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Cover Picture:
Paschal Candle in Fairacres Chapel.

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COMMUNITY NOTES

Dear Friends,

As I write these notes on 24 June, the Feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist, we have just celebrated the happy occasion of the Installation of Sr Clare-Louise of the Joy of God as Reverend Mother of this Community, for a term of five years. Sr Clare-Louise was elected on 27 May, so she, and we, had the great blessing of a full four weeks to plan the Installation and prepare for her entry fully into her role. Our Visitor, Bishop Michael Lewis, Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf, was here to install and bless Sr Clare-Louise. Much work went into making it a blessed day, and all the arrangements went smoothly. The weather was kind, sunny and mild, and the overflow from refectory at lunch after the ceremony was accommodated in a marquee. The refectory and catering were a delight, with the blue, pink and white colour scheme, not to mention the exquisite roses in Chapel. We rejoiced that all our elderly or infirm Sisters in care homes or hospital at this time were able to come for a few hours, as well as that members of Sr Clare-Louise's family and friends could be present.

As we now enter upon this new chapter in the life of the Community, we also give thanks to God for all the gifts and dedication Sr Margaret Theresa brought to us in her eight years as Reverend Mother, for her faithfulness and her given-ness to God and to this Community. She will now have a time of well-earned sabbatical before returning to new duties within the Community at the beginning of Advent. She intends to spend her sabbatical within Great Britain. It will be made up of several elements: retreat, being with her family, musical study and reflection, walking, and her beloved hobby of birdwatching.

On his visits, we do look forward to hearing something from Bishop Michael Lewis, our Visitor, about his diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf. It is one of four dioceses in the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, and is divided into the two

Archdeaconries of Cyprus, and of the Gulf, the latter including Yemen, Qatar, The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait and Oman. Faced with the names of these countries—to most of us just names on a map or in the newspapers in need of our prayer—it is very good that he can bring us up to date on the suffering of Christians and others in this diocese, as well as recounting the courage shown by so many. The diocese is active in ten political jurisdictions, which enables both relationships at every level with leaders from diverse cultural and political backgrounds, and encounters with a wide range of religious beliefs and denominations. We are full of admiration for what Bishop Michael and the diocese endeavour to 'hold'.

The past month or so provided us with opportunities to put into practice some of the spiritual tenets which we believe are important in our life together. One of these has been, in the words of Fr Gilbert Shaw's last homily, given just before he died in 1967, 'Your work is standing—holding things without being deflected by your own desires or the desires of other people round you. Then things work out just through patience; how things alter we don't know, but the situation alters.' We have been waiting with expectation for the Installation, putting into practice standing, holding, waiting, preparing, practising not being deflected by anything which would distract us from that—and there is a great deal that a time of transition will throw up if we let it!

Going back to that spiritual classic, *The Stature of Waiting* by W. H. Vanstone (DLT 2004), I have been reminded of Vanstone's genius in depicting the transition in the life of Jesus from his performing of specific actions (cf. St Mark's Gospel), or his time for 'working' (cf. St John's Gospel), to being 'handed over' to passion and death. Vanstone compares this with transitions in the lives of each of us, from being active and 'in control' to being 'delivered up'; he mentions the experience, which can come so suddenly, of sickness and hospitalisation. It has been a time of

waiting for us, and now we can begin to discover its meaning for the Community, and for those whom we hope to serve through our lives and prayer.

Some of us have been aware that this year, in a time of waiting, the Feast of the Visitation to Elizabeth (31 May) and the Feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist, Elizabeth's son, (24 June) could provide us with a particular message. The lovely old collect for the Visitation mentions 'the grace of mutual encouragement', and Sr Christine took up this theme on 11 June, when preaching on the Feast of St Barnabas, who was often known as 'the Son of Consolation' or 'the Son of Encouragement'. She asked us to consider where we personally need encouragement and how we can encourage others in their following of the Christian way. It occurs to me that that is quite a risky pair of questions. Once we learn, by asking the question, where we ourselves need encouragement, should we not go on and provide it for ourselves, inwardly, not waiting for others to come and encourage us? And if we ask ourselves how we can encourage others, can we then hold back from actually doing so?

In this past year I have found how my training as a Girl Guide, and then for a short time, until my studies had to come first, as a Guide Leader, has returned to bestow me with its riches. The intention of the wonderful Guide and Scout motto, 'Be Prepared,' was to build up skills and knowledge and to do kind deeds, so that when we were really needed, we would indeed 'be prepared'. (All those hours of tying slings with our Guide ties …!) And I have found it to be true. Denise Bossert, in her recent book, *Gifts of the Visitation: Nine Spiritual Encounters with Mary and Elizabeth* (Ave Maria Press 2015) ponders the same experience when she writes:

> With Mary as our guide, we discover what it means to have a spirit of readiness for whatever God wants to do next in our lives. God equips each of us for the work he sets before

> us. He uses others—in many kinds of visitations—to prepare us for our calling. (pp. 54, 57).

Perhaps it almost does not matter for *what* we train ourselves and for what others help to train us, as long as we do not forget the Christian duty to serve. But learning to wait and learning to provide true, not superficial, mutual encouragement seem to be quite good places to begin.

This year we have had the mutual encouragement of two rather special visits from within the Anglican Communion. The Reverend Mother of the Community of Nazareth in Japan came with the retired Bishop of Tokyo, the Community Chaplain, and a woman deacon, for two nights from 24 to 26 January. Five Sisters from the Society of the Holy Cross in South Korea visited us for an all-too-short couple of hours on Sunday, 21 June. These visitors were not with us for very long, but we were much blessed in all that we exchanged with them in such a short time.

The Teresian Year, celebrating the Quincentenary of the birth of St Teresa of Avila, opened on 15 October 2014 and has continued with various important events. In March Sr Clare-Louise, Sr Rosemary and Sr Eve attended a conference in Oxford, and in June Sr Clare-Louise and Sr Eve one at St Mary's University in Twickenham. The Sisters returned each time full of joy and enthusiasm. Talks from the June Conference are now available on YouTube, and are well worth watching. You will see that a contribution from Sr Benedicta in honour of St Teresa is published in this *Fairacres Chronicle*. Also in this edition, you will find articles from our Warden, Fr Andrew Teal, on one of his specialist subjects, the creeds, and from our Oblate Sr Georgina on our true and false selves. Rabbi Howard Cooper reflects on the nature of shadow and darkness in contemporary Israeli society and Jewish thinking, with particular reference to relations with Palestine. Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh (Anthony Bloom, 1914-2003) was particularly important to SLG in the 1960s, and as we

commemorate the hundred-plus years since his birth in June 2014, we pay tribute to him by printing some of the teaching on the Jesus Prayer that he gave to the Community in 1969.

The work of upgrading our visitors' accommodation in Fellowship House is going well, if a little behind schedule. The other Community events to record are the death of Sr Anna, aged 97, on 18 January (see page 35), and the admission of Janet Aidin as a Postulant Oblate on 13 May at First Vespers of the Ascension.

Sr Clare-Louise, *Deo volente*, will be writing the next set of Community Notes. We have now entered upon a time of transition in leadership, in confidence and in the quiet hope that God will show us the way forward in the face of what we, as well as other religious communities, are experiencing, as numbers decline and our average age increases. I am reminded of the quotation from Isaiah 30: 15 in the Rule of Carmel: 'In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.'

The next events to happen shortly, and before you receive this, will be my own Installation as Prioress and the Blessing of Sr Stephanie-Thérèse as Sub-Prioress by Fr Andrew Teal, on 29 June, the Feast of SS Peter and Paul. The marquee is still in place on the lawn, gleaming white in the sunshine, as a reminder and promise to us that our present celebrations continue until 29 June, and beyond.

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG
Prioress

WHY DO WE STILL SAY THE CREEDS?[1]

ANDREW TEAL

SAINT CYRIL, Bishop of Jerusalem, took the Lenten baptismal preparation of the catechumens seriously, as did the early Church. The purpose of Lent was to get disentangled from the web of sin and self, and look to the gates of glory. In his Lent lectures to his congregation he states:

> Look! We stand at the gate of the heavenly mysteries. If you will, enter into the Lord's joy. … See how great a dignity Jesus bestows on you: hearing of hope, but knowing it not; hearing Mysteries but not understanding them; hearing Scripture read, but not grasping its depth. If you will, enter the gate! For God seeks nothing else for us, apart from our good … and to fill you with the heavenly wonder of the New Covenant.

Cyril went on to teach his hearers about the Christian faith by using what we call the Apostles' Creed as a plan for understanding their beliefs. Above all, he wanted to give his hearers a symbol, a sign of a sealed deal, a covenant, in few words which can be learned easily by heart. The Roman or Baptismal Creed, which we call the Apostles' Creed, was 'the Bible in a paragraph'. As a tool for teaching and preparing people for baptism, it is a wide-focusing lens to keep our eyes on the huge scope of God's *kindness*. That most ancient creed exists in several local forms; these were forged in and, indeed endured, times of conflict and persecution, but they needed to be adapted in order to clarify confusion. Their genre is above all *doxological*—giving praise to God in the variety and reality of life in all its diversity.

Thus conceived, the Creed is not a 'handle' on God, but a means for us to remember key things. God is not to be explained,

[1] From a sermon preached at St Mary's, Iffley, 1 March, 2015.

but a mystery to be encountered and love to be received; God is not 'atomic', but his nature is Love and Relationship. This Creed reminds us that God the Father graciously initiated all things not because he had to, or because he was bored or lonely (there was, after all, always the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—infinitely wonderful Love), but because he longed to. He created and creates all things as *Father*, not as mad scientist or impersonal process; he is the *good* Father, not a sociopath out to condemn us.

The creeds teach fearful human beings throughout the ages that we are longed-for, valued, and respected by God himself. They go on to focus on the self-expression of God in the real person, Jesus of Nazareth. They prompt authentic Christian belief, asking us to believe *only* in a Christ-like God. This is a God who knows human experience on the inside: childhood, dependency, the frustrations of every stage of life, the joy of human relationships, the bitterness of betrayal, and the wound of seeing people he loved opt for fear; who gives himself to the powers of fear and death for us, who plumbs every human despair and hell, who knows even death from the inside.

Christians are to believe only in a fully human Jesus who is also fully and truly God. Jesus's humanity and divinity are vindicated in the shock of resurrection, and his presence, power and life are poured out by the Holy Spirit present even after his death. This God is not confined to the past, but is the dynamic presence of the Church in the world. Everything is, and will be, bound together in a glory we cannot imagine. We are, Cyril tells his hearers, only to believe in a Christ-like God, not in a demanding ogre; the God who seeks to serve, love and know us in real relationship. The Holy Spirit in the life of the Church gives us a mission, and reminds us that the golden age is not in the past but in God's future; hope, not archaeology, is our purpose. Our transformed lives demonstrate the power of the Gospel. Our hands really are God's hands now.

