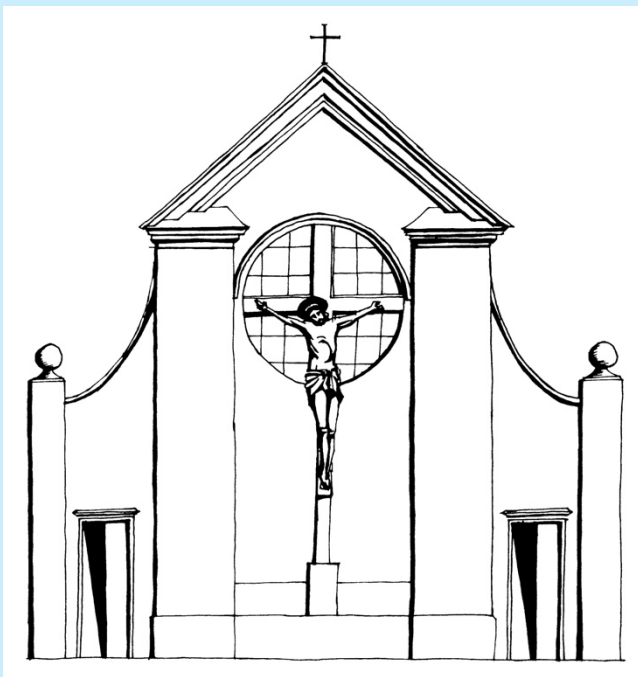


F A I R A C R E S
C H R O N I C L E



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COMMUNITY NOTES

DEAR FRIENDS

TODAY as I begin these *Community Notes*, we have just celebrated a Eucharist with the particular intention for Christian unity. Our Rule, in ‘The Aim of the Community’, states that ‘the Community bears witness to the Divine will for unity’, and continues:

... for this reason the Sisters shall have the visible unity of Christ’s Church as a central theme of their prayer and offering.

The Gospel passage this morning was from St John and will be familiar to many readers as the heart of prayer for unity:

Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

(John 17: 11)

Both the Great Schism, of 1054, which saw the split between the churches of the East and West, and the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, are often seen as the defining moments in the history of Christian disunity. Since the Reformation the Church has, seemingly, become even more fractured as more groups have broken away from the mainstream western churches, and other denominations or groups have formed. But has the Church *ever* been one? In the Gospels we know that the apostles disagreed among themselves:

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. (Luke 22: 24)

Then they came to Capernaum; and when Jesus was in the house he asked them ‘What were you arguing about on the way?’ (Mark 9: 33)

Further into the New Testament, in the Acts of the Apostles, we read of Paul and Barnabas parting because the ‘disagreement became so sharp’, so Barnabas went with Mark and Paul with Silas (Acts 15: 36-40). And in his letter to the Galatians Paul recounts that he ‘opposed Peter to his face’ and accused him of hypocrisy (Gal. 2: 11-14).

We know from contemporary media that it is often the ‘bad’ news which makes its way to the headlines and little attention is given to what is good and encouraging, so while we acknowledge that there has always been disagreement between the followers of Jesus, there has also been much agreement and co-operation. In the twentieth century there were many meetings and attempts to further the cause of Christian unity, both through local projects and through the World Council of Churches (inaugurated in 1948); and through the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, established by Archbishop Michael Ramsey and Pope Paul VI in 1967. The former is a very broad organisation and now has 345 member churches, while the latter involves just two specific churches. There are still many other conversations taking place regularly such as those between Anglican and Orthodox Christians.

In 1992, the first inner-city ecumenical church opened in Milton Keynes, the result of the covenant between five churches thirteen years earlier. However, by the time that the Church of Christ the Cornerstone opened in Milton Keynes the ecumenical climate had become rather chillier than it had been in 1979. The enthusiasm for meeting with other Christians for prayer and fellowship had waned, partly because it seemed that there were insurmountable obstacles to unity at a greater depth, particularly when it came to sacramental unity.

When a great obstacle is reached, some of us continue doggedly on, while others are inclined to put their energies elsewhere; both responses, it seems to me, have been evident with regard to the pursuit of Christian unity. Unity is not the same as uniformity, which could be rather tedious, as varieties of worship and diversity of approach surely reflect the variety of God’s creation. But the persistence of obstacles to sharing fully in Eucharistic worship have caused some of the enthusiasm for unity to wane.

In the Godhead is unity, not uniformity. Our model for unity is the Holy Trinity, God who is three persons yet one God, each person distinct yet ‘co-eternal together: and co-equal’, as the Athanasian Creed puts it. As Christians grow in love of God and in awareness of God’s love for humanity, we can hope to reflect that love by growing in love of each other (cf. I John 4: 20-21).

Two churches have had new leaders since March, when Bishop Justin Welby became Archbishop of Canterbury and Pope Francis was elected leader of the Roman Catholic Church. Community friends who have been to Rome since the new Pope began his pontificate have spoken of a different and encouraging atmosphere in the Vatican, and that it is having far-reaching effects. It is reported that when the new Archbishop and Pope met there was a good rapport between them—Fr Hugh Wybrew remarks on this meeting in the homily he gave us (see p. 9)—and that surely is a great sign of hope for the whole body of Christ. In the present issue of the *Fairacres Chronicle* Sr Avis Mary and Sr Edmée consider newly published biographies of Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin respectively; their reviews give interesting insights into the characters and careers of the two men. In November I attended the Annual Conference of the Leaders of Anglican Religious Communities held at Mirfield, where the speaker was Dr Roger Paul, the Church of England's National Ecumenical Officer for England. Dr Paul was encouraging about the prospects of the various branches of the Church moving slowly toward greater unity. So in some areas, at least, there are encouraging developments.

Sr Avis Mary and Sr Judith attended the biennial International, Interdenominational Congress of Religious (CIR), which was held at the Benedictine Community at Tyniec in Poland this year, and which included visits to the concentration camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau. One of the main addresses to the conference, given by Br Robert Sevensky OHC, and an account of the conference by Sr Avis Mary are included in this issue. Sr Helen and I attended one day of the Greenbelt Festival in August, a very ecumenical occasion, and Sr Helen has written about our visit. As well as ecumenical gatherings, we sometimes attend interfaith conferences and in August Sr Clare-Louise participated in, and contributed to, the International Jewish-Christian Bible Week which took place in Germany.

In the last edition of the *Chronicle* I mentioned that Sr Mary Magdalene is being cared for in St John's Home. The Home began as an eight bedded 'hospital for incurables' and was the inspiration of Fr Benson SSJE. The All Saints Sisters of the Poor at first complemented Fr Benson's work and then took it over at the Home.

Today, the day-to-day running of the Home is delegated to lay staff but the influence of the ASSP is very evident. Earlier this year two SLG Sisters suffered fractures, and although they have made good recoveries, they need twenty-four-hour care which we are unable to provide at Fairacres. Therefore, Sr Mary Margaret and Sr Edwina have joined Sr Mary Magdalene at St John's and we are very grateful that our Sisters can be there and receive excellent care just a ten minute walk from Fairacres. On All Saints Day, all three Sisters joined us at Fairacres for the Eucharist and dinner.

Sr Christine has become, once again, the Editor of SLG Press, and her role as Oblate Guardian has been taken on by Sr Rosemary. Sr Catherine, who has been at Lambeth since January 2012, will return to Fairacres at the end of this year. Following in the steps of Sisters from the Order of the Holy Paraclete, and, latterly, the Community of the Holy Name, she has been part of the 'praying presence' there, helping with sacristy work and other aspects of life at the Palace. For the last year, she has been the only Sister in Cottage 5, but a number of us have visited her and some have joined in worship in the crypt Chapel. I have felt my knowledge and experience of both the Church of England and the Anglican Communion being widened by having an SLG Sister at Lambeth, and by my visits there. Archbishop Justin announced at the November session of General Synod that Chemin Neuf, a French ecumenical community founded in 1973 in Lyon, will be taking over roles previously covered by Anglicans; he commented on the important symbolic significance of this development.

We have recently welcomed new staff to help with the care of our senior Sisters. As well, we now have an employee in the role of Housekeeper for the convent and guest accommodation. We are grateful for all the help which staff give us to support us in the life to which we are called.

Included in this *Chronicle* are the dates of the retreats for 2014. The first, a weekend in March, is at Ivy House, Warminster, a new venue for these retreats. The second is in July at Llangasty, where it has been held for several years now. The details of those leading the retreats will be on the website as soon as they are known; if you do not have access to our website, please feel free to phone us in January.

The Community has not had a conducted retreat week this year; instead Sr Mary Margaret Funk OSB was with us for a few days in September and gave us much nourishing material. Sr Meg is a Roman Catholic from Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Indiana, and has more than fifty years' experience in monastic life. Her books include a moving autobiography, *Into the Depth: A Journey of Loss and Vocation*, and a series on monastic living (*Tools Matter, Thoughts Matter, Discernment Matters, Humility Matters, and Lectio Matters*) relevant well beyond monastery walls.

Advent begins on the last day of November and we will have entered that season by the time this reaches you. As we prepare, once again, to celebrate the Incarnation of Our Lord Jesus Christ, some words of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity seem appropriate:

My Master has said to me, as to Zacchaeus: 'Make haste and come down; I am to lodge today in Thy house'. (Luke 19: 5) 'Make haste and come down'; but to where? To the innermost depth of my being, after having become quit of self, detached from self, stripped of self, in a word selfless.

'I am to lodge today in thy house'. It is my Master who expresses this desire, my Master who wants to dwell in me with the Father and His Spirit of love, so that, in the words of the beloved disciple, I may have 'fellowship' with Them (I John 1: 3). ... To belong to God's household, as I understand it, is to live in the bosom of the tranquil Trinity, in the innermost depths of myself, in that impregnable fortress of holy recollection, referred to by St John of the Cross.

Spiritual Writings, ed. M. M Philipon OP, p. 179

May we ever more live in the bosom of the Trinity and may the Christ Child dwell in the innermost depths of ourselves.

With all good wishes for Christmas and the New Year,

SISTER MARGARET THERESA SLG

RETREATS 2014

21 – 23 March 2014

Ivy House
St Denys Retreat Centre
2-3 Church Street
Warminster, Wiltshire
BA12 8PG
www.ivyhouse.org

Led by a Sister SLG

Full Cost : £80.00
Deposit : £28.00

Closing Date : 28 Feb 2014

23 – 27 July 2014

Llangasty Retreat House
Llangasty, Brecon,
Powys,
LD3 7PX
www.llangasty.com

Leader not yet confirmed

Full Cost : £200.00
Deposit : £62.00

Closing Date : 27 June 2014

To book a place, please forward all application forms and payments to:

Ferrol Brown
Bursary Office
SLG Charitable Trust Ltd
Convent of the Incarnation
Fairacres, Parker Street
Oxford OX4 1TB

Tel : 01865 241849
Email : bursary@slg.org.uk

TRUE PEACE AND JUSTICE

Homily for Trinity 17, Year C

HUGH WYBREW

IN the *Times Literary Supplement* for 30 August there is a review of a book called *The Silence of Animals* by John Gray,* who is a contemporary philosopher noted for his challenge to the myth of progress. This is the belief that the moral and material condition of humanity will improve over time. It is true that the twentieth century, with its wars, the Holocaust and Hiroshima, severely dented Victorian optimism. Gray thinks that to lose faith in progress is much more disturbing than to lose faith in God, reason, or even science. It means to lose the ability to see meaning in life.

