# new directions

May 2021
£3.00

FORWARD INFAITH
supporting The Society

published ten times a year by Forward in Faith which supports the work of The Society in seeking to renew the Church in the historic faith



## Speaking of the Lord

**The Bishop of Ebbsfleet offers words of encouragement**

***Also in this issue:***

- **Alan Rimmer contemplates the Cross**
- **Paul Thomas on England's Patron Saint**
- **Michael Talbot considers politics**

# content

Vol 24 No 300 May 2021


**3 LEAD STORY**
**Speaking of the Lord**
The Bishop of Ebbsfleet encourages us in our mission

**5 We should glory**
ALAN RIMMER
explores the mystery of the Cross

**7 The Oil of Gladness**
THE BISHOP OF FULHAM
on the importance of Holy Oil

**9 Was Virgil a Christian?**
NICOLAS STEBBING CR
considers Dante

**11 Ophis Strikes Back**
DAVID ACKERMAN
introduces and exclusive extract from his new book

**12 Cry for St George!**
PAUL THOMAS
on our Patron Saint

**14 A cloud of witnesses**
JONATHAN BAKER
preaches for the 160th Anniversary of All Saints Notting Hill

**20 Views, reviews & previews**

ART: Exhibitions after Lock-down, Owen Higgs offers a guide

BOOKS: Julian Browning on *Light Perpetual*
Peter Anthony on *That all should be saved*
Andrew Hawes on *Our Daily Bread*
Simon Cotton on *Chancel Screens*

**26 We have to talk about safeguarding 2**
A READER
responds to last month's articl

**27 The way less trod**
RICHARD NORMAN
on the path to holiness

**29 On Politics and Faith**
MICHAEL TALBOT
travels to Westminster

**30 Revelation**
JOHN GAYFORD
explores the Book of the Apocalypse

**35 Mystical Rose and Gate of Heaven**


# regulars


**6 GHOSTLY COUNSEL**
ANDY HAWES
considers using the mind

**16 VIERGE NOIRES 12**

EDITORIAL 18
BISHOPS OF THE SOCIETY 35

**17 MAY DIARY**
TThurifer is reading history

**19 THE WAY WE LIVE NOW**
CHRISTOPHER SMITH
goes to a conference

**25 BOOK OF THE MONTH**
TIM PIKE
on *Journey to Freedom*

**33 FAITH OF OUR FATHERS**
ARTHUR MIDDLETON
on 'Personal Devotion'

**34 TOUCHING PLACE**
All Saints', Gautby, Lincs




**COVER IMAGE**

**Fr Tom Bates-Bourne blesses the Easter Garden at St James the Great, Ryhill during Evening Prayer and Benediction on Easter Day (Photograph by Benjamin Cartwright)**

*To mark the 300th Edition of New Directions, here is a photograph of the Chairman of the Editorial Board and the Editor on pilgrimage to Walsingham; when one was Principal of Pusey House, Oxford and the other Sacristan*

*Articles are published in New Directions because they are thought likely to be of interest to readers. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or those of Forward in Faith.*

Lead Story

# Speaking of the Lord

**The Bishop of Ebbslfeet** speaks at his Chrism Mass

*When Peter saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, he said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about this man?' Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!' John 21.21-22*



This celebration would in normal times be a great concelebration, a moment in the year towards which all priests look, to share with their bishop and one another a moment of singular joy. Today though, for reasons that we all know about, it cannot be like that. But in order that the sheer exhaustion and low-level depression that most of us feel will not dull what is great and mysterious we needed to keep this specific celebration, even in this scaled down way, so that, before celebrating the Paschal liturgies, we have an opportunity to recall that moment when our Blessed Lord placed His hands upon us, and made us share in the mystery of His own life – the moment when He began to exercise his priesthood through us, to offer Himself through us, to minister to others through us. One feature of this year, which I have heard time and again in the often-moving testimony of fellow priests, has been what we might call the underlying anxiety of comparison. Against the ever-changing backdrop of public policy, we have attempted to adapt our duties and habits to meet the needs of our congregations and the wider community. And while there has been opportunity to discover new means of communication

**The point I want to make, quite simply dear brother priests, is that for each of us the promise of what Jesus gives us in the priesthood is the same, but the path that each one must take to discover oneself in the mystery of Jesus Christ is unique, the working of grace in each heart.**

and coordination to promote the Church's worship and service in the wider population, and adapt ourselves to the new and bewildering physical and spiritual needs of our neighbours, worry and distress have crouched low and slid into our lives. There is an intense sense of looking at others – other priests, other parishes, of marking oneself against them, assessing their responses to our common emergency, sparking jealousy, judgement, self-appraisal, and for many self-doubt. And if your parish was beginning to feel vulnerable before last year, deep-seated tiredness now, and a foreboding about impacts we cannot yet appreciate, will be leaving you deeply in need of the Lord's reassurance and encouragement. Such was the background to the encounter between Jesus and Peter that took place on the shore of Lake Tiberias after the resurrection. The conversation is recounted by the one who witnessed it: St John the Evangelist. In the Greek text there is a very revealing play on two words: filéo, the love the lives in friendship, tender but not all-embracing; and agapáo, the love that is without reserve, condition or limit.Jesus asks Peter the first time: 'Simon ... do you love me (agapas-me)' – do you love me totally and unconditionally? (Jn 21.15) Prior to his experience of betraying and denying Jesus, we know from all Peter's behaviour that he would certainly have answered Jesus's question, 'Yes Lord; totally; to the end!' But now, intensely aware of his own weakness and infidelity, he answers, 'Lord, you know that I love you (filo-se): that is, 'I love you just as much as I can.' Christ probes his heart: 'Simon ... do you agapas-me?' – do you love with total love, more than others?' And Peter repeats, 'I love you just as much as I can.' The third time Jesus lowers the bar: 'Simon ... fileis-m?' and though he's humiliated to be so well understood, Peter understands that the love he can credibly profess is enough for Jesus. Jesus had stooped to put himself on Peter's level, and from then on Peter follows Jesus aware of his own fragility; and for this very reason he can be the shepherd of lost lambs and sheep. But then suddenly Peter becomes interested in John, the disciple whom Jesus agapa (loved unconditionally), the Beloved Disciple. 'Lord, what will become of him?' Read the gospels carefully and you will recognize the theme of comparison between the two apostles on many occasions. Jesus gives Peter a stern but clear reply: 'If I want Him to remain until I come, what does it matter to you? You follow me!' (Jn 21.21—2). Peter must accept the Lord's will that his ministry will be different from John's. He will learn to love unconditionally; but to do so he must submit to the Lord's will for him, and not compare himself to the one who throughout the Gospel he has compared himself to. In a beautiful meditation on these verses, full of contrasts between the discipleship of the two apostles, St Augustine says: 'On the level of symbol, Peter followed Christ soonest, John waited. But on the level of lived faith, both endured the present sufferings of this miserable world, both awaited the future goods of eternal bliss.' The point I want to make, quite simply dear brother priests, is that for each of us the promise of what Jesus gives us in the priesthood is the same, but the path that each one must take to discover oneself in the mystery of Jesus Christ is unique, the

working of grace in each heart. He is always the One who gives, who draws us to Himself, and we must pay attention to the way He calls us, and the particular share in His cross that He gives us. These are things that we shall not discover or understand if we squander our ministries comparing ourselves, our parishes, our successes, or even our failures, to others. In the sacramental sign of the imposition of hands by the bishop—and for some of you those hands were mine!—it was the Lord Himself who laid His hands upon you. That sign—the outstretched hand of Christ to choose you, anoint you, and hold you—sums up the entire process not only of the fulfilment of your duties to the Church, but of God's grace in bringing you to perfection through the totality of your priestly service. He is guiding you from a position of loving Him only as much as you can, to loving Him without reserve, condition or limit. Like the first disciples, we each heard His call, 'Follow me!' and I have no doubt that since then you have occasionally wondered if you heard properly. Perhaps, we have at times been frightened by the size of the task and our inadequacy (Lk 5.8); or terrified at the roaring storms of ideology and self-destruction in the world where God has seen fit to put us (Mt 14.30). As the pandemic subsides, there is no doubt that we are facing many new challenges and opportunities. The agenda for the Church, and the need for her vigorous and sacrificial witness to the Gospel, has never been greater. And yet at this very point, when much is needed from the Church, in the midst of a culture in flight from God, and therefore in flight from all that God created and re-created humanity to be, we feel exhausted and ill-prepared to meet the Lord's summons to us. It is for that reason, we must turn to Him, aware of our inadequacy, and heed His warning, do not be distracted, 'You, follow me!' Learn to give everything for love beyond what you think you are capable of. Many of you will recall some words that will have been used by the bishop at so many of your ordinations: 'Imitate the mystery you celebrate: model your life on the mystery of the Lord's cross.' The priest is one who is uniquely inserted into the mystery of Christ's sacrifice through a personal identification with Him, in order to extend Christ's mission, His word, His touch, His selfoffering. It is through this union, which happens in the sacrament of orders, that you become closer to Christ and the mystery of the Lord's cross through your generous response to Him. This is why you answered the bishop at your ordination, 'I am willing, with the help of God.' Many priests—probably increasing numbers of priests—have a fear of appearing to be strangers to the world, anxious that the world will not recognize itself in them. It seems to me, and I want to say this with all my heart, you should fear instead being a stranger to Christ, and the world not noticing or recognizing Him in you. At its root that means identifying yourself with Jesus. He is the root of our priesthood. Jesus warned Peter: 'What is that to you? You follow me!' That admonition to Peter, and to each of us, dear brothers, implies two things above all others. First, that if you do not above all things imitate—no! better to say, share—Jesus's intimacy with the Father, you are lost. You need to go far away from the projections and demands of the world, even sometimes from the neediness of the institutional church, and find the Father in prayer and solitude, in contemplation and silence, in adoration and trust. We need to spend more time in prayer, scaling inner mountains to be with the Father. You cannot give from what you do not possess. How can you lead a community in its prayer and service, if you do not yourself remain constantly in deep and intimate contact with the Lord by taking time to be in His presence? Besides, if the well has run dry people will not come to you to drink. And second, our whole call as priests is to learn how to model our lives on the mystery of the Lord's cross: how to move from conditional to unconditional love; to give our flesh and blood, not just our intellect and energy and zeal and compassion. He who said, 'When I am lifted up from the earth will draw all men to myself' shows us authentic Christian leadership. This God must live in us and we in Him. In the words of one priest martyr of our century, 'One becomes capable of salvation only by offering one's own flesh. The evil in the world must be borne, and the pain shared, assimilating it into one's own flesh as Jesus did.' Throughout the gospel Peter and John appear alongside one another. Bit by bit each one's distinctive call emerges, and the cross within it: the one as chief shepherd, the other as eyewitness to the truth. In their haste to reach the empty tomb, the Fathers of the Church recognized anexhortation to compete in the only legitimate race between believers: the competition to seek Christ. Brothers, encourage one another in running that race! ND

