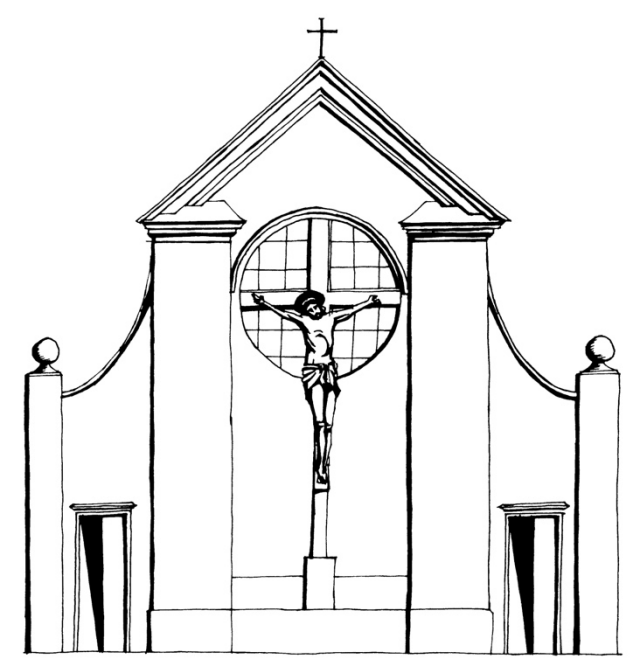
FAIRACRES CHRONICLE



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COMMUNITY NOTES

DEAR FRIENDS,

ON 7 May, the Community asked God's blessing on our crops and those of other gardeners and farmers in a Rogation Mass. As we went in procession around the garden, we gave thanks for the lovely weather and the beauty which we enjoy in our grounds. Two days later on Ascension Day, the weather was very different. Amid gusty wind and rain, I attended the inauguration of an Oxfordshire Blue Plaque by the Bishop of Oxford, Bishop John Pritchard, which commemorates Father Benson SSJE (Richard Meux Benson).

To understand the significance of Father Benson for both the Church and the people of East Oxford, some background might be helpful. He was born into a wealthy family; much of their fortune derived from the Meux brewery in London. He went to Christ Church, Oxford, and after graduation was ordained priest. He was from an Evangelical background, but whilst still a student was influenced by the Oxford Movement. In 1850 he became vicar of St James' Church, Cowley, which was then a village on the outskirts of the city. The area was becoming rapidly urbanised and there was much poverty and poor housing. Not only was assistance given with essential day-to-day needs—through soup kitchens and a coal and clothing club, for example; but also through fêtes, cricket matches, and sweets for children at the local schools. There were longer-term projects as well. Four schools were built; but perhaps the biggest project was the purchase of a large piece of land on which was built the new Church of St Mary and St John in 1875 with a large graveyard, and an eight-bed 'hospital for incurables'. Together with other sisterhoods, the Society of the All Saints Sisters of the Poor (ASSP) was invited to come to Oxford to support and complement the work in which Father Benson was engaged. The Sisters built a convent and extended the hospital, which became St John's Home, where our Sister Mary Magdalene has lived for the past year, and celebrated her 101st birthday on 5 July.

In 1866, sixteen years after becoming Vicar of Cowley, Father Benson founded the Society of St John the Evangelist (SSJE). On 27 December that year he, together with Father O'Neil and Father

Grafton from Boston USA, took Vows and formed the first Anglican religious community for men; their first home was at Magdalen Terrace on the Iffley Road. The Society had a strong contemplative side, but also engaged in many social and missionary activities. Father Benson had felt called to such work in India, but at the request of Bishop Wilberforce remained in Oxford. In 1868 the Society moved to the Mission House in Marston Street. This had a small upstairs chapel and Father Benson had the small temporary 'Iron Church' built in a parallel street for local parishioners. It is on the former Mission House that the plaque mentioned above has been placed. Father Benson retired as Superior in 1890, but he gave his approval to the first SLG Rule, before it was officially approved by Bishop Paget of Oxford in November 1909. These first SLG Sisters lived in Leopold Street, about half a mile from Fairacres. They were not able to have Mass celebrated in the house and were very grateful to attend the Eucharist in the chapel of the All Saints Sisters, where it is likely they encountered Father Benson.

After the ceremony inaugurating the plaque, we were invited to take part in an 'East Oxford Father Benson Tour', encompassing some of the sites with which Father Benson was connected, and in some cases where he inaugurated and financed projects. Some buildings, such as the 'Iron Church', have disappeared; the Church of St John the Evangelist and the Church of St Mary and St John continue to be used for their original purpose. Others remain standing, but are used for different purposes: the small hospital is now a large home for the elderly; the convent in Marston Street of the Sisterhood of the Childhood, which existed from 1894 to 1952, is residential accommodation; and the Mission House is now St Stephen's House, an Anglican theological college and Permanent Private Hall of Oxford University. Our tour covered much local history in a short time. It was heartening to be among both fellow Christians and also city representatives and dignitaries, as we honoured someone who had, and continues to have, significance for East Oxford and the Church.

Later on Ascension Day, at Vespers, Jessica Coombs was admitted as a Postulant of the Community. It seemed very apt to welcome a new member into the Sisters of the Love of God on an

important day for SSJE and ASSP, who supported and nurtured the first SLG Sisters in different ways.

Our most senior Sister, Sister Josephine of the Blessed Sacrament, died in the early hours of 8 February 2013. She entered Community shortly after the Second World War and was professed in 1949. She had clear memories of Mother Mary Frances, who led the Community from the early 1920's for over thirty years. So with Sister Josephine's death we have lost a living contact with that era. She received good care in St Luke's Hospital in Oxford, but her last years seemed to be ones of diminishment. We were very glad that she had been able to visit last summer for part of the Feast of the Holy Name, a feast of which she was fond. In her 'prime' Sister Josephine looked after maintenance matters and carried out some repairs herself; she had a particular interest in electrical items. It seemed rather apt that during the vigil—which we keep beside the coffin of our departed Sisters—a quarter of the Chapel lights fell down! This necessitated the visit of an electrician at ten o'clock that night. No one was hurt, I am glad to report. The text of the homily given at the funeral by Sister Christine is included in this edition of the *Fairacres Chronicle.* The fire alarm went off while she was preaching; we took this as another 'word' from Sister Josephine!

Our most senior Oblate Sister, Susan of the Holy Cross, died on 15 December 2012, after more than forty years in Life Promises. Part of her living legacy to us is the orchard, which she planned, and the glade of silver birches at the bottom of the garden. An edited version of an account of her life journey, written for her family, appears in this edition of the *Chronicle*. Another death to record is that of Joan Spittal, who passed away on 18 March 2013. She was a Companion SLG for over 35 years and a driver for us on many occasions.

Sister Anne is back at St Isaac's with restored mobility, and has asked me to convey her thanks to all who contacted her around Christmas. She is not able to thank you personally, but is very grateful for all your good wishes. Sister Susan visited her in the spring and was with her for the end of Lent and the beginning of Paschaltide.

In January of this year, with the help of ASSP, we hosted the Inter-novitiate Residential Study Days. Dr Petà Dunstan, Librarian in the Faculty of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, led sessions on the early history of the religious life in the Anglican Church. It included site visits to various parts of Oxford which were significant to the Oxford Movement and the revival of the religious life. Some of these I have already mentioned. The participants also travelled further afield to Burnham Abbey to visit the Society of the Precious Blood, and Nashdom, which was for many years home to the Benedictine Community now at Salisbury.

In this edition of the *Fairacres Chronicle* there are two articles which have links with Benedictine spirituality. The teaching of St Benedict has so much to offer our modern culture, which often seems to lack a sense of community and a healthy attitude to time, and to have little understanding of stability. 'Rooted and Grounded in Love: St Benedict's Legacy for Us Today' by Canon Vincent Strudwick, takes its title from St Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The article explores the essence of the Benedictine tradition, which the author believes lies in it being 'rooted and grounded in love'. The author of the second article, entitled, 'God's Love has a Human Face in Jesus: in the Crib and on the Cross' is a Benedictine monk: Father Willibrord Böttges OSB. He explores some of the implications of the Incarnation: because God became human, there is no place, no situation which is without God; the Crib and the Cross are particular places of encounter with the Love of God.

We are very grateful to all the clergy who celebrate the Sacraments for and with us and for the homilies they preach; from these we receive much enrichment each week. We are glad to share some of these with readers of the *Fairacres Chronicle* from time to time and in this edition include 'Spiritual Warfare,' a sermon preached at Fairacres last summer by Robert Tobin. Sister Helen has contributed a poem, and Sister Avis Mary has written an article about her time as Editor of SLG Press. She will be laying down this role later in the year and Sister Christine will take her place. We are very grateful for Sister Avis Mary's time as Editor and for her contribution to the development of SLG Press.

There is a change to the retreat at Shallowford in September. Father Andrew Teal is unable to be present for the first part, but

will join the retreat on Sunday 15 September. Sister Clare-Louise will conduct the Friday evening and Saturday sessions on the advertised theme, 'The Eucharist'. Due to late cancellations, there are also places available for the retreat at Llangasty in July. Please see further details on p. 7.

Father Benson SSJE and the first 'Cowley Fathers', together with the Sisterhoods, ministered to many people in much poverty in the late nineteenth century. Today, there are many instances of poverty in all areas of the world, including the so-called 'developed' world, where, it seems to me, there is spiritual poverty in all strata of society. The voice of God and the utterances of those who seek to follow Jesus seem to fall on deaf or indifferent ears, or to meet with ridicule. Speaking to the early members of SSJE in the Mission House chapel, Fr Benson said:

> We live by the call of God. It is not because He has called us, but because He is calling us; and we need to hear that voice speaking in us constantly, and with increasing power.[1]

May we and all whom God calls to discipleship, hear that call.

With all good wishes,

SISTER MARGARET THERESA SLG

[1] *The Religious Vocation,* edited by Fr Bull SSJE and Fr Cary SSJE, Mowbray, 1939.

RETREATS

Wednesday 24—Sunday 28 July 2013

Llangasty Retreat House

Llangasty, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7PX

www.llangasty.com

The Retreat will be conducted by **The Reverend Mark Birch**, who is Chaplain of The Hospital of St Cross and also Priest in Charge of the Parish of St Faith, Winchester.

The theme of the retreat is **Made in God's Image**—reflections on the nature of our humanity, drawing on experience of ministry both in a children's hospice and in a special school for disabled students.

The cost is **£248** per person, including a **£48** non-refundable deposit.

Due to late cancellations, there are places available.

Llangasty is a retreat house sponsored jointly by the Dioceses of Swansea & Brecon and Llandaff. It is about five miles from Brecon and about seventeen miles from Abergavenny. The nearest railway station is Abergavenny.

Friday 13—Sunday 15 September 2013

Shallowford House Christian Retreat Centre

Shallowford, Stone, Staffordshire, ST15 0NZ

www.shallowfordhouse.org

The Retreat, which is on the theme of **The Eucharist**, will be conducted by **Sister Clare-Louise SLG** and **The Reverend Andrew Teal**, Warden of the Community and Chaplain and Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford**.**

The cost is **£114** per person, including a **£30** non-refundable deposit.

A limited number of places still available.

Shallowford House is associated with the Diocese of Lichfield and it is in five acres of land near the village of Norton Bridge. It is three miles from junction 14 of the M6. The nearest mainline station is Stafford. Taxis cost approx. £12-15. There is an infrequent bus service to Norton Bridge. Most accommodation is en suite.

Write to **Katy Spencer** at our address at Fairacres; or telephone: **01865 241849** (has voicemail); or email: **bursary@slg.org.uk**

SISTER JOSEPHINE OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT SLG

29 December 1924 – 8 February 2013

HOMILY AT THE FUNERAL REQUIEM MASS ON 15 FEBRUARY 2013

SISTER CHRISTINE SLG

> The contemplative is one, who having caught a glimpse of the Divine, having seen for a moment what God is, lets all other things go, gathers all her powers to seek for, to gaze on, to possess that loveliness, counting all things lost for the sake of God, seeing first and always near at hand the loveliness of Jesus—but behind the loveliness of Jesus, the Glory of the Uncreated.
>
> That is the contemplative, the person who has seen something and can never leave the quest…

This extract from a retreat Father Lucius Cary SSJE gave to this Community in 1929 forms a postscript to the version of the Rule Sister Josephine vowed to live under 'for the rest of [her] life'. Father Cary was the Father Founder of SLG, and he and the first Mother Superior, Mother Mary Frances, were coming to the end of their time of major influence in the community when she joined the novitiate in 1946. However, they continued to lead the community for about the first five years of her long life in SLG. Anyone who has tried a vocation to the religious life knows what an imprint those first years leave and what a basis they become for one's future life and prayer. These two people and their teaching formed the foundation on which she built her vocation. In later years we would often meet a dichotomy in her. Arising from the strict enclosure and austere life of those early years, there was a certain severity of practice of the monastic life which she expected also to find in others. Alongside this was a gallant attempt to appropriate contemporary changes in both the Community and the Church.