Clearly, the material condition of some of humanity has improved immeasurably in the last couple of centuries, though billions still live in dire poverty. It is much less clear that our moral condition has improved much. Think only of the financial scandals of the past few years, or think of the growing gap between wealthy and poor individuals and peoples.

Amos prophesied in the eighth century before Christ,

Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, saying, ... 'we will practice deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat.'
(Amos 8: 4, 5-6)

Jesus himself tells the story of the dishonest steward who, when he is found out, plots to save his skin by still more dishonesty. Perhaps it was a recent Galilean scandal. The world is still full of shady deals, greedy dealers, and corruption of all kinds, individual, institutional and governmental. Nor are Christians exempt: one of the urgent tasks facing Pope Francis is reform of the Institute for the Works of Religion, the Vatican Bank.

It is striking how relevant to the twenty-first century are the critiques of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah 2,800 years ago. It is

* John Gray, *The Silence of Animals: On progress and other modern myths*, Allen Lane, £18.99. ISBN 978-1-84614-450-9.

not clear that humanity has made much, if any, progress on the moral front. There is no more social justice now than there was then; there is no more peace in the world. The Church has preached the gospel for two thousand years; but as an institution it has often sided with the rich and powerful, and failed to protest against oppression and injustice.

There have, of course, always been prophetic voices in the Church. In recent decades there have been the liberation theologians in Latin America. They too, like the prophets of Israel, met fierce opposition from the corrupt military dictatorships that for decades dominated South America—dictatorships supported by the Christian United States of America. Their own Church authorities were hostile to them, not least the last two popes. Among their opponents was Jorge Maria Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, and sometime Provincial of the Jesuits in Argentina.

There is a growing Christian sense that preaching the gospel has to be done as much by action as by word; and not least action against social injustice and poverty. That sense has been strengthened by the election of an Archbishop of Canterbury and a Bishop of Rome for whom the fight against poverty is high on their agendas. When Justin and Francis met in June, they spent four hours talking about social justice. They plan to work together on combating poverty, and hope to meet again later this year.

An Archbishop of Canterbury who is a member of the Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards; a Pope who has chosen to be called Francis and lives in a priests' hostel rather than the Sacred Palaces: two Christian leaders who regard engaging with poverty as one of their most important tasks—these are remarkable developments in the Church of God. Francis is bringing liberation theologians back in from the cold. Justin speaks from knowledge and experience to the world of high finance. The great prophets, both before and after Christ, are surely cheering them on.

But will they have any more success than the great prophets? Will the moral state of humanity in this respect get any better? That's not so easy to say. Nor is it easy to think that peace is any more likely to prevail than justice. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul urged that 'supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in

high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity' (I Tim. 2: 1-2). So the Church has always interceded. Paul and the first Christians did indeed live at a time when the Roman Empire had brought peace to its world. The Pax Romana lasted for several centuries within the empire. Later the peoples of Christian Europe fought one another continually, until after two world wars they finally resolved to try to make war among themselves unthinkable. Might the prophets think the European Union, at the very least, a worthwhile attempt to make peace a reality? If it is, it is an attempt not even being thought of elsewhere, notably at present in the Middle East.

Yet we must continue to pray for peace, and for social and economic justice; just as the Church, and all people of good will, must continue to work for both. That does not mean that either will be achieved by our own spiritual and practical effort. Much Christian talk still seems to presuppose that the world will become a better place, albeit slowly, if only we cooperate with God. A hymn well-known to some includes this verse:

Rise up, O men of God!
The kingdom tarries long.
Bring in the day of brotherhood
And end the night of wrong.

But the prophets, and the whole Bible, are clear that the reign of God is not our achievement but his. A wag wrote this parody of that verse:

Sit down, O men of God,
His kingdom he will bring,
Whenever it may please his will;
You cannot do a thing.

John Gray has no faith in the myth of progress, and as an atheist concludes that history has no meaning. His reviewer suggests another possibility, one that most civilisations believed in until well into the eighteenth century. It is that history does have a meaning, but that history's development is not progress but regress, not advance but decline, and leads to destruction rather than utopia. That is the picture painted by Scripture: at its End the world is destroyed by God. But the faith of the prophets, and Christian faith,

looks for new heavens and a new earth, a new creation in which God's justice and peace will prevail. Can *we* make that happen? Not according to the Scriptures. But if the harvest of peace and justice is God's, we are charged with sowing its seed: by word, by action, and by prayer (cf. Mark 4: 26-29).

‘I’M SPIRITUAL BUT NOT RELIGIOUS’[†]

A View from North America

ROBERT SEVENSKY OHC

Introduction

IT IS an honour to be with you as part of this 18th International Interconfessional Congress of Religious. I come, as Pope Francis said upon his election, from a far country, but in the hope that this distance—physical, historical, cultural, political, religious—will add to a blending of perspectives and horizons that both challenges and enlightens us. This is often the hard work and the valuable fruit of gatherings such as this.

I come with a view from another shore, from America, a place that is at once so very familiar, especially through the news and entertainment media, and also very odd to Europeans in ways subtle and not so subtle, and not least when it comes to religion and the role it plays in American life and culture. I must add, as well, what a great joy it is for me to visit for the first time this part of God's creation from which my ancestors emigrated some 120 years ago, from what is now Poland and Ukraine, seeking the elusive American dream. It is so very good to honour them, and to see something of my roots.

America and Religion

The twentieth-century British writer and critic, G. K. Chesterton, once famously described the United States as ‘The Nation with the Soul of a Church.’ It is a description that is both accurate and puzzling to outsiders. I want to elucidate this description by

[†] An address given at the CIR conference at Tyniec, Poland, 24 August 2013.

offering a very brief history of religion in the United States. And for the sake of convenience I will simply speak of ‘America’, though I fully recognize that this is a name shared by two continents and many nations, including at least three in North America. In the course of this description we will move over a landscape that is in the process of major change, one where secularism is advancing but which, compared to many parts of Europe, or even Canada, is only now beginning to unfold. But it is unfolding in a peculiar way, one to which my title alludes.

Increasingly the American population is growing up without any formal religious involvement, and is growing increasingly suspicious of churches and religious institutions, suspicious of what we in America have called ‘organized religion’. Yet it retains an interest in things of the spirit, things transcendent, giving rise to a claim voiced by many, especially those under the age of 40, that they are ‘spiritual but not religious.’ Why has this happened and what does it mean for the future of religious life, in the narrower sense of committed and consecrated Christian individuals and communities? What does it mean for us as monks, nuns, brothers, sisters? What does it mean for our monasteries, priories or other centres? And perhaps most critically, what does it mean for the gospel in our world and for the churches which proclaim it and carry its heritage and its message? The topic is vast, and our time is short, so please forgive me if I only skim the surface.

The Classic History

There are a number of stories or myths that shape the history of religion in America. Foremost among them is the foundational myth of America as the *New World*. It is a myth that has captured the imaginations of peoples and nations for centuries. It is the myth of a world where anything is possible and where opportunities are unlimited, or at least better; and where old social and economic structures are erased, a myth which has drawn men and women to American shores. Admittedly, a goodly number came against their will, as slaves! My grandparents were among such people in that movement that has continued for more than 500 years.

Associated with the New World is the American myth of the frontier: if things are not good here, one can always get up and

move West, where the conditions for personal reinvention are more favourable. As difficult as daily life was, and is, for immigrants and settlers, there was always the idea that, should things become unbearable, one could pack up one's belongings and move. No one is trapped, at least in theory. And that has proven to be as true in the area of religion as in economics or politics.

This echoes another factor in the national story, that the earliest European settlers were coming to America to escape religious oppression and in search of religious tolerance. Generally this applied to dissenters, to those who did not fit in with the magisterial movements of the Protestant Reformation or find their place in Catholic realms: English Puritans, Baptists and Quakers escaping the established Anglican settlement; Anabaptists fleeing Lutheran or Calvinist state churches; French Huguenots fleeing Catholic persecution.

The outcome of this migration was that religious outsiders now coexisted with both Protestant and Catholic established churches. And under the influence of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers there emerged the so-called political doctrine of the Separation of Church and State. In fact, that specific phrase is not used in the American foundational political documents. But the Constitution's First Amendment explicitly prohibited the establishment of any one religion, at the same time directing that the government should not prohibit the free exercise of religion.

This had the effect of making religion in America a commodity, one among many choices available on the free market. Unlike many other nations, perhaps any other nation up to that time, religion became a totally voluntary option, and religious institutions totally voluntary organizations. To be sure, religious sentiment continued as respected, indeed expected, in the personal and social milieu and even—maybe especially—in the political realm. But as President Eisenhower once said in the 1950's, it was important for every citizen to have a religious faith—and he didn't care what it was. This may be a misinterpretation, but is one that captures the spirit of the times.

This development of religion as an essentially voluntary commodity opened the way for remarkable religious creativity in America, especially in the nineteenth century. There were

Protestants from northern Europe; Catholics from France, Germany, and Eastern and Southern Europe; some Eastern Orthodox Christians; Jews. Along with these arrivals, new religious expressions and faiths found their birthplace in free-market America: the Mormons, the Pentecostal or Charismatic movements, Apocalyptic and Millenarian movements such as the Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses, and various communitarian experiments. All these have shaped, and continue to shape, not only the religious landscape but also the culture and politics of America.

Underlying them all is the concept which American sociologists such as Robert Bellah[‡] have named American Civil Religion. That is, there is a certain sensibility or creed which all Americans are expected to confess: patriotism; fair play; rugged individualism; a kind of Deism with frequent references to God in political speech., This creed finds its expression in preceding with public prayers everything from daily sessions of the United States Congress to local sporting events. The President is frequently cast in the role of High Priest, not so much Commander-in-Chief as Comforter-in-Chief in times of national tragedy. It also includes an expectation that our political leaders (and our sports stars) will be paragons of moral virtue, an expectation in which we are regularly disappointed.

Much of the political tension in the United States today seems to come from conflicting interpretations of this civil religion, and it is playing itself out in what are called 'culture wars' which find their focus in such issues as the nature of public welfare, immigration, abortion, same-sex marriage, and other conflicted moral issues. I'm sure most of you are no strangers to these debates in your own country. This has laid the groundwork for something of a major change from the period of post-World War II stability, a kind of Golden Age where the American religious scene was neatly and easily summarized by the title of Will Herberg's influential 1955 book, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*.[§]

[‡] Cf. *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age*, Robert N. Bellah, Harvard University Press, 2011. Bellah died 30 July 2013.

[§] *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, Will Herberg, Doubleday, 1955.

Current Realities

One word that might cover the changes that America has experienced these past decades is ‘secularism’. But here again, it is secularism with a twist. It bears little resemblance to the strident, historical, intellectual anti-religious rhetoric of many Old World secularists, though expressions of that sort can be found both on the world of the Internet and in the popular writings of avowed atheists on the Anglo-American scene. Rather, it has its expression in an overall lessening of the influence on public debate of religious institutions and explicitly religious values. Perhaps this is due to the wide diversity of religious expression in the United States and the ‘free market economy’ of ideas and affiliations that characterize American practice.