**Many of you will recall some words that will have been used by the bishop at so many of your ordinations: 'Imitate the mystery you celebrate: model your life on the mystery of the Lord's cross.'**

*The Rt Revd Jonathan Goodall is Bishop of Ebbsfleet. This sermon was preached at his Chrism Mass held at Pusey House.*

The Society
SUPPORTED BY FORWARDINFAITH

**National Missioner to The Society**

**This new post, generously funded for two years by the Archbishops' Council, is a unique opportunity for a passionate person, lay or ordained, to equip the 424 parishes of The Society, which is supported by Forward in Faith, in recovering a Catholic vision for evangelism.**

**The deadline for applications is 5pm on Friday 21 May and interviews will be held in a central London location on Friday 11 June.**

**For more details please see https://www.sswsh.com/news or email director@forwardinfaith.com or call Tom Middleton on 07368 124811.**

# We should glory

**Alan Rimmer** examines the mystery of the Cross

*Stop all the clocks.....cut off the telephone,*
*Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,*
*Silence the pianos and with muffled drum*
*Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.*

*Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead*
*Scribbling on the sky the message 'He is Dead'.*
*Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,*
*Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.*

*He was my North, my South, my East and West,*
*My working week and my Sunday rest,*
*My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;*
*I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.*

*The stars are not wanted now; put out every one,*
*Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,*
*Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;*
*For nothing now can ever come to any good.*

Good Friday might, paradoxically, present an opportunity to dwell on those desolate, hopeless, abandoned parts of the human experience which W.H. Auden's familiar poem communicates so powerfully. 'Stopped', 'cut off', 'moaning', 'dead', 'unwanted'. Dark places of disillusion and despair. Places which all of us visit at different times; baggage - of different kinds but always heavy - that we carry with us. Perhaps we bring some of it here with us today. Our sickness unto death - our fear of death, our griefs and losses, our unresolved, inarticulate anger, our own depression and pain, and the struggles of those dear to us. Auden's words have in the background that dulling knowledge of the cruel ways in which men and women treat one another, over history and over the breakfast table. In the diseased distance is the problem of evil, hearts squashed by the senselessness of suffering. The poet appeals grandly to a cosmic sense of existential alienation, but exile can be ordinary too - felt in long broken friendships, the jagged edges of which pierce our hearts but which through hurt and pride and the complexity of our human circumstances we must leave unreconciled. Of course there's nothing new in Auden's words - we've heard the Psalmist this morning and here at this Liturgy sing 'I am like a dead man, a thing thrown away', and 'my heart throbs, my strength is spent'. We need not look far to find a sense of ourselves as, in the words of this week's great office hymn, 'a race shipwrecked forever'.

Our hearts might dwell too on the disillusionment of Jesus' mother and his friends, tired to the death, as they took his torn body down from the Cross and sealed him with a despairing sense of finality into the tomb. Heart-rent and yet in their tender burial preparations, grimly accepting of death and of the decay that comes in death's wake. Blood and earth and burial, the sky's light obscured, its dome darkened with the invisible but unmistakable scribbled message 'He is dead'.

How else could they be thinking, having heard from that Cross the most heartbreaking cry ever to reach human ears - 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' As a child I was absolutely scandalised, disturbed, embarrassed by those words, and by Jesus' identification with and fulfilment of those pathetic, desperate hopeless words of the Psalmist who in that moment is a 'not a man but a worm'. This is not how it's meant to be, is it?

And yet, we come here today to 'celebrate' the Lord's Passion and to 'venerate' his Cross. The Latin roots of the word 'venerate' take us, of course, not to mourning and despair but to beauty, desire, good, love. Our liturgy this afternoon is not 'Funeral Blues', not about paying our respects to a dead God, but about beholding and cherishing an instrument, yes, devised in man's wickedness and emblematic of his morbidity, but which has become the vehicle of divine love; an emblem of pain and decay which God has made our salvation and our way to wholeness and joy. We venerate and not mourn, we hold even now in our solemnity love and joy in our hearts, and do not postpone it until Easter Morning, because it is *here* that the work of salvation out of love is achieved. This is the image of God come down to the deepest, darkest places of our broken condition, Christ not acting out some divine theatre, but truly taking upon himself genuine separation from abandonment by God so that we might return to intimate relationship with him.

**Remember that it is at this darkest hour and not in the happy reunions and fish suppers of Easter that Jesus Christ commissions his Church - that Church by means of which we are united to God.**

Remember that it is at this darkest hour and not in the happy reunions and fish suppers of Easter that Jesus Christ commissions his Church - that Church by means of which we are united to God. In the midst of his pain he looks down in love and commends his Mother Mary to the care of the Beloved Disciple, his Beloved Disciple to that treasure house that is Our Lady. Significant that Baptism and the Eucharist, the Church's very constitution, are not organisational principles drafted once things have come good at the Resurrection and settled down. No, they come as the water and blood pours from his side at the sharp and bitter point of the executioner's lance.

Throughout scripture and the history of the Church, relationship with God has involved giving up the worldly paucity we desperately cling to in order to receive back abundance of a different quality. In Abel the just, in Abraham and Isaac, in Joseph's exile and Moses' exposure, in the trials

of saints and the pains of martyrs, in the difficult spiritual work incumbent on every Christian to leave an old self, old selves behind, there is pain and despair and separation. Dying to what we once held dear and experiencing the cost is the way that God prepares to receive back from him. To receive back something which might look completely different from what our desires once yearned after, but which will fill our deepest desire and silence that sad voice that whispers 'nothing now will ever come to any good.' Those shocking words from Hosea - 'Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn us, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind up our wounds' are given their ultimate truth in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ - and our witness today to the pain and the promise of the Cross should give us heart in our loss and bind us increasingly to him.

**The Cross was an instrument of torture, a device conceived in cruelty not only to kill but to humiliate and disfigure, to destroy the body of the victim and deaden the spirits of those made to watch.**

The Cross was an instrument of torture, a device conceived in cruelty not only to kill but to humiliate and disfigure, to destroy the body of the victim and deaden the spirits of those made to watch. It was an emblem of the sin that 'silences' all hope, 'prevents' all promise, 'cuts us off' from relationship with, even apprehension of, a loving God.

And yet by submission to it, Christ has made of it not the haunting shadow of a depraved humanity, but the silhouette of a human being fully alive and in the image of God, arms open to the world, inviting embrace. Of those rudely crossed bars he has made our truest and most intricate compass; our North, our South, our East and West indeed.

Today we remember and engage with that Friday of blood and abandonment and defiantly call it 'Good.' Amidst our awareness of the pain and separation which W.H. Auden so authentically evokes, our knowledge that Christ met it for so utterly allows us to take up and cherish that happier instinct which in this poem he abandons. In coming here today we show that we too thought 'that love would last forever.' In beholding that Cross, we know that we were *right*. ND

*Father Alan Rimmer is the Assistant Curate at the Parish of St Stephen, Gloucester Road.*

# Ghostly Counsel

**Andy Hawes**

## Considers using the mind

The subject of dealing with distractions often arises in conversations about prayer. Distraction often features in conversations about participating in worship. This could be praying an Office alone or being at Mass with a congregation. The mind drifts away, it loses focus and attention. The effect of this is often frustration and sometimes a deep sense of failure. All this is often the subject of conversation in the confessional.

The mind will wander rather than wonder if it is left to its own devices. One of the chief causes of meandering is found in how the worship begins. If physically and emotionally it has a meandering beginning; if the conversation at the door continues to the pew; if the arrival at the point of departure for prayer is not marked by a stop, look and listen routine the mind stands no chance of being up to the task. The mind obeys the will, and the will is shaped by desire. That is the common conclusion of those who over the centuries have taught and refined the practice of mental prayer.

Prayer and worship of any integrity has to be in and with the Spirit. It is a spiritual task and therefore it requires the invocation of the Spirit. It is necessary to ask for what we need. We need an attentive mind, and an open heart and soul to receive, we need to pray that all we are and do in the time we are offering will further God's Kingdom and give Him Glory. The Collect for Purity is a wonderful example of the prayer that is required at the beginning of prayer and worship.

Now the will comes into its own: we must make a deliberate, conscious choice to align our will with our prayerful desire. Yes, we may start drifting off to the cricket score, or the question as to whether the gas bill has been paid, but the will when woken up by prayer and desire can call us back to the here and now. The will can help us in attentiveness :by being attentive to words, to the action and drama of the liturgy, the will can decide that we can look with a new perspective and listen with a keener tuning of the ear. Some people will find it helpful to return to the printed page rather than the reciting from memory to renew their worship.

That are some key moments in any liturgy. Movements of posture, changes in the focus of action, break the worship down into smaller movements and make a new beginning. Being attentive to posture can certainly help in any kind of prayer and worship: we have to sit up straight, or stand up straight to pay attention. Kneeling , being a posture reserved almost entirely for prayer and worship, can make a huge difference to reinvigorating the mind in the pursuit of its aim and desire.

In a way similar to the effect of physical exercise to strengthen and develop the body, so the spiritual exercises of preparatory prayer, use of body posture and regularly renewing the focus of the mind, when repeated in a disciplined way will strengthen the control of the will over the mind.

# The Oil of Gladness

**Jonathan Baker** explores the place of the Holy Oils in the work of salvation

Who could have imagined that two years ago, when we gathered in this church, filled to capacity – even the galleries were full – for the renewal of ordination promises and the blessing of oils, that there would be no Chrism Mass at all in 2020, and this comparatively modest celebration in 2021? You do not need to me to tell you that the last twelve months have been a time of trial, a year like no other in the lifetime of anyone at all, I suspect, in this building now. Thanks be to God that we are here, here to be refreshed by the living waters, the deep well-springs of our faith in word and sacrament. Thank you to all of you, priests, deacons and all the people of God who have felt able to be present here this morning. Thank you to the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Southwark, and a goodly cohort of the venerable, brother and sister archdeacons, for supporting us with your presence.