Sister Josephine, or Sr Jo as we called her, was born Ellen Orford (known in her family as Nellie), and brought up in Ilford, where her widowed mother ran a lodging house to earn enough money to raise four children. She learned early the need for and value of hard work, though it was not 'all work and no play'. At some point in her late childhood or early teens she persuaded her mother to let her try out her elder sister's new bicycle. This she was allowed to do on condition she returned before Grace got home from work. The short spin she had planned ended in central London, where she became completely confused by the roundabout at Piccadilly Circus, and had to be rescued by a policeman. History does not relate what happened when she eventually returned home.

By the time she left school at 16, there was a war on, so she joined Murex Welding Products, working in the assay laboratory testing the strengths of various metals. Though she had begun her Christian life as a Methodist, it was during these years she was confirmed as an Anglican, and St Alban's, Great Ilford, became her home parish. Its Anglo-Catholic tradition imbued her with a great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, so much so that she eventually took 'of the Blessed Sacrament' as her dedication. She used to go by bicycle (presumably by now her own) on pilgrimage to other churches in and around London which had the reserved Sacrament.

She entered SLG just after her 21st birthday. It was the sacramental life, and a life of worship in particular, that led her into SLG. When in the late 1950's the decision was made to change the Divine Office from the Sarum Usage to the full Benedictine Office, she was one of the group that introduced it into the Community. In the late 1970's and the 1980's she became Choir Mistress, rather to her surprise, if I remember. Part of her task was to make the plainchant mass music more accessible, which she painstakingly did over several years. The lines for the notation were drawn with a special four-line dip-pen and the words carefully scripted in her own hand. In fact we are using today the music for Requiem Masses which she scripted over thirty years ago.

When someone has been in Community for 67 years, 63 of them lived under Vows, each of us will have our own memories of that person. As a result, it becomes easy to stereotype each other. What we know about Sr Jo is that she loved cats; she had many

practical gifts, including toy-making and sewing capabilities; she had green fingers (how well I remember about 100 coleus plants she cultivated in No. 2 Parker Street on the Fairacres site when it was used as the sewing room); she was an excellent cook, a diligent bursar, an able electrician. (I think she would be finding quiet amusement in the fact that some of the chapel lights fell off the wall during the vigil we kept last night by her coffin.) At different times she acted as Sub-Prioress at Fairacres and Sister-in-Charge at Bede House. This latter post was a 'temporary' assignment which lasted for a year. Her strict punctuality for chapel, even where, as at Bede House, there was no bell to indicate the times of worship, became the stuff of legend.

But there were other, more hidden, gifts: she was what someone has described as 'a solid friend', both to her Sisters in Community, especially those who needed support or friendly advice, and to a wide circle of people associated with us. She wrote many letters, faithfully keeping in touch with anyone she thought needed a friendly word. Many valued her sensible and straight-forward views on difficult or complex situations.

In the 1960's it became evident that Sr Jo's clear and incisive mind needed the further education which both her straitened family circumstances and World War II had prevented. With the encouragement of Canon Donald Allchin, then our Warden, she went first to Christchurch College, Canterbury, to do a foundation course in theology, followed by three years at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford to read for a degree in the same subject. At LMH she developed her expertise in Hebrew, which remained her preferred biblical language, and a firm conviction that Mark was the first gospel written, not Matthew. She engaged at a deeply challenging level with the radical theology of the late 1960's and early 1970's, and it seems to have set up many questions about, and contradictions to, her hitherto more traditional and conservative beliefs.

After receiving her degree she considered continuing her studies, which would have included a thesis examining what can—or cannot—be claimed about intercession. I remember several discussions with her on this topic when we worked together making habits and veils. As I was left confused and unconvinced by her

arguments, I suspect something of the same was at work in her. In the end she laid this project aside, and was content to teach us Hebrew if we wanted to learn, and to remain agnostic on the subject of intercession.

These last few years in a nursing home, at St Luke's in Oxford, have seemed sad ones, but it is hard to gauge what we can call 'quality of life' when someone is physically incapacitated. She seems to have had no fear of death; indeed she once told me she was eager to know what happened next—this from someone who never read novels or fairy stories! I can only attest that she received Communion whenever I took it to her on a Sunday, even when she seemed otherwise unresponsive. Her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament remained; perhaps this is what we should best remember about her. She had indeed seen something of the 'loveliness of Jesus' and could 'never leave the quest'.

There is another postscript to add, from another Founder of the Community, Father Gilbert Shaw. It is from a homily which we read as one of the Matins lessons on a Sister's death, and seems particularly appropriate for Sr Jo:

> Death is not an end. In one sense it is a beginning, but far more, it is continuity, the gathering up of all we have done and are and will be. 'They take with them the record of their deeds'—that is, their whole being which they have built up in their earthly life.
>
> Love can have no end, for God is Love. Therefore, our love goes on with our Sister as a continual offering, and her love goes out to us as she is gathered up more completely in the knowledge of Christ.

May she rest in peace, and rise in glory. Amen.

‘ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE’
ST BENEDICT’S LEGACY FOR US TODAY

VINCENT STRUDWICK

> ‘This is an *enclosed* order of nuns. No one goes in or comes out.’
>
> Dora was stunned by this information. She stopped. ‘Do you mean’, she said, ‘that they’re completely imprisoned in there?’
>
> Mrs Mark laughed. ‘Not imprisoned, my dear,’ she said. ‘They are there of their own free will. This is not a prison. It is on the contrary a place which it is very hard to get into, and only the strongest achieve it. Like Mary in the parable, they have chosen the better part.’ They walked on.
>
> ‘Don’t they *ever* come out?’ asked Dora.
>
> ‘No,’ said Mrs Mark. ‘Being Benedictines, they take a vow of stability, that is they remain all their lives in the house where they take their first vows. They die and are buried inside in the nuns’ cemetery.’
>
> ‘How absolutely appalling!’ said Dora.[1]

In Iris Murdoch’s novel *The Bell*, Dora echoes the often unspoken fear of an increasingly restless—and now Twitter-fuelled—generation, when confronted by a life rooted in stability. Yet as with so many of us, Dora’s fearful reaction is also accompanied by a certain fascination to explore what seems so alien to her experience.

It may be useful to recall that the beginnings of Benedictine spirituality go back to the fall of the Roman Empire. Society under Rome had been ‘ordered’, and the *Pax Romana* reached right round the Mediterranean. Roman law and the Greek language, together with an amazing communication system that had been fundamental to the spread of Christianity, had held together an amazing mixture of peoples. However, as the Empire declined and broke up, things changed. The economy was in tatters, the Rule of Law broke down,

[1] *The Bell*, Iris Murdoch, Penguin Books, 1962, p. 64.

and there were vast movements of people, no longer clear about their identity, rootless, savage.

It was within this restless society that, following some time as a hermit, Benedict came to Monte Casino, where he founded his community of monks, remaining there until his death in 537. This is the context in which we read the Prologue to the Rule of St Benedict, where we are given a picture of the Lord in the market place calling out to passers by with an offer to get the most out of life.[2]

'Which of you desires life, and covets many days to enjoy good?'[3] The call is a call to *live,* not just to survive. In the stable environment of the monastery Benedict offered a 'school for the Lord's service',[4] where the freedom sought in chaos might really be found. Freedom in stability? In what Dora in *The Bell* perceived as a 'prison'?

It must be nearly twenty years ago that I was asked to conduct a retreat for an Anglican Benedictine monastery. I wrote to Dame Felicitas Corrigan, Benedictine nun of the Roman Catholic Stanbrook Abbey, with a question, thus beginning a correspondence which was usually conducted half in English and half in Latin!

My question was: 'What is the essence of the Benedictine tradition?' From personal experience of the Abbeys of Bec, Downside and Worth, of St Benet's Hall in Oxford, and of various Anglican Benedictine houses, both of men and of women, I knew that there are many ways of being Benedictine. However, Dame Felicitas's answer made a lasting impression. She said that she had taken my letter to another Sister, and they had both responded:

> … that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.[5]

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[2] Esther de Waal in *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, trans. Abbot Parry OSB, introd. Esther de Waal, Gracewing, 1990, p. xviii.
[3] Ps. 34: 12.
[4] Rule, Prologue, para. 7.
[5] Eph. 3: 17-19.

Within the framework of the Benedictine pattern of life, regulated by the Rule, the psalmody of the choir Office provides words for a daily dialogue with God in the company of the saints.[6] All come to know their place in a corporate life founded on agape. This is the rooting and grounding in love for which the word 'stability' stands.

In her introduction to an edition of the Rule published in 1990, Esther de Waal wrote:

> His Rule is all about love. It is a practical guide to help men and women establish and maintain loving relationships with God, with others, with the material world, and also (perhaps surprisingly to those who associate Christianity, and in particular monasticism, with denial and asceticism) with one's own self. It is the whole person that is addressed in the Rule of St Benedict. The whole God-given human being made up of body, mind and spirit.[7]

In this school for the Lord's service there is a realism about how people are, and how relationships break down. We are all so different. I am reminded of the special Post Office parcels unit dealing with parcels that have become unwrapped, which was featured in the newspapers at Christmas a few years ago. Among the finds were a stuffed snake, a parcel of lion droppings and an angel with a halo that lit up! I like to think—if those parcels ever arrived—that the person who received them would say, 'Just what I wanted!'

We are all different; and there are many different ways of going wrong. Benedict was aware of this, and provided a long list of anticipated faults and correction, within the context of the grounding in love and stability of the community and of the grace and love of God flowing through it.

The emphasis on being 'rooted and grounded in love' lies at the heart of Benedict's legacy to us. No generation needs to be alerted to this more than the Facebook and Twitter users of our day. Perhaps this is the medium through which we should repeat today, as many Benedictine houses do, Benedict's picture of the Lord calling out in the market place. It is an extraordinary paradox that

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[6] cf. Rule, Ch. 8-19.

[7] *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, trans. Abbot Parry OSB, introd. Esther de Waal, Gracewing, 1990, p. xvii.

the communications revolution, with all its wonderful potential, is in danger of being a vehicle both of sharing ignorance and of trivializing relationships. Well before the days of the widespread use of the Internet, the Anglican bishop John Taylor wrote in *The Christlike God*:

> It is the almost universal loss of the sense of being in relationship with the otherness of other persons and answerable to them as part of one body, the almost total loss, in a word, of community, which renders our present society and nation so inimical to a sense of God, and so incapable of prayer.[8]

Members of Benedictine houses are aware of this, and their ministry of hospitality enables many people to be brought into the rhythm of Benedict's call to life.

Forty years ago, I got to know Dom Christopher Jamieson of Worth Abbey, when I lived nearby. I was captivated by the experiment with the Lay Community of the Abbey (as it then was). More recently, when Dom Christopher was Abbot, a television series was made, in which hospitality was offered to a variety of people, so that they could have a taste of the Benedictine experience and see where it led.[9] More and more people are aware that the resource is there and is developing in many rich ways.

I turn now to the Anglican tradition, and the way in which the Divine Office, at the heart of the Benedictine life, was preserved in post-Reformation England and spread throughout the Anglican Communion, which numbers 80 million people today.

Christopher Dawson, a historian and Roman Catholic who taught my own tutor, George Every, wrote in the 1930s that:

> the Benedictine Order was the cornerstone not only of the Carolingian Empire but of the social order of Christendom in the Middle Ages.[10]

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[8] *The Christlike God*, John V. Taylor, SCM Press Ltd., 1992, p. 245.

[9] 'The Monastery', first transmitted in May 2005 on BBC 2.

[10] *Christianity and European Culture: Selections from the Work of Christopher Dawson*, ed. Gerald J. Russello, The Catholic University of America Press, Part One, ch. 3, p. 39.

Its educational and liturgical influence was at the heart of that period of history. The changes in the sixteenth century brought the break with the authority of Rome, and the Dissolution of the Monasteries. However, in the new dispensation the Benedictine liturgical influence continued, through the work of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and others, to inform the spirituality of the clergy and the worship of the laity.

This new dispensation had a Bible in English and, from 1549, an English Book of Common Prayer, providing the context in which queen and poet, housewife and yeoman, lived and died. At the heart of the Book of Common Prayer was Cranmer's work as a liturgist, following the pioneering work of Cardinal Quignon. Many accretions of readings and prayers in the Latin were removed. Through the regular recitation of the Psalter (completed in a monthly cycle), Bible readings and prayers, and through a liturgical year set out in the Calendar, a breviary for the clergy and regular public worship for the people were put in place. This Prayer Book was at the heart of shaping community life anew, amidst the changes of Tudor society.

There were some early revisions, but the Elizabethan Prayer Book established a pattern of devotion from the Feast of St John the Baptist 1559; this was resumed and renewed in the revision of 1662.

The provision of the Eucharist was the main feature of the book, but in the provision of Morning Prayer, based on Matins and Lauds, and Evening Prayer, based on Vespers and Compline, we were offered a reflective heart at the centre of community life. It was ordered that:

> All priests and deacons shall be bound to say daily the morning and evening prayer either privately or openly, except they be letted by preaching, studying of divinity, or by some other urgent cause. … Privately they may say the same in any language they themselves do understand.[11]

The laity were made increasingly familiar with this pattern in the parish churches on Sundays and, when the parson rang the bell, through the week. I had a seventeenth-century prayer book for family use, with short versions of the daily office from the Book of

[11] The Second Prayer Book of Edward VI, 1552.