There are several factors that complicate this picture. The first is the general weakening of denominational identity. Whereas fifty years ago most Americans would have strongly identified as Catholic or Lutheran or Presbyterian or Southern Baptist or Methodist, those labels are losing force among Christians. With the rise of non-denominational Christian churches, especially the so-called ‘mega-churches’, which attract 20,000 or more adherents weekly to forms of Christian worship modelled on contemporary popular entertainment and self-help ideologies, and with little emphasis on liturgy or doctrine, we seem to be entering into a post-denominational era in America.

Patterns are also changing due to evolving demographics and new immigration cohorts. Populations that have come from Mexico, Central and South America—the so-called Latino or Hispanic population who will make up almost 30% of the US population by 2050—were once reliably Catholic, and they still make up much of the strength of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. But that is changing as millions of Latino/Hispanic residents find their way into various forms of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. These are usually local, often informal, Bible-centred congregations. Asian immigrants have brought various expressions of Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. And of course, followers of Islam are now a visible part of the American religious landscape. These new peoples and religions raise the question of what assimilation into the dominant culture will look

like and how it will affect our religious institutions. Again, this is a question not limited to the United States. But we are, after all, a nation of immigrants and ought to bring a certain experience to this question. It must be admitted, however, that our history has not always been admirable or easily replicable.

Another factor bears emphasizing: religious labels are no longer the accurate predictors of political or social views that they once were. There is a liberal/conservative divide in the United States, and it is a divide that runs through the heart of many faith groups: Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim. Rather than identifying simply as, say, a Catholic, one must now ask, ‘What *kind* of Catholic?’ People speak of ‘Cafeteria Catholics’ who pick and choose elements of the traditional faith they embrace. Whatever one might think of such a stance, it is a reality.

In a word, religion has become increasingly privatized. It is now considered by many, perhaps most, Americans to be a personal option, a matter of personal style. And even among those who strongly identify with one or another great tradition, there is always the sense that the individual has the right—even the duty—to shape what they will believe, how they will behave, and what relationship they will adopt toward other truth claims or faith positions.

This has led to two new and related realities. The first is the dramatic increase in the number of ‘un-churched’ Americans, those who have had minimal or no exposure to any faith tradition. The second is the rise of what social science pollsters call the ‘Nones’, that is, people who claim no religious affiliation at all. A few decades ago not many Americans would identify as having no religious affiliation. Now many do, especially those who are younger. That number currently stands at about one third of those under 30 and one in five of those under 50, and those percentages are only expected to rise.

But interestingly, we also see that these Nones are far from being atheist or even agnostic. Almost two-thirds report belief in God, with varying degrees of certainty. And they are quite interested in spiritual practices. Forty per cent report praying at least monthly and meditating regularly. They are among those who are most likely to say, if asked, ‘I am spiritual, but not religious.’ Their spirituality is usually private, not supported by any

community, and is often absorbed through books or the Internet. But it is a reality that we see increasingly, not only in the United States but around much of the developed world.

The Role of Consecrated Religious

What role is there for religious or monastics in the face of these emerging realities? There is, of course, the official ongoing work of ecumenical and interfaith understanding and cooperation. But in the United States that is taking place now primarily on the local level, often through cooperation in practical undertakings such as shared work in feeding the poor or sheltering the homeless; through shared witness in ecological concerns and sustainability; and in work for peace and in ending of the culture of gun violence.

Beyond that I see three areas where the witness and work of religious communities and the monastic expression is uniquely important and necessary:

The first is that many of us are well positioned to offer welcoming spaces for retreats, educational programmes, and sabbaticals; and for engaging in the work of hospitality and the art of listening. There is a growing hunger for a deepening formation and commitment on the part of those who remain in the traditional churches. Those who have left the Church but still yearn for some sort of faith expression, and those who never have been in the Church, or are deeply wary of it, also find their way to our doors.

Offering a safe space where questions can be asked, or where one can simply be and let the winds of the Spirit blow where they will, is a major ministry of many religious communities, even aging ones. Every year we find literally thousands of people coming to our community for time away, time out, and for spiritual direction and counsel. This is frequently to give support to those engaged in their local church, but in some cases may lead to re-integration in church life. But the retreat house is first and foremost a laboratory of the Spirit.

The second area rises from our spiritual expertise or charisma, and from our peculiar, and sometimes marginal, place in the church and in the world. That makes it possible for us to offer seekers a clearer emphasis on and instruction in the practices of the faith, often more than on beliefs or doctrines.

People come to us hungry to learn about what has been called ‘the technologies of the Spirit,’ that is, methods of prayer or meditation. From *lectio divina* and praying the Divine Office to Centering Prayer, from Taizé-style worship or the Jesus Prayer, to Christian adaptations of Zen sitting, Insight Meditation and yoga, we must be prepared to take out of our treasury what is new as well as what is old and offer it freely, trusting that God’s life-giving Spirit will guide the sincere practitioner to the heart of the Holy.

People come to us hungry for the power of sacred ritual and communal prayer offered with regularity, sincerity and purity of heart. People are often deeply moved when they join us in even the simplest act of devotion in this context.

People come to us longing for a rule or pattern of life that will ground them in their nascent desire for holiness, often expressed in a longing for balance amidst the hectic pace and demands of contemporary society. This is reflected in the more than 800 Holy Cross Associates, who come from many different Christian traditions seeking to follow Christ in a disciplined way and in association with a praying community.

People come to us seeking models of Christian life together, something rarely easy but of abiding interest. We find, for example, that emerging intentional Christian communities of young people, as well as individuals of all backgrounds, look to the classic models of religious life to learn how to better shape their own life together. We see young people with a deep desire to serve others, and through various volunteer programmes we can offer them opportunities to live and work alongside us in service and in a deepening faith. This is a kind of engaged catechesis and formation often unavailable in local churches, and sadly lacking in society at large. It is marked by an isolation not satisfied by social media such as Facebook.

Finally, as religious we serve as quiet witnesses to the integrity and durability, relevance and adaptability of our particular expression of the great tradition. This tradition of living the religious life has different expressions within Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Anglicanism and the churches of the Reformation. As larger institutions fail around us, or become increasingly irrelevant or incomprehensible to ordinary people, it may be that our small, weak communities and monasteries, and our relatively simple lives,

will serve again something of their role in past centuries. They will be beacons of the healing and of hope that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Future

Speaking from the perspective of the developed world, both in the Americas and in Europe, I have to admit that the future of religious life as we have known it is marked by diminishment. Many of our communities are aging and are much smaller than they were fifty years ago. Many face a corporate death. In some ways that should not surprise us; intentional communities, monasteries, and religious orders have come into and fallen out of existence over the centuries. Speaking from the Anglican perspective, it must be admitted that even at its height, the numbers living the religious life have never been large. Nevertheless lessons can be learned from this ‘demographic cliff’ that many of us face.

We can learn that fidelity and availability count as much as numbers. I think the Eastern Christian tradition has always understood this better than the West, recognizing that a skete of two or three monastics—or even one—can be a leaven of holiness for an entire region. Our task is to be faithful to God’s call and our vocation.

We can see how lay associates or oblates or friends, which are growing exponentially in some places, extend and express a vision and grace that was once solely the preserve of the professional religious. We observe, at least in my community and others with which I am familiar, a small but real increase in the number of younger men interested in joining us. But we also recognize an emerging sense that the monastic quest or religious vocation is an eminently appropriate call for the second half of life. Hinduism has always known this. Why has it taken us so long to begin to acknowledge that?

More and more small communities of two or three are forming, which may last only a few years. We see individuals drawn to make private vows of celibacy and simplicity of life, with few of the burdensome superstructures erected by nineteenth-century exuberance. I believe that it is our duty and call to support these emerging, and admittedly sometimes exotic, vocations.

We see new expressions of the communal and consecrated life among Catholics such as the San Egidio community, the Focolare Movement, the Neocatechumenal Way and the New Evangelism. In the Anglo-American world, we see the rise of the so-called ‘New Monasticism’ which is often very different from traditional models but which increasingly looks to us to help shape the way forward. The members of these communities are often married Evangelical or non-denominational Christians living in communal homes in the inner cities and ministering to the outcast.

In terms of ecumenical outreach, the best thing we can do is lend our hearts, hands, prayers and hospitality, and our accumulated wisdom to these surprising new manifestations of the Spirit across denominational or traditional sectarian lines.

Summary

When someone tells me that he or she is ‘spiritual but not religious,’ my instinctive response is to say, ‘Well, I’m religious but not spiritual.’ This sometimes leads into a discussion about what these terms mean and how they apply in our lives, and why we use or avoid particular words. All too often the ‘spiritual’ label means ‘I want to feel good,’ but there is a reluctance to push further, to go deeper, to examine the conditions that might make that possible, or even desirable in the long run. There is, too, a reluctance to count the cost of committing at this depth. But just as often the label can point to an opening of and to the Holy Spirit, and signal the seeds of a real, if hidden, conversion, especially in those who have been hurt in or by the Church.

We will increasingly meet these people in our lives and ministries, just as we will meet those who are totally uninterested in or actively hostile to whom we are and what we represent; or who they *think* we are and what we stand for. But each such meeting is an opportunity to be faithful to our call and to speak the truth in love, as much by the quality of our lives as by our words. We can with confidence leave the rest up to God.

In conclusion let me emphasize that nothing in the situation I have described is peculiar to America. But in some significant ways, America is still the New World. On the negative side, this is reflected in a certain mindset that can be either profoundly unaware

of history and tradition, or overly romanticized in its view of the past. But at its best, America can support a deep and wide experimentation in all areas, including religion. There is a tendency to believe in trying something new if the current process is not working. And if it works—however that may be defined—it is good, it is true. This is a gross simplification of what could be called a pragmatic approach to life. And there is a dark shadow side to this approach, for countless abuses and errors have risen out of it.

But there is another way of looking at this open creativity that marks the American religious landscape. It is that of Gamaliel who cautions his council: ‘... if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them—in that case you may even be found fighting against God!’ (Acts 5: 38-39).

All the areas I have touched on: secularism, disillusionment with ‘religion,’ the rise of ‘spirituality,’ the searching, the seeking, the false starts, the apparently permanent errors and heresies—could these have their place in the overall Providence of God? Is God speaking to us through them? What is God saying to us, asking of us? And what shall we answer? As hard as it may be to believe, it is not only the Lord, but the world that awaits our response.

A CONFERENCE IN KRAKÓW

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

FROM 23 to 28 August this year, Sister Judith and I attended the biennial International, Interdenominational Congress of Religious (CIR) at Kraków in Poland. Among the speakers, who between them gave us some excellent input, was Br Robert Sevensky OHC whose talk is included in this edition. There were about fifty of us, representing the Roman Catholic, Lutheran/Reformed, Anglican, Romanian Orthodox, Melkite Greek Catholic and Ukrainian Catholic traditions. We came from 10 countries: Germany, England, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Poland, Romania, Italy, the Czech Republic and the USA.

CIR came into existence in Spain several decades ago, through the initiative of an ecumenically-minded Spanish priest. Since then Spanish interest has declined, but CIR is still going strong. It is loosely constituted, but enabled by a strong organizing ‘Team’ from various traditions and nations. Delegates from outside Europe are also warmly welcomed to the conference. However, in practice, the majority tend to come from the same religious communities, which support the conference regularly. It is an experience of *lived* unity, of praying and eating together, listening to talks, and meeting, both all together and in smaller groups. Each time we find that what unites us as Christian religious is greater than any division of denomination or national identity. We learn to be a community together for a time, and then we return to our own communities, perceiving more about the religious life and other traditions than when we arrived. Friendships are made and sustained through prayer, but also through continuing correspondence, and sometimes through visits to each other.

