silliness' (Wilkinson's term) appear throughout the book. Peter Nockles in his Foreword picks the term up and glosses it as 'a certain immaturity'; one could wish that Wilkinson had given us some clear definition and reference so that we could understand yet more of Faber's intriguing and curious personality.

JOHN SCOTT

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

This set of two books appears in paperback for the first time this year. Volume 1 (reviewed in the Summer edition of the *Fairacres Chronicle*, p. 67) spans the period from 'Earliest Times to 1700'; this second volume covers '1700 to the Present Day'. The methodology and how the author, Gordon Mursell (currently Bishop of Stafford), understands the terms 'spirituality' in general and 'English spirituality' in particular are outlined in the first volume; this book is, however, intended to be capable of standing alone.

Mursell has accomplished that necessary yet difficult task of encompassing, now in more, now in less, detail the great variety of styles which have been part of English spirituality in the past 300

years and of welding them into some kind of whole. Due place is given to the various Christian traditions which had a role to play during the period, including Anglican, Roman Catholic, Non-conformist, Methodist, Salvation Army and Pentecostal. Although the author has had to be selective due to the wealth of available material, the book provides a sound framework for further reading in areas of chosen study; for example, pointers are given to the life, work and teaching of the first General of the Salvation Army, William Booth (1829-1912).

This book is set out chronologically, as was the first. It is made up of three lengthy chapters, and the 'case studies' at the end of each chapter illustrate some of the themes selected for that chapter. Among spiritual giants treated in detail are, as one would expect, William Law, the Wesleys, Gerald Manley Hopkins, Evelyn Underhill and Michael Ramsey and—rightly affording him first place in his century—John Henry Newman (1801-90), now expected to be canonised before too long by the Church of Rome (pp. 264-79). Much has already been written on Newman, yet I find this author's detailed treatment of him not only objective but also gripping. Apart from those selected for particular treatment, many other great spiritual teachers are to be found in the study. Due place is given to the importance of literature in English spirituality. Names drawn upon include Daniel Defoe, William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Dickens, G. K. Chesterton, C. S. Lewis and Charles Williams. It is particularly helpful to have the historical context, such as the growth of the towns and of the shipping industry and railways, set out in conjunction with developments in spirituality.

The first chapter is entitled 'Enthusiasts and Philosophers: English spirituality in the eighteenth century'. This relates to the concepts of the 'enthusiast', who laid emphasis on the primacy of revealed truth to be apprehended and experienced by the believer, and of the 'philosopher', whose attitude was one of reason with regard to the experience and knowledge of God. To create a metaphorical bridge between the worlds of the first chapter and of the following chapter about the nineteenth century, 'Kinship and Sympathy: spirituality and the Victorian age', Mursell uses the

image of the Royal Albert Bridge, Isambard Kingdom Brunel's miracle of modern engineering opened in 1859 to take the railway across the River Tamar from Plymouth to Saltash in Cornwall. The 'enthusiast' and the 'philosopher' had sought to fashion a piety for what was already a rapidly-changing society, but with the impact of modern industry, the world in which they had lived was to change far more rapidly and almost beyond recognition in the next century.

Social justice or 'kinship', as well as compassion or 'sympathy', became central tenets of English spirituality in the nineteenth century. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution had stressed in a new way kinship with plants and animals. Furthermore, there was little point, the preachers of the Gospel discovered, in attempting to commend the spiritual values of Christianity to people who were starving, unless they tried at the same time to alleviate their misery in more practical ways. The beauty and attractiveness of God and God's compassion were presented to all in need. All things belong together, and the central pivot is the Cross, by and through which God's unconditional 'sympathy' with a suffering world is made manifest: '[The Cross] consoles, as Love itself consoles, by the very presence of its sympathy.'[3]

The chapter on the nineteenth century concludes with the chilling prospect of the dawning of the next, a century during which it soon became clear that things would never be the same again, in which millions of lives were wrecked and lost through the hitherto unimaginable horrors of the First and Second World Wars. The century is covered in the third and final chapter, 'Losing our Absolute: spirituality in the twentieth century'. This title comes from D. H. Lawrence's novel *The Rainbow* (1915), where Will Brangwen on a visit to Lincoln Cathedral realises that the Christian faith is no longer embodied only in the beauty of the cathedral: 'He had lost his absolute…' (p. 355). The reader is given a taste of some of the consequences of losing this absolute through old certainties dying in an increasingly pluralistic and relativistic society, and this is done partly by means of a particularly useful section on 'thematic

[3] Dora Greenwell, *Colloquia crucis*, 2, pp. 48-8, quoted on p. 293.

spirituality', spirituality related to the themes of social justice, feminism, war, the arts, psychology and the secular quest.