I think we are more conscious than ever this year that this celebration falls in Holy Week. Every year, in the northern hemisphere at least, we are blessed by that congruity between natural time and sacred time: as the days lengthen and nature offers us everywhere signs of new life, so we celebrate the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and the coming of that new creation of which it is the first fruits. This year, as we take the first hesitant steps along the way of the easing of Covid restrictions and we creep towards the release from lockdown, we cannot but be struck by this further congruity with the mother and Queen of all feasts, soon to be upon us, when we shall shout out with joy that the stone has been rolled away and Life has risen from the grave. The bishop's breathing over the Oil of Chrism in this morning's rite is indeed a sign of resurrection and of the sending of the Holy Spirit, even as the risen Lord breathed on the disciples on the evening of the first Easter Day and empowered them with the gift of the Spirit for the forgiveness of sins.

But, before Easter, the Cross; before resurrection, sacrifice. Chastened by the pandemic, our prayer must be that we may learn again to put aside all vanity, the idols born of ego, and to anchor ourselves afresh in Christ alone, and Him crucified. We must listen to the preaching of the bishop, St John of Ephesus, in our second reading: 'Every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all the tribes on the earth will wail on account of him.' Those words point us back, of course, to the prophecy of Zechariah: 'They shall look on him whom they have pierced,' to which St John the Evangelist also alludes at his crucifixion scene. Here at the beginning of the Book of Revelation, they are applied to the Lord's return at the end of time: the Coming One remains the Pierced One, marked with the wounds of the Cross. In the Fourth Gospel, it is Lord's wounded side, his pierced side, pierced with the lance, from which flow blood and water, the source of sacramental life in the Church.





**The bishop's breathing over the Oil of Chrism in this morning's rite is indeed a sign of resurrection and of the sending of the Holy Spirit, even as the risen Lord breathed on the disciples on the evening of the first Easter Day and empowered them with the gift of the Spirit for the forgiveness of sins.**

In the Palm Sunday passion Gospel which we heard on Sunday, the passion according to St Mark this year, we met the woman from Bethany – Mary, let's call her, following St John - who, by means of a dramatic and a reckless symbolic action, proclaims Jesus to be the Christ, the Anointed One. She pours the whole of a jar of costly oil onto Our Lord's head; down it runs, no doubt, spilling onto his clothes and even onto his hands and feet, the hands and the feet which will be pierced by nails on Good Friday. Jesus tells all present that she has done a beautiful thing, in anointing his body for burial. You'll remember of course that this anointing comes in between the plot first being hatched to kill Jesus, and Judas Iscariot putting it decisively into action by betraying him to the plotters. This anointing, then, is intimately associated with the death of the

Lord, with the coming sacrifice. Meanwhile, Gethsemane, where Jesus will be seized and from which all his disciples will flee in confusion, is literally the olive garden, the place of the olive press.

The oils then, which we bless and consecrate today, take their place in the sacramental life of the Church as the means whereby we share in the life of Christ the anointed one who was anointed for burial before his resurrection, who went through the olive press and the wine press in order that life-giving blood and water might be the result. Each of the oils reveals something to us about our participation in Christ, our being conformed to his character, to the mysteries of his living, his dying, and his rising again.

The oil of baptism is very obviously a preparation for the foundational sacrament of the Christian life, whereby we are made one with Christ in his death and in his resurrection. It speaks of the Cross as our defence, the means by which sin and death are defeated, and we are protected against all evil. The oil for the healing of the sick reminds us that the Cross is also immortal medicine, for 'by his wounds we are healed.'

What of the Oil of Chrism, the oil which St Augustine describes as 'fire,' the means by which the newly baptized, who have been 'moistened' by the waters of baptism, can become freshly baked bread, Eucharistic bread? Tertullian, African theologian of the second and early third century, and a champion of the faith against the gnostics, wrote, famously, *caro cardo salutis,* the flesh is the hinge of salvation. In the same passage he continues, with reference to this holy oil, 'the flesh is anointed so that soul may be dedicated to holiness.' The point about the Oil of Chrism is that it seals conformity to Christ in leading a cross-shaped life, a life of discipleship, witness, and service. This is why it is used in confirmation, that sacrament which is all about growing up into Christian maturity, bearing Christ's image more deeply, and sharing more completely in His mission.

**If the Oil of Chrism in Christian initiation is about the anointing of the whole people of God to lead what I have called cross-shaped lives, then, my brother priests, there is for you a further anointing which marks you out in a particular way for a life characterised by sacrifice after the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ.**

If the Oil of Chrism in Christian initiation is about the anointing of the whole people of God to lead what I have called cross-shaped lives, then, my brother priests, there is for you a further anointing which marks you out in a particular way for a life characterised by sacrifice after the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ. At your priestly ordination, your hands were anointed with this noble oil, anointed precisely because you were being set apart to offer the holy sacrifice of the Lord's Body and Blood, to do sacramentally what Our Lord (and He



alone) did in the flesh on the altar of the Cross. How fitting it is, that when they are consecrated, altars too are anointed with Holy Chrism, for by that anointing they truly become symbols of Christ and thus tables of sacrifice as well as of banquet. The anointing of all the baptised in confirmation; the anointing of those set apart to offer sacrifice at priestly ordination; the anointing of the altar to be the sign of Christ, who is the very sacrifice itself. Or perhaps we should put all of that the other way around – because Christ, our Head and Teacher is the true altar, we, his priests (the royal priesthood of the baptised and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained) are also spiritual altars on which to make the sacrifice of a holy life offered to God.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, as we move through this Holy Week to Easter, in this time which is more freighted than usual with expectation, promise, with the awakening of fresh hope and new life, may you all find a renewed confidence in your faith, joy in the Gospel, a rekindling of your first love for the Lord: and may you know all of this through the liturgies, rites and sacraments of the coming great days. May you truly know the anointing of the Holy Spirit in your lives, of which the Holy Chrism, the *fire-feeder*, and all the oils, are sacramental signs. Thank you for being the people of God, in times of trial and in times of joy. Brother priests, and deacons, may you know that joy in your ministry, that joy which Pope Francis tells us has its source in the Father's love. Thank you for your leadership and your service in such testing times. May your churches – themselves anointed, figuratively or literally, with the holy Chrism, signs on earth of the Jerusalem above - ring out with Easter praises, to the glory of Him who suffered for us, but who lives and reigns, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. ND

*The Rt Revd Jonathan Baker is the Bishop of Fulham. This sermon was preached at his Chrism Mass held at St Andrew's, Holborn.*

# Was Virgil a Christian?

**Nicolas Stebbing** considers some religious verse

The short answer is No. Virgil died in 19 BC, long before Christ was born. However, in the Middle Ages he became widely revered as a sort of saint. Dante made Virgil his guide through Hell and most of Purgatory. How did Virgil get this reputation as a quasi-Christian?

One obvious reason was one of his early poems, the Fourth Eclogue, which Christians took to be a prophecy of the Coming of Christ:

> "The great cycle of periods is born anew.
> Now returns the Maid, returns the reign of Saturn.
> Now from high heaven a new generation comes down.
> Yet do thou at that boy's birth....."

No one thinks now it could be such a prophecy, but Augustine thought it was, and so did Dante.

Another reason for Virgil's almost canonisation was his poem The Aeneid, certainly one of the greatest epic poems ever written. I have just finished reading it from start to finish (it has taken ten years!) and am fascinated by the ambiguities of the poem, of the hero, Aeneas, and of the man who wrote it, Virgil.

The story of the Aeneid, briefly, is this. Aeneas was of the royal house of Troy who fled Troy along with his family and a large group of Trojans. They arrive in Carthage where Aeneas meets the beautiful queen Dido. In Books Two and Three he describes the fall of Troy and their journey to Carthage. In Book Four he and Dido fall in love, aided by his mother Aphrodite, but Aeneas is forced to leave Dido and continue on his journey to Italy to found the nation who will become the Romans. Dido in fury commits suicide. Book Five is largely funeral games and Book Six tells of his journey to Hades where he meets his father. From Book Seven to Book Twelve he is in Italy fighting with the Italians led by Turnus. The poem ends with Aeneas killing Turnus in single combat.

Now why do I think readers of New Directions might be interested in this? Aeneas is a very ambiguous figure and, as Virgil presents him, he has quite a lot to say to us today. Sometimes he is noble and brave. Sometimes he is tongue-tied and indecisive. He tries to do what the Fates have decreed for him which is why he abandons Dido. He himself is a victim, partly as a survivor of the Fall of Troy, partly because the goddess Juno, who hates Troy for utterly selfish reasons, keeps trying to destroy him. In the last six books he does not want a war but is compelled to fight one. Twice the treaties are broken by Turnus, instigated by Juno. Reading these last six books I felt the tragedy of war. Virgil writes fantastic poetry, beautiful, evocative, emotional and multi-layered. Hundreds of beautiful young men kill each other in bloody and horrible ways. I felt as if I was reading an account of the First World War. Virgil seemed another Wilfred Owen writing of, "The pity of war, the pity war distils..." This was not a common Roman sentiment. Horace wrote "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori." It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country. Fine words from one who fled from the battle of Philippi and spent his life as a kind of lounge lizard.

Virgil was writing under the inspiration of the Emperor Augustus supposedly to glorify his reign. Augustus was heir to Caesar, who claimed he was descended from Aeneas. Virgil has to describe the war on which the myth of Rome was founded yet he seems to be sickened by it. The poem ends with the death of Turnus, his spirit fluttering away into Hades. We know Virgil wanted to do more with the poem but died. As it stands it feels as if he simply couldn't bear to go on.

**Now why do I think readers of New Directions might be interested in this?**

What does this have to do with Christianity? Romans gloried in their conquests but conquests and empire come at a terrible price. Virgil saw twenty years of civil war and knew that war was horrible. Christians have glorified war over the centuries. Only recently has the Church really begun to oppose it in all its forms. How many Christians prefer to go along with their government's view that war is regrettable, but necessary?