Common Prayer. Its subtitle said that it was a prayer book 'as well for the Temple as the Closet'. It was a short version of the breviary for the laity.

In the cathedrals and other great churches, the daily round of prayer was often celebrated with music, in contrast to continental Protestantism at the time, where music was often associated with the devil. The English composers Thomas Tallis and William Byrd, while composing perhaps their finest music for the Latin rite, wrote beautiful motets for Queen Elizabeth I. They were biblical, based on the Psalms, and in English. Many were laments for the Catholicism of the past, like the setting by Byrd of Psalm 137 ('By the waters of Babylon, we sat down and wept'). While they could be interpreted as expressions of personal longing, they also contributed to the development of a rich Anglican tradition of devotion.

Richard Hooker of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and later Master of the Temple Church in London—the nearest we Anglicans have to a theological founding father—stoutly defended the Anglican musical pattern of devotion, based on psalmody:

> The prophet David, having singular knowledge, not in poetry alone but in music also, judged them both to be things most necessary for the house of God, left behind him for that purpose a number of divinely indited poems … for the raising up of men's hearts and the sweetening of their affections towards God. In which considerations the Church of Christ doth likewise … retain it as an ornament of God's service, and an help to our own devotion.[12]

This legacy was built upon in the nineteenth century when, under the influence of the Oxford Movement, the religious life was once again restored in the Anglican tradition. Some houses of Sisters adopted a Roman pattern of worship. The Benedictines of Nashdom Abbey also did so, until well into the second half of the twentieth century. Others adopted an Anglican approach, using the *Daily Hours of the Church of England* composed in English by Dr Henry Parry Liddon, Vice Principal of the theological college at Cuddesdon.

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[12] *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity,* ed. R Bayne, Macmillan & Co., 1902, Bk. V, xxxviii.2.

In the mid 1960's, when the renewal of the religious life in Anglicanism was at its peak, I gave a paper in a symposium at Downside Abbey. There were about 300 men and 3,000 women living the religious life in the Church of England at this time. These were tiny numbers compared with those in Roman Catholic houses. Nevertheless, through placing a reflective Office at the heart of a community learning to love, Anglican religious played a significant role in the spiritual, educational and pastoral life of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion. As the number of religious houses in the northern hemisphere, both Roman Catholic and Anglican, is still dwindling, I am concentrating upon what I regard as the main legacy of Benedictine wisdom for our society today: that we shall be 'rooted and grounded in love'.

Jean Twenge of San Diego State University has identified through research over the past twenty years what she calls the 'Me Generation'. According to her findings, the attitudes of people of student-age in the 1980's and 1990's contrast sharply with those of the 'Baby Boomers' (born 1946-64) at the same age, and those of 'Generation X' (born early 1960's to early 1980's, preceding the Me Generation). Whereas Generation X was community-minded, idealistic and concerned with others and the future of the planet, the Me Generation focuses more on money, image and fame. This is the generation of the Internet age, of Facebook, Twitter and the mobile phone.

I must avoid letting what comes next sound like a 'rant' in *The Oldie*—although I do read that magazine from time to time! The technological and information-technology revolutions should be blessings, but they do need some correctives. It seems to me that being connected to scores of people through social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn does not of itself create any sort of quality relationship. If it excludes the kind of relationships that St Benedict carefully sought to nurture through the Rule, it can be harmful, and contribute to something from which the Me Generation suffers: a loss of the Benedictine legacy of stability.

Twenty years ago I was among the first Fellows of a new Oxford college: Kellogg College. For ten years I was Chamberlain, our name for the Master of the Common Room. My role was intended to form a fellowship of learning among teachers and students, and

to create a corporate identity and a sense of belonging. During that time I was occasionally asked by Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB to give tutorials in my subject to students at St Benet's Hall, a permanent private hall of the University of Oxford, founded from the Benedictine Abbey at Ampleforth. As a treat he invited me from time to time to Latin Vespers, followed by dinner. There was, in my view, a noticeable and distinctive quality to the life of the Hall which marked it out from other colleges. The students may not have crowded into the chapel, but the pattern of life under which the Hall operated was shown in the way they treated guests with welcome and interest. It was a quality that was an inspiration for me in my role at Kellogg College.

Recently I read an interview in the Roman Catholic weekly, *The Tablet*, with Professor Susan Greenfield, who is Professor of Pharmacology in the University of Oxford, and a Fellow of Lincoln College. She has no religious creed, but she had just completed a retreat at Ampleforth Abbey. She was struck by how quickly the time had passed, despite barely looking at her mobile, and despite being without computers or television. 'I felt so super-charged and super-detoxed—really bursting with energy, and positive', she said. To the suggestion that perhaps God was looking for her, she replied with a laugh: 'I know—but he's playing hide-and-seek at the moment.'

And God does play hide-and-seek, with many millions of us, the world over. But I believe that we may be found by God when we are 'rooted and grounded in love' with the saints; that is, in community, with others. This will take various forms, but it is the heart of the Benedictine legacy.

‘NOT AN INDUSTRY, BUT LIVES LIVED’

SEVEN YEARS AS EDITOR OF SLG PRESS

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

IN this year’s annual address to the Community Chapter on 26 May, our Warden, Father Andrew Teal, used some stirring words, saying that SLG should be:

> A place of welcome and encouragement, a place of modest exploration, of commitment and solidarity with the world, a place where silence has the last word, a place of worship and struggle, a place where people are equipped to inhabit the complex reality of who they are, in a community of fellow questers.

He went on to say:

> Spirituality is not an industry, but your lives lived. The discipline of your living together with one another is a shining light that the Christian life, when it is vulnerable enough, is also strong enough to equip our whole being to be on holy ground.

Father Andrew’s words resonated with me. The various phrases in the first paragraph quoted express something of what the Community of the Sisters of the Love of God might hope to be, but these phrases are equally true for the life and work of its small publishing business, SLG Press. We do hope to welcome and encourage, through the written word and through our contacts with our readers. What we write and publish represents our modest explorations and our commitment and solidarity with the world. We are members of SLG and answerable to God and each other, as well as to the wider community here at Fairacres, including our staff, who work for and with us.

Our publications come out of our daily life and prayer. The works published come from Sisters (original writings and also compilations and translations); from Community contacts; and from people who know of SLG Press and submit manuscripts. We select what tunes in with our way of life, our spirituality and prayer.

As Father Andrew said in the second paragraph quoted, 'Spirituality is not an industry, but your lives lived.'

This is true not only in terms of *what* we decide to publish, but also in terms of *how* and *when* we are able to publish. We are not always able to work in what would be the most effective way, were it actually an industry. We cease our work at frequent intervals through the day, in particular for the Divine Office, meals, Community meetings, pastoral needs, and other tasks we may have been given; and, of course, there are times of holiday, retreat and sickness. This inevitably leads to a certain uncomfortable gap between any mental image we ourselves might have of spending the days in complete silence, working on manuscripts, editing, writing and publishing, and what is the reality: not being able to get to editorial work anywhere near as much, or as frequently, as we'd like.

SLG Press has grown from its small beginnings in 1967 and has gained over the years an international reputation for short, high-quality works of Christian spirituality. It was founded at a time when the community had become aware that a significant aspect of the contemplative life is a longing to share with others what we have ourselves received. The Dominican St Thomas Aquinas (*c.*1225-74) expressed this with the Latin words *contemplata aliis tradere*, usually translated now as, 'to contemplate, and to hand on to others the fruits of contemplation'. We rejoice to be able to communicate through the published word the things which are important to us. We see this work, too, as taking place on holy ground.

Our aim is to publish books which help and support people who desire to take prayer seriously. This general intention broadens out to a variety of topics relating to the spiritual life—studies of those who have made a significant contribution to Christian teaching on prayer over the centuries, for instance, as well as theological reflection on the gospels and on themes as diverse as poetical writing, ministry, suffering and death, and pilgrimage. We draw from the wisdom of the Desert Fathers, early monastic saints, the fourteenth-century English mystics, the tradition of Carmel and other ancient and modern-day teachers of prayer. Canon Donald Allchin (A. M. Allchin), Warden of the Community 1967-95, and a great supporter of SLG Press, said:

> The Christianity which we proclaim, the faith which we hold, is not just the bare letter of the Gospel, but it is the life of Christ, present in every age in the lives of the saints, Christ's life down the centuries.

For seven years now, I have been Editor of SLG Press, which includes responsibility for the *Fairacres Chronicle*. It is a lovely job to be given. From the autumn, I shall be assigned to other work in the Community. The reader will guess whither I am sent, if I say that St Teresa of Avila knew how to find God amongst the pots and pans! The past seven years have seen many changes in SLG Press, and I thought that readers might be interested to hear something about this period from the perspective of the Editor.

Being Editor for an established publisher means two things: first, continuing the ethos of that publisher, following on from what has gone before; and secondly, offering one's own distinctive contribution—albeit mostly in quite a hidden way. When I took up the role, I was following in an established tradition. The vision at the foundation of SLG Press came into being through our Reverend Mother at the time, Mother Mary Clare, and our then Warden, Father Gilbert Shaw. This vision was carried forward and extended by the seven Editors who preceded me: Sister Marjorie, Sister Edmée, Sister Rosemary, Sister Barbara June, Sister Jane Antony, Sister Christine and Sister Isabel. With the exception of Sister Marjorie, who ran the Press for the first ten years, I have been in SLG while each of those Sisters has been in post.

I think that that, instinctively, I have attempted to follow St Paul's programme, namely to 'proclaim Christ crucified'.[1] Recently I picked up, and read with interest, a small book of selected readings from Martin Luther, from which I quote:

> To preach Christ means to feed the soul, to make it righteous, to set it free and to save it, if it believe the preaching. For faith alone is the saving and efficacious use of the word of God.
>
> Christ ought to be preached to the end that faith in him be established, that he may not only be Christ, but be Christ for

[1] 1 Cor. 1: 23.

> you and for me, and that what is said of him, and what his name denotes, may be effectual in us.[2]

This tunes in with the Carmelite emphasis on promoting and practising friendship with Jesus. Thus, for instance, in selecting books for review in the *Fairacres Chronicle*, good books 'about Jesus' have had a particular priority. Our best-selling publication continues to be a book on the Jesus Prayer, first published by us in 1974, *The Power of the Name: The Jesus Prayer in Orthodox Spirituality* by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware. Another particular success has been *Learn to Be at Peace: The Practice of Stillness* by Andrew Norman, a book written from personal experience which helps people trying seriously to practise prayer.

In the course of our life and work, people write to SLG Press with their intercessions and concerns, and responding is part of our ministry. Experience of the cross, of suffering, of darkness and simply not-knowing is a part of the lives of all of us. Another best-selling book is *God and Darkness: A Carmelite Perspective* by Gemma Hinricher OCD. It clearly speaks to a need. To quote from Martin Luther again:

> The cross teaches us to believe in hope even where there is no hope. The wisdom of the cross is hidden in a profound mystery. In fact, there is no other way to heaven than taking up the cross of Christ. On account of this we must beware that the active life with its good works, and the contemplative life with its speculations, do not lead us astray. Both are most attractive and yield peace of mind, but for that very reason they hide real dangers, unless they are tempered by the cross and disturbed by adversaries. The cross is the surest path of all.[3]

My brief from the then Reverend Mother, Mother Rosemary, when she asked me to take over SLG Press, was 'to bring it into the 21st century'. This was far from being a lack of appreciation of all that had gone before since its foundation in 1967. I understood it to mean that rethinking had become timely, due to immense changes in society, in information technology and in publishing and business

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[2] *The Darkness of Faith: Daily Readings with Martin Luther*, introd. & ed. James Atkinson, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1987, p. 11.
[3] Ibid. p. 41.

practices. We needed to develop, or we probably had ultimately to cease to be; and development was what we were going to do.

I took over SLG Press on 15 September 2006, the day after the last major celebration of the Centenary of the foundation of the Community on Holy Cross Day, 14 September 1906. This timing put SLG Press firmly into the context of the Community's one-hundred year history, and also into the context of almost forty years of its existence.

There have, indeed, been many changes since 2006. The introduction of the 13-digit ISBN (International Book Standard Number) was the first. The 10-digit numbers were proving insufficient to record all books being published worldwide, and we needed to learn the new requirements and also to introduce a system for recording our own ISBNs. Over the last seven years, it has become far easier for us to register a new ISBN online; it is good when something actually becomes simpler! To balance this, however, if we issue a new publication as an e-book as well, we now need not one, but three, ISBNs: one for the paper book, and two for the two different formats of e-book which we sell.

Much of our business is mail order. Quite early on, Royal Mail carriage charges started to soar, and out of necessity we investigated and used other carriers. Over the years since then, the role of major online agents in enabling easy booking and collection of parcels has mushroomed. This has made things much easier, and we rarely now have to worry about the reliability of collection and delivery.

SLG Press continues to operate as a not-for-profit concern. In 2006 the Press accounts were compiled manually by a Sister and balances were entered subsequently into the accounts of our charity, SLG Charitable Trust Limited. When the time came later for her to move to other work within the convent, it was necessary to set up separate computerised accounts for the Press, run alongside the charity accounts. This was the first new Press system undertaken after 2006 which was a major project—managed, as all projects have been, alongside the ordinary work of the Press.