That is the Apostles' Creed, which we say at Baptism in a question-and-answer form in Common Worship, as well as reciting it in full at Matins and Evensong. It begins with 'I believe' because of the personal commitment we make at our initiation into the Church. Is it any wonder that when the choir at Pembroke College are asked to lead worship (and that includes giving drama and tempo to the Creed and prayers) some ask about integrity. Can we say this if we cannot buy into its world view? Good question!

The Creed said at the Eucharist is a revision of the Nicene Creed of AD 325. This Creed is different from its antecedent baptismal creeds. It is more than a personal declaration of belief that certain things are the case. The Nicene Creed begins with 'we'; this is our *community's* charter of core values. It is not a list of beliefs, but an expression of what we think and do in God's love; belief *in* him, not *that* certain things are the truth *about* him.

One way of understanding it is as the community's declaration of a covenant, a claim on God's reaching out to us. When we rehearse this Creed, we are saying both that this is the God we are bound to, and that this relationship is not static but always adapting to change.

In today's world, do the creeds still have a role? Do they have a future as well as a past? Part of the Reformed Churches' contribution to Christian faith is that some individuals and communities have not seen the connection between 'confessing with the lips' and 'believing in the heart' by repeating a fixed creed or confession of faith. Quakers, the Brethren, and many individuals have instead trusted the words of Jesus: 'When you are delivered up, don't be worried about what to say! The Spirit will tell you!' (cf. Matt. 10: 19; Mark 13: 11; Luke 12: 11). But could it be that the future of the creeds is fundamentally important to the future of belief and of the Church?

Even those with little or no use for creeds are often prepared to concede that the moral teaching and ethical example of Jesus have

a permanent value. Follow him, if not the creeds, as Roden Noël wrote in his poem, *The Red Flag* in 1872:

> What if men take to following where He leads,
> Weary of mumbling Athanasian Creeds?

In Germany in the last century, we witnessed another movement which sought to abandon outmoded creeds—so-called 'German Christians', approved of by the Nazi party. They said they had the cross in their hearts and the swastika on their arms. To counter this there was the Barmen Declaration of 1934, rejecting the fusion of Fascism and Christianity and pointing to the good news of God's grace witnessed to by the creeds. It would be naïve to assume that the Church is wise enough now not to be taken-in again; false doctrines need exposing to protect the image of a Christ-like God.

There are, too, many objections to a Christianity that is too legalistic, sometimes expressed as, 'Can't we just get on with things together and stop being so tribal?' I support Oxford United and every week go to their fixtures, both home and away. The terrace chanting, spontaneous and corporate as it is, has illuminated for me how early Christian worship was probably expressed. However, the chants can be very partisan; we cannot say the same about the creeds, can we? Not entirely.

Human understanding depends upon classification and, therefore, on differentiation and at one level all knowledge is a human construct. This is not to say that our understanding is entirely subjective, but language and culture do enable us to make sense of the world. Adam gave names to all the animals, and in the process began to participate in the life of the world. This is not unlike what happened historically to the creeds, which were doxological in the beginning, but ended up being more definitive. As scientific language became more precise over about three hundred years, so too did doctrine, and over a similar timescale. Could it not be that this precision was necessary so that the

Christian community could find the necessary freedom to live out their beliefs?

Another hard truth is that we know examples of, and see reported in the media, the dangers of religious literalism and intolerance. Many uphold the *words* of the creeds, but seem to despise their meaning, and their neighbour. There is the legend of the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky, a monster who holds the correct form of orthodox creeds, but has no concern for their substance, preferring punishment to compassion. It does not have to be like this; but the fact that so often it has been makes it hard to uphold the case for having creeds.

Ultimately, the creeds are not about grasping at brittle prejudice; instead, they hold out to us the wild hope of human flourishing. A wedding ring of itself proves nothing, for anyone can wear one; and many married people, for a host of reasons, do not wear one. However, marriage constrains, and continues to transform, human love. We marry because we fall in love, and through every change in life and emotion, marriage continues to hold that love. A ring is the sign which prompts us to return to that foundation of love, not to let the business and ordinariness of life erode the mystery of our love for our spouse. Similarly, the creeds, like a verbally rehearsed wedding ring, can provoke us to unveil the mystery of the reality of the God of Love.

The creeds are precise, providing constraints within which true faith, freedom and love can blossom. They state the basic shapes and rules within which all theological thinking is to operate if it is to be fundamentally Christian. And they provide a stable base for exploration and questioning with integrity, honest doubt, and continuing reflection.

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BRINGING THE MIND DOWN INTO THE HEART

METROPOLITAN ANTHONY OF SOUROZ

In 1969 Archbishop Anthony Bloom (as he then was) led the University Mission in Oxford, and found time to visit Fairacres. He had been visiting Carmelite monasteries on the continent, so he told us about the liturgical reforms they were implementing and mentioned that many of the nuns were using the Jesus Prayer. This led to some discussion about the Jesus Prayer and the Office in the course of which a Sister asked him, 'Could you say a little about bringing the mind down to the heart?' What follows is a verbatim record of his response.

I THINK it is a very complicated way of saying something simple. If you read words, they are first in your eyes before they are in your brain, though with training the process is practically simultaneous. But when you begin to read a language you do not know, you spell first and then the letters click into a word. The first thing is that you have it outside you, and though you may have the word on your tongue completely it does not mean that you have it in your mind completely.

Shall we apply that to the Offices? One reads and sings an Office and then discovers that the words were said perfectly, but the mind was somewhere else. To start with you can have the words before your eyes and on your tongue, if you are sufficiently trained, but they may still be outside your consciousness or just on the fringe. The first thing is to turn inward the edge of prayer, and bring them into your mind, take hold of them with all your mind, and to do that you must learn attention. You must learn to rule out not only idle thoughts which do not allow you to concentrate, but also the kind of halo that is around the thought and links into it something outside itself.

Another thing you must do is to spend enough time to think out the meaning of the words you are using, because the richer your

intellectual understanding of the words, the easier it is to concentrate. A word which has a very, very poor meaning for you, which is just a crumb you can take between two fingers, is very difficult to keep. A word that is very rich intellectually is much easier to concentrate on. Once you have done that it requires not only *meditation*—an effort to understand the meaning of the word—it also requires a *crystallization* around this word of all you know about it. When you begin to crystallize, to gather round the word all its meaning, you discover that it begins to echo also in your heart. Instead of saying, 'What does the dictionary say about *Kyrie eleison*?' you ask yourself, 'What does this mean to me?' What are these words for me? Your heart begins to respond, and ultimately, if you have a sufficiently clear, objective knowledge of the meaning of a word and have gathered it in intellectually, it is not necessary to rehearse its meaning every time you use it. You know how it is. When we know a language well we can use a word with all its richness; when we do not know the language well we think this word has such and such a connotation, that word has such and such. I will choose.

When it has got to that, then your heart begins to respond with whatever superficial experience there is. Then you must use this word with all its richness, with all the hooks it has to fish out of the depths of your own self, all your experience of life concerning this particular word. We all have words, for instance, that echo very far, say, in our childhood, in our knowledge of literature, in our friendships, in letters, in many ways. One of the main things about concentrating on the words intellectually and probing one's heart about them is to try to gather around each word every single echo it provokes in us. This confrontation enriches the emotion around the word, and if it is the wrong kind of emotion, it comes under judgement and one begins to do something about it.

The Jesus Prayer is made up of two halves, a statement of faith and then a cry: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.'

The statement of faith consists in placing ourselves face to face with the Lord, having declared all that is true about him in saying *Kyrie*, and establishes the relationship between him and us that allows us to say *eleison.* To take each of the words of the Jesus Prayer very briefly:

Lord – this is not only an appellation; it is recognition of his lordship, of his sovereign domain over us, of our total allegiance, our complete surrender, the recognition that he is king and the fulfilment of the first Beatitude.

Jesus – The name the Word of God acquired in human history affirms the Incarnation. It confirms the completely new relatedness, not only between mankind and God but between the whole created world and God. Not only has the Son of God become the Son of Man, but also the Word has taken flesh, and the flesh of the Incarnation relates him to all things visible and is the presence of God in our midst. Recall the beginning of St Matthew's gospel, '… and he called his name Jesus', the Saviour, because he is Emmanuel, God with us.

Christ – is the declaration that he is the fulfilment of the law and of the prophets, the link with the Old Testament and with all the history of mankind beyond the covenants.

Son of God – the final part of the declaration of faith of the Church.

The shape is exactly the same as the prayer of Bartimaeus, the blind man of Jericho, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me' (Mark 10: 47). We know only a little bit more. He is the son of David, yes, but he is a real son of David, the Son of God. Once we have made this profession of faith, that is, not only a theological statement but a total commitment and involvement, we cannot recognize him as our Lord without being involved in an active relationship. Then we see that it unfolds in a Trinitarian prayer, because he is the Son of God and only the Son knows the Father

and him to whom he will reveal it. We cannot say that Jesus is the Lord and God unless we are taught by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 3). So, by implication, it is a Trinitarian prayer centred on him who is the door, the one who reveals to us the Father, who gives us that Spirit who teaches us to say 'Abba, Father' (Rom. 8: 15).

> ***Eleison,* Have mercy on me** – These words have a very limited meaning in all the modern languages. We do not say 'have mercy' to people in normal speech, so it is a word that does not speak to us directly with the same power as it did for a Greek who used the word *eleison*. But for a Greek it had an exceptionally wide meaning. The word *eleison,* and the root from which the word 'olive' has come are the same, because the image is the same. If you look not in dictionaries but in the Old and New Testaments, you will see the range this *eleison* covers.

We first discover the olive twig at the end of the flood when Noah receives it from the beak of a dove (Gen. 8: 11). Is it the same as the dove that later descended on Jordan on the day of the baptism of Christ? I do not know, but it is a dove and it brings a twig of an olive tree that says, in the name of God, 'My wrath has come to an end. I am giving forgiveness as a free gift and from now onwards time and space are again stretching in front of you. There is a way.' But it is not enough to be forgiven, to have the road ahead of one, if we are incapable of walking along that road because we are wounded. If we are groping, the road will not lead us anywhere. In the story of the Good Samaritan, the wounded man had all the road before him on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, but he could not take a step. Then the Good Samaritan, the one who is the image of Christ himself, pours the burning wine, the Spirit that burns and cleanses, and the soothing and healing oil on the wounds of this man, and he is healed. Now the road that stretches before him is a road he can walk on. In our life, this road is called Jesus Christ, but it still remains that we cannot take one step unless the grace of God

heals in us our woundedness, our sickness, restores to us the integrity we have lost.