This year’s conference covered four full days, and with a deliberately wider theme than two years ago, when we had thought specifically about the place of Scripture in our lives as religious.** The theme this time was ‘Seeking Unity in Jesus on the banks of the Vistula’, and the excellent talks from religious of different traditions covered a variety of different topics. We were staying with the Benedictine monks of the historic Tyniec Abbey on the banks of the River Vistula. Geographically it is near a village outside Kraków, but politically it is part of the city. We heard about the situation of the Church in Poland from the former Abbot of Tyniec, Fr Bernard Sawicki OSB, who is now based in Rome. It certainly enabled me to have a little more understanding of Poland and the Polish Church, including why the election of Pope John Paul II, the Cardinal Archbishop of Kraków, Karol Józef Wojtyła, had been seen by so many as the salvation of Poland.

For this conference the organizing Team had been faced with a particular dilemma. They had to decide whether the ‘day out’, which is always a part of the conference and is usually a happy visit to one or more religious communities within reach, should this time

** See my paper, ‘How Holy Scripture forms and informs the Religious Life: An Anglican contribution’, *Fairacres Chronicle*, Winter 2011, vol. 44 no. 2, pp. 10-25.

be a visit to Auschwitz (Oświęcim). Many people do try to visit Auschwitz once in a lifetime. Tyniec Abbey is only 40 miles (65 km) by road from Auschwitz. Though near, it is still not easy to reach through individual trips from the Abbey especially by religious who might have somewhat limited experience of travel. The Team had thought to begin with that it would not be a good idea, as this would hardly be a fun day out; but as their discussions progressed, the decision was made that we should go. It was the right decision.

The Auschwitz authorities themselves organize (without over-organizing) the massive numbers of people and groups who come, to make their visits as simple, informative, peaceful and helpful as possible. We set off at 8:15 a.m. on Monday, 26 August, and arrived back in time for supper at 6:00 p.m. Our conference was supplied with three guides, all Poles, but speaking in English, French or German. We could pick up what our particular guide was saying through headphones, something which contributed greatly to a sense of silence and reverence, despite the huge numbers passing through the camp. I have been told that, after Poles, the British make up the second largest national group of visitors.

Our visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau took about four hours to complete. We saw the first camp to be built, Auschwitz I, and entered by the infamous gate, with its cynical Nazi inscription, *Arbeit macht frei* ('Work makes you free'). I had not realised that so many brick buildings still stand in Auschwitz I. We went into a significant selection of the buildings, including the basement cell where St Maximilian Kolbe died. It would take many days to see the whole camp and various exhibitions. We visited places between the buildings where specific horrors had taken place. We saw many of the exhibits, including the notorious glass cases of hair, spectacles, shoes, suitcases, kitchen utensils, etc. We heard, too, what enormous quantities of these items had found their way to Germany in the Nazi era, as gifts and aid for impoverished citizens.

After that, we got into our bus for a short drive to the camp of Auschwitz II, or Birkenau, set up specifically for the extermination of European Jews. Our guides again joined us for this. We entered by the other much-photographed Auschwitz gate, where the railway lines run from the outside world through the gate into the camp.

A priest friend, who had also visited Auschwitz for the first time earlier in August, said to me when we met again at Fairacres: ‘You grow up after Auschwitz, don’t you?... You aren’t the same afterwards...’ In the short term, I didn’t feel very different, but as I begin to process the experience, I understand something of what he meant. Having already visited Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen and Dachau Concentration Camps in Germany, and having, of course, seen many of the pictures of Auschwitz, I was not immediately greatly surprised.

With this background, it would tend to be the unexpected which was the most striking. An image which did impress itself particularly upon me was that of the ruined barracks at Auschwitz-Birkenau. There were many upright concrete posts which held the barbed wire, angled at the top, so that from a distance they appeared bizarrely like giant walking sticks. Interspersed with these were the numerous upright brick chimney stacks of the ruined barracks, the only parts still standing. The posts and chimney stacks together, rising up out of the earth and standing against the sky, created a most sinister impression.

As is well known, people emerged from the cattle trucks at Birkenau and were immediately selected for death or, in the short term, for life. We followed the path of those who were selected to go to the left, that is, straight to the gas chambers at the end of the path. How long that walk would have been from the place of selection. As I walked it, the only word that came to me for the whole experience of Auschwitz was simply the German word *verrückt* (crazy!). Our group was walking smartly for 15 minutes or more. And these people, who in any case had been selected as the least physically fit, had been travelling in the trucks for days, without food, water, ventilation or sanitation. Sometimes there was no room for them immediately in the gas chambers, and they were forced to wait among the trees in a wooded area nearby.

After our visit to the camps, we returned to our bus and were driven to the International Youth Meeting Centre in Oświęcim for a late lunch. We then drove on to the Centre for Dialogue and Prayer in Oświęcim, which was founded for all those affected by what happened at Auschwitz. There an Irish Sister of Mercy, Sister Mary O’Sullivan RSM, welcomed us and talked to us about the work of

the Centre, as well as answering a few questions. We then had only minutes before boarding our bus back to the Abbey. Some of us used that time to make a very rapid visit to the Auschwitz Carmel, which is next door to the Centre. We were unable to enter the chapel, as a Mass was in progress, but at least we could gain an impression from the doorway and take a few photographs.

It was a great blessing to be able to undertake this pilgrimage as part of a group of fifty religious of various Christian traditions and nations. On the whole we did not speak a great deal about it informally to each other during the conference. There was no need, as we were simply living and experiencing it together, and the conference did have other important aspects. There was no structured evening meeting that day, but after Vespers in the Abbey Church, we shared thirty minutes of silent prayer.

Apart from the objective experience of visiting Auschwitz together, we had things in our histories to absorb, together and individually. Many conference members had been deeply affected personally by World War II, including loss of family home and family members. By God's providence, we had among us a religious who had lost a large number of family members in Auschwitz: aunts, uncles and cousins. We also had a religious who was the grandchild of someone who had accompanied a transport into Auschwitz and had become head of a concentration camp; he was subsequently imprisoned for war crimes. These two Sisters chose to spend the day at Auschwitz in each other's company. We had Poles whose experience of loss of family and of German occupation was still sharply present. All these things were a source of great anguish for those concerned, but their pain was also shared and held, each by the other, and within this whole reconciling community. On the morning after Auschwitz, we met together and some conference members voluntarily gave 'testimony' regarding their stories. It is very painful, even now, to recall and write about their suffering, but wonderful that this could happen.

We pray that, for those who spoke, and who throughout the conference conducted themselves with great dignity, generosity and courage, as well as for any others who did not share so openly their own burdens, the whole experience has brought, and will continue to bring, healing, hope and greater unity.

In 2015 the CIR Conference will take place at the Anglican Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield in England. The Conference is not generally well supported by Roman Catholic religious from the United Kingdom or Ireland. We would very much like to see a better representation at Mirfield. More details can be obtained from:

Fr Nicolas Stebbing CR,
Community of the Resurrection
Stocks Bank Rd
Mirfield
WF14 0BN
www.mirfieldcommunity.org.uk

THE INTERNATIONAL JEWISH-CHRISTIAN BIBLE WEEK

SISTER CLARE-LOUISE SLG

EACH YEAR a remarkable gathering of Jews and Christians takes place at Haus Ohrbeck in Georgsmarienhütte near Osnabrück in Germany, studying biblical texts from the Hebrew Scriptures in the light of the two religious traditions.

The Bible Week first took place in 1969 at Bendorf, near Koblenz, so we were celebrating the forty-fifth anniversary of this gathering. So the Bible Week is now a well established event, with participants drawn from Germany, England, the Netherlands, the USA, Israel and many other countries. Three elements are central to the week: first, it is an opportunity for encounter and dialogue between Christians and Jews; secondly, it is an opportunity for reconciliation and meeting between Germans and Jews; and thirdly, it is an opportunity for a shared study of the Hebrew Bible. Each year there are three lectures on the book of the Bible chosen as that year's theme, as well as study groups in which the Scripture passage is studied more deeply, including the chance to look at the Hebrew text for those able to read it.

This year was my second experience of the Bible Week; having attended in 2012 I couldn't wait to return! In fact one of my first impressions last year was of the warm welcome given to newcomers. It is a large conference of approximately 130 people (including children), but I felt included and at home from the start. I am not a German-speaker and have a beginner's level of Hebrew, but I found that many Germans speak English, translation was provided during all events, and I was inspired to new efforts in learning Hebrew.

The study groups are at the heart of the week. Each morning groups of ten to eleven participants meet to study the biblical text, this year the Book of Esther. The groups consist of a mixture of Jews and Christians of different nationalities and languages. Translation is provided within the group, and there is a facilitator, a Jewish resource person, and a Christian resource person chosen from among the group members.

These groups are essential to the Week because it is within them that relationships are developed and deep conversations held. I was moved in my own group by the openness and trust with which the issues of anti-Semitism and the Christian misuse of some Hebrew texts were shared; and by the comment, from a Jewish member, that 'though we must be sorry for what our ancestors have done with our traditions, we must now move forward together.' I became better acquainted with the experience of those who still suffer persecution on account of their faith, and was horrified to hear of recent experiences of anti-Semitism experienced by members of the group. I came away with a deeper commitment to dialogue and a more profound respect for Judaism as the foundation from which my own tradition was born. I met Christianity's elder sibling, with a voice and a message that Christians need to listen to.

There is a special opportunity to experience the worship of the two faith groups as well as their interpretations of Scripture. The main meeting room is transformed into a synagogue for Sabbath worship, and on Sunday the Eucharist included a choir made up of Jews and Christians. My experience was that, having spent the week in dialogue, I felt a guest at the Sabbath service, rather than a tourist. There is daily shared Psalm Reading followed by silence, and the two traditions organise other worship during the week.

Speaking as a Christian, another joy is the wide range of Christian denominations represented and worshipping together. This year the Sunday Eucharist was conducted by a Lutheran pastor, with a Roman Catholic preacher. The event is ecumenical as well as inter-religious.

Many of the participants have been involved in the Bible Week for many years, if not decades. Rabbi Jonathon Magonet, who was one of the founders of the week, remains at its heart, not only through his teaching and scholarship, but through the inspiration he gives to the conference and its participants. Leo Baeck College in London continues to support the Week, as it has since its inception; and Haus Ohrbeck has provided its home for the last ten years. This gives the sense of continuity and community which enables a deep level of mutual sharing.

And the Week is great fun. A lot of optional additional activities take place, including music, a trip out, informal talks and seminars, and a final evening of entertainment. It is also a delight to have a number of children present. The oldest participant this year was in his nineties and the youngest a few months old.

In a world where there is so much tension, discrimination and violence within and between different religious and ethnic groups, the Bible Week is a sign of hope. Arising out of the events of World War II, it is a place where difficult opinions can be voiced and hurts exposed. Joys can be shared and the Scriptures studied, learning takes place, and good food is eaten at a common table. People discover by first-hand encounter with others how much they have in common. It is a place of life and reconciliation, and I wish it well for the next forty-five years.

Further details of the International Jewish-Christian Bible Week can be found at www.haus-ohrbeck.de. There is a page on the website in English.