In September 2011 we re-housed our shop at Fairacres. It had been in a small room, and we were given a slightly larger room nearby, where we could spread ourselves. But first we had to empty

it of the heap of things there for 'temporary storage'. Press staff were occupied for some months with sorting and shredding boxes of papers, and with trips to recycle redundant equipment. However, when the new shop was set up with fresh display stands, we knew that it had been worth it. We have extended the range of cards on sale, buying in some cards and also making our own from colour photographs taken by Sisters. The modest selection of books purchased from other publishers has also been extended. In Advent last year, we began to carry a range of CDs. We regret that we are unable to make these books and CDs generally available by post; our main energies have to go into the publishing work of SLG Press and into orders for our own publications. We see the shop as a service to our resident guests and others, many of whom have no access to a Christian bookshop where they can look at what is available, or are not comfortable with online ordering.

We already had a website for SLG Press, which was launched in August 2003. We saw that as a first step towards further online development and knew that we would need a new website fairly soon which enabled customers both to buy our books and to subscribe to the *Fairacres Chronicle* online. Selling our books as e-books and providing for their delivery digitally had been a remoter idea, and it was a concept which, like many other publishers at the time, we found hard to grasp.

In the Spring of 2010 we were contacted by Andy Severn, who had recently set up a business, Oxford eBooks,[4] to see if we were interested in e-book conversions and website delivery. Indeed we were, but our need for a brand-new website was at that time more pressing than our need for e-books. The upshot was that we had found the perfect website designer! We worked together very happily with Oxford eBooks on a customised website, which was launched in April 2011. The most recent development is that Oxford eBooks themselves took on the hosting of the website in June 2013 through their new venture, Oxford Webhosting.

Setting up the website took many months, and much custom programming was required, reflecting the complexity of our needs. A great deal of work also took place in-house. Complete details of

[4] www.oxford-ebooks.com

each book, including contributors and specifications, a modern description of each book and an up-to-date biography of each author or contributor were just the start. The content for the actual web pages had to be written, together with terms and conditions, guidelines for authors, copyright information, and so on. We produced material for free downloading. We are very pleased with the result, and now receive the majority of our orders via the website.

After what seemed but a short breather, we worked on the e-books add-on to the new website. In June 2012 our first e-books were on sale, the conversions to e-books done by Oxford eBooks; currently we have 21 titles available as e-books. Apart from having them available on our website, we put them all on sale on Amazon, where results have been very pleasing; we are really beginning to enjoy their regular payments into our bank account, and e-books create no storage headaches!

The work we did for the website led naturally to another project: the design, more or less from scratch, of a new publications list. We were able to move from a simple list of titles in print to a much fuller booklet, containing book images, brief descriptions and information such as ISBN numbers. Last year the Community acquired a colour laser photocopier, and we are now able to print off up-to-date copies in colour as we need them.

Back in 2006, I did not rule out the possibility of increasing the frequency of the *Fairacres Chronicle*, which had begun as four slim editions a year and was currently a bi-annual magazine. A third, extra, Autumn edition was produced for the Community's Centenary. It soon became clear, though, that to do this as the norm would tax our resources too much. Postage costs have become disproportionately high, and it is no longer realistic to expect Fairacres to focus its energies into getting the *Chronicle* out, as it was the case in the early days in 1967, when many Sisters could help with the task of distribution.

Something not particularly envisaged in 2006, but which had become a reality by 2008, was the employment of a member of staff to work in SLG Press, primarily on orders, bookkeeping and administration. The Press accounts have always been part of the charity accounts, and we work closely with the bursary staff.

Another whole area is the actual production of books. In an increasingly digitised age, we have invested in publishing software, even if we have not yet managed to invest sufficient time to become proficient. The covers of our books were becoming increasingly attractive by 2006, and I have attempted to follow and build upon the work of my immediate predecessor. Yet, although we may well have an instinct for finding the right cover image, we are not trained cover designers and it is more difficult for us to translate an idea into something really professional in appearance. We have been fortunate to find a couple of professional designers in the last year who meet our needs, and are very pleased with the results.

More concrete issues were faced early on. A dedicated telephone line, hard cabling for the computer network rather than wireless, and new windows, blinds and electric wiring were installed in the Press premises. This resulted in frequent clean-up operations, particularly after the installation of the windows, which was far messier and more disruptive than predicted. The last major project on my personal 'to do' list, bearing in mind my brief back in 2006, is the layout of our office and packing facilities, together with storage of our publications; these aspects overlap within a confined space. A lot of work has been done over the last six years to arrange and store stocks consecutively according to publication number. But no major changes have happened as yet, and this is a project which now needs to wait for those who come after me.

Sister Christine, who has assisted me for the past few years, will be the first Sister to take up the role of Editor for a second time; another previous Editor, Sister Rosemary, will return as her assistant. Pinky, who has been with us as an employed member of the Press staff for almost two years, will continue her work with the business aspects and the customers.

The question, 'What have I learned?' is a big one, and some passage of time will be needed to answer it. I have certainly learned many business and technological skills in a rapidly-changing world. I have had invaluable experience of writing and copy-editing. This leads me to reflect a little on our editorial standards and policy in SLG Press. One thing that Sister Christine and I have discovered, as we have worked together on editing, is that, although this has always been done with care, editorial standards have improved

progressively over the last 50 years, and we have become increasingly rigorous. Perhaps the world has changed in this respect, too. In editing once more some of our older publications which have been popular and need to be restocked, we have found that just putting covers on a talk will no longer do! The manuscript must hold together, with beginning, argument and conclusion. The references must be chased up, and approximate quotations will not suffice. The back cover must give a clear and brief indication of what the book is about. It is not enough to say on the back that the book, or the author's approach, is 'valuable', without specifying how and why. The book's title must not be some esoteric quotation for the *cognoscenti*, or it will not sell. When I began, I took as a rule of thumb (and rules are, of course, made to be broken) that the title should say in the first six words what the book is about. Preferably it should say it in the first two to four words. This has stood us in good stead.

Excellence has always been the aim of SLG Press, but I have had to learn that it is not always achievable. We can only do our very best. At first I assumed that it was quite possible, for instance, to produce an edition of the *Fairacres Chronicle* without errors, even minor ones. That is the aim, and it does happen, but experience has now taught me that things can always go wrong. Thousands of words are likely to attract some minor errors, especially where deadlines have become pressing.

Excellence is good and right, but perfection can be a little different. Perfection, however understood, sometimes isn't possible, simply because time is required. It is altogether safer, and involves fewer risks. Recently I heard in a radio interview that a well-known independent girls' school in Oxford is trying to teach girls less to aim for perfection, namely for marks of 100%, than to seek beyond their reach.

I am grateful for the tools and infrastructure which the Community generously places at our disposal. Given these things, and since I am never short of ideas for developing SLG Press and for new publications, sometimes the sky seems the limit. Yet the constraints are very real. During the past seven years they have, for me, circled constantly around the shortage of working hours available in the Press in which to bring those ideas to completion.

It is somewhat surprising to me that I have not quoted here either from one of the Carmelites (St John of the Cross or St Teresa, for instance), or from something published during my time as Editor, but rather from Martin Luther. It is perhaps fitting, however, for Luther's serious German temperament and indefatigable searching for, and wrestling with, truth ('Here I stand; I can do no other' [5]), his experience of being in a narrow place, and his pioneering spirit sum up some of the qualities I have needed to bring, and have sought to bring, to the work I have been given.

Now I am in the process of laying down the role in the autumn, it only remains for me to thank all of you, as well as my colleagues, for all the support and encouragement I have received. I shall let that great pioneer, Martin Luther, have the last word—again on the subject of lives lived from the perspective of Christ and the cross:

> 'Being conformed to Christ' is not within our powers to achieve. It is God's gift, not our own work.[6]

[5] Words believed to have spoken by Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms, 17 April 1521.

[6] *The Darkness of Faith: Daily Readings with Martin Luther*, op. cit., p. 41.

GOD'S LOVE HAS A HUMAN FACE IN JESUS

In the Crib and on the Cross

FATHER WILLIBRORD BÖTTGES OSB

FOR ME the most important discovery of the past years has been that a relationship *can* support me, and *how* it can support me. Viktor Frankl has opened up for me something new, which I was able to recognize from my own experience. Viktor Frankl, who founded the school of therapy known as logotherapy,[1] was a Jew. Like many millions of Jews, he was in a concentration camp during the Second World War. More than six million Jews were murdered in the camps at that time. One winter's day he had to build a road, together with other prisoners—which, given the frozen ground and the tools available, was a hopeless task. Then he had a vision, an interior image of his wife. She stood as vividly before his eyes as if she were actually present. He discovered that his love for her was so intense that he knew: 'From the power of this love, I can live; and for this love, I will live.' He said: 'If someone had said to me at that time, "Your wife is no longer alive", that would have done nothing to change the reality of the relationship. It was so real interiorly that the exterior relation had become insignificant.'

There is a prayer of Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769) which resonates with what Frankl experienced:

> Faithful Emmanuel, be born also in me. Come, my Saviour, for without you I am lost. Live in me; make me one now with you, who elected me into life.

Frankl's wife was born in him; he carried her within himself. The relationship had its effect upon his life. It was not the image itself which was decisive. What was decisive was the relationship, which was ignited and received new warmth through the image.

God becoming human means for me that God became an image. I can take this image into my depths, so that my soul begins to love; to love not the image itself, but the One who as Truth looks

[1] Logotherapy is founded upon the belief that striving for meaning in life is the primary and most powerful motivating and driving force.

upon me in this image. If I concentrate upon Christ coming towards me in the gospels, his image comes to life in me interiorly. For me it is an obscure image, but I sense its reality. It gives me joy and comfort, and order and peace come at times when I am angry and confused. I only have to enter into the relationship, only have to relate to the One whose Heaven is within me. Indeed, Heaven is nothing other than a description of the presence of God. 'Our Father in Heaven' does not only mean that God is 'other' and is to be contrasted with, and is superior to, everything created. It also means that God is within me. Heaven is also the place in our depths where God is, the One to whom we should turn, turning away from all else.

> See, your Heaven is within me; it desires you, its adornment.
> Tarry not, O my Light, come; come, before the day dawns.[2]

Because God has a human face in Jesus, I can sink into God's love; I can enter ever anew into relationship with the One who is so close to me. He is not a stranger at all, but the Friend of humanity, and a human Friend.

The image can also be a word. Then similar things happen. I hear the Word; I enter into relationship with the Word. I hear: 'The Word became flesh and lived among us.'[3] This Word touches my soul, and if I am prepared for the encounter with the Word, I feel the joy which comes from him. 'I want to live with you', says the Word.

'I want to live with you.' What do you feel when you hear that? How do you respond? 'You want to live with me. My Lord and my God, you want to live with me. You want to live in me.' The Word seeks my soul, and my soul seeks the Word. My questions are answered if, and only if, you and the Word encounter each other. Then it will be for real. The searching comes to a stop, and peace comes into being in the midst of struggle.

Christ is the image of the invisible Father, the Word made flesh, who alone has brought us tidings from the Father, to whom no one but Christ has access. Yet Christ, the incarnate One, can also cause me to be deeply distraught, for he meets me with an

[2] Angelus Silesius (1624-77).
[3] John 1: 14.

incomprehensible love; a disturbing, crazy love; a love which goes to the uttermost.

The fear of hell has tormented me for decades. It was my fundamental fear. It wasn't in any way about being lost, but about what is ultimate, final. It was a fear which meant that people without faith in God seemed fortunate to me, for they didn't know about hell. Now this wonderful, divine, human being stands before the eyes of my heart and speaks to me:

> Look into the Crib: thus have I loved you. I have let go of my equality with God in order to be close to you; in order to make you understand better with what love God loves you. Look at how I have healed the sick—thus I wish to heal you; look at how I have forgiven sinners—thus I forgive you; look at how I have comforted those who mourn—thus I wish to comfort you. Look up to the Cross: I have staked everything—my life—in order to reveal to you my all-embracing, eternal love.

Lord, how am I to comprehend that? I spread out my hands and adore you.

To me the Incarnation means that God does not leave a person alone; that God remains with that person in all circumstances—in that person's finitude, guilt, abjectness, greatness, suffering and dying. God went down into hell, and therefore there will be no more hell, for God is present even in hell. God has, in person, opened to hell the entrance to Heaven:

> Rejoice, you Heavens; rejoice, you ends of the earth. God and sinners should now become friends. Peace and joy are proclaimed to us today. Rejoice, shepherds, with your flocks.[4]

Redemption means something utterly fundamental. We know about a love which embraces all—believers of all religions and so-called unbelievers, righteous and unrighteous, and everything, every place—because God became human and because we know about the Crib and about the Cross and the Resurrection. Redemption means that God's love is as great as God is; because nothing has existence without God, there is therefore no place without God. Crib and Cross reveal and proclaim that God's love reaches from the deepest point imaginable to the uttermost heights

[4] Gerhard Tersteegen.

of Heaven. Crib and Cross are places of encounter with divine love, a love which invites us to see and to hear with what eternal love we are loved. Nothing and no-one can separate us from the love of God, which has taken human form and is given to us in the Crib and on the Cross, in this Jesus who has brought us redemption.