Where are we going? What is our goal? In the Old Testament, kings and priests were anointed because they stood on a threshold on which, really, only God could stand, and to fulfil their calling they needed divine grace. And we are told by scripture that we are a people of kings, of prophets and of priests (Rev. 1: 6), and every one of us stands on that threshold. We are vested with Christ the prophet, Christ the priest, Christ the king, and our vocation is superhuman in the sense that we must be in the image of Christ, the Son of God. Our vocation, to use words from 2 Peter 1: 4, is to become 'partakers of the divine nature'. That we cannot possibly do. We can only be given and receive an outpouring of divine grace.

If you take this word *eleison* with all these various connotations, you see why the Greeks did not look for any more words when they wanted to say something to God. *Kyrie eleison* is the only answer we can give to every petition in every one of our services, and each one of us can put into it anything we like because each of us stands in a different situation. If we use words that define definite concrete situations, Mary may choose one word, John another and Peter a third, because we are not all in the same situation simultaneously. The one is broken-hearted because he is aware of sin and the other is rejoicing because he is aware of God. This unique word can take us to the very bottom of things and we can shout from the very depths of our fall, *eleison*! If we are out of the pit and walking, but feeling we cannot take one more step because our strength is failing and we are wounded, we can use the same word: *Eleison*! Heal! If we walk again towards Jerusalem and are aware that we cannot possibly tread the Holy Ground of the City of God, we can cry again, *Eleison*. Pour out thy love and make it possible for me to be what I cannot make myself be.

The two halves together make a prayer of stability, because it is not a prayer which in itself contains emotion. So many prayers are

a long discourse—we start at the top of the page and end at the bottom, something like Alice in Wonderland! We move along like a train along rails and cannot be stable because we have to move out of one thought into the other, out of one situation into the other. The Jesus Prayer sets in front of us the truth about God, and then, in the immobility of this contemplation, it makes us say in one word all our manifold needs. We do not need to move out or in or aside.

This is something which is possible only if first of all we learn stability. This is why it is pre-eminently the prayer of the desert and of the contemplative life. Whether this life is enclosed or not by walls is another thing, because stability and enclosure are within our hearts. Enclosure *defined* by walls is called a prison. You cannot say that all people who are in her Majesty's prisons are contemplatives or that they have reached stability! All they can *do* is to be inside, but all that they *are* is outside. All their thoughts, their heart, their imagination, all that is called life, is outside. Inside there is nothing for them except imprisonment. In order to make a prison cell a monastic cell, we must move inward into our own self. One of the Fathers calls it 'getting back into our own skin'. When we are solidly established, our stability is within our heart and we do not cast out tentacles to be linked with other things. We are safe. The image of tentacles I got from Alexis Carrel who wrote a book called *Man, the Unknown*. He says it is a mistake to imagine our human person ends where our skin and clothing ends, for the stomach of a greedy person is projected outwards and sticks to every edible thing! The eyes of a curious person are everywhere in the world, and so forth. The first thing we must do to achieve stability is to pull the tentacles back, not to have one's tongue stuck on chocolate or fruit but to get it inside one's mouth! The same with the eyes and the ears. When we discover ourselves under our own skin, we can act as normal human beings. Otherwise, we act as though we are beside ourselves. That is the beginning of stability.

This prayer is both a prayer that can be used to the full only if we are really stable, that is, standing face to face with God, completely settled, and one which teaches us stability because it brings us back to the only place out of which we can say these things. We cannot use the Jesus Prayer from outside inwards; we can use it only from inside Godward. And Godward does not mean towards the sky or somewhere else; it means going deeper inside, turning the edge at oneself. Our mind must grasp the prayer, our heart must collect round the prayer all there is that is akin to it, and then the words of prayer become something like the working of an electric typewriter which you scarcely need to touch to get results.

I remember a conversation I had with an old monk when I was nineteen or twenty, and he was in his early eighties. He had been singing Vespers and Matins with a rapidity that defeated my ears and my understanding, and the fact that he had no teeth made the difficulty worse. At the end of this I was completely desperate, I had been cheated out of Vespers and Matins, and, with all the arrogance of my nineteen years, I said, 'Father, you read and sang in such a way that I am sure you could not follow, not to speak of me!' And he said, 'Oh, I am sorry. I did not think of that. But, you see, it is about seventy years I have been hearing and singing these Offices and now I do not need to pronounce the word. The moment I have seen it, it is as though a hand had touched a key in my heart and all my soul begins to sing.' Where I needed every word to fasten my attention to, my heart, my will and so forth, for him all the words were already woven into his soul.

Anthony Bloom (1914–2003) *was Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Diocese of Sourozh, the Patriarchate of Moscow's diocese for Great Britain and Ireland, and well-known for his books on prayer.*

SHADOW AND DARKNESS IN JUDAISM

HOWARD COOPER

I DO NOT want to talk about this. I am frightened of talking about this. I want to change the subject. I want to share with you instead some Biblical texts, something numinous—like the first paragraph of the whole Bible, those wonderful opening verses of the Book of Genesis, where there is darkness, *choshekh* in Hebrew. It is part of the chaos of the beginning of creation as portrayed by the Biblical storytellers, where the earth is unformed and void, *tohu va'vohu*, some primal state of inchoateness, in which darkness just is: pre-existent, pristine, waiting for something to happen, and the spirit of God, the *ruach Elohim*, happens. It is hovering over the primeval waters, and suddenly a voice emerges out of the darkness, illuminating the darkness: 'And God said, "Let there be light."' *Y'hi or*. Before we know it, before we have time to think about the impossible, miraculous transformation of intention into action, of thought into matter, of speech into waves and particles, in that moment, aeons long, 'Let there be light' flows into 'and there was light.' *Y'hi or va'y'hi or.*

'Let there be' is connected by a single letter to 'and there was/is.' The wish and its fulfilment are the same word in Hebrew. How small the gap between what comes to mind and what then comes to pass; and how huge that gap is for us, between 'Let there be!' and 'here it is!' We live in that space between fantasy, imagination, desire and what then evolves, unfolds, in what we fondly call 'reality'. That space is there already 'in the beginning', with 'let there be' flowing into, yet separated from, 'and there was'.

How much I would prefer to dwell on these verses, make them my subject; where God speaks the universe into being, where our Biblical narrator evokes the creation of the universe by evoking a Creator who uses words, just like the narrator, to conjure something out of nothing; uses language to enlighten the darkness, to 'divide

the light from the darkness'. How much I would rather talk about Judaism's extraordinary foundational text, the Torah, and how the Torah starts with this luminous poetic text, creating a word picture of a Creator who mirrors us, continually bringing light to bear on, and from, a pre-existing darkness.

But something pulls me back, something says, 'No, that's too easy,' these Biblical texts. Too much light; because the darkness keeps shining through.

> At the end of the watch, on your way from the tent to the shower, you sometimes hear horrible screams. You walk in your shorts and clogs, a towel slung over your shoulder, toilet kit in hand, and from the other side of the galvanized tin fence of the interrogation section come hair-raising human screams … You ask yourself what is happening here five yards from you? … You don't know (exactly). But you know that from this moment on you won't be able to rest. Because no more than fifty yards from the bed where you try to sleep, eighty yards from the mess hall where you try to eat, people scream. And they scream because other people, wearing uniforms like your own, do things to them that cause them to scream.
>
> … And now, as the screams grow weaker, as they change to a kind of sobbing, wailing, you know that from this moment on nothing will ever again be as it was. Because a person who has heard the screams of another person being tortured is already a different person. Whether he does anything about it or not, a person who has heard the screams of another person being tortured incurs an obligation …[1]

As, perhaps, does anyone who hears the accounts of those who hear the screams of others being tortured.

[1] Translation taken from Ari Shavit, 'On Gaza Beach,' *New York Review of Books*, 18 July 1991.

Ari Shavit, an Israeli journalist who lives in Jerusalem and writes for the newspaper *Ha'aretz* published the account of his experience of army reserve duty in Gaza in 1991. The State of Israel is now long gone from occupying Gaza. But as we all know, and as I saw on a recent trip to Israel and Palestine, a study tour organised by British Friends of Rabbis for Human Rights (www.rhruk.co.uk), the dark shadow of occupation, part of Judaism's shadow, is still very much present in what we can now talk about only with grim irony as the 'Holy Land'.

The text of Genesis is magisterial, it proceeds with that great series of divisions and discriminations, stage by stage, day by day, creating a Creator whose activity is portrayed as a continual act of distinguishing between opposites, then naming what comes into being: 'And God called the light Day, *yom*, and the darkness He called Night, *laiyla*'. And the rhythm of creation is established: 'And there was evening and there was morning, *yom ethad*, one day'. A rhythm that echoes through the Bible's first chapter, 'And there was evening, and there was morning,' as the divine project evolves, stage by stage.

And the text is so beautiful, so melodious, so soothing to the ear as creation is hymned into being, that the narrator's sleight of hand can easily be missed. Let us listen again: 'And God called *the light* Day, *yom*, and the *darkness* He called Night, *laiyla*'. Light—day. Darkness—night. Simple, binary opposites. And then they are put together: 'And there was evening and there was morning.' And what happens when evening darkness and morning light are put together? Suddenly we hear that they form *yom ethad*, one day. One *yom*. But that is what God calls the light on its own: *yom*. So how can the word used solely for the light, *yom*, suddenly be the same word for the light plus the darkness? Where has the darkness gone? The word used in relation to light, *yom*, has cast its shadow over the darkness. The darkness is hidden, it seems to have disappeared. But we know that darkness can never disappear.

And Ari Shavit won't let me pretend that it has: it is being acted out at this very moment in a far off land about which we know little, but hear a lot. He keeps on describing what he calls the *'silent metamorphosis'* that is required of himself and his friends, people like me and you, *'these good people who are solid citizens of a consumer-oriented, technological democracy'*. Because he is a Jew he cannot help but be alert, in a way analogous to the way in which the therapist is alert, to the constant intersection of the past with the present. As he continues to speak he takes us nearer to the heart of the darkness:

> And although there is no basis for comparison—and in truth, there is no basis for comparison—I begin to understand how it was with some of those other guards who stood in other places, over other people, behind other fences. How those other guards heard other screams—and didn't hear a thing. For in most cases the bad do not know they are bad. Those who carry out atrocities hardly ever know they are carrying out atrocities. They simply obey orders. Or wait for promotion. Or do what they have to do. All they really want is to get home safe and sound. And they worry about their taxes, and about their kids' problems in school. But at the same time that they are thinking about home and the wife and the bills to be paid, their hands unthinkingly hold the weapon; their eyes are on the fence, on the door. The door behind which people are suffering. When we line up for guard duty at 1.30 in the morning I scan our faces. Our slouching bodies. Are we the thing that is called 'evil'?