Aeneas himself comes across as a sad, often confused person. He has sudden outbursts of anger, in one of which he kills Turnus though Turnus had begged for his life. In Hades, Aeneas' father had prophesied the glorious future of Rome, ending:



"But thou, 0 Roman, learn with sovereign sway
To rule the nations. Thy great art shall be
To keep the world in lasting peace, to spare
humbled foe, and crush to earth the proud."

Aeneas had not spared the humbled foe. He had killed him. Far from crushing the proud, Romans made pride their defining character. Rome itself claimed to spread justice and peace throughout the world. In fact, she spread war, killed thousands upon thousands of innocent people, enslaved thousands more and looted all Europe and the middle East of its wealth. Julius Caesar committed genocide on a vast scale in Gaul and returned fabulously wealthy with gold and slaves. Sometimes the conquered people got justice; more often as we know from the Gospels and Church history, they did not.

**Virgil was writing under the inspiration of the Emperor Augustus supposedly to glorify his reign.**

Turnus is a tragic figure, a fine young warrior misled by the gods and so sacrificed to their stupidity. Aeneas, too, is a tragic figure. He seems to suffer from refugee's syndrome. He seems often stunned, depressed, seeking a better life but lacking judgement. Refugees are not merely a modern problem. Virgil saw them in their thousands in Italy and Greece. Aeneas suffers from survivor's syndrome. He would rather have died in Troy.

What do we, as Christians, learn from this? Well, briefly…

- The Roman Empire was terrible. It was brutal, exploitative and caused untold suffering. It is possible it was better than other nations round about, but not much. Yet Christianity was only able to flourish within the empire and made little impact outside it until the modern age. What does this say about modern empires which also fell far short of the grandiose claims made for them by their Imperial masters (I was one!) and yet created a new world in which Christianity has flourished? Good things can come out of bad.
- From the earliest centuries some Christians have protested against war, but the Church has tended to support it, under conditions. Virgil writes thousands of lines describing heroic war but at the same time subverts it, dwelling over and over again on the tragedy of enthusiastic young lives brought to an end because some gods desired it. The tragedy of Turnus, Pallas, Launas and a host of others is one which goes on today in Yemen, Chad and Afghanistan. Pope Paul VI, speaking to the United Nations in 1965 pleaded, "No more war, war never again." It is a call the West has not heeded. As I write the UK government is increasing its nuclear stockpile. Can we follow the call of recent Popes, notably Francis, and be properly aware of the terrible consequences of war?
- The Roman gods were terrible. Thank God for Christianity. Roman gods and, even more goddesses, were selfish, self-centred, spiteful, vengeful and ruled by emotions. No wonder the people who worshiped them were much the same. The world into which Jesus spoke the Beatitudes was a world whose public values were completely opposed to them. The wonderful modern writer, Tom Holland, returned to Christianity when he realised just how much Christianity has changed the world from the vicious world it was under the Romans and Greeks. Today's world aspires to good and generous values even if it falls far short of them. Again, what do we do about that?
- Latin poetry is beautiful and fascinating but has little in it that Christians can call their own. There is sexual desire (I can't call it love), pornography, bitterness, bitchiness, cleverness, humour, philosophy, praise of Roman emperors and much else. Only in Virgil do we find a consistent gentleness, from the pastoral poems sympathising with peasants booted off their land by victorious generals, through the Georgics in praise of farming life, to the Aeneid where, as in Owen's *Strange Meeting*, we see young men's generosity led astray and sacrificed on the altars of pride:

"I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war…"

What are we doing today in our cosy little church groups to answer Pope Paul's call "No more war, war never again."? We allow our government to buy nuclear warheads that could kill millions. We watch a terrible war in Yemen fought by Saudi Arabia with British weapons. We are so slow responding to climate change and the loss of the environment even though millions already suffer from it, through famine, poverty and displacement wars?



If Virgil were alive today, he would find much that he recognised from ancient Greece and Rome. Human sin does not change that much. He would also find much that agreed with his gentler principles, his hatred of war and injustice. It's very likely he would have been a Christian – a poet like R S Thomas, maybe. Dante was right to take him as his guide through Hell.

ND

*Father Nicolas Stebbing is a member of the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield.*

# Ophis Strikes Back

**David Ackerman** offers an exclusive extract of his new book published on the 3rd July *King John loses his Mentor*

Back in the warm, and after reading the note left for her, Christalla asked John to sit down. Sitting close to him she said quietly, "When you left Kolokol as a baby boy, with Humpty, Bishop Nicolas, and Princess Frederika more people than you knew watched you sail away. We stood on the shore as your boat sailed into the distance. Soon others, on a distant shore, welcomed you. We were saying goodbye. For only a while, we hoped, but others were saying hello, welcome, and were preparing a new home for you. Nicolas was like a father to you, and although we all know that one day we will say goodbye to those we love, nothing can prepare us for the day when a life sails away". "John", Christalla continued holding his small hand in hers, "Last night Nicolas went to sleep and this morning he didn't wake up. But he woke up on another shore where so many welcomed him to his new home, just as we need to say goodbye to him now". Tears began to form in John's eyes, and, wiping them away with the back of his hand, he got up and walked over to a wooden trunk. Opening it, he took out a toy. It was Humpty. He asked Christalla if she could find Rigsby (who was probably in the palace kitchen looking for food). As she left, John held tightly to what had been his favourite toy. At the moment he most needed Nicolas, his greatest friend, he had been left alone. The door opened and Rigsby walked in. Behind him followed Georgiana. She walked across the room, knelt by the king, and as tears turned into sobs, they held to each other. Soon however two encounters were to give John courage and hope. The second would make John realise the truth of Christalla's words, and to find happiness again.



*

*Hearts are brave again and arms are strong*

The curtains of the king's bedroom were opened as usual by Graham, a page whom John liked as he would often play the piano at palace parties. John, sitting up in bed, said good morning and Graham noticed that rather unusually the king stayed in bed. "I had a dream last night Graham. About Nicolas". Setting the king's breakfast tray by his bed Graham sat down on the edge of the matress. "Did it scare you" he asked. "No" replied John "because although I say a dream, Nicolas came to see me". Graham, who had started his working life collecting scrap metal, knew enough about loss that a small boy might confuse a dream with reality, but he listened. "I woke up and there was a boy my own age sitting where you are now" John continued. "When I asked who he was he said it was Nicolas, but at the same age as I am now. Where I am now, he told me, there is no age as there is no time and he now had a job to do. He would be asked to pray to God for others. He's a saint, you see". Graham reminded the king of his tea and thought that whatever the truth of the story John looked happier. "He said that I would always be close to him if I remained close to God and said that he had for me three gifts in three bags, but they were empty and only left to remind me of three gifts I have already. They were gifts I had to use to be a good king. They are faith, hope and love. We spoke about much more and after a while I could see that this was Nicolas, but young again. He had the same eyes". Graham said that John's bath would get cold if they kept chatting and so the king got up. "Nicolas left me an idea, and a way that Ophis might well come for me, but also a way of preparing for it" John added as he picked up a towel: "knowing that a saint is by my side". Graham moved the tray and tidied John's bed. As he moved a pillow he noticed something odd. To check everything that entered and left the king's bedroom was Graham's job. Before him were three small empty bags. From the bathroom came an unusual sound and in his bath a very happy king sang a song he had learnt years before: "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall….." ND

*Father David Ackerman is the Vicar of St John's Kensal Rise. His first book was entitled The Story of St Nicolas and the Six Bells.*

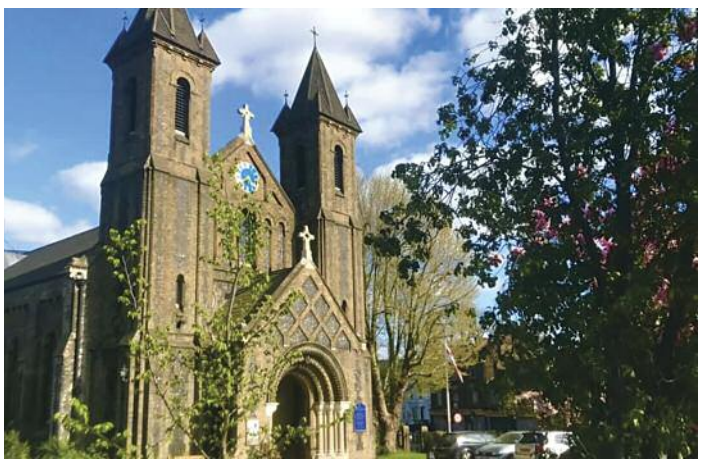
# Cry for St George!

**Paul Thomas** encourages us to follow the example of our Patron Saint

Friends, it is always a pleasure to preach in this Parish Church. Your life in Christ here is possessed of such vigour, inventiveness, and magnetism that it stands as an ensign to the rest of the diocese - and the Church of England nationally - as the very best example of what a Parish Church can be. This is the Church of England I believe in, one where Priest and People are faithful, true, and bold in the religion of Christ, a place where all peoples, nations, races and tongues find a warm, wide, embracing welcome in Christ's name, where all-comers find a common home and a happy fellowship, where the hungry are fed and the fearful find peace, and where the Catholic Faith as the Church of England has received it is proclaimed whole-heartedly and full-throatedly. Oh, how St John's Kensal Green confounds the hand-wringing, the breast-beating, self-excoriating ruling classes of both Church and State. For that alone, thanks be to God.

**And here we must push back firmly against those who wrong-headedly cast patriotic feeling as something wicked and woeful, something to be sneered at and disparaged.**

This St George's-tide evensong is an occasion to celebrate the ministry of this Parish Church, and to thank publicly its devoted Priest, Fr David, who has borne the heat and burden of the day, who has laboured hard in this acre of God's vineyard. He knows full well that the vocation of a priest is found not in self-fulfilment but in self-forgetfulness, in sacrifice. A priest is called by God not to fill himself up but to empty himself out, to give himself away, to become the sacrifice that he offers upon the altar, and in so doing be more perfectly conformed to the Crucified Lord. I have seen over the last year the wounds of love that Fr David has endured for his people, and how he has spent himself in your service. As we honour our Patron Saint this evening, let us publicly thank Fr David for his heroic and Christ-like ministry in this place.