Translated from German by Sister Avis Mary SLG

ASSOCIATES

New

Companion

Joy Osgood (correction, with apologies)
23 August 2012

Maureen Tallon
10 April 2013

FLG

Gillian Straine
21 February 2013

RIP

Priest Associate

Peter Joliffe
20 December 2012

Companion

Nancy Doreen Wickes
2 February 2013

Joan Barbara Spittal
18 March 2013

FLG

Peggy Hunt
14 March 2013

OBLATE SISTER SUSAN OF THE CROSS SLG

14 September 1923 – 15 December 2012

THE STORY OF A LIFE

SUSAN COKAYNE

Oblate Sister Susan wrote this short account of her life journey for her family at the age of 77 in November 2000, twelve years before her death. Although reticent about the hidden life of an Oblate Sister, the strands of her life which nourished her vocation are clearly recounted here. We are grateful to her nephew, Ian Doulton, for permission to publish it.

Childhood and Early Life

I WAS born on 14 September 1923 at 54 Montagu Square as Susan Cokayne, the youngest of the family of Francis and Dorothy Cokayne. Betty, Anne and Tom were my sisters and brother. I was not a pretty sight, for I arrived with a cleft palate and double hare lip. This meant that I had difficulty in sucking, and so I was operated on very quickly to enable me to feed. My poor mother was very distressed, but was much comforted by the pioneering plastic surgeon, Sir Harold Gillies, who assured Mummy that he could, over the years, make things all right for me. I was fortunate to be born to well-to-do parents who were able to afford to give me the best treatment, and to be born at a time when plastic surgery was starting to come into its own.

I had to undergo operations every two to three years. I recall waking up one night as a very young child to find Sir Harold and our doctor, Dr Belfrage, standing by my bed and looking at my mouth. Sir Harold had a wonderful way with his patients and was very reassuring. In those days, cleft palates were repaired in a series of operations, not all at once. Up to the age of about eight, I was very difficult to understand, as I could not produce the right sounds. However, my family could understand me, and were very patient.

As the operations succeeded, so I became able to speak more clearly. My mother became very strict about this and made me repeat what I was trying to say until I said it intelligibly. Although it was horrible at the time, I have been very grateful to her subsequently. I know that if I don't articulate words well now, it is due to my own laziness and fault.

Because of my speech difficulties I was rather isolated and lonely, and I derived great consolation from animals, which have been an abiding passion. I was not allowed to have a dog, as my father thought it cruel to keep dogs in the middle of London. Fortunately our kitchen had a cat, and most mornings my mother and I would go down to the kitchen—Mummy to order the dinner with Florence the cook, and I to seek out and play with Blackie. It was the highlight of the day for me.

Our parish church was St Mary's, Bryanston Square, once a riding school, and we were all baptized there. But we attended St John's, Southwark Crescent (now Hyde Park Crescent) week by week, either for Mattins or the children's service. I enjoyed the big words in the Prayer Book Mattins; although I did not know what they meant, they made a great impression on me. In about 1929 or 1930 we left friendly, homely, squashed Montagu Square and moved round the corner to 1 Bryanston Square, which had plenty of light and space, but somehow always had an impersonal feeling, perhaps due to it once having been an embassy. However, it was good for entertaining: my sister Betty had already been presented at Court as a debutante.

Owing to the constant operations, my education was very interrupted. I was educated privately and alone by a series of governesses. The best was Marian Wells, an excellent teacher and a delightful person. All too soon she married, but we remained friends until her death in the 1980's. We followed the PNEU (Parents' National Education Union) system.[1] On Saturday afternoons

[1] A movement beginning at the end of the 19th century, influenced by the educationalist Charlotte Mason, who died in 1923. She believed that children should be treated by teachers and parents as individuals needing to be stimulated from an early age by a wide, well-structured curriculum, including literature, art and science, rather than simply trained to read,

we would go to the Old Vic Theatre or the open air theatre in Regents Park to see plays by Shakespeare, or to one of London's excellent museums. Sometimes on Sundays I went with Mummy and Daddy to visit one or other of my two godmothers in the country. In the summer holidays we always went away, sometimes to the seaside at Selsey or Anglesey, sometimes to the country on Exmoor or in East Sussex near Northiam. On Exmoor we stayed at Exford and were able to ride each day. I was in the seventh heaven, as I loved horses and riding and dogs.

In 1937 I achieved my desire to go to school, and went as a day girl to the PNEU school at 3 Queen's Gardens, where my sister Anne had been before me. It was run by Miss Faunce, a brilliant and enthusiastic teacher of English literature, who inspired even me. I was very behind with my other school work and lazy too, and soon settled down to being a 'dunce'. During 1938 I became clear that I did not want to be a debutante. I wanted to have a career, the passport to which was obtaining my School Certificate. I continued to do badly, until one day I overheard Miss Faunce say to my mother, 'Susan is hopeless. She will never get her School Certificate.' I was dumbfounded and furious, but this was a turning point. I suddenly had the incentive to work and did achieve the School Certificate. Best of all, I became a boarder in my last term at school, as the school had evacuated to St Giles House, Wimborne St Giles, Dorset. It was lovely there. I left school in July 1939.

On the Land

ON THE DAY on which war broke out, we were on holiday in the Quantocks, and I was riding Joseph in the pony class in the Dunster Horse Show. The next day my brother Tom and I went for a walk and had a serious talk about the implications of the war for us. It was already arranged that I should go to a finishing school in the autumn. I went first to a school in Eastbourne, where we could hear the guns firing from across the Channel. As this was not considered 'safe', I was sent to another finishing school near Oxford. I hated it. It seemed quite wrong to be messing about with French literature

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write and count. This challenged commonly-accepted views; due partly to her influence, such ideas are now regarded as self-evident.

whilst at night we could see the bright red sky as Coventry burned. Fortunately I got measles, was sent home, and never returned. Instead I went to Cheshire to join a friend who was leading a team of Land Girls. We hoed, picked peas, lifted potatoes and so on, all day long. It was very hard work, but fun, and I learned to milk cows. Our rations were inadequate for hard manual work, and we were often very hungry.

When I returned home, I insisted that I must do something useful. I really wanted to join the ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service);[2] but my mother would not hear of it, so I said I wanted to work on the land. My father said that I had better get some training for it, and thus it came about that I went to Swanley Horticultural College in 1941 to do a three-year diploma course. The College had been evacuated to the Midland Agricultural College in Leicestershire. We worked in the large kitchen garden and also on the fruit plantations. It was all new to me, but fascinating, and my fellow students were nice. It was exceptionally cold that winter, with a lot of ice and snow. Many of the senior students were keen Christians and started a thriving SCM (Student Christian Movement) group. They had a great influence on me. I decided to become a Congregationalist: the Church of England bored me stiff, and the Free Church methods and way of life appealed to me.

In 1942, in the autumn, Swanley College moved back to its real home at Swanley in Kent. The College was a very beautiful Queen Anne house, with a long avenue of lime trees in front, and orchards, garden, conservatory and twelve commercial greenhouses. In my second year I did 'commercial horticulture', which entailed spending quite a lot of time stoking boilers, and so on. It was no fun working in the greenhouses during air raids, with bombs falling. Once a German plane flew low and we were machine-gunned as we worked in the fields. One night the old yew tree outside the college building received a direct hit during a particularly violent air raid, reducing the building to a shambles. It was fortunate in the circumstances that only one student was killed. I spent that same night fielding incendiary bombs in the roof of our lodging-house. We were all sent home for a time, and the College reopened at

[2] The women's branch of the British Army during the Second World War.

Ripley in Surrey. I was now in my final year, studying 'decorative-flower production'. All the practical work was done in the marvellous Royal Horticultural Society gardens at Wisley.

When I left college, I went for a job interview in Winchester, and whilst I was hanging about beforehand, I went into the cathedral. I was overwhelmed by it, and thought, 'I must get this job, so that I can be near this place!' I became gardener to the Second Master of Winchester College, whose house and garden were in Kingsgate Street, almost opposite to where my old governess Marion lived. She was married to a clergyman, who had now retired. After work I used to go to Choral Evensong in the cathedral. Apart from the service and the music, it was warm and comfortable. I returned to the Church of England, having found that I missed having a weekly Communion service.

Theological Study, Missionary Work and Fairacres

I LIVED on my meagre wages. After paying for board and lodging, I was left with about 10/- (50 pence), which I saved. I was able to embark on a correspondence course from Oxford, mainly to keep myself occupied in the evenings. I chose to study Theology, as the subject I knew least about. I think I even had the silly notion of proving it wrong! Instead of that, it absolutely gripped me. The clergy in the Cathedral Close were very kind and friendly, and somehow I passed the examination for the Certificate for Proficiency in Religious Knowledge.

A gardener is out in all weathers, and I began to get rheumatic pains. When Agatha Norman, Tutor to Women Theological Students at King's College, London, offered me a place in the Theology Faculty to study for the Lambeth Diploma, I accepted gratefully. The Faculty was at its zenith under the leadership of the Dean, Eric Abbott, who later became Dean of Westminster. I found, however, that learning Greek in order to study the New Testament in Greek was very hard going. It was also hard to commute each day by train from outside Hatfield, where I lived with my widowed mother, to King's College in The Strand in Central London. By the time I left King's in 1951, she had moved to a flat at Princes Gate in London and was now much happier, being nearer to my siblings. I continued to live with her, and was kept busy with some parish work at Balcombe in West Sussex, and with running several discussion groups elsewhere.

It became clear to me that I needed to get away from home for a while, and things fell into place when I got a letter from Diana Hunt, describing her work as Sub-Warden of the University Settlement in Bombay. I already knew of the Settlement, for I had seen an advertisement for a member of staff on the notice board at King's. I had always wanted to go to India, and helping to run a students' hostel seemed to be within the scope of my abilities. I had applied, but was put off by meeting the Home Committee and so had not pursued the matter. Diana's letter re-kindled my enthusiasm, so I re-applied and was accepted. I sailed from Tilbury at the end of 1952.

The Settlement had three Europeans on the staff, including Diana and myself. There were some 60 students in residence from all over India, and a few from East Africa, the Seychelles, etc. They ranged from 14-year-olds to ladies doing advanced postgraduate studies, all studying at one of the many colleges affiliated to Bombay University. There were also differences in caste, language, culture and food. I became involved in some social work enterprises, both in Bombay and in Poona. I loved India in general, but hated the climate of Bombay.

A few months after my return to England, I joined the staff of the College of the Ascension in Selly Oak, Birmingham, as a Tutor. I already knew the College, having spent three weeks there before going to India. It trained missionaries going overseas, and also some people for work in this country. The Selly Oak group of colleges was comprised of many denominations working closely together. I had gone to Bombay with no real missionary training. In consequence I had made almost every possible mistake, and so was able to teach the students not to fall into the same errors. During two long vacations I visited the Caribbean and South Africa, to see for myself the needs in places to which our students would be sent. Barbara Peile, who was to become a Companion of SLG in July 1966, came briefly to the College of the Ascension, before going to India to run a village hospital.

Whilst at Selly Oak I met Kathleen Oxley, who came from Trinidad. She had just returned from mission work in the Gambia in order to take up a post working amongst the many West Indians in Birmingham. We became close friends. She then felt called to the Religious Life, and in September 1963 I drove her to the convent of

the Community of the Sisters of the Love of God at Fairacres in Oxford to become a Postulant. She became Sister Mary Kathleen and is still in the Community. Through this visit I came into contact with the Sisters and started on the path towards becoming an Oblate of the Community, making my life commitment in August 1970.

Another Change of Direction

MY MOTHER died rather suddenly in December 1963. I had already made up my mind to leave the College, as I had seen that my mother needed me at home. We were in the process of buying The Red House at Clifton Hampden near Abingdon when she died. Not only did that fall through, but I could not even afford a quarter's rent on my mother's London flat, so that also went. I was without a home until I was offered a base in Birmingham, which I accepted gratefully.

During the Second World War, plastic surgeons had devised a technique for growing a piece of one's own skin to repair the hole in the cleft of the mouth. I was anxious to have this done, so that if the time ever came in old age when I could not wear a denture, I would still be able to speak clearly. I became a patient in the plastic surgery unity at Stoke Mandeville Hospital and had a series of seven operations at three-weekly intervals.

I seemed unable to pick up after that. Olga, a former Warden of the University Settlement in Bombay, offered to have me to stay with her at an establishment in Jutland, Denmark, where she was Warden. It was run in exactly the same way as the Settlement, so I felt at home, and I soon picked up a bit of Danish. My convalescence took almost a year. Barbara Peile joined me towards the end, as she was convalescing after an operation for cancer. By 1968 Barbara and I had both recovered and we decided that we would set up house together when she returned from India, perhaps having some elderly friends to share it with us. Whilst she was abroad, I worked in several homes for the elderly, one in Reigate, and several belonging to the Friends of the Elderly. I then flew out to India to join her for a few months at her hospital.