There is real humanity and understanding here. And compassion. With painful honesty he refuses to fudge the issues:

> I go over and over again in my heart the long list of arguments, the list of the differences. There are no crematoria here, I remind myself, and there was no conflict

between peoples there. Germany, with its racist doctrine, was organized evil, its people were not in danger, and so on.

But then I realized [and here he comes to the core of the problem] that the problem is not in the similarity—for no one can seriously think that there is a real similarity—but that there isn't enough lack of similarity. The problem is that the lack of similarity isn't strong enough to silence once and for all the evil echoes, the accusing images.'

How has it come to this? How has it happened to a culture, a people, who treasure, revere, texts at the centre of which is the call for justice: 'Justice, justice, you shall pursue' (Deut. 16: 20)? And the refrain repeated thirty-six times in the Bible: 'And you shall love the stranger,' the outsider, the Other, 'for you were strangers, outsiders, in the land of Egypt': so you know, you carry the memory of what it is like to be oppressed, to be treated harshly. How is it that this systemic call to imaginative empathetic identification with those who are not 'us'—a call foundational to both Judaism and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations on 10 December 1948—just six months after Israel's Declaration of Independence—is so disregarded? How is it that we now have religious settlers in the Occupied Territories descending at night from their hill-top homes and fire-bombing Palestinian mosques and houses in the name of those same texts, and in the name of the divine presence that is seen as inspiring and infusing those texts?

How is it that in some quarters these luminous texts have turned toxic? Could it be that we never paid sufficient attention—or any attention—to the darkness encoded within the Biblical narratives, with their unpredictable and demanding God and his quixotic project for societal and personal transformation, texts that incarnate for an always-backsliding, rebellious people, a daunting vision of human potential? Could it be that we were not conscious

enough of the ways in which that wondrous saga of creation and revelation, of wandering, conquest, and occupation of a Promised Land not only inspired a people over generations, hardened them to the dramas of history, steeled them against centuries of persecution and victimhood, enabled them to survive with their faith continually evolving yet more or less intact, but also contained (and contain) a huge shadow in relation to what this kind of disciplined belief, with its insistence on the rigorous daily practice of righteousness, entails psychically? In short, have we paid sufficient attention to the ways in which belief can be a form of cruelty?[2]

When belief involves a form of domination of the self—'Thou shalt not … thou shalt not … you must … you must …'—and an aggression, conscious or unconscious, towards anything playful, pleasure-seeking or plain unruly in oneself or others, then either the self suffers or, when it is acted out, the Other will end up suffering instead, or as well. Perhaps Judaism has not been sufficiently alert to the ways in which the state of conviction that we call 'religious belief' can have destructiveness encoded within it.

In this sense, the way we might hold to certain kinds of religious faith is analogous to other kinds of faith and belief. You may recall a remark Jung made during an interview in 1938, concerning the appeal of the totalitarian dictators in Europe, where he says that the 'law to remember' about them is: 'It is the persecuted one who persecutes.'[3]

The psychodynamics of 'It is the persecuted one who persecutes,' with its attendant concepts of splitting, displacement and projection, can help us think about the unfolding tragedy that has been taking place over these recent decades in the land of Israel. I would rather get back to the texts, that safe ground we can

[2] Based on a formulation by Adam Phillips in *Freely Associated: Encounters in Psychoanalysis*, ed. Anthony Molino, Free Association Books, London, 1997, p. 132.

[3] *C. G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters*, eds William McGuire and R. F. C. Hull, Picador, London, 1980, p. 131.

dig into, endlessly fertile for the imagination. But that other ground, with its uprooted olive trees and siphoned-off water supplies, will not let me go just yet. Something is being acted out there that needs to be thought about if we are considering light and darkness and shadow in Judaism, something fuelled by both recent history and ancient texts. History and texts are playing off each other in perverse ways within the collective unconscious of the State of Israel.

The newly born State of Israel arose, as they said, out of the ashes of Europe; this is not a metaphor—at least, not a metaphor that can ever escape its grim specificity in genocide. In the past forty years we have learnt a lot more about the ways in which, in the early decades of Israel's existence as a state, the actual stories of Holocaust survivors went unheard: the tales of persecution, of victimhood, of suffering, were not wanted as part of the official narrative filled with youthful pioneers making the deserts bloom. The silence of survivors was not only a personal inability to put into words the enormity of what had been done to them, of the losses that had been experienced, the traumas that had been witnessed and lived through; but it was also part of a collective response to persecution that sought, paradoxically, to downplay the specific recent history of European barbarism—even though this history was part of the very bedrock of the new State.

In the words of the Israeli novelist Aaron Appelfeld:

> We should not forget that it was not only the survivors who wanted to repress their experiences; the feeling throughout Israel at the time was that survivors should renounce their past and put aside their memories. During the 1940s and 1950s, religious beliefs and European mannerisms were seen as alien values to be kept out of Israeli life. Both the religious Jew and the assimilated Jew were frowned upon. [4]

[4] *The Story of a Life*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, pp. 169-170.

So the perceived ‘weakness’ and vulnerability of the European survivors was turned against them cruelly: ‘Why didn’t you resist? Why did you let yourself be led like lambs to the slaughter?’[5] So the new Jewish state built up a national narrative for itself, another mythic saga, of assertiveness, defiance, a refusal to allow itself any hint of uncertainty or vulnerability: ‘Never again!’ The slang term, the badge of pride, was that the new Israeli state was a nation of ‘sabras,’ an Arabic and Hebrew word for the prickly pear, that tenacious, thorny desert plant with a thick hide that conceals its sweet, soft interior. By definition survivors, non-native born, were not ‘sabras;’ and the vulnerable core of traumatized escapees from Europe became, as it were, part of the Israeli shadow, along with the knowledge that 750,000 Palestinian inhabitants of pre-State Mandate Palestine had been displaced or fled during the War for Independence.

‘It is the persecuted one who persecutes’—or it is the humiliated ones who humiliate. The return of what had been repressed was not long delayed in the life of the young State. It is perhaps not surprising that the State of Israel presents itself as being under constant existential threat when it is splitting off its shame and rage at what was done to the Jewish people, and perhaps its shame at what its own Independence has meant for the Arabs of Mandate Palestine. It is continually experiencing its own displaced hostility as being directed towards it from the rest of the world. And of course, the actual hostility in some parts of the world only confirms Israeli paranoia.

The grotesque Separation Wall that now scars the landscape of Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank is a physical enactment in a particularly brutal and literally concrete form of a psychic reality. It is a physical defence that enacts a psychological defence, because on the one hand, it has brought a kind of daily security to Jewish inhabitants of Israel, but on the other hand, its construction involves

[5] Ibid., p. 168.

a huge nexus of denials. A denial of the suffering it causes, expressed as, 'Let someone else be humiliated for a change'. A denial of the aggression it is generating: 'We are the good guys here, we only have peace in our hearts; it is them who have aggression and hatred in their hearts.' It is a denial of the self-harm and longer-term self-destruction within this policy. The delusion that you are living in the light blinds you to the darkness of your own annihilatory fantasies that wish your neighbours would just disappear. Putting them behind a wall, so that when you drive along your Jewish-only roads you cannot see the 'Other,' is psychologically the crudest, most primitive form of denial. If I cannot see you, I can pretend you do not exist; I cannot bear to know that I do not want you to exist, but at least I can construct a defence that magically makes it seem that 'Let there be no Palestinians,' becomes 'and there *are* no Palestinians.'

Let us go back to the texts. Classical Judaism, in the Bible and the Talmud, does not speak so much in the language of 'rights' as we now understand them, but in terms of 'responsibilities,', responsibilities to others, with a bias towards the poor and the marginalized (the widow, the orphan, the elderly), and the stranger, the 'Other' who is not one of 'us'. They are spelt out in detail in the primary texts and the commentaries on the texts: concentric circles of responsibilities to your own people, to other people, and to your environment. Through ethnocentricity to universalism, because each human being is made in the image of God and therefore each person is precious. It is a wonderful paradox, incarnated at the heart of Judaism, that only through living out your particular destiny will you be able to transcend particularism and understand, and help others understand, that fundamental truth. Part of the vision of the Torah is that humanity is a mosaic or a stained glass window, with each colour and each texture a unique part of the big picture, with the same light shining through but refracting in different ways. Strange word this, 'mosaic,' which comes from the Latin for 'of the muse, artistic,' and its curious synchronicity with 'Mosaic',

pertaining to Judaism's muse and the Judaic myth of Mosaic artistry in the authorship of these translucent and problematic texts.

And they are problematic in places, distressingly so. What does it do, I wonder, to a people to ascribe holiness to a text like this?

> When My angel/messenger goes before you and brings you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I annihilate them, you shall not bow down to their gods in worship or follow their practices, but shall tear them down and smash their pillars to bits. You shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will remove sickness from your midst … I will send forth my Terror before you, and I will throw into panic all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn tail before you. I will send a plague ahead of you, and it shall drive out before you the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites … I will set your borders from the Sea of Reeds to the Sea of Philistia, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hands, and you will drive them out before you.[6]

What does it mean that this text, and others like it, are still part of the Torah, still part of the annual cycle of readings in the synagogue? At least, they are read in traditional Orthodox synagogues, which read every word of the Torah within that annual cycle, without censoring texts that might be problematic to a modern ethically-sensitive Jewish sensibility. It is probably worth adding that Reform and Liberal communities do not read these texts; we do 'edited highlights' of the Torah. We like the nice bits, with uplifting enlightened messages and high ethical standards. We effectively censor a lot of the darkness that is grafted into the Torah; we pretend it is not there, which is, of course, problematic in

[6] Exodus 23: 23-33, Jewish Publication Society translation from *The Jewish Study Bible*, eds Berlin and Brettler, OUP, 1999, p. 160-1.

its own way. Because it *is* there, and when you go to Israel, colonized by these ancient Biblical texts, and see what is happening, you become aware that whatever the benign traditions of interpreting these texts have been, it is the narrow fundamentalist readings that dominate and dictate the attitude of self-styled 'Torah-true' Jews to the other residents in the land.