GREENBELT FESTIVAL 2013

SISTER HELEN SLG

SINCE coming to the Community in 1999, I have been intrigued by the reviews I have read in *The Church Times* and *The Tablet* of the Greenbelt Festival. I had never heard of anything like it: a large, weekend-long gathering of people to celebrate, discuss, debate, perform and worship in a mainstream Christian context. From these reviews I learned that many of those involved were people of some note; names I recognized from mainline churches, including Anglican bishops and priests, as well as international writers, social activists, theologians and singers. Trying to imagine this event, I could only think of a huge folk festival, something with which I am familiar, but with religion and the spiritual life as its organizing theme instead of music.

When we received an invitation to attend this year's Festival in order to help staff an information table for the Anglican Religious Communities (ARC), it was a surprise. I was delighted to accept Sr. Margaret Theresa's suggestion that I accompany her. Although it is not the sort of activity we would normally be involved in, we feel it is important to support Anglican religious life, and that this would be a good opportunity to both inform people and to support ARC, which does so much to encourage and support Communities.

Thus it happened that Sr Margaret Theresa and I found ourselves speeding down the A40 toward the Cheltenham Race Course one Saturday morning in late August. Being first-timers, we had decided to go for only one day; we later discovered that some of the religious attending joined with the 10,000 campers in their tents and vans for the full four days!

Our first glimpse of Greenbelt amazed us: seeing the numbers of fields given over to parking, and the seemingly endless rows of cars parked in them, we realized this was a REALLY BIG EVENT. I should not have been surprised; when we were planning the day Sr Margaret Theresa had suggested making sandwiches to take with us, 'because there may not be food available'. I had looked at the Greenbelt website and discovered there would be nearly forty food sites. But I had not translated that to the vast number of cars before us.

Our tickets had come in the post earlier on, in the form of plastic wristbands. It turned out that wearing these was key to our being able to get into any area or event, as the indoor events had doorkeepers counting people entering and leaving each hall. This was only one sign of the impressive and well-considered organization of each aspect of the Festival. We headed off to purchase a programme and the separate guide containing daily timetables and maps to the many locations where the huge number and variety of events were taking place. It also showed where to find such amenities as food tents, the bookstore, the ‘Jesus Arms’ pub, and the giant G-Source tent encompassing dozens of booths of ‘organizations working to make a better world.’

The Anglican Religious Communities table was in G-Source, back-to-back with the Ripon College Cuddesdon table, next to the Franciscan Third Order table, across the aisle from tables for Bishop’s House, Iona, and Tools With A Mission, and around the corner from the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions UK table. This is a hint of the variety of the seventy-five faith-based organizations represented in this one tent. Reaching ‘our’ table, we were pleased to discover that seven Anglican religious orders were represented on the staffing rota: the Community of the Sisters of the Church, the Community of St John the Baptist, the Order of St Benedict at Mucknell Abbey, the Order of the Holy Paraclete, the Society of St Francis. And, perhaps bravest of all, the Sisters of Bethany, who were located on the Sanctuary Stage where they taught people to pray the Divine Office—including choir practice before Vespers.

This rota allowed for two people at the table at a time, while the others were free to attend events until their shift. I was grateful to be able to hear Jim Wallis, founder of *Sojourners Magazine*, an influential American journal of religion and social justice that I had read for years before moving to the UK. I had never seen him in person before, and I found what he said both sensible and moving. Two remarks in particular have stayed with me: ‘Hope means believing in spite of the evidence—then watching the evidence change.’ And, ‘Cynicism is the buffer against commitment; it is spiritually dangerous and toxic.’ Wise and useful words in these days of concern about both the Church and religious life.

I also attended a *Sacred Harp Songbook* workshop, where I wondered anew at the remarkable harmonies in this traditional music from the southern mountains of the US. It sounds unlike anything else I've ever heard; it is rather like a blend of Balkan traditional music and Orthodox chant. I was glad to learn that there are now groups that gather regularly in the UK to sing this powerful, haunting and beautiful music. As I was returning to G-Source to work on the ARC table, I encountered the giant puppets of *In Another Place*, from Liverpool, as they portrayed the nativity story alongside the path. It was one of those things that just stops you in your tracks: puppets two storeys high, bending and weaving to a beautiful script that is at once poetic and simple, acting out the birth of our Lord. Before I knew it, tears were rolling down my cheeks at the eternal truth and beauty of our ancient story. Sr Margaret Theresa also attended a wide range of events, and together we heard theologian Mary Grey's talk, 'In the Beginning Was the Relation: Creation, Reconciliation and Confronting the Balfour Declaration', an eye-opening account of this key aspect of the story behind the ongoing Middle East crises.

The lasting impression I have of Greenbelt is of being among thousands of people I'd never met, but who felt like old friends, people of all races and classes, from infancy through to their eighties and nineties. I learned that this is an event families attend over generations; you can tell the old hands—they trailed children, chairs, food and blankets in well-packed wagons behind them! And although it was a day amid a large crowd, it was at least as energizing and inspiring as it was tiring. The people who stopped at the well-stocked ARC table showed real interest in the brochures available describing the many Anglican Communities represented, and they asked thoughtful questions. At one point a Roman Catholic Sister introduced me to a Chinese nun who was returning to China to found a new convent in her native country. The joy on her face remains with me.

The programme book of this year's Greenbelt Festival says on the cover, 'Life begins when we change our mind.' How often Our Lord tried to teach us this! In parables, in stories, and especially in relationships, he was constantly pointing us to the presence of the Father in places we'd never thought to look. I would never have

expected a crowd of 20,000 people attending talks, concerts, exhibits, discussions, even crowded services of worship, to show forth so dramatically the many faces of our faith, to live so clearly the spirit of love and generosity to friend and stranger. Did I mention there was even a tent where festival-goers could donate blood? And one where they could make bread for those who have none?

I left Greenbelt changed, dazed with joy and amazement at all I had seen in that one day, and with a deep sense of humility. In the words of the Lord, 'Repent, for the kingdom is near;' it is always nearer than I know, and all I have to do to see it is allow my mind to be changed by Life himself.

Next time, I hope to take my tent.

THE CENTRE AND THE MARGINS

KENNETH LEECH

THIS ARTICLE arises from meditation on two earlier articles in the *Fairacres Chronicle*, one by a number of Oblate Sisters on the theme, 'Living on the Margins',^{††} one by my old friend and colleague at Trinity College, Oxford, Ben de la Mare, on his experience of stroke.^{‡‡} As I write, another long-time friend is suffering from Alzheimer's; so I reflect on personal, medical and theological issues. But, as I have long believed and experienced, although not in exactly the same way, these issues are closely integrated in one's life experience.

In 2011 I met Iain McGilchrist, who was launching his book *The Master and His Emissary: the Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (Yale University Press, 2009). It has taken me about two years to work through its 597 pages, making extensive notes on the book, and reducing it to seven filing cards! I would

^{††} *Fairacres Chronicle*, Winter 2011 & Summer 2012.

^{‡‡} 'The Experience of Stroke and the Life of the Spirit', *Fairacres Chronicle*, Winter 2005.

strongly recommend this book. The author is personally trained in both psychiatry and neurology, and neuroscience, and his writing includes a good deal of historical data from ancient Greek and Roman times to the modern and postmodern world.

Shortly after this meeting, on 26 July 2011, I was found in the street close to my home in Mossley, Greater Manchester, having apparently suffered a heart attack. I was admitted to Tameside Hospital, where I spent six weeks. I was born there in 1939, but had no further connections with it, having left the Northwest for London, where I studied and worked for fifty years, until retirement in 2006.

I have no memories of my time in Tameside. I was apparently unconscious most of the time. Even the songs and guitars of Sue White and Trish Mala, both youth workers who had worked with me in Soho and in the East End of London, did not wake me. However, I have pieced together bits of information from many friends who visited me. One said that while I was being carried from the general ward to the Intensive Care ward, I was muttering, ‘Don’t forget, I have to be at Heathrow airport at 10 a.m. tomorrow and be in New York City by 1.00 p.m.; and I don’t like being late for aeroplanes.’ They all said soothingly, ‘Yes, yes.’ Meanwhile, my passport and money were in Mossley.

After six weeks I moved to the Devonshire Unit on Cherry Tree Lane, Stockport, which specialises in neurological illness. I have a clear memory of all the people who came to see me, but for much of the time I was convinced that I was in the USA. I rejected the claim that I was in Stockport, forcefully telling one friend, ‘You seem to think the whole world is in Stockport. I know that we left New York City a few days ago. We are somewhere in the State of Maryland and, if we keep travelling, we shall reach Washington DC in a few days.’ (This was in conflict with the fact that I never heard any American accent, and all the TV programmes were BBC or ITV programmes like *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale*.) There were other conflicting episodes: one day I imagined that I had addressed a conference to which both Fr Gresham Kirkby and Fr Martin Jarrett-Kerr CR came. I was very surprised but pleased to see them, although I knew they were both dead. In fact, I had preached at Father Kirkby’s funeral a few years earlier.

Since returning to Mossley to live in a care home, I have spent a considerable amount of time trying to make sense of my illness and its creative potential. I have totally ‘recovered’—my mind and memory are good and my walking has improved tremendously. I have been in touch with many friends in Britain, especially from Mossley and Manchester, and the USA. I am expecting three visitors from the USA in a few weeks. I have been especially grateful to Denise Yeldham for her support over the psychiatric and neurological aspects of my illness.

My only ‘failure’ is that I have lost the ability to use a computer; however, since I have written six books on computers, I take this to indicate a loss of interest, rather than of skill. From this it is evident that email is not the quickest way to contact me. Last time I counted, there were 5,000 in the inbox.

But I have recently been reading, or re-reading, two other books which, in different ways, engage with the issues raised by McGilchrist. I am re-reading Urban T. Holmes III’s *Ministry and Imagination* (Seabury Press 1976), and, for the first time, Diarmuid O’Murchu’s *Quantum Theology* (Crossroad Publishing 1997). I am hoping to write a study of Holmes’s thinking about ministry and priesthood, having made a brief reference to his work in my *The Sky is Red: Discerning the Signs of the Times* (DLT 1997). At that time Holmes was almost unknown in Britain, while O’Murchu’s book is only published in the USA. When it was given to me as a birthday present by a Canadian friend I naturally assumed that the author was North American. I then discovered that he lived a few hundred yards from me in Whitechapel.

These three books are complementary and convergent, though they approach their material from different contexts, perspectives and experiences. I have already touched on McGilchrist’s thinking; O’Murchu, along with some sociologists of religion, accepts the currently fashionable contrast between theology and ‘spirituality’. Theology is defined as dogmatic, rigid and fossilized, while spirituality is liberated, counter-cultural and exciting. Holmes’s work, influenced by ideas of chaos and by the anthropologist Victor Turner, is a powerful appeal for a renewal of Christian ministerial practice.

What did I learn in the two hospitals and from living for over a year now in different accommodation? I cannot comment on my time in Tameside, though others have told me that I said nothing or very little. Stockport was very different. I recall virtually everything I did or said, and virtually everything that was said to me, and by whom. On the first day there I fell out of bed, having stretched too far for a book, and landed on the floor, I remember that, almost immediately before the fall, I had dreamt that I was in some university, Cambridge or Manchester. But I awoke to recognise the medical superintendent looking down at me saying, ‘There are no bones broken in your arms, but allow some time for them to heal.’ They have healed now.