Bar returned to England in 1970, and we rented a bungalow in Malvern while we looked at houses for sale in the area. One day we saw in a local paper a house called Stokefield for sale in Graham

Road. It had an acre of garden and many rooms. We fell in love with it and it became ours in 1971. We lived happily there, together with various old friends in need, our dog and our cat, and did all the work ourselves. By 1984 most of our elderly friends had died, and we thought we should move before Stokefield became altogether too much for us. But we had no idea how, when or where. After praying for guidance, and after much deliberation and hassle, we gave Stokefield as a gift to the Help the Aged charity.[3] The charity undertook to house us rent-free in exchange. We moved in 1985 to their property Portway Lodge in Wells, where we could each have one of the two adjoining flats on the first floor. The garden was very overgrown and I found plenty to do.

Portway Lodge was up a steep hill and very exposed to bad weather. By 1990 we were finding carrying the shopping home quite an ordeal. We were glad, therefore, when Help the Aged suggested we move to a small house in Wells. They allowed us to choose, and we chose a small, sunny terraced house in the centre of Wells, near to the church, post office and shops. Although the area is noisy, it has many advantages for us, now that we are elderly. We are content to live quietly here and just be 'available'.[4]

EARLY WALK

SISTER HELEN SLG

Dawn-reddened grasses
upright
in the grey not-yet of morning.

Consider Moses,
that burning bush…
But no—
where fire has won
there is no need for flame.

[3] Now 'Age UK'.

[4] Barbara Peile died in September 2007. Oblate Sister Susan continued to live in this house until shortly before her death.

‘SPIRITUAL WARFARE’

ROBERT TOBIN

A sermon preached at Fairacres on 25 August 2012

IT IS noteworthy, I think, that certain traditional Christian concepts have become decidedly unfashionable among progressively-minded church people in our own age. How rare it is, for example, to hear anyone speak nowadays of ‘fearing’ God, as though to do so were somehow a violation of our own human dignity or a distortion of God’s love. Similarly, the idea of ‘spiritual warfare’ is another long-standing Christian concept that seems to have been quietly pushed into the background. Admittedly, this isn’t altogether surprising, given the readiness of Christians in the past to externalize this notion of battle in order to justify all sorts of violence in the name of God.

Since the time of Constantine, the Church has allowed itself to be used by kings and rulers, ostensibly Christian, who have drawn upon its spiritual authority to justify their own murderous ends. And there is, of course, a troubling precedent within Scripture itself that yokes together ‘the will of God’ with human war and conquest. Having had a lesson this morning from the Book of Joshua,[1] we should not overlook the fact that it is an account of how a particular people—the Hebrews—committed conquest and genocide in the conviction that it was all God’s will to do so. Contemporary Palestinian Christians are understandably very uneasy about where to locate such an account within the salvation story, given their own continuing experience of Israeli aggression in the modern age.

Yet not only is the image of God as a mighty warrior inescapable, but it has powerful resonances, resonances which I think we would be foolish to dismiss outright, whatever the justified misgivings we may have about correlating religion with violence. The sixth chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians is one of the classic Christian texts in which the language of warfare is employed in ways that at once

[1] Josh. 24: 1-2a; 14-18.

comfort and challenge us.[2] It is clear that in doing so the author of Ephesians draws consciously upon scriptural precedent, specifically references in Isaiah that portray the armour of Yahweh and his Messiah.[3]

Yet whatever the more tribalistic conception conjured up by these images in the Old Testament, it ought to be clear that they are used for very different theological reasons in Ephesians. Here the early Christian community is called upon explicitly to 'put on the whole armour of God'; not so that it may struggle against 'enemies of blood and flesh', but rather 'against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places'.[4] All that follows, then, would seem to be a rousing call to engage in spiritual warfare against the temptations and assaults that each of us as individuals must face. And these are, of course, real enough. One needn't subscribe to notions of little red devils whispering in one's ear to know how insidious and corrosive sin can be within our own hearts and minds. In our eagerness to reject more old-fashioned ways of conceiving of such things, we too often downplay, or even reject, the realities of greed, lust, anger, and so on. To externalise these personal challenges through the language of 'powers' and 'forces' is only to expose them to the scrutiny and confrontation they deserve.

The language of powers employed in Ephesians seems, however, to point to something more than just the individual struggle with sin. There is a corporate aspect to all this, both in terms of the Christian community receiving this counsel, and in terms of the forces that must be confronted. Certain modern theologians have sought to recast the notion of spiritual warfare by understanding these adversarial powers as all those authorities, ideologies, hierarchies and institutions that take on lives of their own, so that they become dehumanizing and develop into sources of spiritual menace. Thus the evil in our midst ceases to have a name or a face, and instead is manifest in social structures that tyrannize us to the point of cosmic proportion.

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[2] Eph. 6: 10-20.
[3] cf. Isa. 11: 4-5; 49: 2; 52: 7; 59: 17.
[4] Eph. 6: 12.

How to reconcile these differing conceptions of the 'powers of this present darkness' in itself becomes the task, before we can formulate our challenge to them. To see the powers only in terms of the individual Christian runs the risk of a kind of quietism, a failure to recognise social evil and our obligation to fight against it. On the other hand, to see the powers only in terms of social evil is to run the risk of not taking personal moral responsibility for ourselves, of always locating our sin in structures ultimately beyond our immediate control. The question then becomes this: how do we confront the 'spiritual forces of evil' in a way that is appropriately personal *and* corporate? How do we recognise the reality of spiritual warfare as part of our Christian life, knowing that the recognition in itself can be part of the battle?

The simple answer to this complicated question is, as the passage tells us more than once, to put on 'the whole armour of God'.[5] For all their militaristic resonance, 'the belt of truth', 'the breastplate of righteousness', 'the shoes … of peace', 'the shield of faith', 'the helmet of salvation' and 'the sword of the Spirit'[6] are not ultimately signs of our own spiritual competence, but of God's saving protection. They are embodied affirmations of God's faithfulness in a world that, for all its beauty and loveliness, is also beset by violence and cruelty.

Our calling is neither to obsess over such things, nor to ignore them, but rather to recognise again and again our radical dependence on God. In this we derive the strength to negotiate the complexities of our human condition without being defeated by them. In this we take up our cudgels, not against ourselves nor against each other, but in the faith that the battle has already, in fact, been won, that the Cross and Resurrection of Christ have overcome all fears—save the happy fear of God himself.

[5] Eph. 6: 11, 13.
[6] Eph. 6: 14-17.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

VINCENT STRUDWICK'S formation was as a student and tutor with the Society of the Sacred Mission at Kelham. Later, he and his wife were associates in life and work with the Society at Willen Priory. He has taught historical theology in Oxford. He is a friend of SLG, and for ten years has been Chaplain to the All Saints Sisters in Oxford.

FATHER WILLIBRORD BÖTTGES OSB, born in 1945, entered the Benedictine Abbey at Gerleve in Westphalia, Germany in 1966 and was ordained priest in 1972. For much of his monastic life he has worked with young people, or in more general educational and retreat work. In 1991-2002 he was involved in hospital chaplaincy (focussing on patients undergoing organ transplantation) and some parish work. He is now at the Monastery of St Ansgar, Nütschau in Schleswig-Holstein.

ROBERT TOBIN is Chaplain of Oriel College, Oxford and an occasional celebrant at Fairacres. He is currently preparing a study of the transformation of social identity in the American Episcopal Church in the 1960's. He has served as Episcopal/Anglican Chaplain at Harvard University and Team Curate in Beaconsfield in Buckinghamshire.

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NEW FROM SLG PRESS

ON TOUR IN BYZANTIUM

Excerpts from *The Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus

TRANSLATED BY RALPH MARTIN SSM

John Moschus, a monk from a monastery near Jerusalem, set off with a companion in about AD 575, to tour the Christian centres of the eastern Mediterranean. He thought of the world as a spiritual meadow, where wild flowers of every kind grew in profusion. Like a bee, he visited one blossom after another, gathering tales from ordinary people in many occupations, in the belief that heroic deeds and unselfish sacrifice were not confined to the great and famous.

The result was a unique piece of early investigative travel journalism, woven together by John Moschus into a book which he called *The Spiritual Meadow*. Ralph Martin provides us with a selection of some of the best stories from the complete work, in a new and lively translation from the original Greek.

RALPH MARTIN SSM read Classics in Toronto, and was then ordained to the Anglican priesthood. In 1957 he moved to England to become a member of the Society of the Sacred Mission. After teaching at the Society's theological college at Kelham, Nottinghamshire, and pioneering a new foundation at Willen, he worked in Lesotho, Australia, Ghana, Japan, Rome, Middlesbrough and Kuwait. Since 2006 he has lived in retirement in Oxfordshire.

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Order from SLG Press online, or by post, email, telephone or fax. It is also available as an e-book from our website, or on Amazon.

BOOK REVIEWS

Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: An Introduction and Selection by Rowan Williams and Benedicta Ward SLG, Bloomsbury, 2012, £16.99. ISBN: 978-1-4411-2354-1.

It is appropriate that this book should be dedicated to the memory of Donald Allchin, who so strikingly taught and practised a form of ecumenism which sought connections throughout history. He believed that there is unity in Christ with people who lived long ago and in times very different from our own, and that we can experience this and learn from it. So, in contrast to those who may feel that 'history is bunk' and Bede is boring, the compilers of this book have found that a close reading of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* can instruct and illuminate us today. The thirty-page Introduction by Rowan Williams contains sections on Bede's context and purpose; his methods and sources; the spiritual challenge of the *History*; 'what Bede doesn't say'; and, briefly, the legacy of the *History* in English history. In the remaining 133 pages Sister Benedicta gives her own translation of a selection of relevant passages from all five volumes of *The Ecclesiastical History*, and, as a pendant, the letter of Bede's disciple Cuthbert about his death.

Bede lived from *c*.673 to 735; we are taken by him into a world remote from ours in time, and to a lesser extent remote from his, too. It is seen through the eyes of a monk-scholar whose immediate experience was limited to short distances around his monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow. Much of his *History* is likely to be unfamiliar to us, for the story is complicated. The names of the protagonists are strange to modern ears, and can be confusing; the place names are disorientating, despite the map provided, because they differ from those we use today. 'Where are we now?' the reader may ask, and, 'What is going on?'

It so happened that, as I was reading this book for the first time last year, I was also reading Antony Beevor's *The Second World War*[1]. It struck me that the scale of Beevor's endeavour and that of

[1] Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2012.

Bede were comparable. Whether covering the history of part of a small island over several centuries, or of a global conflict over six tumultuous years, what the historian is faced with is just *too much.* Bede used different and uneven sources, making the material he compiled unwieldy; but, as Rowan Williams makes clear, Bede made sense of it through reference to the Bible, and the pattern of events in the history of God's chosen people shown there. This enables him to see order in the chaos. He can see a similar pattern, determined ultimately by the nature of God and God's love, in the chequered history of England which he describes. By implication Bede is inviting his readers to think biblically, which means to believe that the meaning of time, and what may seem chaotic to us, is not to be found in smooth and inevitable progress or decline, but in relation to the central event of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. Hence he is at pains to insist that the paschal mystery should be celebrated with right order by all who confess Christ—this, for him, is according to the Roman dating of Easter. Hence, too, the attentive reader is not just imbibing a history of the conversion of a people (albeit by fits and starts) to the faith of Christ, but is being converted and knitted into the life of the whole Church.

The warmth and light that flicker through Bede's pages reflect a peculiarly English experience. In this country we can never take the sun for granted, and fire and light are the more cherished because of that. In winter we may long for them as for life itself. In Northumbria, the Christian wife of King Edwin received a letter from the Pope, urging her to pray for her husband's conversion:

> Inflame the coldness of his heart by the knowledge of the Holy Ghost, that by the abolition of the cold and pernicious worship of paganism, the heat of Divine faith may enlighten his understanding through your frequent exhortations. (p. 73)

So, too, the justly famous story of a sparrow flying out of the winter cold into the brief comfort of the hall 'while storms of rain and snow rage outside' (p 75) speaks of the gospel promising to illuminate the surrounding, threatening, dark. Conversion brings light, and it changes the way everything is seen. My favourite story of the light of Christ is of an un-named nun who was dying in the monastery at Barking. At midnight her candle still burned, but so

bright was the light that was coming to her that the candle seemed darkness, and she called out to her Sisters to put it out.

> And when still no one paid any attention to what she said, or gave any answer, she added, 'Let that candle burn as long as you will; but take note that it is not my light, for my light will come to me at the dawn of the day.' (p. 122)

Bede concluded his *History* with a chapter about his own life, the books he had written and a prayer that he might 'some day come to you, the fountain of all wisdom, and stand before your face forever' (p. 164). In the account of his death in the Letter of Cuthbert he is recorded as saying, 'The time of my departure is at hand and my soul longs to see Christ my King in all His beauty.' (p. 168).

In this book we have a starting point. It may not be that many who read it will go on to seek out Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and read it from cover to cover, however much the authors hoped for, and intended, that. But anyone who has been born into, or has adopted, the Christian faith known in England in the centuries before and after Bede, will have material to ponder concerning their own Christian identity now, within this Church and nation. And perhaps it will assist them in the struggle to understand a world that can seem chaotic or adrift from God.