It is no use arguing with this mental world, which is essentially paranoid-schizoid, because from its perspective the boundaries of the land of Israel are divinely determined. This kind of piety creates its own reality, as happens in a psychosis: from inside this world-view, modern Biblical scholarship just does not exist. So there is no access to different ways of thinking about these texts, which might consider, for example, how they echo the rhetorical or stylistic conventions of other non-Hebraic contemporary texts. The notion of genre, the placing of these texts into Middle Eastern contexts, any use of literary critical theory—all this is *goyische nachas* (i.e. secular, gentile; what non-Jews enjoy but not us, and probably anti-Semitic to boot). And this is so even if such scholarship is penned by Jews.

To the observant believers in Jewish particularity the study and practice of Torah puts you within a chain of tradition that brings light into the world with a kind of undimmed intensity, because it stretches back to the revelation of the divine will at Sinai: 'Many candles can be kindled from one candle without diminishing it,' is the metaphor that the rabbinic *midrash* offers to describe this.[7] And to the mystically-minded Torah practitioner, one's own immersion in and living out of Torah stretches back to a source of light that pre-dates this mythical encounter at Sinai (of course, the category of myth isn't accepted within this world-view), for the 'light of the Torah,' according to the key mystical text the *Zohar*, is one of the seven lights created before the universe came into being. The other lights are described as 'the light of Paradise, the light of

[7] *Sifre B'haaloteka*, 93.

Gehenna/Hell, the light of the divine Throne of Glory, the light of the Holy Temple, the light of repentance, and the light of the Messiah.'[8]

The 'light of repentance'—now there is a useful concept. There is something we can work with, that we need to work with. Much of what I have been talking about falls within the penumbra of this metaphor. Because repentance/*teshuvah*, the turning back and seeking forgiveness, and the turning back to try and find something that has got lost in the craziness and despair of Jewish history, feels like a psychological and spiritual, as well as a political, imperative at this late stage of Jewish history.

I am reminded of the lines of that passionate and radically minded poet Adrienne Rich: 'How did we get caught up fighting this forest fire,/We, who were only looking for a still place in the woods?' (from 'Leaflets', 1969). How did we get caught up in this enactment of the darkness grafted into this luminous tradition? Something has gone wrong and it is driving us mad. It is terrorizing us, torturing us, our souls. I see no light at the end of the tunnel. When you drive from Jerusalem to the West Bank now you go through two huge tunnels. These Jewish-only roads have been dug underneath Palestinian homes and villages, to provide access to the settlements. At the end of these tunnels you emerge, but in the soul there is darkness.

What illumination I find is in those brave souls who are still fighting for human rights in Israel and in the territories. And there are some wonderful people doing that, against the odds, against the indifference. They are like divine sparks of hope, of refusal to give up on that original vision of having been created in order to enact an ethical responsibility towards others. So they provide me with glimmers of light in the darkness. As, of course, do the texts of tradition, these same problematic, accursed and blessed texts such

[8] *Zohar*, iii, 31a.

as the verse from the prophet Micah (7: 8) that I am going to end with. I have laid it out as a poem, which it is, or can be: thirteen Hebrew words rooted in 'imaginative awe,' to quote W. H. Auden. The internal connections and tensions, continuities and discontinuities and paradoxes of these verses, deserve a lecture in themselves. But I leave them with you in the spirit of the poet Seamus Heaney, who said that the effect he wants to achieve in his work is to take the 'dark embryo' (T. S. Eliot) in which poetry originates, and 'to set the darkness echoing:'

Do not rejoice
my enemy
for me against me
when I fall
I rise up
when I sit
in darkness
the Eternal/*Adonai*
is light
for me

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BECOMING WHAT YOU ARE.

GEORGINA ALEXANDER

TO SAY that prayer is the way to become 'what you are' would surprise most of us. If we think about it at all, we believe that we are already what we are. If we do practise prayer, perhaps we think that it is a way of saying words to God, or to the saints, or to Mary. It is a way of getting what we think we need, or asking for what we think other people need, or, indeed, a way of telling God what to do. In other words we advise God as to what we think is best for ourselves and for those we love. That is because we see things from our own point of view. We have not yet met our deep true selves, when we can truly say 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'.

Thomas Keating, in his *Invitation to Love*, defines this true self as 'the image of God in which every human being is created' (p. 148). Prayer is the beginning of a road to a real relationship with God. It is the means by which we become transformed into a likeness of Christ, so that he can continue to live his life through us in the world.

Much of the teaching we receive in the Church is about the Christian way of life in order to build up of moral standards and virtues as a foundation for our lives. It is about learning how to study the Bible and to understand the significance and meaning of the liturgy as a basis to our Christian life and practice. That is necessary and as it should be, but we do not have to stop there, for the Christian life is about loving, rather than about being merely good; it is about loving God, and ourselves, and our neighbour (cf. Mark 12: 13; Deut. 6: 5). We do, indeed, need that basic moral framework from which to grow, and it is indispensable as a foundation to our lives; but we have so much more potential than most of us realise.

The belief that God loves us, that he knows us and all that we do and did, and yet still loves us, will bring us to the place where we will know who we really are and become what we are meant to

be. That is because God is at the centre of our being; otherwise, we would not exist.

Each one of us is a unique individual, with great potential for growth in grace and in the use of our gifts. The problem is that we have a deep unrecognised fear of letting go of the false self. Thomas Keating defines this as the image 'developed in our own likeness rather than the likeness of God' the self-image developed to cope with the emotional trauma of early childhood. It seeks happiness in satisfying the instinctual needs of survival/security, affection/esteem and power/control, and bases its self-worth on cultural or group identification' (p. 146).

At first it seems a terrible loss to let go of who we think we are, because belief in the false self goes deeper than superficial consciousness. Becoming our true selves is a pathway that has to be trodden with love, with care, with faith and with hope, but not with ambition. Ambition is always found in an ego-based spirituality, that is the ambition to become someone we can esteem.

In other words, we have to follow this path in all humility, though it may be some time before we realise the value and truth of that gift. God is on the other side of all our thoughts and feelings, the other side of all our fears and inhibitions. Because, mostly, we identify with no other than that surface self, it requires a great deal of faith and hope and perseverance before the transformation can take place.

God is always calling us into relationship, and yet we can only begin to follow when we become aware that we are called. For Saint Seraphim of Sarov the starting point for our richest relationship with God was learning to live in harmony with the Holy Spirit. As he famously said, 'The aim of the Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit, that we might be transformed into a likeness of Christ.' This is the crux of the matter: to become aware of the call to become Christ-like, our true selves, and to begin to follow it.

Georgina Alexander is an Oblate Sister SLG.

IN MEMORIAM: A LIGHTED CANDLE

Sister Anna

31 May 1917 – 18 January 2015

I FIRST MET Sister Anna (Nancy Hoare) in 1971, over the washing up in the scullery at Fairacres. She was wearing a black monastic habit—which made me think that she must be an Orthodox nun—with a worn brown apron on top. We took it in turns to wash or dry and to put things away in silence, but that did not prevent lively communication. 'I'm nippy,' she hissed and darted off round the kitchen at speed, worming her way round more sedate Sisters and peering up at them short-sightedly with an apologetic and beguiling grin. I soon learned that Sr Anna was a force to be reckoned with, but it took me a while to work out quite how she fitted in to Fairacres.

On 16 November 1970, after due consideration and a vote in favour by the Chapter of SLG, Sr Anna had made her monastic profession at Fairacres. The liturgy on that occasion was the same as that for Trinity Sunday; the rite of profession began with the choir singing the antiphon, 'I will go to my father and will say unto him: Father, I am not worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants' (Luke 15: 19). The bishop then asked her, 'My daughter, what do you desire?' and Anna replied, 'The mercy of God, and to make my profession under the protection of the Community of the Sisters of the Love of God and in fellowship with it.' After further questions and promises, she made her vows. Then she was given a lighted candle, a black scapular symbolizing the yoke of Christ—to be worn over her habit—and a gold ring, 'the pledge of the Holy Spirit as a token of your perpetual consecration.' Anna wore the ring until the end of her life, and her distinctive habit in likely and unlikely places from Monte Carlo to Madison in Wisconsin, but the candle was kept at Fairacres, and burned out before the altar on the day of her funeral.

Anna, true to her unconventional vocation, had not had a novitiate as such at Fairacres, but Mother Mary Clare reckoned that the experiences she had had amounted to novitiate enough. Up to this time, she had been living a wandering life, obedient to the Gospel, including two and a half years in Greece where she lived alongside an Orthodox monastery (and picked up her habit from their rubbish heap). Before that she had spent four years in the novitiate of the Society of the Sacred Cross at Tymawr, and before that five years as a solitary. When she left Downe House School at eighteen she studied music at l'Ecole Cortot in Paris, but she was already conscious of being drawn by God into a particular vocation.

In 1938, to prepare herself to do God's will, she embarked on a two-year course at St Christopher's, an Anglican training college for women church workers. At the beginning of World War II, she was up at Oxford reading theology, a degree that she used from 1943 in the Wistow Training Centre for Post-War Christian Service where she taught theology to German refugees. This centre was set up to offer German refugees a two-year theological course, preparing them to return to Germany to work in the Church there. Its first warden was Dr Gunther Schweitzer who, after his release from internment, returned to his family in Oxford and became part of an undergraduate group called Christian International Service, founded by Nancy, as she was then. When he became warden, Nancy, just out of university, became his secretary and lecturer at the college, where she was the only English member.

She said of herself, 'I don't have a normal calling. I was called to be a monastic pilgrim, which means to travel anywhere on the surface of the globe without money, doing whatever providence gives me to do.' Given that, it was not surprising that in 1972, when Mother Teresa of Calcutta was looking for Anglican sisters to join her own sisters in a house in Belfast at the height of the Troubles, Anna responded to the call and set off from Fairacres. She was not to live here again until 2003, when blindness and infirmity obliged

her to leave Belfast; but she always regarded Fairacres as home and returned faithfully each summer for a period of rest and retreat. The house of the Missionaries of Charity in Belfast did not endure, but it sowed a seed that bore rich fruit in Anna's life. She lived there for thirty-one years, witnessing tirelessly to a Christian love that transcends sectarian divisions. Above all, she is remembered for her pioneering work for integrated education in the Province, and for founding Lagan College, the first integrated secondary school. She received an MBE in 1992 for this work.

Sr Anna's funeral was held on 19 February 2015 at St Mary's Church in Witney, Oxfordshire. She was cremated and her ashes interred in a family grave. She is survived by nephews Stephen and Neil, and nieces Juliet and Phyllida.

SISTER ROSEMARY SLG

We have received many tributes to Sr Anna, among them this one from Christiane and Christoph Bals, of Andernach in Germany. It captures both her zest for life, and her capacity for forming lasting friendships.