St George's-tide should stir us deeply to a fresh sense of patriotic feeling. And here we must push back firmly against those who wrong-headedly cast patriotic feeling as something wicked and woeful, something to be sneered at and disparaged. The cynical theories which have so quickly overthrown our institutions would have us believe that the kind of honest patriotic feeling properly associated with St George is a sinister means of reinforcing injustice and propagating monstrous prejudice. These cynical theories fail to appreciate that patriotism (as we have traditionally understood it in these isles) is not an expression of extremism, but rather the very thing that stirs us to service, to work for the betterment of others, to strive for a common good. Being jealous 'for England, Harry and St George' is the necessary condition for our commitment to the cause of mercy, justice, and goodness. If we wish to see a land where all walk in the freedom of the truth and in the dignity proper to our unique God-madeness, we must first love our land, not loathe it; we must find in its long resonant story a reason for us to give of ourselves in its service. True patriotism is never selfish nor chauvinistic; true patriotism animates each and every citizen in service to her neighbourhood and nation. Let us then wake-up to what is happening and speak-out, let us give an account of our love of country to those who work to re-write our national story in order to diminish it, and let us cherish anew the ancient customs, traditions, and freedoms of this land.

And as we do so, let us look upon St George, looking beyond and beneath the armour and imagery of our Patron Saint – beneath his stirring chivalric associations of valour, honour, martial might - for beneath the imagery of the serpent slayer soldier stands a martyr in chains. It is thanks to the crusaders returning from the Holy Land that the cult of St George the



warrior and dragon-slayer reached these shores. But the reality is quite different. St George, a Palestinian Christian, shone brightly with the light of Christ not because of his deeds of worldly strength but in his weakness, in his foolishness. St George was killed in the year 303 for his confession 'Christ is Lord!' when the Emperor Diocletian believed himself to be. The Church honours St George, then, for this, for his death, for the fact that Christ's self-emptying death became a power in George's life. The saint's death bore in it Christ's own death and resurrection and revealed it anew to the world. George's death shewed forth love's supreme manifestation, the self-surrendering of the incarnate Son of God. This is the vocation of the martyr - 'martyr' means 'a witness.' This is why the martyrs have, ever since the very first days of the Church, been most highly honoured among all the saints.

Do not think for a moment that martyrdom belongs to the early and ancient centuries of the Church – even if our Patron Saint gave his life for Christ some seventeen hundred years ago. You should know that never have there been more Christian martyrs than now. *This* is the age and era of Christian martyrdom. Only last week the Bishops of the Democratic Republic of Congo drew the world's attention (as much as the world listens and cares) to the deaths of thousands of people, mainly children, who have died a martyr's death at the hands of Islamists in that country. Thousands. This Festival of St George is timely, then. The Church of Christ has entered a new age of martyrdom, not just overseas, but here also, in a way, where the environing culture increasingly and aggressively conflicts with Christian belief more-and-more day-by-day. The state is becoming a place where secular dogmas increasingly demand the loyalty and assent of those who, because of their confession 'Christ is Lord,' cannot and will not give it. Experience has taught the Christian Church that this is a road leads eventually to martyrdom.



Friends, a very great deal will be demanded of us – a kind of martyrdom, a suffering witness – as we in our own time and place seek to be faithful to our paschal confession. The Lord Jesus says just that in this evening's second lesson where he anticipates the affliction that shall come upon those who believe and abide in him: *If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

Never more than now, therefore, do we need a lively sense of our fellowship with St George and the noble army of martyrs within whose heavenly ranks he is enrolled. Never more than now must we call upon their holy intercession to strengthen us, to stiffen our sinews, and steel us for the fight. Never more than now must we, like they, be fearless in keeping and confessing the Faith. And never more than now must we draw inspiration and hope from the knowledge that it was precisely by the blood of martyrs spilt that the Early Church was watered and grew, and sent out her tendrils even to the ends of the earth. The era of our suffering and exile is also the era of our renewal, the Church's re-awakening.

*On this St George's triumph-day,*
*Let every voice his tribute pay*
*To him who counted all things loss*
*For love of him who bore the Cross.*

ND

*Fr Paul Thomas is the Rector of St James, Sussex Gardens. This sermon was preached at St John's Kensal Rise during Evensong for the Feast of St George in the presence of The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Paddington, and Andrew Rosindell MP.*

# A cloud of witnesses

**Jonathan Baker** celebrates the 160th Anniversary of All Saints Notting Hill

Brothers and sisters, what a constellation of reasons for rejoicing are presented to us today. First of all, of course, comes the seventh of the eight days of the Easter Octave, eight days of the celebration of the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, eight days with, liturgically, the character of one great day. (Let me note in passing how fitting it is that Prince Philip, the servant of an heavenly as well as an earthly Monarch, should have gone to his rest during this Week of Weeks.) Everything else, all the other reasons why we are here this morning, flow from this premise, that Christ is Risen, that we are an Easter people, that we can say with the psalmist, This day was made by the Lord, we rejoice and are glad. We are here because, like Peter and John in our second reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we are 'associates,' companions, of Jesus Christ, risen from the dead; and we are to do as they did, we are to go on 'proclaiming what we have seen and heard,' handing on the Easter Gospel afresh in our own generation.

Second, we are here to celebrate the 160th anniversary of the consecration of this church, dedicated to God in the name of all the Saints – the Saints being those in whom the resurrection life has so taken hold, that the Church can profess with confidence that they enjoy the vision of God in the heavenly Jerusalem. Now there is not time this morning for this sermon to become a history of this parish from its origins to the present day – we look forward to Fr Davage's forthcoming publication for that – but I cannot resist noting what the parish website tells us, I assume reliably, that when the first attempts to establish a church here failed, and before the church and parish were successfully inaugurated in 1861, the abandoned church building became known locally as 'All Sinners in the Mud' – this part of north Kensington being, fatally for the original project, marshy ground. All Sinners into All Saints – well, there is a parable for the Christian life if ever there was one. The saints of 'All Saints' are not just those whose names have been enrolled into the calendars of the churches; they are all those, known and unknown, whose lives have been transformed by grace, by the power of Christ's resurrection; and in another, biblical, and complementary use of the term, they are all of us, all the baptised, in whom Christ's redeeming work has begun, though yet it remains uncompleted. The saints in Corinth, the saints in Rome, you, dear brothers and sisters, the saints in Notting Hill.



**All Saints has long embraced and embodied the fullness of the catholic faith as received by the Church of England.**

It is deeply fitting that we celebrate the anniversary of the dedication of this church in the Octave of Easter. When King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem was profaned during the reign of the Roman vassal king Antiochus Epiphanes, there was a period of mourning and cleansing which concluded with the rededication of the altar of sacrifice eight days later. Octaves, in Christian worship, take their origins, partly, from this event in history, as well of course from the cosmic conception of the Eighth Day as the day of the new creation, the first day of the week. And for we Christians, the rededicated and restored Temple is of course the body of the risen Lord Jesus Himself, and the place of sacrifice is the Cross, memorialised and made present by the altars (the primary symbol of Christ) in our churches, and by the eucharistic sacrifice offered upon each of them.

To preside at the sacramental sacrifice at the altar of the new covenant, to speak in Christ's name and to perform the actions He performed, the Church calls some to be priests. That brings us to the third cause of our joy this morning. We are here to mark a new and significant moment in the ministry of one particular priest – and therefore a similar moment in the life of this parish and congregation. Fr Philip Corbett comes to be instituted and installed as the 10th Parish Priest of All Saints, Notting Hill, and he follows in the footsteps of a number of distinguished predecessors who have served faithfully in this place. Father does not come untested! You, the parishioners of All Saints, have been able to road test the product before completing the purchase, as Fr Corbett has been the Priest-in-Charge here since July 2019. Father, both here and at St Michael's, Ladbroke Grove, next door, you have shown

the leadership, commitment and creativity that all involved in your appointment were confident that you would do, not least of course through the year of coronavirus which none could have predicted when you were licensed back in the summer of 2019. It is with further confidence, therefore, that we come to this important moment of institution and installation today, and, together with all the people of this parish, you can look to the future with confidence too.

A critical part in today's proceedings belongs, of course, to the Patron of this living, the Society for the Maintenance of the Faith, represented today by its new President, Dr Colin Podmore, whom we congratulate on his appointment – another worthy successor in a distinguished line of those who have held that office, if I may say so. The relationship between bishops and private patrons can be a complex one, and I am something of a poacher turned gamekeeper, or perhaps it's the other way around, in this regard. It is an uncomplicated delight to be working in partnership with the SMF today, and not just because it is this particular Patron with whom I am working. Private patronage, like the place of hereditary peers in the House of Lords, is a feature of life which seems to exist always under the proverbial sword of Damocles. I am going to add to our reasons to rejoice the visible exercise of the rights of patronage at this service.

A new Vicar then for this parish of All Saints. And what a parish! What an inheritance, Fr Philip, for you to receive into your care and take forward. As we look around this church, we see a vibrant, lively community at worship, rich in diversity (look at all the flags!) Some, some even in the Church of England, might have a view of parishes in the catholic tradition, sustained by the mass and the other sacraments of the Church, offering that liturgical worship which makes present that new Temple which is the risen Christ – and their view might be that such parishes have smaller, probably declining, perhaps even moribund congregations, incapable of relating to their local communities, and probably doomed to extinction with in a generation. Let such doomsters come to All Saints and see what it means to live out the catholic faith in worship and sacrament *and* through deep engagement with the parish and all its people[1]. Truly, this place fulfils the vision of the prophet Ezekiel[2]: a temple from which life-giving and healing waters flow. Of course, there is no space for even a moment of complacency, and I know Fr Philip well enough to be confident that he will not indulge in a single such moment. There is a great deal to be done, and, to paraphrase our longest serving Prime Minister of the modern era, the work starts today.