SISTER ROSEMARY SLG

Elizabeth of the Trinity: The Unfolding of her Messsage; Volume 1: In the World & In Community, and *Volume 2: In the Infirmary & After Her Death;* Joanne Mosley, Teresian Press (from the Carmelite Book Service, Oxford), 2012, £10.00 per volume.
ISBNs: 978-0-947916-11-4 (Vol. 1) and 978-0-947916-12-1 (Vol. 2).

My husband handed me two fat books in the week before Christmas with the words, 'an early Christmas present'. It was possibly not the week to start a book which would become completely absorbing. This is a fascinating biography, detailed and yet easy to read; an account not only of Elizabeth's life, but also of her family and friends.

Joanne Mosley introduces us to the world in which Elizabeth grew up, and deals with her spiritual journey within this world. Her family was a devout Catholic family living in Dijon at the end of

the nineteenth century, a turbulent time for the Church in France. The author uses events in Elizabeth's early life to illustrate her strong, and often wilful, character, but also demonstrates how her deep and sensitive nature developed. The gradual deepening of her prayer life, and her determination to seek God's will in all things, lead eventually to her joyful and longed-for entry into the Carmelite community.

In 1887, at the age of seven, Elizabeth lost her father, who died of a heart attack while she held him in her little arms. Elizabeth recorded this experience in a poem she wrote ten years later:

> I tried to hold back
> That last, so very long sigh. (p. 7)

Elizabeth was brought face to face with death, 'not as a word, not as the attending of a funeral, but as split second of the mystery itself: the departure of a soul from this life to the next' (p. 37).

The first volume follows her childhood, the development of her very great talent as a pianist, her ability to make and maintain many close friendships, and her careful religious education. We read that Elizabeth herself felt that her first confession, aged seven, was a 'conversion'. It was not long after, at the age of eight, that she began to feel that she wanted to be a nun, much to her mother's distress. Elizabeth continued to battle with feeling angry often, but having made a 'conscious decision' to change, she persevered and by the age of eighteen was known for her 'evenness of temper' and 'gentleness', so making her 'iron will' contribute to the transformation.

Her First Communion at the age of ten was, in Elizabeth's own words, 'the day when the sweet Lord took possession of my heart' (p. 18). Her mother, Madame Catez, was deeply moved by the occasion and wrote, 'I saw my child so recollected, so earnest, her tears didn't stop flowing and I understood that God had taken possession of that heart which was so pure and loving.' (p. 18). As very near neighbours of the Carmel, the family were invited into the convent parlour. Mother Marie of Jesus, the sub-prioress, told Elizabeth the meaning of her name, saying 'she was the happy little house of the good God, and that her name Elizabeth meant that

Elizabeth would spend the rest of her life becoming ever more absorbed in the mystery of being a "House of God".'

The second volume is mainly focused on Elizabeth's own writings. We are given a clear and detailed account of the way her message of prayer, contemplation and love burst forth from her hidden life in Carmel, and was spread chiefly through her writings. Her friendships continued after she entered Carmel. She wrote to friends and to priests; many treasured her letters, which became valuable documents in the Process of Beatification. An important source for this volume is the account written after her death by Mother Germaine, who had been involved in her formation as a novice and who greatly supported her through her last illness.

Soon after her death the local Dijon community started calling her their 'little saint'. Elizabeth's journey to Beatification, and the complicated and painstaking process the Roman Catholic Church requires, are carefully researched and documented; even here, interesting and amusing comments make it very readable. This process culminates in 1984, with her Beatification in Rome on the Feast of Christ the King.

During the six years of her 'hidden life' in Carmel, Elizabeth continued to write a diary and poetry. Her letter-writing also was profuse. In particular she has left us, in *Heaven in Faith*, the testament she wrote for her sister Guite, evidence of her continuing desire to bring others to God. *Last Retreat*, the document she wrote during the retreat she made just before she died, is remarkable evidence of her vocation to suffering with Christ.

Her final days are very movingly described, as are the events that followed Elizabeth's death. This is the story of a very special life that has been portrayed with great sensitivity and love, while maintaining rigorous attention to the facts and sources. The author's empathy with Elizabeth adds to the pleasure of reading the book.

ELIZABETH KING

The Great Beginning of Cîteaux, *A Narrative of the Beginning of the Cistercian Order*: *the* Exordium Magnum *of Conrad of Eberbach*, translated by Benedicta Ward SLG & Paul Savage, Cistercian Publications/Liturgical Press, 2012, £29.98, US $59.95. ISBN 978-0-87907-172-1.

When Cistercian Publications, the publishing house of the English-speaking Cistercian Order, was founded in the early 1970's, one of its main tasks was to issue an English translation of Conrad of Eberbach's monumental work, narrating the early history of the Order. It has been an unexpectedly difficult assignment for two accomplished translators and their editor, but we can be grateful for their dogged dedication to it. Here we have an accessible English version which gives a well-defined picture of life in Cistercian monasteries, from the foundation of the Order until the early thirteenth century.

Conrad was abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Eberbach in Germany, but had begun his monastic life at Clairvaux, which was founded by St Bernard. There he began the compilation of the history of his Order. Some of the older monks had known the great St Bernard, and had tales to tell of his wisdom as abbot and upholder of the tenets of the Order. Conrad drew on historical accounts already current, but expanded them to add a layer of his own teaching and perception about the monastic life. Like all inheritors of a tradition, he was concerned lest the first enthusiasm and vision of the founders, Robert of Molesmes and his companions, should be lost. He was, therefore, at pains to illustrate his history with stories of the more saintly brethren, and what happened to those who did not keep strictly to the Rule. As madness was equated with evil in medieval thought, many of the latter tales are written from a world-view to which we would now find it difficult to subscribe.

He was also convinced that, for the monastic, salvation can only be found in the Cistercian Order; the Black Monks, or Benedictines, were insufferably slack and decadent. The claim that one particular Order or Congregation was the only way to Christ—the only 'ark of salvation'—was a widely-held belief until the reform of the religious life after Vatican II. This view is hard for

some of us to comprehend now, with our understanding that each Order or Congregation has its own charism, with a different gift to offer the Church.

Although at first sight this book appears to be one for scholars or members of the Cistercian Order, I discovered that it has a wider appeal. In scholarly terms Conrad's is not a critical history, but stands nearer the tradition of the Desert monastics, relating stories that are designed to build up the reader in faith. However, the serious student will find the extensive footnotes and bibliography particularly useful.

SISTER CHRISTINE SLG

Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD, Peter Brown, Princeton University Press, 2012, £27.95. ISBN: 978-0-691-15290-5.

We are here as if in an art restorer's studio; a well-known picture begins to be cleaned. Dark corners are illuminated, colours renewed and apparently changed; then overpaintings are removed, a landscape subtly altered, a shadowy, unsuspected figure comes to prominence in the composition; and we see afresh.

Peter Brown engages in a re-consideration of our accepted ideas of the landscape of the early Christian West, deliberately making the point that recent academic work will also shed further light on what was happening contemporaneously in the Christian East. It has been all too easy to date everything from the conversion of the Emperor Constantine (312 AD); yet he was never seen publicly at Christian worship and his considerable foundations in Rome were all, noticeably, outside the city's centre. If Brown chooses 550 AD as his cut-off date, it is because by then the Church was finally attaining a position of power and wealth equal to, if not beyond that of, the surviving Roman families and governmental structures.

Giving, of course, was a fundamental part of Roman civic life, just as was taxation. Public buildings and entertainments were simply expected, as was the *annona*, the food subsidy that maintained the citizens of Rome and frequently threatened the reputations and lives of its rulers. Yet this raises a question: Who were the poor? The Roman citizens were certainly not the destitute;

they had rights and saw the right to riot as a means of enforcing them. Who, then, for Christians were the poor? St Cyprian had taught his people in Carthage to give to the Christian poor, notably in the ransoming of Christians taken as slaves; and such giving both enabled Christians, in the traditions of the Old Testament, to see themselves as the poor, and to see giving as wealth transferred into heaven. The poor, in other words, as 'brothers, rather than others'.

The point is made that the majority of Christians in these centuries are of distinctly middling status, reflected in their social standing and influence. Yes, they give to the Church, decorate its buildings, but they continue somewhat marginal in a society still wedded to its traditional structures and ceremonies; the word 'pagan' does not appear before the late 370s. Against this background, both Ambrose and Augustine as bishops have their achievements—and failures. And here we have the particular strength and charm of the book, that Peter Brown takes us into detailed accounts of individuals and their circumstances. Paulinus of Nola renounces his wealth—not for poverty, claims Brown, but for anti-wealth. Then the ever-vexatious Jerome appears on the scene, scourge of a Roman church seeking to build up its identity. He is the apostle of total withdrawal, who nonetheless requires wealthy patrons to provide his necessary library facilities. That total withdrawal threatens, too, the Church's cohesion, when the exaltation of virginity and widowhood suggest a two-tier following of Christ. Following the shock of the Sack of Rome in 410 the super-rich Pinianus and Melania embraced asceticism and the disposal of their fortune(s); but this was not indiscriminate charity, for it was the monasteries of East and West—the 'holy poor'—that benefitted.

What were the rich, then? Criminals, as the Pelagian author of *De Divitiis* suggested? Or guilty of pride and not beyond hope, as Augustine taught? John Cassian and Salvian of Marseilles sharpened the issues, Cassian by his vision of monasticism, and Salvian by a vivid awareness of impending judgement. Ordinary Christians had 'one tiny flicker of hope' of salvation, but the committed had more expected of them. Augustine had expected regular giving as a part of everyday expiation for sin; Salvian conjured up angels and devils by the deathbed.

It was, of course, a profoundly disturbing time, as the Roman Empire in the West with its taxation and financial structures began to fail, and individual kingdoms slowly and painfully took shape. By the time of Gregory the Great, the Roman Church had begun to take over from the city's authorities the traditional responsibility for the poor. In Rome they were still the relatively-privileged poor, but elsewhere they are better defined as the non-powerful. Bishops were coming to a position of influence, not through holding political or civic office, but by a combination of financial power, with the Church's wealth, held in trust for the poor, and pastoral power, both spiritual and sacramental. Giving was now inextricably linked both with expiation for sin and with intercession. It is noticeable that, whereas in earlier times a monastery might grow up where an *abba* drew disciples to himself, now in the sixth century a monastery would be built where monks would come to intercede. Peter Brown gives us some final and telling pages, here, on the rise of the clergy as a separate order, particularly with respect to marriage and celibacy. This was not a caste seeking to define itself; it was responding to lay demand for difference.

Peter Brown's achievement is not least in having placed us all in his debt with so rich a work. Princeton University Press may also take its share of credit for the editing and production. Scholars will relish not only his insight and method, but 101 pages of footnotes and 76 pages of primary and secondary sources. Classical and church historians and theologians will relish the evaluations of individuals and communities and re-evaluations of the development of ideas. But please do not be put off by thinking that this is a book only for academics; all of us can enjoy what is, simply, accessible and well-written reading matter that does not require the possession of academic qualifications. It deserves to be enjoyed on the beach, as well as in the Bodleian! Early Christianity is in all sorts of ways remote from us; yet here our brothers and sisters in the faith are re-enlivened and the saints brought before us, as they struggle in daily life towards their hope and our God who 'is rich in mercy', but who 'for our sakes became poor'.

JOHN SCOTT

The Philokalia: Exploring the Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality, ed. by Brock Bingaman and Bradley Nassif, OUP, 2012, £22.50. ISBN: 978-0-19-539027-8.

This is a first-rate book, which has been very well prepared and researched by its various contributors and is beautifully produced: it is very good value for money. Under the aegis of Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, who contributes a foreword, these contributors come from across the Church and both sides of the Atlantic. This symposium is a truly ecumenical production of the highest significance; for this is the first time that a careful academic hinterland has been created to enable due consideration of the significance of the *Philokalia* as a seminal collection of ascetic texts, with a rich history. These texts are of importance initially within the Orthodox Church, but more recently attracting use and appreciation within the Catholic and Protestant Churches.

Its preface pays tribute to the foundational work of translation by Bishop Kallistos Ware and others in the English-speaking world: four volumes of the *Philokalia* have now been translated into English, and the final volume is awaited with eager expectation; their translation rests upon the modern critical Greek text. As Bishop Kallistos has observed, it is astonishing that this collection of spiritual writings, stretching back over a millennium and compiled in the eighteenth century in relative obscurity, should now speak so urgently to the spiritual needs of the modern Christian world.

This symposium is divided into three discrete and substantial sections: the history of the collection; its theological foundations; and its spiritual practices. The history of how the *Philokalia* came to be is carefully examined by three contributors, outlining the intentions and aspirations of its Athonite monastic initiators, St Nicodemus and St Makarios, who first published the work privately in 1782. They demonstrate some of its likely antecedents in the monasteries of Mount Athos, and they speculate about the principles of its compilation, noting that some famous ascetic texts were not included, perhaps because they were already available.