'That's simply wonderful! Great idea, East Germany!' We had the chance to travel with Sr Anna in the former GDR in the 1980s. Everything changed in her presence. She looked at the containers which had been put up to recycle plastic and wanted to introduce this idea to Northern Ireland on her return to Belfast. It wasn't that she overlooked the barbed wire or ignored the situation of many Germans who didn't have the opportunity to travel. It was just that her perspective was broader: 'When I taught German Jews English during the war,' or 'when I was hitch-hiking in Israel …' Her experience of life and her stories were never ending and were always accompanied by laughter, irresistible faith and boundless energy. She bent forward and used to listen with her whole body when discussing new ideas, and was ready to challenge old ideas.

We distinctly remember one of her stories concerning integrated education. She had been discussing this idea with a

person in charge of education in Northern Ireland. Sr Anna was informed that it was impossible to start a school for Catholic and Protestant pupils as there was no according law: 'Then we have to make one,' was her serious and spontaneous reply. Nothing was impossible. Everyone was welcome to contribute and everyone had something to contribute. She was sure of it. And the moment she approached us, wondering whether we couldn't just offer a little help, it seemed impossible to refuse. We raised funds for Lagan College mainly by organizing sponsored walks in Germany. Being still at university, we had no other means to give financial support. Many a time Anna joined in, barefoot in her sandals, wearing her religious clothes and overtaking younger ones with her energetic stride. So many of us were overwhelmed by her humour, her outlook on life and her sincerity when she talked about the difficulties people had to deal with in Belfast in their daily lives.

We also remember one Easter morning we had the privilege of spending with Sr Anna. She had been fasting and had spent Holy Week in seclusion in a little cottage in the countryside. On Easter Sunday she went outside, took deep breaths and was overjoyed: the air, spring buds, the wind, the sun—and to top it all off we had a boiled egg for breakfast. We still see her, glancing at it as if it were a roasted turkey: 'Let's enjoy it while it's hot', she said and then slowly appreciated every mouthful.

How can we try to communicate the joy we had in her company, the many thoughtful and inspiring moments, the silence and stillness when praying, her unpretentious and yet highly intelligent way of facing political unrest, and her unique faith and trust in God? She died and yet she is with us, deeply rooted in our souls and hearts. Knowing Sr Anna and having had the chance to be in touch with her for almost thirty years has not only enriched our lives, but changed them, beautified them and given them direction in a meaningful and happy way. Thank you, Sr Anna!

SAINT TERESA OF JESUS, 1515—2015[1]

SISTER BENEDICTA SLG

Born Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada on 28 March 1515, at Ávila in Spain, St Teresa became a Carmelite nun when she was twenty, taking the religious dedication 'of Jesus'. She lived a comfortable, undemanding life in the order's convent in Ávila, the Convent of the Incarnation. In 1555, when she was forty, after a very serious and prolonged illness, her life of prayer began in earnest. In order to follow the way of prayer and austerity for which she now longed, she went to live in a small bare house, dedicated to St Joseph. This was the beginning of a new form of Carmelite convent, the Discalced Carmelites of the Reform. Soon there were houses both for men and for women following the Rule of the Reform. She received violent opposition from those members of her order following a less rigorous way of life, but persevered calmly and firmly. By the end of her life she had established many Carmelite houses in Spain, which were to give rise to thousands more throughout the world.

Teresa was not just a religious person; she was a popular, lively writer, embodying in her prose the characteristics of the Spanish Golden Age. In 1617, along with St James, she was made patron of Spain. Pope Gregory XV proclaimed her a saint on 12 March 1622, and in 1970 Pope Paul VI made her a doctor of the Church. Teresa's place as patron of Spain indicates her popularity among Spaniards on a national as well as a religious level. However, she was more than a religious and national figure; she was a mystical writer of unique power. She wrote a great deal, and every page reveals the impress of her personality. Her humour, her vigour, her common sense, her practicality—all emerge in prose as colloquial and earthy as that of any writer. In her books she analysed the way

[1] First printed as an Introduction to *The Life of Teresa of Jesus*, trans. E. Allison Peers, Image Books, Doubleday, 1991.

of prayer, from simple meditation to the ecstasy of union with God, with detailed attention to all that lies between. She wrote in the first person, and drew on her own experience, analysing and presenting it for the guidance of others. In her own opinion her greatest book was her autobiography, the *Life,* in which she surveyed her first fifty years. The *Book of the Foundations,* the account of the convents she had founded, followed on from the Life. In the *Way of Perfection* and the *Interior Castle,* she continued her exploration of the ways of prayer. They are vigorous, lively books and in them all there is that distinctive approach of Teresa, complete unity between life and prayer. For Teresa, prayer was not just an activity undertaken at certain times in the day, but the whole orientation of her daily life toward God with the eager longing and desire of a lover, issuing in either activity or prayer. It was a glorious adventure but it was never easy. 'Nothing can be learned,' she wrote, 'without taking a little trouble,' and she applied this with intense and sustained care to every moment of her life.

It is of some interest to observe how large a portion of Teresa's writings is autobiographical. She did not produce treatises on subjects or discuss ideas objectively. Like Augustine of Hippo in his *Confessions,* or Gregory the Great in the *Dialogues,* both of which she had read, she expressed her thoughts in the first person singular. Her books are full of paragraphs of direct prayer and conversation between herself and her soul or between herself and God. With the exception of Augustine, autobiography was not a familiar way of writing until the twelfth century, and then the instances of it are rare. But it was to be the most popular of all methods of writing in the Renaissance, when literary analysis of the self took centre stage. In this, as in many other matters, Teresa belonged to both the end of the Middle Ages and the new world of the Renaissance. However, she felt she never belonged to the new world of the Reformation. The idea of heresy shocked and worried her; her attention was not directed to understanding heretics, only to saving their souls by prayer.

Teresa was not a trained academic theologian, but too much has been made of the 'confusion' of her books. It is certainly true that she was not a John of the Cross, with his objectivity, his crystal clarity and order. She herself said often enough that she was not a professional writer: in each of her major writings, she begins with some remarks about how unfit she is for the task. In the *Interior Castle*, for instance, she wrote:

> Few tasks which I have been commanded to undertake have been so difficult as this present one of writing about matters relating to prayer … I do not feel that the Lord has given me either the spirituality or the desire for it … for I write as mechanically as birds taught to speak.
>
> (*Interior Castle*, Preface)

Her insistence on her poverty as a writer is misleading. It was standard form for an ancient writer to deplore his inability and unsuitability for the task and to insist that others have forced him to the work. Teresa naturally began with a classic *deprecatio* in the ancient style. Everyone did it as a mark of humility, and it shows no more about the writers than that they are familiar with the methods of introducing an important text to their readers. In fact, the problem with her written work is not weakness of intellect nor an inability to say clearly what she means; it is rather that she writes as she speaks, and to a specific audience whose needs and problems are in her mind. Above all, she writes at top speed, usually without the chance for revision. The result is racy, colloquial, immediate but not confused. Teresa wrote out of experience—not 'experience recollected in tranquillity,' but lived experience, doing things, going places, meeting people, handling difficult affairs. She was an enclosed nun, but as the foundress of new convents, she spent a great deal of time outside her cloister. Her busy life and her writings cannot be separated; each was part of the other and they give a single and direct witness to Teresa herself.

We know much about Teresa's personality because of her autobiographical style of writing, exemplified by the *Life*. She tells us that this account was written at the command of her confessor, a Dominican, Fr. Garcia de Toledo, and was not finished until 1565, though begun three years earlier. The *deprecatio* is typical of her approach to her written work:

> The authority of persons so learned and serious as my confessors suffices for the approval of any good thing that I may say, if the Lord gives me grace to say it, in which case it will not be mine but His; for I have no learning nor have I led a good life, nor do I get my information from a learned man or from any other person whatsoever. Only those who have commanded me to write this know that I am doing so, and at the moment they are not here. I am almost stealing the time for writing and that with great difficulty for it hinders me from spinning and I am living in a poor house and have numerous things to do. (*Life*, Ch. X)

The 'poor house' was the newly founded convent of St Joseph, Ávila, where Teresa spent some of the quietest years of her life, in great poverty and simplicity. She wrote quickly, but not under such pressure as later. The manuscript of the book is now in the Library of the Escorial in Madrid among other autographs of her works collected by the Vicar-General of the Discalced Carmelites, P. Doria, at the request of King Philip II of Spain; it is written without punctuation or paragraphs, in a clear, legible hand, with few erasures.

Who taught Teresa to write? It seems that she learned most of all by reading, and not at first spiritual or theological books. According to her own account in the *Life,* she developed in her youth an inordinate liking for tales of chivalry. She absorbed fiction and romances avidly, exercising her imagination on the new novels of Spain in its most chivalric epoch, filling her mind with knights, kings and noble deeds done for love, until she found herself unable

to take an interest in anything else. It was a taste learned from her young mother, who, she says, was 'very fond of books of chivalry', and it was her mother's books that she took to read:

> I began to make a habit of it … I thought there was nothing wrong with wasting many hours, by day and by night, in this useless occupation, even though I had to hide it from my father. So excessively was I absorbed in it that I believe, unless I had a new book, I was never happy.
>
> (*Life*, Ch. II)

One result of this early immersion in contemporary Spanish fiction must surely have been to form in her the sound vernacular literary style which emerged later. A less happy result was the growth of an unruly imagination, well known to readers of fiction in any age, which affected her behaviour, and for the next twenty years disturbed her ability to concentrate.

Teresa makes it clear that she entered Carmel as a worldly and vain young woman. It is clear, too, that, even in the houses of the Reform, the majority of her novices came from a similar background and had similar tastes. Describing the first novices at St Joseph's in Ávila, where above all she might have expected more devout candidates, she says:

> During this time there entered it several young girls who were quite young and whom the world seemed to have already claimed for its own, to judge by their showiness and curiosity. (*Foundations*, Ch. I)

Pampered young ladies anxious about their health seemed unlikely material for the severities of mental prayer to which Teresa urged them, and she did not hesitate to call them to order, with irony and without sentimentality:

> Hardly have we begun to imagine that our heads are aching than we stay away from choir … One day we are absent because we had a headache some time ago, another day

> because our head has just been aching again; and on the next three days in case it should ache once more.
>
> (*Way of Perfection*, Ch. X)

The image on which she based one of her major discussions of the life of prayer was well suited to such young ladies. She told Fr Diego, who later related the conversation in a letter to Luis de Leon, how God had shown her

> a most beautiful crystal globe, made in the shape of a castle, and containing seven mansions in the seventh and innermost of which was the King of Glory, in the greatest splendour, illumining and beautifying them all. The nearer one got to the centre, the stronger was the light; outside the palace limits everything was foul, dark and infested with toads, vipers, and other venomous creatures.
>
> (4 September 1588)

In the *Life*, she discusses prayer using the image of four methods by which a garden in the dry Spanish countryside could be watered: by a bucket let down into a well, by conduits, by the waters of a stream, or by natural rainfall. At the end of the *Interior Castle*, she suggests that the ways of prayer she has outlined would provide as much refreshment for the Sisters as though they were walking through the 'lovely gardens and fountains and mazes' of a real castle. It is a mark of her realism that she should have used both an ornament and the formal gardens of Spain as appropriate images for talk about prayer.