My illness raised a lot of issues—theological, neurological and pastoral—and provoked a good deal of reading and reflection on the mind and brain, on intellect, emotion, quantum theory and chaos. But these must await another time and, maybe, another book.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

DOUGLAS DALES, a Priest Associate of the Community, ministers within the Diocese of Oxford.

KENNETH LEECH, a Priest Associate of the Community, retired to Mossley, Manchester after many years of active ministry in London.

MICHAEL PATERNOSTER retired to Wells in 2000 after spending the greater part of his active ministry in Scotland. He celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his priesthood in 2012.

JOHN PORTER, a Priest Associate of the Community, lives in France and ministers to the local Anglican congregation.

ROBERT SEVENSKY OHC is the Superior of the Anglican Order of the Holy Cross, Newburgh, New York.

HUGH WYBREW, a Priest Associate of the Community, lives in active retirement in Oxford.

BOOK REVIEWS

Archbishop Justin Welby: The Road to Canterbury, Andrew Atherstone, Darton, Longman and Todd, 2013, £7.99.

ISBN: 978-0-232-52994-4.

The two paragraphs on the back of this small book describe it so well that I will start by quoting them:

This biography of Justin Welby, the 105th Archbishop of Canterbury, traces the story of his life and ministry from his earliest years to the eve of his enthronement in March 2013. It examines his conversion to Christianity as a student at Cambridge University, his career as a treasurer in the oil industry, and his meteoric rise through the ranks of the Church of England—as a rector in Warwickshire, Director of International Reconciliation Ministry at Coventry Cathedral, Dean of Liverpool, and Bishop of Durham.

Based on extensive archival research, and interviews with the archbishop's friends and colleagues, this study analyses his formative relationships, leadership style and priorities for the Church. It highlights Justin Welby's passion for evangelism, reconciliation and risk-taking, which mark a change of direction for the Anglican Communion.

The author, Andrew Atherstone, Tutor in History and Doctrine at Wycliffe Hall, and a member of the Theology Faculty in Oxford is, like his subject, an evangelical. But if Welby is primarily an evangelical, the book shows his remarkable capacity to cross borders, and his biographer crosses them with him. Thus there is nothing, in the phrase commonly used, 'narrowly evangelical' about this biography. At the same time, it is magnificently evangelical!

The first chapter, 'A Silver Spoon and a Broken Home', describes Welby's parents. His mother, Jane Portal, secretary to Winston Churchill and socially well-connected, abandoned her job with Churchill to marry Gavin Welby. The discovery, after Justin Welby's appointment to Canterbury, that his grandparents—unknown to him—were Jewish émigrés from Germany, originally named Weiler, is chiefly credited to the investigations of *The Sunday Telegraph*. Gavin Welby was evidently attractive to women, but his

relationships did not last, and the marriage with Jane Portal ended after three years. Thus the young Justin spent his early years being shuttled between his mother, father and grandparents.

At the age of eight Welby was sent to a boys' preparatory school in Seaford where, Atherstone writes, 'he left little impression upon the school record, apart from a star performance in his last year as Nerissa, the waiting-maid in the *Merchant of Venice*.' He went on to Eton where he was a 'model boy, but not one of great distinction'. A formative influence during these years was his grandmother, Iris Portal, with whom he usually spent his vacations. She was a younger sister of Rab Butler, and the wife of a lieutenant-colonel in the Indian army—'a daughter of the raj'. Thus all these factors of lineage and upbringing explain how it is that Welby combines the self-assurance of the English gentleman with the wit and unnerving acuity sometimes encountered in Jewish men.

After Eton Welby went up to Cambridge. The first section of the chapter 'Conversion and Calling', describes the phenomenal success of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union in bringing students to commit themselves to Christ. Against the handful of one-time university students one has known who have never recovered from evangelical zeal, must be counted the many every year brought to lifelong commitment to Christ by the work of CICCUC at Cambridge and OICCU at Oxford. Those of us who have travelled by another way read, with a certain relief, that Welby remained for a year apparently unmoved by all attempts to evangelize him.

But one Sunday evening, 12 October 1975, he was taken by a friend, Nicky Hills, to an evangelistic meeting. The sermon bored Welby out of his mind, as he later wrote, but he spent the evening with Hills discussing what it meant to be a Christian. During the course of the evening Hills explained the purpose of the cross of Christ and, at ten minutes to midnight, Welby prayed a prayer of commitment. 'The penny dropped', Welby wrote, 'I asked Jesus to be Lord of my life. ... The sense that something had changed was instantaneous.' Some weeks later, while reading the third chapter of the Gospel of John, he had an overwhelming sense of God's love for him, a sense which is expressed in various ways throughout the book. Later, for instance, his 'Thought for the Month', which he

wrote for his parish at Southam, included a response to a speech made by Archbishop George Carey in the House of Lords about the need ‘to strengthen the moral fibre of our nation’ by re-instilling rules for society based on the Judaeo-Christian tradition, principally the Ten Commandments and the example and teaching of Jesus. Welby wrote:

[The speech] gives the impression that morality and Christianity are the same thing. They are not. You can be a morally upright atheist, or Buddhist, or whatever. To be a Christian is to know and to love God and to have experienced His love and forgiveness. That experience should lead to a desire to lead a good life; but the experience of God’s love comes first. (p. 58)

After Cambridge Welby thought about ordination, but a placement for a week in Islington, which gave evangelical students a brief experience of parish life in North London, convinced him that he was not cut out to be a clergyman. Numerous job applications came to nothing until, now married to Caroline Eaton, a fellow Cambridge graduate who had similarly been brought to Christ, he found himself, with no knowledge of finance and only A level French, in an apartment in Paris, employed by the French oil company, Elf Aquitaine. After five years, in 1983, he was posted back to London to run the treasury for its subsidiary, Elf UK.

The next section, ‘Tragedy’ records the return journey to England during which Johanna, the Welby’s first baby, was thrown from the car and died five days later. Atherstone calls Welby by his surname throughout the book except in this section where he is Justin. The grief described in an account written later by both Justin and Caroline brings its reader too close for surnames.

After only a year with Elf UK, Welby was head-hunted by a new company, ‘Enterprise Oil’. He was chosen to be the group treasurer to run all the short-term and long-term finance and insurance deals. In this environment he developed his capacity for clear decision making, while understanding the need for collegiality. He wrote:

Treasury teaches you to be decisive. Markets don’t allow you to hang about and vacillate. And treasury teaches you about teamwork and working collaboratively. (p. 30)

The new company created an ethos of equality, instilled in practical ways: a staff canteen, for instance, where everyone ate, regardless of rank or department. ‘Power was delegated to the lowest possible level, and ideas and criticism from all employees was generally welcome.’ Much later Welby wrote:

Serious, sensible Christianity is holistic. It should incorporate and transform every aspect of life. It is dangerous to start artificially to separate the sacred and the secular because you end up with a privatised approach to faith which has no impact on life. (p. 32)

The next section ‘Call to Ordination’ begins with the influences on Welby of Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB). One of them was John Wimber, widely known for his books and for his many aphorisms such as: ‘Faith is spelt R-I-S-K.’ Welby was gradually being drawn to offer himself for ordination, ‘kicking and screaming’, as he put it. The Bishop of Kensington did not warm to him and told him there was no place for him in the Church of England. Nevertheless the interviewing process continued slowly over the next two years, and the longer it went on, the less Welby wanted to be ordained. His work at Enterprise Oil was going exceptionally well: ‘I had a time when I couldn’t put a foot wrong ... we were doing some very complex deals and everything worked, and I was thinking, I’m really good at this!’ But finally he was sent in 1988 for three days of interviews. The Bishop (Maidstone) asked him why he wanted to be ordained. Welby replied: ‘Well, I don’t, really, because I’m enjoying what I’m doing now.’ The Bishop, baffled, asked him why, then, was he there, and Welby replied that he had an overwhelming feeling—shared by Caroline—that it was the right thing to do, a call from God. The Bishop then asked what he would do if he was not selected for ordination. Welby replied that he would go back to London and take his wife out for the most expensive meal he could afford to celebrate. He was recommended. At the Enterprise Oil leaving party Welby’s boss quipped that it was the only known case of a rat joining a sinking ship! The rest of the book suggests that there is little likelihood of any ship sinking while Welby is on board.

Cranmer Hall, the theological college in Durham which Welby chose for his training, provided a wide range of Christian teaching from Calvinist to Catholic. The first section of the chapter,

‘Growing Churches’, concludes: ‘Welby demonstrated a catholicity of approach, a desire to learn from contrasting perspectives, and an ability to straddle different ecclesiastical worlds in an eirenic manner. His college contemporaries found it impossible to pigeon-hole him’ (p. 42).

In 1992, at the age of thirty-six, Welby was ordained in Coventry Cathedral by the Bishop of Coventry, Simon Barrington-Ward. He was to remain in the Coventry diocese from the time of his ordination to 2007, when he was appointed Dean of Liverpool Cathedral. Welby served his title at Chilvers Cotton, a working-class suburb of Nuneaton in the West Midlands, becoming Rector of St James Church, Southam in 1995. This chapter, ‘Growing Churches’, describes Welby’s ability to create small groups for Christian nurture. By 1999 there were nine of these, meeting midweek in homes around Southam for Bible study, prayer and mutual encouragement. But, as the section ‘Widening Relationships’ relates, Welby was increasingly in demand for his management and financial skills.

One of these demands was an invitation to join the Finance Ethics Group of the Von Hügel Institute, a Roman Catholic research centre at St Edmund’s College, Cambridge, concerned with the relationship between Christianity and social policy. Through this Institute Welby established a new range of associations with Roman Catholic economists and theologians, especially in French-speaking Europe. He became closely associated with the Observatoire de la Finance and with its founding-director Paul Dembinski. Through him he met, in 2000, Nicolas Buttet, a Swiss Roman Catholic lawyer who had left his work at the Vatican to spend five years as a hermit before founding in 1996 a community, the Eucharistein. Atherstone writes:

The community’s ministry focused on redeeming people pushed to the fringes of society by drug and alcohol addictions or mental illness. Welby was bowled over by his first encounter, and described Buttet to his parishioners in Southam as ‘So full of love for others that you could touch it. So utterly unconcerned with himself. So generous, and so committed to Jesus he almost shone.’ (p. 66)

In 2003 Buttet was ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood and became Welby's spiritual director. There was a further development of this kind a year later when Welby became an Oblate of the Anglican Benedictine Community at Elmore where he had first made a retreat while an ordinand in the early 1990s. Atherstone describes the Community as a 'small bastion of Anglo-Papalism, celebrating the Roman Eucharistic rite and using the prayers of the Roman breviary'. But it was evidently the Benedictine way of life, its regularity, the focus on choir, the vast chunks of psalms, which drew Welby. 'Above all, for me,' he wrote, 'there is the encouragement of ordinary folk seeking to live out a life of integrity in community, with Christ at the centre, guided by a Rule of incandescent common sense' (p. 95).

The chapter, 'The Ministry of Reconciliation', begins with the development of Coventry Cathedral's International Centre for Reconciliation (ICR) and the appointment by Bishop Colin Bennetts, Barrington-Ward's successor at Coventry, of a specialist in religious dialogue between Christianity, Judaism and Islam. This was Andrew White, whose first work with the ICR was in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip 'where he demonstrated a genius for establishing relationships with hostile religious leaders'. The upshot of this particular undertaking inspired Welby to offer himself to White as a 'bag-carrier or anything', an offer promptly taken up, and which led directly to Welby being invited to join the team at Coventry Cathedral as White's co-director of international ministry. When offering Welby the job, Colin Bennetts explained that 'he would spend two weeks a month travelling, mostly to places of violent conflict, and would have to raise his own finances.' (p. 72).