The first printed version of the *Philokalia,* however, which incorporates many, though not all, of the texts included by the Greek monastic fathers, was issued in 1793 by Paisy Velichkovsky,

who independently translated it into Slavonic. This text had a profound influence on Russian and other Slavonic spiritual traditions in the nineteenth century. It was through this route that the earliest select translations drawn from the *Philokalia* became available in English just after the Second World War. The whole story is told in some detail with meticulous references. The first part of the symposium concludes with a fascinating account of the way in which Father Dumitru Stăniloae pioneered the translation of the *Philokalia* into Romanian, during and after the communist era, adding significantly, however, to the range of ascetic writings included within it.

The section considering the theology of the *Philokalia* is rich indeed. It deals with its roots in the Bible and the way in which its writers relate to the spiritual meaning of the text of the Scriptures: in many ways the manifest unity in diversity of the *Philokalia* mirrors that of the Bible itself. The contribution by Rowan Williams in particular is masterly; in it he outlines lucidly the theological world of the *Philokalia*, demonstrating its inherent spiritual unity. No less striking is the contribution by one of the editors that considers the singular influence of St Maximus the Confessor, whose writings constitute most of the second volume of the *Philokalia* in its English translation. The consideration by another contributor of the ecclesiology inherent in this long spiritual tradition is equally important. Not least it corrects any misapprehension that the path of ascetic prayer enshrined in the Athonite tradition and embodied in the *Philokalia* can be attempted outside the sacramental life and discipline of the Church.

The third part of this symposium ranges over a number of interesting topics, indicating along the way the relevance of the *Philokalia* to spiritual and pastoral needs today. There is a judicious consideration of the place of 'the Jesus Prayer' within this tradition, and a perceptive analysis of the demands of spiritual authority in the writings attributed in the *Philokalia* to St Symeon the New Theologian. Three of the contributions reflect as much about the modern American scene, however, as they do about the text that they are considering; nonetheless their reflections are of interest and contemporary relevance.

The last two contributions distil much wisdom: about the role of women in the *Philokalia*; and about its antecedent roots in the ascetic traditions of the earliest Christian monasteries in Egypt and Gaza. The discussion of the significance of the Virgin Mary in the Athonite tradition is sensitive, well-informed and of great spiritual value and relevance for modern attitudes towards gender within Christianity. The final contributor is surely correct in highlighting the underlying significance of the spiritual teaching found in the letters of Barsanuphius and John, who lived in the sixth century in Gaza, and whose writings were certainly known to the Athonite compilers of the *Philokalia*. In 1816 St Nicodemus published in Venice an edition of their entire correspondence, comprising 850 letters.

This is altogether a fascinating and outstanding volume, richly endowed with copious references. As such it should provide a sure springboard for further research into the provenance and influence of the *Philokalia*. But this is not its ultimate purpose in the minds of its contributors and editors, any more than it was of those who initially compiled it, either in Greek or in Slavonic. Rather, *tolle lege* ('pick up and read')! For the *Philokalia* is a demanding handbook for a lifetime of prayer, suffering and disciplined application; a sure guide, however, to the narrow and afflicted way up the Mountain of the Lord that leads to the life that is Life indeed.

DOUGLAS DALES

Words of Spirituality: Exploring the Inner Life, Enzo Bianchi, 2nd ed., SPCK Publishing, 2012, £9.99. ISBN: 978-0-281-06867-8.

Falling Upward: A spirituality for the two halves of life, Richard Rohr, SPCK Publishing, 2012, £10.99. ISBN: 978-0-281-06891-3.

We have here two books by religious, both concerned about the authenticity and depth of our relationship with God. Father Enzo Bianchi founded the ecumenical community of Bose in Italy, where he remains as Prior, whilst Father Richard Rohr is a Franciscan, whose varied ministries have brought him to New Mexico and to the founding of the Centre for Action and Contemplation.

Father Rohr, as the title of his book suggests, is anxious to ensure that we make the most of our lives, which can only be achieved by doing the work appropriate to each, though not necessarily chronological, half. His analysis of our selves and of our common western world predicaments could seem pessimistic. Our first-half work is necessarily concerned with building up our identity and imposing some form of order on our external circumstances. This has to be done, and it will take into account both the need for clear structures and disciplines and our inevitable (and right) tendencies to rebel. And here the problems begin. Rohr, with significant experience of prison chaplaincy, writes clearly of those who have never experienced this basic and balanced approach to life. Even 'much of the workforce and student body of America' [are those who have] 'been coddled, been given "I Am Special" buttons for doing nothing special and had all his or her bills paid by others and whose basic egocentricity has never been challenged or undercut' (p. 31). In short, society is largely trapped in a state of adolescence. Not that Christians have much to boast about, either; too much of their religious practice and day-to-day attitudes remain mired in formalism and impervious to the gospel.

For us all, there has to be a twofold recognition. First, that failure and loss are inevitable in our lives: 'Human maturity is neither offensive nor defensive; it is finally able to accept that reality *is what it is*' (p. 7); and secondly, that God is at work in us through the Holy Spirit, but that we are hardly aware of our true self that God is bringing into the light. Thus in the second half of life we learn to accept all that had to happen previously, and yet we do not let ourselves be overruled by it. Rohr seeks to illustrate this in a number of ways, including an account of his own religious development. Of the Catholic Church he is a committedly critical, yet dependent, member; of the Franciscans a committedly thankful and dependent member. Thus he observes:

> Reality, creation, nature itself, what I call 'the First Body of Christ' has no choice in the matter of necessary suffering. It lives the message without saying yes or no to it. ... 'The Second Body of Christ', the formal church, always has the freedom to say yes or no. That very freedom allows it to say no much of the time, especially to any talk of dying, stumbling ... Yet I know that I avoid this daily dying too. The church has been for me a broad

> education and experience in passion, death and resurrection by forcing me to go deep in one place. (p. 79)

If we persevere in unmasking ourselves and in the acceptance of our creatureliness before God, then the image of Christ may appear:

> I am grateful that Jesus himself was a teacher from the second half of life, who, according to Paul, 'always said yes'. (p. 142)

A word in conclusion: Father Rohr's book is clearly written with a variety of readers of varying religious persuasions in mind. A wide range of reference is good, as is his call upon a range of archetypal stories and myths, whilst Christian scripture plays a solid, but far from exclusive, role. If, however, you are allergic to the juxtaposing of, say, Odysseus, Cinderella, Freud and 'my friend Paula D'Arcy', then this may not be the spiritual book for you. Nor, indeed, if a style that can only be called relentless, with *significant phrases in italics*, is not to your taste. You have been warned.

In 1995 Father Aidan Nichols OP wrote in his Note preceding *Faces of the Church*, a collection of papers by the late Father Geoffrey Preston OP, that:

> The desire is sometimes expressed for a "post-critical" theology which would integrate the gains of modern biblical scholarship within a contemplative, ecclesial reading of the Bible of the kind that the Church Fathers, and, after them, the spiritual masters and mistresses of the Catholic tradition practised apparently so effortlessly.[2]

Well, Pope Emeritus Benedict has given us three volumes on the gospels and Our Lord's life in such a spirit, and SPCK promises us, beyond the present volume, a series of works by Father Bianchi. Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams commends the enterprise to us by noting that:

> To read Enzo Bianchi's work is, among other things, to be forcefully made aware that we have got used to a rather thin diet of resources to help us read the Bible.

Indeed; and our situation is critical. Are the scriptures to be ignored in part, re-written in part and interpreted by external norms? Or can we come nearer to the understanding of Origen, who saw the

[2] *Faces of the Church: Meditations on a Mystery and Its Images*, Geoffrey Preston OP, ed. Aidan Nichols OP, T & T Clark, 1997, p. vii.

Incarnation, the Word, in Christ's human life, in the continuing life of the Church and in the very scriptures themselves? 'Truly, you are a God who lies hidden'—but hidden, there to be found in prayerful exposition.

The structure of the book takes some pattern from the practice of the early Desert Monastics. So what we are given are forty-five considerations of themes, some on virtues, theological and cardinal, some more apparently monastic (desert, spiritual struggle, obedience) and others more apparently general (patience, silence, loving our enemies). But these are artificial distinctions, for Father Bianchi is speaking from Scripture, allowing the Word to resound afresh. Thus a consideration of holiness immediately connects it with beauty and progresses in thought through the communion of saints into the life of the Holy Trinity. So egocentricity is challenged and a reminder offered that we are called to responsibility for the beauty of the world created to be 'very beautiful' (Gen. 1: 31). And our personal responsibility is underlined by our every act:

> It shines forth where communion triumphs over consumerism, and where contemplation and the free gift of oneself are victorious over possessiveness and greed ... The command 'You shall be holy, for I, the Lord, am holy' (Lev. 19: 2; 1 Pet. 1: 16) is inseparable from the command 'Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another' (John 13: 34). Christian beauty is not an object, but an event.

Scripture leads us here, but Father Bianchi is well versed in, and quotes from, other writers too, creating an interplay of interpretations as we move on.

A number of years ago I heard a complaint that parochial Lent and other courses were always offered as 'teaching the basics'. Can we not, the questioner asked, do something beyond and better than that? This book is, in a sense, the answer to that question. It deals with the basics—or perhaps better, the fundamentals—of our relationship with God, and since it draws on Scripture and tradition it will provide repeated inspiration. We go to the Eucharist, we receive Communion, we make our confession, regularly and repeatedly, trusting in God's promise of growth in grace. And Father Bianchi now calls us to attend to Scripture in the same hope of meeting the Lord and being re-formed by him. He quotes St Paul writing to the Romans that 'the creation waits with eager longing

for the revealing of the children of God' and hopes to be 'set free from the bondage to decay', and comments:

> As Christians await the Lord's coming, their expectation becomes an invocation of universal salvation, an expression of a faith that embraces the entire cosmos and suffers together with every human being and every creature. If this is what it means to wait for the Lord, and if this waiting is a responsibility we have as Christians, we should listen to Teilhard de Chardin's heartfelt and provocative message: 'We Christians, responsible, after Israel, for keeping the ardent flame of desire burning—what has become of our longing ?'

JOHN SCOTT

The Greatest Prayer: Rediscovering the revolutionary message of the Lord's Prayer, John Dominic Crossan, SPCK Publishing, 2011, £10.99. ISBN: 978-0-281-06417-5.

John Dominic Crossan is Professor Emeritus at DePaul University, Chicago and the author of several books, including *The Historical Jesus* and *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*. This knowledge alone gives some clues to this book's content and style: an American scholar wishes to understand both the Lord's Prayer and Jesus himself within their historical setting—seeing Jesus, perhaps, as a revolutionary. Crossan says as much in the first chapter, and particularly on p. 7.

For Crossan, the Lord's Prayer is 'Christianity's strangest prayer' (p. 1). It is both a revolutionary manifesto, since its radical vision of justice is the core of Israel's biblical tradition; and a hymn of hope, since it utilises poetic techniques which are the core of Israel's poetry. He also sees the Bible as 'the strangest book', because nonviolent and violent visions of God 'march in tandem' throughout the Bible, as do nonviolent and violent visions of Jesus throughout the New Testament. (p. 185).

I find the author's thought processes difficult to follow, due to his tendency to combine punchy metaphors, such as comparing God and prayer to electricity for charging a laptop battery, with complicated biblical exegesis. His approaches are valid and interesting, but they produce an incoherence of style. This book is

not, therefore, particularly easy to read. But it is far from being lightweight and it is not just a repetition of other books on the subject. I found his thoughts on justice and violence particularly helpful. Anyone wanting to take study of the Lord's Prayer seriously will surely find something which aids understanding.

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

BOOKS RECEIVED

From Bloomsbury:

Choose Life: Christmas and Easter Sermons in Canterbury Cathedral, Rowan Williams, 2013, £10.99. ISBN: 978-1-4081-9038-8.

Prayers of Great Traditions: A Daily Office, ed. & introd. by Christopher Voke, 2013, £12.99. ISBN: 978-1-4081-8730-2.

On Heaven and Earth: Pope Francis on Faith, Family and the Church in the 21st Century, Jorge Mario Bergoglio and Abraham Skorka, 2013, £14.99. ISBN: 978-1-4729-0381-5.

You are the Messiah, and I Should Know: Why Leadership is a Myth (and Probably a Heresy), Justin Lewis-Anthony, 2013, £12.99. ISBN: 978-1-4411-8618-8.

From Canterbury Press (Norwich Books):

Making all Things Well: Finding Spiritual Strength with Julian of Norwich, Isobel de Gruchy, 2012, £10.99. ISBN: 978-1-84825-240-0.

Maiden, Mother & Queen: Mary in the Anglican Tradition, Roger Greenacre, ed. Colin Podmore, 2013, £24.99.
ISBN: 978-1-84825-278-3.

Sounding the Seasons: Seventy Sonnets for the Christian Year, Malcolm Guite, 2012, £9.99. ISBN: 978-1-84825-274-5.

With Pity Not With Blame: Reflections on the Writings of Julian of Norwich and on The Cloud of Unknowing, Robert Llewellyn, new ed. 2013, £12.99. ISBN: 978-1-84825-287-5.

Seeing in the Dark: Pastoral Perspectives on Suffering from the Christian Spiritual Tradition, Christopher Chapman, 2013, £16.99.
ISBN: 978-1-84825-259-2.

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