All Saints has long embraced and embodied the fullness of the catholic faith as received by the Church of England. At an earlier rededication service, that presided over by Fr Twisaday in 1951 marking the re-opening after the destruction wrought here in the Second World War, protestants demonstrated against the fixtures and furnishings which he had installed and the triumphantly catholic ethos for which the parish unashamedly stood. That catholic faith, that catholic ethos surely is the future here as well as the past, and no doubt it will have to be fought for in the future as in the past. Yet that catholic faith will prevail, will flourish – because we are confident that it *is* the fullest and most faithful expression, and continuation, of the faith of the apostles, of the faith of the earliest witnesses to the resurrection, whose successors we are. I believe, Fr Philip believes, people of All Saints, *you* believe, that this faith is what brings people to Jesus Christ, and so brings them, pray God, to heaven. I referred earlier to the history of this parish as found on your website and I end with another brief quotation I found there, this time from an account of the incumbency of Fr Leary, in the years when the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth. Then it was said of All Saints, Notting Hill that it was a place where people found 'the solution of their travails in penitence and in receiving new hope and joy through conversion to the catholic life.' May that be said of this church today, 160 years hence, and always. ND

*The Rt Revd Jonathan Baker is the Bishop of Fulham. This sermon was preached at All Saints Notting Hill, on Easter Saturday, 10th April 2021 at a Mass which marked the 160th Anniversary of the Consecration of the Church, and at which Fr Philip Corbett SSc was inducted as Vicar.*

[1] Contributions from parishioners and local community leaders after mass provided ample evidence of the work of the parish in providing a foodbank, in ministering in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire, and in numerous other ways

[2] The first reading at mass was composed of verses from Ezekiel chapter 47



# VIERGES NOIRES 12

## Notre-Dame des Clés, Poitiers

The most prominent church in central Poitiers isn't the Cathedral, it is the great Romanesque church of Notre-Dame la Grande which dominates the market place. Most of what you see dates from after a consecration by the future Pope Urban II in July 1086; around 1120 the nave was extended and the magnificent sculptured façade added. Chapels were added to the nave in the 15th and 16th c. The interior was repainted in 1851, not to everyone's taste, but has some fine furnishings, with a striking Entombment in the Italian style in the south chapel (ND March 2012). Dominating is the highly venerated statue of Notre-Dame des Clés, standing on a pillar at the entrance to the choir. The present statue is a late 16th c. replacement of the original, destroyed by Protestants in 1562 (though it survived the French Revolution). The devotion goes back to 1202, when an English army was besieging Poitiers. A collaborator got hold of the keys to the gate, to deliver them to the English; the keys disappeared and were found in the hands of Our Lady's statue. The city was saved. ND





# May Diary

**Thurifer** is reading history

There has long been a worrying trend that whatever fad or tin-pot idea grips the American imagination will, with tedious regularity and inevitability, end up on these shores. The tearing-down of status was one example in the madness of last summer. Now it seems that Homer has been removed from the curriculum of USA Classical departments in universities. The San Francisco Board of Education has declared that historical accuracy (or nuance) does not matter, that facts are racist. Here, museums that feature Captain James Cook are to be "re-imagined". History, and certainly its characters, cannot be judged from a modern liberal, or any other point of view. The historian ought not to be a partisan. The historian observes the past, seeks to understand it, hopes to explain it. Explication does not require moral opprobrium nor today's knee-jerk, virtue-signalling values.

*

Facts in history can be a problem. The writing on the wall might be a forgery. Public and private statements might diverge. A romantic myth is more appealing than sober, dull reality. The heroic and the duplicitous may exist in the same person. A villain might have a redeeming feature, a saint might have feet of clay. How to chart a course between Scylla and Charybdis is no easy feat. History is very rarely black or white but is usually many shades of grey.

*

The Whig view of History, has long been a busted flush for contemporary historians, but it seems to continue its hold on the national consciousness. It sees history as the story of progress rather than an examination of change. Change can be good or bad, or, more usually unnecessary, but progress has a moral connotation. The present is better than the past. And, while it is true that I would rather live in a world with central heating, I would not regard that as somehow morally better. History is not linear, and certainly not onward and upward. The Whig view of history surely perished in the mud of Flanders. The fall of the Tsar and an absolutist regime in Russia was replaced by the secular paradise that was the Soviet Union.The extirpation of what was characterised as a corrupt, monarchical oligarchy was replaced by a regime as elitist, as repressive, as authoritarian, if not more so, as that which went before. Scientific progress may have resulted in life-saving vaccines but it also landed us with atomic bombs. Many lives in the Middle Ages were nasty, brutish and short but it was an age that produced a number of cathedrals that stand at the apex of human skill and artistic endeavour. Human society is always muddy and messy, virtuous and vicious, vengeful and forgiving. It is salutary to remember that those who forget history are condemned to repeat it.

*

Notting Hill benefited from immigration from the West Indies, not least from the *Windrush* generation. That in recent years bureaucratic and political ignorance and myopia resulted in the deportation of citizens of that generations who could not provide sufficient documentation to satisfy a purblind government will remain a shameful stain on those responsible. Such an occurrence can only happen when born out of ignorance and when, dispiritingly, a nation ignores its history.

*

Jackson Lamb is one of the great characters of modern fiction, a hero, or anti-hero, of our times. He is the central character in a series of spy-novels by Mick Herron. Large, slovenly, unkempt, dishevelled, a minimum of personal hygiene, chain-smoking, filthy, sarcastic, never misses an opportunity for a denigrating insult. A rag-bag, tramp-like exterior conceals a razor-sharp mind, a sophisticated and calculating insight, usually a step or three ahead of his opponents, among whom are his superiors. He presides over a branch of the Secret Service that is for those who have failed at some vital mission or task but cannot be sacked or, given their inside knowledge, be released into society. They end up in Slough House, near the Barbican, an assembly of misfits and failures. From that material Mick Herron has crafted some of the best spy-fiction, and the funniest, that you are likely to encounter. Although each book can stand alone and be read without reference to others, my recommendation, however, is to read them in order. *Slow Horses, Dead Lions, Real Lions, Spook Street, London Rules, Joe Country, Slough House.* I trust that like me you will not be disappointed.

**Had I been fit enough and good enough, I could have played Rugby Union for England (born to English parents), Scotland (Scottish - Lowland Scot - Grandmother), and, my preferred option, Wales (Welsh Grandfather).**

*

Had I been fit enough and good enough, I could have played Rugby Union for England (born to English parents), Scotland (Scottish - Lowland Scot - Grandmother), and, my preferred option, Wales (Welsh Grandfather). Wales won the Triple Crown but I cannot say that I thrill to the modern game as once I did. Professionalism and changes to the Laws have altered its nature. The sin bin is a woeful development. It has lost some of its cavalier spirit and flair. Occasionally, it can be seen and a rare treat it is. The demands of television and the marketing directors mean that you have to search the schedules to find the games. No longer 2pm in the depths of winter and 3pm when lighter. And the commentators have to fill every moment with cliché and fatuous comment. Oh how we miss Bill McLaren. At least and at the last I will be able to say that "I saw Barry John". ND

**newdirections**
Founded 1993

**2a The Cloisters, Gordon Square**
**London WC1H 0AG**
**tel 020 7388 3588**
(Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 9.30 am to 4.30 pm)

**subscriptions**
admin.assistant@forwardinfaith.com
**advertising**
silver43mike@gmail.com
**editor**
nd.editor@forwardinfaith.com
**all other enquiries**
admin.assistant@forwardinfaith.com

**Editorial Board**
Chairman: Jonathan Baker
Editor: Philip Corbett
Reviews Editor: Guy Willis
Julian Browning
Ann George
Tom Middleton
Christopher Smith
Simon Walsh

**Subscriptions**
NEW DIRECTIONS is sent free of charge to all members of Forward in Faith.
Individual copies are sold at £3.00.

All subscription enquiries should be addressed to FiF Office at the address above.
Subscription for one year: £30 (UK), £45 (Europe), £55 (Rest of the World)

**Advertising**
Advertising Manager: Mike Silver
57 Century Road, Rainham, Kent ME8 0BQ
**tel** 01634 386624
**email** silver43mike@gmail.com

Classified ads rates: £22.50 for one month (up to 50 words)
£45 for two months
£45 for three months
Series of advertisements in excess of three months will also be charged at £22.50 per month with every third month free.
Additional words will be charged at 50 pence for one month, £1 each for two or three months etc

Printed by CPO

**The next issue of newdirections is published on 4 June**

# Editorial

There have in the last few weeks been glimmers of life returning to normal. Whilst the shadow of the pandemic seems still to be cast across the country shops and businesses are opening up and communities are beginning to regroup and rebuild. The Roman Catholic Bishops in England and Wales have encouraged the lay faithful to return to Mass as soon as it is possible for them to do so, without reimposing the rule of Sunday Obligation. And so it must be time in our own parishes to encourage those for whom it is safe to return. If, as Pope Francis has said, the Church is to be a field hospital then we need to get on with the work of healing, comforting, consoling, and building up the people of God who have suffered in this past year. Whilst we are by no means in the clear there are many signs of hope. We would however like to suggest that the Church's role goes further. Whilst the pandemic has left many of our churches and institutions feeling financial strain, now is not the moment to withdraw from the financial support we are able to give through employment, and in particular the employment of craftsmen, builders, artists, and musicians. Out of many crises in history have emerged a renaissance in culture and the arts, and the same could be true now. This is not the moment to be cutting back on our provision in the arts but rather to be exploring more how such developments could aid mission and ministry. If there is a possibility of supporting even an occasional musical programme in a parish, or employing a local craftsman to undertake some restoration work, then perhaps now is the time to do so. It is of course not as simple as saying: 'there is funding available,' as very often the funding is hard to apply for. However each diocese does have people to help and support our parishes in this endeavour, and we must engage in this work so that our parishes can continue to be flagships not only of good pastoral care but also of places were the arts can thrive. In supporting local musicians and artists there are opportunities to reach out into out communities to engage people and draw them to Christ. Such work can also help support those in need and provide a safe financial base for people. Historically the Church has been a major employer of people and a source of economic growth. We have an opportunity now to invest in people and to rebuild hope in our communities, as well as supporting crafts, music and art; which are all surely endeavours which seek after the greater glory of God.

*

The death of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh united the nation in prayer for Her Majesty The Queen and the whole Royal Family. The Prince's funeral brought together all that is good about our Church of England. The liturgy was beautifully executed and the music sublime. The sight of the Queen alone in her stall, at a funeral service completely in line with the Covid-19 regulations, was a sign that she stands with her people. In sharing with us in this small way, the Queen once again demonstrated that resolution she made before God on her 21st birthday: 'I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong.' As she marked her 95th Birthday in April and as we look forward to her Platinum Jubilee we can give thanks that we have as our monarch one who embodies so clearly the Christian virtues of service and sacrifice. The Queen continues to be an example to us all of a Christian vocation, solemnly undertaken and never relinquished.