The next section in this chapter 'Iraq, Nigeria, Burundi', describes Welby's ministry of reconciliation in these countries. In the inflammable and often murderous situations in which he constantly found himself, his experience at Enterprise Oil proved fundamental. In an article in *The Treasurer*, 'Guns, God, and Staying True to Yourself' (2006), Welby reflected on three ways in which his experience in treasury management had prepared him for this ministry in conflict resolution: first, the ability to synthesize a lot of information under pressure; second, flexibility in attitude, in analytical models, in planning and in execution; third, determination.

Atherstone continues: ‘Treasury management at Enterprise Oil required resilience to broker deals, sometimes over many months amidst numerous obstacles, and to keep pushing forward towards key goals. A similar steely character is needed in reconciliation ministry’ (p. 78). In Welby’s case, this ‘steely character’ paradoxically issues in a willingness to remain vulnerable. In an article, ‘Reconciliation in Nigeria’, Welby wrote that the reconciler must be willing to be personally vulnerable in forging genuine relationships:

They have to relate to a person, not an office. One cannot see a ‘militia leader’. One has to see a named individual with feelings, emotions, in whom the blood flows, and who has worries and loves like everyone else. Relationships must be affective. They need to show signs of personal engagement, to affirm, to encourage and to be warm in their expression. Such relationships will necessarily be emotional. Conflicts are emotional places to be in. ... The foundation of relating is that the very existence of a relationship is more important than the process of reconciliation. (p. 81-2)

In this chapter, ‘The Ministry of Reconciliation’, Welby’s understanding of reconciliation is made clear. For instance:

Welby emphasized that rapid reconciliation is illusory. It is a long-term process, never an event. ... He warned against *declarationitis*, ‘the disease of making declarations and concluding that by doing so we have changed the world. It is as though, by some strange semiotic mechanism, talking about reconciliation can lead to its happening.’ (p. 83)

And, in another place, ‘Reconciliation is conflict transformed, not concluded’ (p. 92).

Risk-taking is on the same level of importance for Welby as reconciliation. In the next chapter, ‘Liverpool Cathedral’, Welby says, in his sermon at his installation as Dean, that

risk means taking chances with things that may and will fail, whether styles of worship, or new forms of church life, or in reconciliation amongst people who are in conflict, or in offering generous hospitality and love. ... If we trust Christ we can do no less than take risks. (p. 101-2)

Earlier in the book Welby is shown to be scathing on the subject of ‘Risk Management’, writing that on the one hand it is an ‘increasingly black art’, and on the other that ‘an obsession with managing risk leads to cowardice and paralysis of action’ (p. 64).

‘Liverpool Cathedral’ concludes with the announcement by Downing Street that Welby was to be the next Bishop of Durham. Welby’s final sermon was a ‘passionate exhortation to hang on to Jesus’. Atherstone writes:

He warned his congregation, speaking also to himself as he entered the episcopate, against the danger of becoming ‘mere straw figures pretending to religion. ... Such strawy existence leads us from grace to law, from hospitality to defensiveness, from risk-taking in Christ’s service to self-preserving in our own interests.’ (p. 115-16)

The last chapter, ‘Durham’, shows Welby’s exceptional attributes emerging in response to the increasing responsibilities being laid upon him: humour, a disarming candour, lack of self-defensiveness, a devastating capacity for ‘sharp questioning, and withering put-downs’ in the realm of finance, and ‘decisive leadership, interwoven with collegiality and consensus’. If it had not already become clear to the reader in the chapters leading up to this one that Welby is capable of carrying the full load of leadership, this chapter must surely settle the question.

The book ends with Welby’s first public statement as Archbishop-designate in November 2012, from which Atherstone takes the key points. But the last quotation is taken from the pages of *The Treasurer*—a source frequently used throughout the book—in which Welby wrote:

I am profoundly optimistic about the Church I serve. For all its many failures it has treasure—perhaps treasure located in rather clay-like containers—but treasure that gives hope, meaning and purpose to those who find it. (p. 145)

Andrew Atherstone is to be thanked for writing a readable and illuminating account of our Archbishop, a man at once ordinary and extraordinary.

SISTER EDMÉE SLG

Pope Francis: Untying the Knots, Paul Vallely, Bloomsbury, 2013, £12.99. ISBN: 978-1-4729-0370-9.

I can highly recommend this book. If you wish to know more about the direction in which this pope might go; or to learn more about the man, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who, though widely-known as a conservative, has taken the name of Francis, a radical saint of the Church; or to understand something of the controversies of his earlier life in Argentina, then you will find much to illuminate and instruct here.

The author, Paul Vallely, is Visiting Professor of Public Ethics at the University of Chester. He is the author of several books and has written for various British newspapers, both secular and religious, and for the *Wall Street Journal*. His research for this book has been extensive, including travelling to Argentina and Rome to meet intimates of Bergoglio. There are a number of black-and-white photographs, and a timeline, showing the life of Bergoglio set alongside what was happening in the Church and in Argentina. Admittedly the book itself has been written in a hurry, but it is sad to have to repeat our frequent lament over the incompleteness of the proof-reading, resulting in mistakes in wording and, sometimes, in non-sentences. Why...? That quibble apart, the book is most helpful.

Vallely rigorously examines the controversy surrounding Bergoglio in the years 1973-9, when he was Jesuit Provincial in Argentina. The treatment, though not uncritical, is sympathetic. It would take several readings of this part of the book, which is dense, for me to feel that I had really grasped in some measure the complex history and politics of that era. Some parts of the chapter on the suffering undergone by the people during the ‘Dirty War’ in Argentina I find almost unbearable to read.

By the end of the book we have an image of Bergoglio during that period as an able, charismatic young man, who from the time he was very young had been a ‘political animal’, and whose traditional, authoritarian leanings led to decisions which are criticized widely in hindsight—as indeed they were by many at the time he made them. Bergoglio was made Provincial when, as he himself now acknowledges, he was probably too young for the

responsibility. He lived in a brutal dictatorship; whatever he did in difficult situations would have tended to have unfortunate and tragic consequences. Sometimes he may have shut his eyes, but frequently he was incredibly brave; and he saved many people. We see something of the complexity of trying to live as a Christian in extreme circumstances and under a tyrannical and oppressive régime. The book demonstrates that, for the Christian, no opt-out from facing the powers of this world is truly possible, and certainly not in a dictatorship.

Bergoglio now embraces the Liberation Theology which he, along with the Vatican, sought to repress—partly because of the fear of its connections with Marxism and other left-wing ideologies. He himself later followed the same programme of caring for the poor in the slums as had the two Jesuit priests whom he failed to protect, and who were imprisoned and tortured for their work in the slums during the Dirty War.

Bergoglio, who became known as the Bishop of the Slums, is a man of prayer. He rises early each morning to spend two hours in prayer. In the years following his time as Jesuit Provincial in Argentina he underwent a profound inner conversion, where he recognised his own failures and sought forgiveness. He also developed a sense of corporate sin and responsibility, which he had lacked, seeing only individual failings. He acknowledges that he made ‘hundreds of errors’ and committed ‘sins and offences’ in his leadership roles, which perhaps explains his emphasis on God’s mercy and forgiveness in his teaching and preaching thus far as Pope. He is rather a loner, a solitary. Although he is friendly and interested in people and contacts them freely, Valley indicates that he does not have friends in the usual sense of people to visit and simply to spend time with.

There are parts of the book which are easier to read: for example, the accounts of the papal election of 2005, when Bergoglio was runner up, and of the 2013 election; the description of the act Francis has to follow, namely the papacy of Benedict XVI, including a sense of the time now being ripe for him in a way that it would not have been in 2005; the charming anecdotes of the refreshing human touches he brings to his new role. I particularly like the story that, when Pope Francis was unable to sleep on the

night of his election, he was driven at his request around Rome in an unmarked car (eschewing the papal limousine) and saw the people celebrating.

The book's title is based on a painting by Johann Georg Melchior Schmidtner, 'Our Lady, Untier of Knots', in the St Peter am Perlach Church in Augsburg in Germany. Bergoglio's doctoral studies took him to Germany for a few months in 1985. It was not a very happy time for him, as he missed Argentina. But the painting so spoke to him in the turmoil in his life, after his presiding over a deep rift among Argentina's Jesuits, that he took copies of the painting back to Argentina. A cult has since developed there, around the image of the Virgin as the solver of problems.

Pope Francis is not going to be able to untie everything. For some there is already disappointment over his assertion that the priesthood is not open to women. But Vallely mentions two specific things which Francis could help to untie. The first is that he now has the opportunity to allow the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo to access Argentinean Church records in their search for missing relatives, which was something he refused to do when he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires. Secondly, his old friend Rabbi Abraham Skorka hopes that Francis will act upon his conviction that the Vatican should open its secret archives to reveal the truth as to whether Pope Pius XII did more to help, or to hinder, the Jews of Europe during the Nazi persecutions leading up to the Holocaust. Michael Walsh, in a review of the book in the Roman Catholic weekly magazine, *The Tablet*, points out, however, that with the accession of a new pope, those papers are in any case next in line to become available, in accordance with normal Vatican procedures. If this does not happen, then there will indeed be reason for suspicion.^{§§} It is worth noting that Walsh, having read ten biographies of Bergoglio, says, 'Read this book. Forget the rest.'

Vallely quotes Leonardo Boff, one of the founding fathers of Liberation Theology and Professor Emeritus of Ethics, Philosophy of Religion and Ecology at Rio de Janeiro State University in Brazil, as saying:

^{§§} *The Tablet*, 3 August 2013, p. 25.

Francis is more than a name—it's a plan. It's a plan for a poor Church, one that is close to the people, gospel-centred, loving and protective towards nature which is being devastated today. Saint Francis is the archetype of that type of Church. (p. 198)

Words of Boff are used to conclude the book: 'What matters isn't Bergoglio and his past, but Francis and his future' (p. 203).

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

The Jesus Prayer and the Great Exchange, Simon Barrington-Ward, Grove Books Ltd, 2013, £3.95. ISBN: 978-1-85174-856-3.

This is a fine and personal testimony that sheds further light on Bishop Simon Barrington-Ward's long experience of using the Jesus Prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy upon me/us.' It further enhances the great value of his earlier book on that subject, published by the Bible Reading Fellowship.*** Bishop Barrington-Ward was formerly Bishop of Coventry, and before that General Secretary of CMS.

This booklet is structured around three parts, discussing what the bishop describes as 'the Great Exchange' between God and ourselves in Jesus Christ: how God enters into our life and death; how we enter into the death of the Son of God and his Risen Life; and our life-long vocation as Christians to experience the 'mutual indwelling' of the Spirit of Christ, drawing on the teaching of St Gregory Palamas. In both these books, a deeply personal experience and understanding is underpinned by some judicious reading, to which these two publications make a very accessible introduction. This new booklet was prompted by a first visit that the bishop made recently to the Holy Mountain of Athos.