In the *Interior Castle*, Teresa often refers the reader to what she has already said in her autobiography. Indeed, one reason for the writing of the *Interior Castle* was that the Inquisition had retained the manuscript of her *Life*. In 1569, the princess of Éboli, Ana de Mendoza, had borrowed the manuscript, read it, and denounced it to the Inquisition in a fit of pique; in 1579 it was still unavailable. Teresa left it tranquilly enough in the hands of the Inquisition, sure it contained no heresy; but one night when she was travelling with

three of her nuns to Ávila, they stayed in a poor inn in Arévalo, where she met and talked with her former confessor, Fr Diego, later her biographer. She told him that Garcia, her confessor, had recently asked her to write again the story of her life in a fresh book. This recommendation to replace the first text shows how much it was valued and read in her lifetime as a practical book for those concerned with the life of prayer.

The way of life and prayer that Teresa described was eminently practical and realistic. It seemed to her that all Christians were capable of receiving the fullest gifts of prayer; the only limitation was whether one really wanted to or not:

> So niggardly and slow are we in giving ourselves wholly to God that we do not prepare ourselves as we should to receive that precious thing. (*Life*, Ch. XI)

She says that 'those who are beginning to be the servants of love' must work hard 'to make a garden in which the Lord is to take his delight.' In chapters XI, XII, and XIII of the *Life* she discusses with great care, and with frequent reference to her own experience, how to begin to pray and to persevere in prayer. In chapters XIV and XV, she describes the next stage for the contemplative, the 'prayer of quiet.' Then in chapters XVI and XVII she discusses 'the third water with which this garden is watered, that is, of running water proceeding from a river or spring,' and so introduces what she calls 'the sleep of the faculties.' This leads to the fourth aspect of prayer, the 'fourth water,' which is also a fire, a consuming flame, a state that she finds beyond words.

The language used by Teresa about this way of prayer was open to misunderstanding. There was a real danger that she might be charged with the errors of the Quietists who taught a way of total passivity, in which the soul should go beyond any kind of thinking, even about Christ. Teresa, like John of the Cross, was entirely opposed to such a view. She was quite clear that the one praying is always with Jesus Christ. To say that to discover the

third or fourth stage is to go beyond Christ, she found simply absurd. She regarded her discussion of this point in the *Life* as definitive and referred the readers of the *Interior Castle* back to it. She says she was much criticized for her view, but maintained that

> the last thing we should do is withdraw of set purpose from our greatest help and blessing which is the most sacred Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.
>
> (*Interior Castle*, VI.vii)

Carefully she explains that there are times when those seriously engaged in prayer will find themselves unable to meditate on the Passion of Christ as they did before. This is because they have learned to exercise the mind and the imagination to stir the will, and there is no longer any need for them to begin with this effort; the mind has learned the habit of recollection. However, they have in no way 'left behind' Jesus Christ. 'The soul never ceases to walk with Christ her Lord but is ever in his company.' The Christian who prays is not aiming at a state of passionlessness, but is learning to walk with Christ and to be increasingly on fire with 'the sparks of his love.' One who is nailed to the cross can in fact no longer see the cross; there is a union which is deeper than face to face sight. For Teresa it was vital to distinguish between a failure to use the mind by relapsing into sloth decked out as contemplation, and the true concentration of the mind for as long as possible and as strongly as possible on the person of Christ, until a different way of knowing should be given.

One aspect of prayer, which she touched on and expanded when writing about the fourth water, is perhaps particularly unfamiliar: there is much here about visions and locutions, ecstasies and illuminations, all things that the Inquisition found most suspect and which today are most readily discarded as hysterical phenomena. The Inquisition examined these matters carefully, not because they thought them impossible, but because they suspected their doctrinal authenticity. Modern questions are different and

such language seems either incomprehensible or amusing. In relation to the tradition of Christian prayer, I suspect that it is we who are unusual in finding such things difficult to understand. The Middle Ages, and indeed the early Church, had a long tradition of visionaries, and it is in this tradition that Teresa's experiences and her careful analysis of them should be set. The Incarnation after all had been announced to Mary in a vision, and the birth of Christ was described in terms of visions of the angelic host. Likewise, the Resurrection of Christ was announced by a vision of angels to certain women at the tomb. Among the martyrs of the early church, many had visions. Perpetua, a martyr of the second century who wrote her diary while in prison in Rome, included in it visions of a very striking character. There were certainly always problems; some heretical sects, such as the Montanists, were guided by ecstatic visionary women. Since visions could not be examined in a material way, their influence had to be tested by other means—by scripture, doctrine, right conduct, and common sense.

The great flowering of visionaries came in the twelfth century, and thereafter their popularity and influence in every realm of affairs grew. It is clear that in the Middle Ages the exterior physical phenomena of a mystic were a passport to credibility, for the effect would show in their bodies. This is not surprising; after all, human beings have only five senses with which to register whatever happens. It is, for instance, a common and humiliating experience that great personal grief or complete desolation does not make one heroic and romantic, but is so disorientating that, as likely as not, one will become sick and have a blinding headache. So the coming of the Spirit of God on a human being uses the normal makeup of that person. Thus the eyes close, the breathing changes, people seem to speak automatically, they may rise from the ground, become rigid and immovable, or even catatonic, for hours on end; they will hear sounds and see sights imperceptible to others.

Teresa fits very well into this tradition of the mystic. Like them she said she was ignorant, knowing neither Latin nor scholastic methods; she had not learned to use her mind along particular and defined ways. She wrote what she understood from within, not from exterior information. Like many of them she wrote in the vernacular. When faced with the inexpressible it affected her physically. What she experienced took the form of visions, locutions, and ecstasy. Because of this and not in spite of it, she was widely consulted, and so highly regarded for her prayer that people would act upon what she said. Like all mystics, she tried to find a way to communicate what she had seen and known. As this became more and more intangible, she needed new images rather than old arguments. In the last chapters of the *Life*, Teresa used the language of betrothal and marriage, the great and eternal image used by Paul for the love between the Church and Christ, here extended to the personal union of the soul with God.

It is necessary to distinguish between Teresa's imagery and her accounts of experiences of a paranormal nature. But they come from the same apprehension of life. Where John of the Cross used the images of a way, a climb, a mountain, movement in a line, a pilgrimage upward, Teresa used a centre of wholeness, a castle, a house, a room, a walled garden, not a spreading out, but a going inward. Where John's keenness of intellect led him to analyse his own poetic experience, Teresa presented her knowledge of prayer through images. More surprisingly, she was also able to stand back from her experience of the paranormal and analyse it for others. She made careful distinctions between different kinds of visionary states, making them useful rather than leaving them as inexplicable wonders. For instance, there are those disorientating experiences for those who pray which she calls 'lesions.' In these, the absorption of prayer and its impact on the mind and body can lessen physical control and make you drop things, forget things, not react on a natural level very quickly. This was something to be taken into account, not something to be wondered at, for she was

quite sure that such manifestations were a weakness, not a strength. They may be of God; if so, this will be shown in increased love for others and for God.

Above all, Teresa was available to others in her books as in her life, and she did not step outside Christian experience. This was true even of her most famous mystical experience, when she thought her heart was being pierced by a fiery spear:

> In [the angel's] hands, I saw a long golden spear and at the end of the iron tip I seemed to see a point of fire. With this he seemed to pierce my heart several times, so that it penetrated to my entrails. When he drew it out, I thought he was drawing them out with it and he left me completely afire with a great love for God. (*Life*, Ch. XXIX)

The reality underlying the words in which her mind clothed her experience, and the images themselves, belong to the central Christian mystical tradition. She says that this was a very rare kind of vision for her. Its prime significance was the awareness it brought her of desire for God, a desire she did not regard as something personal, but as the thing she most wanted for everyone.

Her account expresses first of all this transcending desire for God; secondly, the experience was one of deep pain; thirdly, the metaphor of fire is used, a traditional and deeply significant image for prayer connected with the heart, the most central part of the person; and fourthly, the 'transverberation' was not an isolated event. It came during her life as a Carmelite nun and it overflowed into the next years of service of others until her death. It says nothing else but that divine love enters into the very centre of the soul, so that it affects every action and thought. In all Teresa's writings, particularly in the *Life*, it is always the reality of day-to-day living in prayer that concerns her, not a sentimental or precious otherworldliness. It is this which gives a timeless quality to her books.

Teresa's description of the piercing of her heart inspired the famous statue by Bernini, a baroque expression of devotion which would, perhaps, hardly have impressed Teresa herself. Nor did Richard Crashawe's description of her death as 'that final kiss', in his poem 'The Flaming seem like anything of the kind to her when it came. It is more true to Teresa's character for us to remember that at the time of her death she was carried reluctantly, in extreme sickness, to the house of a friend. This was the Duchess of Alba who—from a sentimental desire to treat Teresa as a saint, which Teresa disliked and mocked—wanted Teresa to be with her at the birth to her child. So it was there at Alma de Tormes that Teresa died, on 4 October 1582, constantly repeating Psalm 51: 'The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.'

ASSOCIATES

New

FLG

The Revd Dominic Keech, 22 March 2015

Companion

Diana Tear, 2 July 2015

RIP

FLG

Anne Potts, 12 November 2014
Maisie Orr, 11 December 2014
Diana Roantree, 16 December 2014
Joyce Behrendt, 7 February 2015

BOOKS

Archbishop Justin Welby: Risk-taker and Reconciler, Andrew Atherstone, Darton, Longman and Todd, 2014, £18.99.

ISBN: 9780232530728.

The small book by Andrew Atherstone published in 2013, describing the years of Justin Welby's life up to his inauguration as the 105th Archbishop of Canterbury in March 2013, has now been followed by a full-scale biography by the same author which brings the story up to the first year of Welby's Archbishopric. The early years are more fully covered than in the 2013 book and it further gains from the inclusion of photographs.