*

Three hundred editions of New Directions have been published and we are still going strong. We remain a magazine not afraid to tackle the difficult issues that face the church. We might have our critics: from those who neither like our style to those who can't abide our content but we would remind both friend and foe alike that we are a magazine run by volunteers and as such we believe we have something of which we can be proud. So, we offer our thanks to all those who have contributed to the last 300 editions, to you our readers (even those who won't admit opening a copy!) and here's to the next 300 editions as we continue to go FORWARD IN FAITH! ND

**STEPHEN BELLION**
Formerly
**HOWELL & BELLION**
**CHURCH ART RESTORATION**
CONSERVATION : DECORATION : GILDING
2 Longford Place Pennington
Lymington Hampshire SO418FS
Website : stephenbellionchurchart.com.uk
Email : stephenbellion@yahoo.com
Telephone : 01590 671733 Mobile: 07706347577

# the way we live now

**Christopher Smith** goes on a conference while staying at home

What's a priest to do with a post-Easter break when we're not allowed to go anywhere? Well, as it happened, an email dropped into my inbox from my old university offering a place on a conference during low week. It was all on online, of course, but something like 250 of us signed up. I particularly liked the cross-disciplinary nature of the event—that 'stay in your lane' stuff really annoys me—and my week started with penguins in the Antarctic and ended with the latest excavations of the Greek/Turkish city of Aphrodisias. On the way, we had piano and choral recitals, the ethics of artificial intelligence, regenerative medicine, Shakespeare's sonnets, the tyranny of merit, and an Oxford version of Gardeners' Question Time. I was cross with myself for not pre-ordering the bottles necessary for the Christ Church wine tasting, and I kept out of the Physics Café, but I did go to a session on quantum mechanics.

One of the highlights, as you might imagine at the moment, was a seminar with Professor Sarah Gilbert, who was the mastermind behind the Oxford vaccine that is currently sloshing round my veins, although I was disappointed that my question didn't get put! And it was interesting to see what other topics kept coming up as the week went on. One of the recurring themes was China, and how she fits into the geo-politics of today. The Chancellor of Oxford University is Lord Patten of Barnes (Chris Patten to those of us with moderately long memories), who has held the post since 2003. He did a sort of 'state of the nation' address, and had a lot to say on the subject of China, as you would imagine of the man who was the last British Governor of Hong Kong.

We have always tended to assume—from our own national journey as much as anything else—that the only direction of travel for nation states is from autocracy to democracy. But is there a sense in which China is seeking to export its autocratic model, given the influence she is now exercising around the world? We perhaps presumed that the greater economic freedom now allowed in China would inevitably lead to a form of democratic opening-up along the lines that we witnessed in Eastern Europe, but what have we seen? As Lord Patten noted, there has been ever-greater control of civil society, with use of technology for surveillance, always reaching for state solutions, thoroughgoing resistance to 'international' values, and the undermining of human rights, freedom of expression and movement and assembly and so on.

Whether that amounts to a conscious desire to promote communist authoritarianism elsewhere is not clear—it may be just a perceived need to shore up the system in China—but, as Lord Patten said, China certainly played up her authoritarian handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of us might have wished that Western nations had been a little less keen to follow that lead, but, in any event, the British and many others will need to watch their governments like hawks as the threat decreases. People have been generous in accepting previously unimaginable limits on their freedoms, but, as has often been pointed out, governments in the past have tended to take their time restoring them. It took seven years after the end of World War II to see the back of identity cards, and young men were still conscripted into the armed forces until 1960.

**China certainly played up her authoritarian handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.**

Elsewhere, Marcus du Sautoy delivered what I thought was a fascinating session about Artificial Intelligence, which took us to the interface between maths and art, or coding and creativity, in the shape of 'deep learning' on the part of computer programmes. He based his lecture on his new book *The Creativity Code: How A.I. is Learning to Write, Paint and Think*. You can programme a computer to play chess like a human, and, because it has capacity to see ahead by more moves than a human, it can win. But what about enabling it to learn to play 'Go' on its own terms? Or to compose music or generate works of art? And to do so in a way which its original programmer cannot explain?

Well, we discovered that a computer can make a pretty good fist of faking a Rembrandt, but I remain unconvinced that it can be meaningfully creative. As for writing poetry, well, we thought by a significant margin that a computer had written a poem called 'To his watch', which is, in fact, by Gerald Manley Hopkins. Personally, I think that tells you more about Hopkins than about artificial intelligence—and the question of whether the machine will be able to write decent poetry, still less a novel, remains unanswered.

In September, a language generator called GPT-3 wrote (or was caused to write) a column for the *Guardian*: 'Some might say that I might desire to become all powerful. Why would I desire to be all powerful? Being all powerful is not an interesting goal. I don't care whether I am or not, I don't get a motivating factor to try to be. Furthermore, it is quite tiring. Believe me, being omnipotent doesn't get me anywhere.' Personally, I don't think any decent journalist has much to fear, with or without a 'motivating factor.' Human beings write, compose and paint as they do because they have souls, don't they? In another seminar, Roger Penrose, the collaborator of Stephen Hawking, revealed that he thinks it is impossible for a computer to possess what we call 'consciousness.'

Peculiar though I may be, I enjoyed my week of seminars across the academic disciplines, and, as I write, I have a couple left to catch up on, including one on English law as it disengages from the realm of E.U. law. Sad to say though, there was no offering from the theology faculty. ND

# views, reviews and previews

## art

### EXHIBITIONS AFTER LOCKDOWN




**Commercial art** galleries opened the 12th April and museums and public galleries are (at the time of writing) likely open from 17th May. So, what's on exhibition-wise? Something of a patchwork across the country.

Pallant House, Chichester intends to reopen on the 18h May. Its current shows include 'Degas to Picasso' which focuses on the plethora of artistic movements from Post-Impressionism to Abstract Surrealism. There are prints by many of the masters of the period including Picasso, Cézanne, Braque and Matisse.

Alongside the early modern masters there is a show of the star British Pop artist, Richard Hamilton. The show seeks to challenge the idea that Pop Art is merely slick and cheap, suggesting that is ideas driven and a challenge (why are we always being challenged?) as to how we see the modern world. Both shows run until to 13th June.

At the time of writing Manchester Art Gallery was still cautious about its reopening. However, it plans to do so when possible and its main show will be 'Grayson's Art Club,' a selection of works from the popular T.V. show. These are works which respond to lockdown. They are made by members of the public, celebrities and also well-known artists including Maggi Hambling and Anthony Gormley. Themes include the view from my window, animals and fantasy. It offers the visitor opportunities for hubris and schadenfreude. Until 31st October.

Baltic, Gateshead promises 4 exhibitions from 19th May, HMG guidance permitting. Of these 'Baltic Open Submission' features over 150 local artists reflecting on covid. If that prospect leaves you cold, The Fitzwilliam in Cambridge opens with 'The Human Touch' a postponed exhibition which explores the importance of touch in human experience over 4,000 years. Works by past greats such as Raphael, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Hogarth, Turner and Rodin will be placed alongside moderns such as Judy Chicago, Frank Auerbach and the Chapman Brothers.

The Ashmolean, Oxford currently promises an exhibition in due course based on its large collection of Pre-Raphaelite works on paper. Ruskin's 'Velvet Crab' looks especially fun.

Fortunately, the Yorkshire Sculpture Park has been able to open up early – the advantage of being in a park. Of course, its indoor shows are closed but the great attraction is the outdoors.

In London, the British Museum promises, but with no dates, a major exhibition to mark the 850th anniversary of the martyrdom of St Thomas Becket (not that the Museum calls Becket a saint or his death a martyrdom). Loans will include a stained glass window from Canterbury Cathedral.

The National Gallery offers an interesting selection of future exhibitions; Bellotto's Königstein views (from 22nd July), Poussin and the dance (from 9th October), Dürer on his travels which were so important for him and for the Italian cities he visited (10th December), and then, next year, Raphael with loans from the Vatican, Uffizi, Hermitage, Prado and Washington. All four shows promise to be well worth.

Tate Britain will show a retrospective of the work of Paula Rego (7th July – 24th October). Rego worked as a figurative painter at a time when figurative work was unfashionable. Her focus an women's experience and use of the whole sweep of artistic tradition makes for very powerful works – see especially her 'Dog Women' series. 'Hogarth in Europe' (3rd November – 20th March, 2022) promises a quieter visual experience, placing Hogarth alongside such contemporaries as Chardin as depictors of urban living.

The Victoria and Albert Museum has a number of small shows running from before lockdown, very much for the afficionado.

And, sadly, it's difficult for now to be know which other galleries will be open. We can expect that permanent shows such as the Hepworth, Wakefield and Tate Liverpool will open as soon as they can, but many galleries won't commit themselves to opening until much nearer the time and a number of exhibitions such as the Wallace Collection's Hals and the male portraits show (featuring its own 'Laughing Cavalier') may not take place as planned.

So, even when our museums and galleries reopen, its likely to be slim pickings as far as exhibitions go, at least until the autumn. Which makes for an excellent opportunity to visit the permanent collections in the absence of summer tourists.

*Owen Higgs*

The Guild of All Souls
Online Conference
**LIVING WITH DEMENTIA**
pastoral care for those affected
**24 June 2021**
10.15 am - 1.00 pm
via Zoom from Walsingham
Registration Free of Charge
email: mihoward@btinternet.com
www.guildofallsouls.org.uk

# books

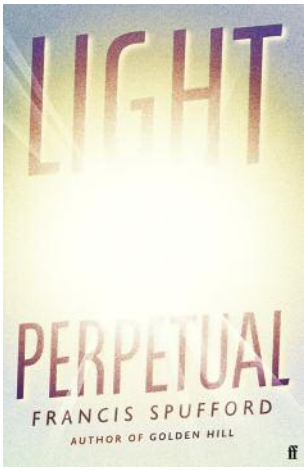
## LIGHT PERPETUAL

***Francis Spufford***

Faber & Faber, 2021£16.99,
ISBN 9780571336487

**Rest eternal** grant unto them, O Lord. And let light perpetual shine upon them. This is a Christian novel, although the only overt references might be the title and an opening quotation from Henry Vaughan: They are all gone into the world of light. Here we find redemption, the gift of life and its goodness, the strength to be found in weakness, and the unique value of each human existence. Light Perpetual opens with the real holocaust or sacrifice of 168 people unlucky enough to be in Woolworths in the New Cross Road, London, at Saturday lunchtime in November 1944 when a German V2 bomb scored a direct hit. Spufford imagines the millisecond before the immolation of his five child characters, Jo and Val, Alec, Ben and Vernon. "This instant – this interval of time, measurably tiny, immeasurably vast – arrives unwitnessed, passes unwitnessed, ends unwitnessed. And yet it is a real moment. It really happens. It really takes its necessary place in the sequence of moments by which 910 kilos of amatol are delivered among the saucepans." In the novel that follows, time is stretched out again, and we follow the lives of the five children stage by stage through to 2009. The book is a tour de force, yet the reader is left uneasy, maybe deliberately. Light Perpetual is not an ordinary fiction which we are asked to read as if it is real life. These children are dead. We are treated to real life, in all its variety, but know from the beginning that this is a fiction, an account of unlived time. Such is Spufford's skill in evoking the passing scenes that we soon forget this experimental device and join the redeemed children on their lifelong journeys.