The story begins, however, in post-war Berlin, where he went as a student in 1953. He encountered the grim devastation of the city and the traumatic experiences of its inhabitants, during the final stages of the war and then under Communism. He was nurtured by an informal Christian group that had its origins under the leadership of Pastor Martin Niemöller, who had been persecuted

*** *The Jesus Prayer*, BRF, 2007, £5.99. ISBN: 978-1-84101-588-0.

by the Nazis. ‘They came together fortnightly and I found myself entering into a deep, mutual acceptance and openness to each other, and an even deeper sense of the presence of God’ (p. 5). Discussion revolved around II Corinthians 5: 21, reflecting on how Christ came into the world to alter for ever the relationship between God and any who would receive him. As Christ entered into the dark depths of human sinfulness, so human beings may now enter their true destiny in him as children of God—a ‘sweet exchange’ indeed. Under the guidance of a young German pastor, the English student encountered for the first time the teaching of the early Fathers on this subject, which became the foundation of his own spiritual life and pilgrimage through many years of fruitful Christian ministry and leadership.

Bishop Simon Barrington-Ward is a person of rare openness and sympathy, able to embrace, for example, the warmth and vitality of Nigerian Pentecostalism along the road to his leadership of the global witness and ministry of CMS. It was while in that demanding role that he first visited the Orthodox Monastery of St John the Baptist at Tolleshunt Knights, Essex, which was at that time under the inspired spiritual leadership of Father Sophrony. Here he encountered the corporate praying of the Jesus Prayer, in various languages, which is one of the distinctive features of worship in that remarkable community, to which he has often returned. Here also he encountered in Father Sophrony a true *staretz*, a spiritual teacher of unusual clarity and depth. From him he learnt the road into praying the Jesus Prayer personally and sacrificially; for Father Sophrony’s opening prayer was always: ‘Draw me through the Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, into the triune love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!’ (p. 9). The Jesus Prayer thus becomes the ‘rod and staff’ of the long and sometimes dark Christian spiritual journey, following the light of the Holy Spirit, through ‘the valley of the shadow of death’ towards God’s Kingdom of eternal life, which is the true home of humanity made in his image and likeness.

The bishop writes:

Continually we realize, as we are being drawn into the interplay of *God’s journey with us in Christ* through the Holy Spirit, and through the same Holy Spirit, *our journey*

in and with Christ to the Father, that this way of praying becomes part of a continuous exchange, which can be worked out in and through us and our fellow Christians all through our life. ... God in Christ, through the Spirit, keeps coming to us in his infinite love and compassion, and in his mercy. (p. 11)

It has been often observed that pilgrims to Mount Athos receive exactly that for which God has prepared them in many hidden ways before they arrive. This truth is vindicated in the third part of the booklet, in which Bishop Barrington-Ward recounts his first pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain in 2011, and his personal discovery of the significance of the spiritual teaching of St Gregory Palamas (1296-1359), who was Archbishop of Thessalonica. He describes simply and vividly his impression of the various monasteries that made him welcome; for example, Vatopedi by the sea with its glittering church that is a thousand years old, where the silent recitation of the Jesus Prayer is the hidden counterpoint to the solemn chanting of the services and the Liturgy. He also summarizes the remarkable way in which the spiritual life of the Holy Mountain has been revived in recent years, not least by the example of St Silouan, whose prayer reflects the ecumenical and global scope of the worship and intercession that is offered by day and night on Athos: 'I pray thee, merciful Lord, for all the peoples of the earth that they may come to know thee through thy Holy Spirit.'

The bishop's pilgrimage took him also to the monasteries of Stavronikita, Pantokrator and Koutloumousiou, before he completed his visit at Simonopetra, perched high above the sea. He recounts some of the conversations that he had with various wise and kindly monks, who further deepened his understanding of the spiritual significance of the Jesus Prayer, and of the key theological importance of the teaching of St Gregory Palamas.

St Gregory set about a strong reconstruction of our understanding of the full meaning of God's entering into a human life and death in the person of Jesus Christ, and of Christ's being raised up to become the author and inaugurator, through the power of the Holy Spirit, of God's new creation. (p. 17)

In the words of St Paul, ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself’ (II Cor. 5: 19). These words seem to provide a golden spiritual thread of consistency to Bishop Barrington-Wards’ truly ecumenical spiritual experience and formation over many years of prayer and openness to the Spirit of God. He concludes with these words:

God’s *promises* are to be given to us *now*! St Gregory Palamas surely wanted nothing less than to assure us of their reality and truth, since for him the Jesus Prayer was itself a constant and utterly confident glimpse and gleam of the certainty of our destiny and of our ultimate goal, as we are united with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and drawn in, with and through him, into the Father’s love, to be made one with the triune God, in that *theosis* which awaits us all (p. 23).

DOUGLAS DALES

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

The subtitle, *Mary in the Anglican Tradition*, suggests perhaps a more comprehensive and systematic treatment than the book provides. Canon Greenacre had, in fact, intended just such a solid piece of work, but died before he could attempt it. What we have instead is a collection of sermons, lectures and articles on Mariological topics. Inevitably there is some overlap and repetition, but we can indeed be grateful to Colin Podmore for collecting and preserving such a wealth of material. The book is arranged in four parts. The first is not *by* Roger Greenacre but *about* him, recalling that his twenty-five years as a Canon of Chichester were preceded by ten years as chaplain of St George’s, Paris, and followed by another ten years’ chaplaincy on the French Riviera. Equally fluent in French and English, he was almost uniquely qualified to interpret Anglicanism to Roman Catholics and vice versa. Careful as he was not to give the impression that all Anglicans are devoted to Our Lady and longing for reunion with the Holy See, he was firmly Anglo-Catholic, paid little attention to evangelical scruples about the cult of Mary, and perhaps overstated the signs that devotion to her is on the increase among us.

The second part of the book consists of a very fine series of teaching sermons on Our Lady. The third is headed ‘The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Anglican Tradition’: here, indeed, we could do with more substance, as the five items Father Podmore has collected hardly cover the ground completely, though it is good to have plentiful extracts from the underrated Caroline Divine, Mark Frank. Greenacre notes that from the Reformation onwards most Anglican theologians, while conceding that the saints and faithful departed *do* pray for us, have been reluctant to allow that they can be asked directly for their prayers.

The final section consists of reflections on the place of Mary in ecumenical dialogue, particularly the text of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II), *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, with its determined effort to interpret the Marian dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption in ways acceptable to Anglicans. It has to be said, however, as Canon Greenacre was well aware, that the understanding reached by those who have worked and prayed together over a long period is not always acceptable to those who have not shared the experience. Moreover, as he once said to a French audience, ‘If the phenomenon of contemporary Anglicanism is confusing for those on the *outside*, I have to tell you that it is almost equally confusing of those on the *inside*!’ The outlook is darker now than when many of the pieces in this book were written, but those of us who believe firmly in the essential Catholicity of the Anglican Church will find much encouragement from these pages.

MICHAEL PATERNOSTER

You are the Messiah, and I Should Know: Why Leadership is a Myth (and Probably a Heresy), Justin Lewis-Anthony, Bloomsbury, 2013, £12.99. ISBN: 978-144-1186-18-8.

‘Not another book on leadership!’ This was the response of a younger, but experienced, parish priest when I told him I’d been invited to write this review. It reminded me of a comment by Mother Mary Clare on the plethora of books on prayer: that it was like giving a thirsty man a treatise on the properties of water, when what he really wanted was a drink!

I found it a curiously unsatisfying book. Despite this, the first part is a useful survey of definitions of leadership with many quotations and footnotes. The last part is a discourse on the leadership of Jesus and its expression in the early Church, ending with a consideration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's approach to leadership. There are some helpful sections, e.g. a useful discussion of the distinction between heresy and blasphemy.

The middle two-thirds of the book is a not-uninteresting account of leadership as depicted in the movies, especially in War films and Westerns; but it was too long and tended to be tedious. However, I learnt some interesting facts, among them that John Wayne, the Hollywood epitome of military leadership in Westerns and War films, was excused military service and was never in the Armed Forces.

As a critique of leadership presented by Hollywood it's not without interest, despite the sans serif typeface which makes it a difficult book to read. And there are several misprints at important points in the text, as well as a surfeit of quotations and footnotes. As a book on leadership it would not fully satisfy Mother Mary Clare's thirsty man, but provides some signposts for deeper thought on the subject.

JOHN PORTER

BOOKS RECEIVED

From Bloomsbury

Aquinas at Prayer: The Bible, Mysticism and Poetry, Paul Murray OP, 2013, £16.99. ISBN: 978-1-4411-0755-8.

Looking Through the Cross, The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2014, Graham Tomlin, 2013, £9.99. ISBN 978-1-4081-8847-7.

Sackcloth and Ashes: Penance and Penitence in a Self-centred World, Ann Widdecombe, 2013, £9.99. ISBN 978-1-4081-8716-6.

From Canterbury Press (Norwich Books)

Running Over Rocks: Spiritual Practices to Transform Tough Times, Ian Adams, 2013, £14.99. ISBN 978-1-84825-168-7.

Etched by Silence: A Pilgrimage Through the Poetry of R. S. Thomas, compiled by Jim Cotter, 2013, £12.99. ISBN: 978-1-84825-339-1.

Walk in This Light: Living Out Our Baptism and Confirmation, Richard Giles, 2013, £12.99. ISBN 978-1-84825-27-8.

Celebrating Sundays: Reflections from the Early Church on the Sunday Gospels, compiled & introd. by Stephen Mark Holmes, Canterbury Press, 2012, £30.00. ISBN: 978-1-84825-210-9.

Thirty Nine New Articles: An Anglican Landscape of Faith, Martyn Percy, Canterbury Press, 2013, £16.99. ISBN: 978-1-84825-525-8.

When God is Silent: Divine Language Beyond Words, Barbara Brown Taylor, 2013, £9.99. ISBN 978-1-84825-454-1.

The Preaching Life: Living Out Your Vocation, Barbara Brown Taylor, 2013, £12.99. ISBN: 978-1-84825-318-6.

Learning to Dream Again: Rediscovering the Heart of God, Samuel Wells, 2013, £14.99. ISBN: 978-1-84825-331-5.

From Teresian Press

Infinite Horizons: Scripture Through Carmelite Eyes, James McCaffrey OCD, 2013, £8.00. ISBN: 978-0-947916-13-8.

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NEW FROM SLG PRESS

**The Spiritual Wisdom of the Syriac
*Book of Steps***

Robert A. Kitchen

Robert Kitchen points out in his introduction to this book of extracts from *The Book of Steps* that it 'has always had trouble getting noticed'. The fourth-century Syriac author was writing to and about the Christian community in which he lived. His work is a manual of Christian living for the Church in Syria, written before monasticism had taken its traditional shape.

This anonymous author addresses the people under his pastoral care, drawing on his vivid knowledge of scripture and biblical personalities. In doing so, he distinguishes between people known as 'the Perfect', who are called to unceasing prayer, and those known as 'the Upright', who live a more active life of ministry.

To put this teaching into a modern context, Dr Kitchen summarizes the thirty chapters of *The Book of Steps* and gives a short commentary on a core passage from each one.

ROBERT A. KITCHEN is the minister of Knox-Metropolitan United Church, Regina, Saskatchewan. He read for the Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford under the guidance of Sebastian P. Brock. With Martien F. G. Parmentier he translated *The Syriac Book of Steps* (Cistercian Publications, 2004). He has written also on Philoxenos of Mabbug and Dadisho Qatraya.

Fairacres Publications FP171 £5.50 ISBN: 978-0-7283-0238-9

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