Readers of my review of Atherstone's first book on Welby, *Archbishop Justin Welby*: *the Road to Canterbury* in the *Fairacres Chronicle* (Winter 2013), may recall that I found so much in it worth quoting that it became more of an account of the contents than a review. There is the same temptation here, but for the present purpose, I will confine myself to touching on a couple of the many issues which faced Welby on his arrival at Canterbury.

These were women bishops, and homosexuality as it affects the clergy. The issue of women bishops was one Welby had been involved in while Bishop of Durham. Atherstone writes that 'Welby's personal commitment to the consecration of women as bishops was not in doubt', and he goes on to quote a pastoral letter Welby had written for his diocese in 2012 in which he made it clear that he had arrived at his commitment 'as a result of careful studies of the scriptures …' (181). How Welby achieved this interpretive feat is not revealed, but it enabled him to facilitate conversations between the opposing parties. In due course, they were able to produce the necessary legislation for women to be consecrated as bishops, while providing inviolable provisions for those dubbed 'traditionalists'. Welby's success in resolving this issue could probably be better attributed to his realism in the face of a cultural change which could no longer be withstood.

The rise of the passionate defence of homosexuality is similarly due to a cultural change, although both issues could equally be seen as the revenge of history. The eleven pages Atherstone devotes to the question of same-sex marriage, in a chapter called 'Sex, Money and Power', begins by charting the progress of one of the Alpha Course's best-sellers, *Searching Issues* by Nicky Gumbel, from its denunciation of homosexuality in 1994, to 'studied silence' on the subject in the latest edition of 2013 (211-12). Welby, on the other hand, is being forced by his position to attempt answers to the continual questioning of him on the problem for the Church of 'gay marriage'. A typical response taken from the many quoted is: 'rather than shouting that one side's homophobic and the other side's betraying the gospel, we need actually to listen to each other as human beings' (221).

The next chapter, 'A Global Communion' is largely dominated by the same subject. The job of being *primus inter pares* is evidently like being a dartboard. The arrows fly thick and fast and must penetrate even the 'man of steel' as Welby has often been called. But that is only one side of him. The other is someone who listens, attentively and with compassion, to all the human problems he necessarily faces, a side which is well brought out in this very interesting book.

SISTER EDMÉE SLG

If You Sit Very Still, Marian Partington, Vala Publishing Co-operative, Bristol, 2012, £14.39. ISBN: 9781908363022.

The dust jacket of this carefully crafted book is exquisitely beautiful, with white flower and golden lettering against a midnight blue background. It expresses the way in which Marian Partington has tried courageously to make something beautiful of her life, for her own sake and that of her family, despite horrendous suffering.

Marian is the sister of 21-year-old Lucy Partington, a third-year English undergraduate at the University of Exeter, who vanished one evening immediately after Christmas in 1973, while waiting for the bus home to her family in Cheltenham after visiting a friend. Some of us will recall that news event very well. For twenty years the family had no idea why or where Lucy had gone, only that it was completely unexpected and apparently out of character. But in March 1994 the police contacted the family to say that Lucy's remains had been found in the basement of 25 Cromwell Street, Gloucester, the home of serial killers Fred and Rosemary West. By that time, Marian had lived for twenty years with no knowledge of what happened to Lucy, and she has now lived for a further twenty years *with* the knowledge—at least in outline, for the Wests were not forthcoming with information at their trial. Lucy, one of their many victims, had been abducted, gagged, raped, tortured and murdered, then beheaded and dismembered and buried in a shaft between two sewerage pipes. It may be surmised that Lucy had been prepared to accept a lift because she had seen that there was a woman, Rosemary, in the car.

There is so much that could be said about this beautifully written, intensely moving book. It can be understood on many levels. Space does not permit me, however, to do more than to make a few points. As Andrew Proud, Bishop of Reading, said when Marian spoke at the University Church of St Mary the Virgin in Oxford on 20 September 2014, we need to take care in the words we speak, because here we are on 'holy ground'. The format of that event, entitled 'Becoming Forgiving', was a dialogue between the two. It was one of many events that day to mark the retirement of John Pritchard, Bishop of Oxford. Having already read this book, I was very glad to have the opportunity to hear Marian speak in person, which she does with amazing articulacy, given the subject matter, even though this is by now the fruit of long practice. For the most part, although by no means entirely, she chose to read her words out from the book, on the basis that in the course of the years

she had crafted the exact phrases in the book, and could not now better them.

The reviewer's stock questions, 'For whom is this book written?' and 'Who will benefit from reading this book?' do not quite fit here. It is a book in which Marian shares at the deepest level her journey from a 'limit situation', an extreme life situation, towards forgiveness, compassion, deep awareness of our common humanity and recognition of the need for cleansing of the soul through confession. It was chosen in 2012 by Rowan Williams, then Archbishop of Canterbury, as his Book for the Year for the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *New Statesman*. The question I could perhaps ask the reader is, 'Who wishes to go on the journey of reading this book?' Certainly not everyone will wish to do so. It demands much. For a long time I found, strangely, that I could only read it between the hours of about 2 a.m. and 4:a.m. I have not really made sense of that, except for the fact that the senses are heightened at that time of the night—and this is certainly a book for heightened sensitivity.

Marian tells her life story, and details her long and courageous journey towards forgiveness. She does not spare us the details, such as the fact that for a year after the finding of Lucy's remains, they were needed as an exhibit for the defence; and that after that, Marian had felt an instinctive need to go to the mortuary in Cardiff to hold and wrap Lucy's bones. During that moving ceremony, something shifted and she made a step towards peace.

The challenge of forgiveness for Marian is an extraordinary one and it is humbling to be permitted to share in it by reading the book. Soon after the discovery of Lucy's remains, Marian understood that she could either sink or face what had happened with an open heart. Articulating the unspeakable has moved her life from a place of crucifixion to a place of resurrection. She became a

facilitator of the online Forgiveness Project[1] and she tells her story in prisons and schools. Quoting the mother of another murdered girl, she says that forgiveness is giving up hope of a better past.

Marian's generosity is deeply moving. There is a point in her talks, wherever they take place, in a church, prison or school, where she produces Lucy's hand-made woollen purse, fashioned from homespun wool, Lucy's gift to her before she died. Marian passes it round, as a tangible object to earth the talk. It is a sobering moment.

Marian told of a pilgrimage she had made in recent years to the cathedral at Santiago de Compostela in Spain. She told us how good it had been to have the experience of just being one of the pilgrims, and how good it was for once to be 'just ordinary.' She hoped to return.

This is the story of someone who, after the extreme experience of Lucy's murder, in some ways can never be 'ordinary' again, but in whom grace, and co-operation with that grace, have combined to salvage something beautiful and even to bring joy.

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

Prayer and Thought in Monastic Tradition: *Essays in Honour of Benedicta Ward SLG*, edited by Santha Bhattacharji, Rowan Williams & Dominic Mattos, Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014, £75.00. ISBN: 9780567082954.

Tantalus and the Pelican: Exploring Monastic Spirituality Today, Nicholas Buxton, Continuum, 2009, £15.99.

ISBN: 9781847061119.

Here are two books, very different in scope and intention, both of which testify to the continuing vitality and relevance of the monastic strand in the life of the Church. Nicholas Buxton's is the story of his own spiritual quest, by way of an Indian ashram, a Zen monastery in New Zealand, participation in the television series,

[1] (www.theforgivenessproject.com)

‘The Monastery,’ and a month-long retreat with the Carthusians at Parkminster, to become eventually an Anglican priest, attracted by the idea of being actually paid to pray. (One wonders if he has since found that the ideal of the priest as a person of prayer is at odds with the expectations most laity have of their clergy!) As he describes his spiritual formation, he draws heavily on the Desert Fathers and on St. Benedict. His somewhat enigmatic title points to the contrast between contemporary consumerist society, which thrives on encouraging people always to want more than they have and never to be satisfied. Tantalus, for whom the satisfaction of his desires was always beyond his reach, aptly symbolises this state of being. This is in striking contrast to the teaching common to most religious traditions that true happiness is to be found not in getting but in giving. The pelican of the title symbolises this: the Desert Fathers had, in the words of the psalmist, become ‘like a pelican in the wilderness’ (Ps. 102: 6 BCP), and in medieval belief the pelican feeds its young with its own blood, a symbol of God’s self-giving in the Eucharist.

Dr Buxton acknowledges his debt to Sister Benedicta in supporting the writing of his book. So do all the contributors to *Prayer and Thought in Monastic Tradition* in their turn. Friends and colleagues who value her immense contribution to scholarship presented this Festschrift to Sister Benedicta in 2014. It is clear that she combines rigorous academic standards with lifelong faithfulness to her religious vocation. The range of subjects covered by these essays is itself a remarkable testimony to her breadth of interests. Whereas the academic scholar often seems to focus on a very narrow field, she has contributed significantly to the study of the Desert Fathers, Bede, Anselm and the early Cistercians; to the medieval understanding of miracles; to the late medieval flowering of vernacular mystical writing; and to studies on the continuing influence of monastic spirituality in the post-Reformation Church.

It would be impossible to summarise the twenty-one essays here gathered together, and impertinent for someone who is neither an academic nor a monk to comment in detail. One essay, however, which I found particularly interesting is that by Paul Savage, 'Concerning Academic Translation and the Latin of Conrad of Eberbach.' Savage collaborated over a twenty-year period with Sister Benedicta in a translation of Eberbach's account of the early days of the Cistercian order. He draws a contrast between academic translation and literary translation. The former keeps as close as possible to the vocabulary and thought forms of the original, to give the reader an entry into a past sensibility. The latter feels free to depart further from the original in an attempt to find contemporary equivalents for the ideas and emotions expressed in an idiom largely unfamiliar to modern readers. An extreme example of this approach is found in Harry Eyres's contemporary translation of the Odes of Horace, *Horace and Me* (Bloomsbury, 2013).

As I read Savage's essay it struck me that the contrast he draws describes neatly the difference between these two books. The Festschrift is an extended attempt to help the reader to enter into the thought-worlds of the past, whereas Dr Buxton's intention is to ask himself and us what there is in the tradition that can serve to illuminate our present situation and guide our choices. These two approaches need each other, for contemporary relevance depends on knowing what really happened in the past and what it meant to those living at the time. There is no bypassing the need for careful scholarship, but in itself it is barren unless it is allowed to shape the way we approach the problems and possibilities of our own day. It is fitting, therefore that the final essay is by another member of Sister Benedicta's community, Sister Edmée, for whom the Song of Songs is both a text deserving of the most careful and detailed study and a source of continuing spiritual nourishment.

MICHAEL PATERNOSTER

The Reverend Canon Michael Paternoster retired to Wells in 2000, after spending the greater part of his active ministry in Scotland.

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