The author leaves the reader at the point of the unprecedented celebrations worldwide on New Year's Eve 1999. Although there was no significant religious revival as the third millennium dawned, there was a glimpse of a different kind of world, with scope for spirituality to adapt and renew itself.

If I do have a criticism of this book, it is that I have found it quite difficult to tease out the origins and meanings of the first two of the rather esoteric, if apt, chapter titles/themes from the text itself, which is composed in beautiful prose. But having persevered through that barrier, I have found my comprehension of 'where we are now' in the Church and in the spiritual quest—not only in this country, but also worldwide—vastly increased by this excellent and broad-based study. For such riches, the book is moderately priced.

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

BOOKS RECEIVED

From Canterbury Press:

The Meaning is in the Waiting: The Spirit of Advent, Paula Gooder, 2008, £8.99. ISBN: 978-1-85311-908-8.

The Oblate Life: A Handbook for Spiritual Formation, The English Benedictine Congregation, ed. Gervase Holdaway OSB, 2008, £17.99. ISBN: 978-1-85311-883-8.

Take, Eat: Reflections on the Eucharist, Kenneth Stevenson, 2008, £9.99. ISBN: 978-1-85311-925-5.

Before the King's Majesty: Lancelot Andrewes & His Writings, ed. Raymond Chapman, 2008, £16.99. ISBN: 978-1-85311-889-0.

Waves of God's Embrace: Sacred Perspectives from the Ocean, Winston Halapua, 2008, £8.99. ISBN: 978-1-85311-922-4.

From The Columba Press:
Prayer – The Heart of the Gospels, Jim McCaffrey OCD, 2008, £9.99. ISBN: 978-1-85607-612-8.

From McCrimmons:

(CD-ROM: PowerPoint presentation) Wait and See for prayer groups, meetings and worship gatherings (21 meditations with words and pictures, leading into quietness with God), Angela Ashwin and artists, 2008, £24.95.

From SPCK:

The Fidelity of Betrayal: Towards a Church Beyond Belief, Peter Rollins, SPCK, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-281-06051-1.

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Veronica Madge, Companion.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN ARMSON, a Priest Associate of the Community since 1975, trained as a medic before ordination. He then mostly worked in theological education. He retired from being Precentor at Rochester Cathedral in 2001. After a couple of years in the Hengrave Ecumenical Community, he now lives by himself in Herefordshire.

RAYMOND PELLY is also a Priest Associate of the Community (since 1977). Born, educated and ordained in England and Switzerland, he has been involved with parish ministry and has also held posts in Anglican theological colleges in England and New Zealand. He has been Anglican Chaplain at the Victoria University of Wellington (1990-4) and is currently Priest Associate at the Anglican Cathedral in Wellington. He is writing a book with the same title as the sermon published in this edition.

JAMES ASHDOWN lives in Hackney, where his wife is a curate. He has worked with churches in inner London for the past twenty years, currently with the United Reformed Church and in a freelance capacity, particularly as a researcher and non-managerial supervisor.

BERNHARD SCHÜNEMANN is Vicar of St Stephen's, South Dulwich, London. He came to know the Community during his years as Vicar of Littlemore, Oxford (1997-2006), when he was a regular celebrant at Fairacres.

JOHN SCOTT, formerly Chaplain at Bede House, now reads books at home in Folkestone and periodically at large elsewhere.

FROM SLG PRESS

LOVING GOD WHATEVER

Through the Year with Sister Jane

Edited by Jim Cotter and Sister Avis Mary SLG

The first edition of *Loving God Whatever,* published in 2006 by Cairns Publications in association with the Community, was sold out within a year. Due to many requests, SLG Press has now produced a new edition in paperback. This is timely, as it will make an attractive Christmas gift. SLG Press can supply copies on application, invoiced at the price of the book plus actual shipping costs.

Sister Jane, born in 1927, was a member of the Community for forty years until her death in 1995 and was Reverend Mother from 1973-88. A number of our readers will have known and loved her personally and be glad to meet her again in this selection of her writings; it is hoped that many others who did not have that opportunity will be able to get to know her through them.

Essentially a shy person, Sister Jane was nonetheless a born leader with a great gift for spiritual accompaniment. This book reveals not only her spiritual wisdom but also her great capacity for friendship and understanding, her down-to-earth sense of humour and fun, and her ability to meet people where they were, making them feel special.

Fairacres Publications 155 ISBN 978-0-7283-0174-0
£ 9.00 ISSN 0307-1405

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