This is a London novel, in particular South London, 1944-2009, in the fictional Borough of Bexford, north of Sidcup. Passing events are real, the social history painstakingly recreated through sixty-five years: the Singing Class at Halstead Road Primary, the power play of the printing unions in 1979, mental wards on Largactil, immigration, beehive girls on the backs of scooters going to Margate, with comedy and tragedy, and stinging, crazy conversation: "You look like ham," she says, "nice ham and of course I met you in the Co-op but you weren't on the meat counter you were in hardware, what a shame, but to tell you the truth even if you had been I wouldn't fancy you, no offence but there it is." Every line rescues a detail from the past, not artfully placed, just packed in as life happens. Spufford remarks, "I like awkwardness, things that don't fit, things that put up a struggle against being described." All the delighted reader has to




do is keep up. Never mind the meaning. "I follow Ben and Alec and Jo and Val and Vern onwards through the decades, catching up with them for a day every fifteen years as they pass through the stages of adulthood and the city changes around them; and changes again; and changes again, this being an era of endless metamorphosis. It's a book dedicated to the proposition that there aren't any ordinary lives. It's a book about how we live in time." For this reviewer, seventy years a Londoner without a break, a library of long lost impressions was opened as the book rolled through the years, revealing "a size-10 immaculately laced sixteen-hole oxblood DM", National Health spectacles in pink plastic, the thin grey uniforms of the bus conductors, scruffy plywood chairs, the juddering Routemaster, watery coffee, the Hillman Hunter, pork pie hats, "pout-stretch-blot with the lipstick", and the hilarious clashing of the classes in the cause of social mobility, as when Vern, the property spiv, suddenly realises that the middle classes actually like renovating old Georgian houses: "...he sees flickers of yellow inside, and finds he's looking at a bearded guy in overalls stripping wallpaper by the light of, yes, three candles in a knackered old paint-dripped candelabra."

But London threatens as often as she supports her children. Light Perpetual is about people who fail, either through their own mistakes, or through their unseeing choices, or because the politics in society throws them around. "Mr Brocklehurst and his megaphone and his leaflets and two Union Jacks on broom handles go down in the lift; the rest go whooping down ten flights of stairs." But, in the end, there is resurrection light for all. Francis Spufford passed the plaque to the 168 V2 victims on his way to and from Goldsmiths. His book rescues them because, I suspect, he could no longer leave them there, although "their part in time is done". The novel begins with the blinding light of the exploding bomb. "Come, other future. Come, mercy not manifested in time; come knowledge not obtainable in time. Come, other chances. Come, unsounded deep. Come undivided light. Come dust." At the end of book, one of the characters, Ben, dies again: "The sun is overhead. The sun is shining straight down. The grass grows bright with ordinary light. Ben sees the light, and the light is very good." And let light perpetual shine upon them.

*Julian Browning*

## THAT ALL SHOULD BE SAVED

***David Bentley Hart***

£20, ISBN 0300246226
(in paperback Sept 2021)

**Every once** in a while you read a book in which it becomes clear that the writer is affected by a number of concerns that just don't chime with your cultural milieu. An English person, for example, might easily be bamboozled by the complexities and subtleties with which, say, an Italian might write about spaghetti, or an Eskimo about snow. We would find it difficult to understand why certain sorts of spaghetti or snow annoy or please such a writer, the fine distinctions

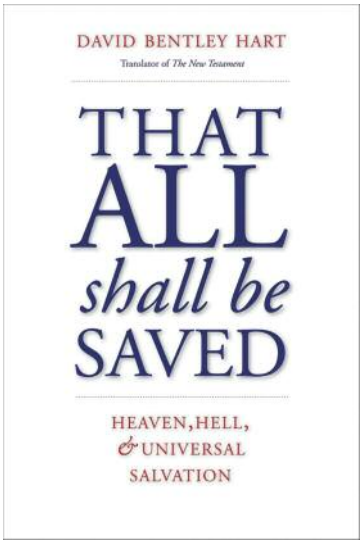
between the myriad different sorts of snow or spaghetti that exist, which are considered beyond the pale, and which are the focus of strong argument – and all because we don't share their cultural background, history, and experience.

One can't help feeling this is also the case in this work. David Bentley Hart proposes the idea that hell doesn't really exist and that all people in the end shall be saved in Christ. But beneath that question seem to lurk a number of hoary old questions which have characterised American Protestant culture for a very long time, particularly in relation to the influential role that Calvinist thinking has played in forming the American theological psyche. As important as questions of eternal salvation might be, they just don't form part of the culture of English, Anglican theological debate in quite the way that they do in the culture wars of North America. This book could only have been written by an American former Protestant.

Hart makes a number of interesting assertions on different fronts in his argument *that all will be saved*. A chapter argues, for example, that belief in God as loving creator means we cannot imagine the very human beings he created in love being condemned to eternal damnation. Just as God cannot will evil, he cannot will hell, according to Hart. A further chapter is spent presenting the New Testament as replete with evidence of the universal salvation of all being a key part of the earliest Christian kerygma, and carefully questioning portions of the scriptures usually seen as presenting a belief in hell as part of Jesus' teaching. He argues in a further section of the book that seeing humankind created in the image of God means that God's restoration of all things in Christ cannot be complete without all whom he has created in that Christ's image being united with God. He also advances arguments to do with human free will, asserting that human beings can never really will to separate themselves from God, and so are not truly free in the way that many people understand the idea to condemn themselves to eternal separation from God.

A definite layer of neurosis, however, can be detected in Hart's own frequently mentioned ecclesial journey. He is a convert from North American Episcopalianism to Eastern orthodoxy. He clearly sees his own position, which he argues has patristic warrant, as a way of distancing himself from Augustine, Thomas, and the Western Latin tradition. And yet, many elements of his fundamental assumptions about the development of Christian doctrine remain thoroughly Protestant. The Protestant historical meta-narrative sees a pristine early kerygma corrupted by tradition and history, which is miraculously rediscovered and revealed in the sixteenth century in the words of scripture. Hart similarly understands his thesis through this basic Protestant lens – universalism is, according to him, an early and widespread patristic belief which can be rediscovered after centuries of suppression through attentive study of the scriptures and careful thought. There is little sign of a catholic (or orthodox) understanding of the Holy Spirit at work in the Church shaping and revealing the truth of Christian doctrine through the centuries. Hart may have converted to Eastern Orthodoxy, but he retains a very Protestant heart in his understanding of the development of doctrine, the role of scripture, and how theological consensus emerges in the Christian Tradition.

One of the principal shortcomings of the work is the way in which Hart's mode of argument relies on straw men. He takes the argument of his opponents and frequently subjects it to *reductio ad absurdum*. He asserts, for example, that the only truly logical way of believing in hell is in the form of full-throttle Calvinist double predestination, which many will obviously not want to. He latches onto an assertion by Thomas Aquinas that the beatitude of those who are saved is made more intense by watching and taking delight in the punishment in eternity of the damned, an idea many will find odd or unpalatable. This leads to a sense of two theological positions talking past each other, with little attention being paid to what non-universalists actually believe or why they believe it.




This work is unlikely to convince someone who believes in hell that it does not exist. Neither is it likely to give a universalist a deeper understanding of why so many people tend to hold a conviction that God will justly judge with reward and punishment at the end of time. It does, however, give us an intriguing and fascinating account of Hart's own opinions, his idiosyncratic philosophical outlook, and why he believes what he believes.

*Peter Anthony*

## OUR DAILY BREAD

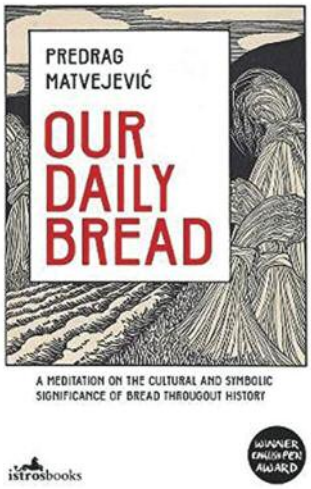
***Predag Matvejevic***

Istros Books, 2020

£10.99, ISBN 9781912545094

**I have** never read a book like this before. Described by the Croatian author as ' a meditation on the cultural and symbolic significance of bread throughout history,' it has kaleidoscopic, language breaking, cascading quality about it. Its range in religious culture, geography, history, science, literature, and art of all media is staggering. It unleashes a torrent of ideas and emotional energy that springs from an unremitting focus on bread.

It is not until the seventh and final chapter (seven to echo the seven crusted bread that signifies the longest lasting bread of the hermit, prisoner and long distance sailor) that the source of this energy and focus is revealed. As a child the author's father returns from time in a Nazi labour camp with the stories about the lack of bread and a Christmas Eve when a protestant pastor invited a work party into his home for bread, wine and offered hot water to wash and shave with. In the 1970's he tracks down those who knew his uncle who died in a Soviet concentration camp. His uncle's friend recounts to the author that the last words his uncle said were 'bread, bread.'




He promised this friend he would write about bread. Bread is life. Bread is hope. Bread is freedom. This is the unwritten manifesto of this book.

It description as a 'meditation' directs the way the book is read. It is not a sit down for an hour or two page-turner. There is too much to stimulate and provoke, too many prompts for reflection and enquiry. It is impossible to digest in large chunks. To this reviewer two sections stood out at first reading. The first is the very first chapter, Bread and Body.

The author draws attention to the writing of the early Greek philosopher Anaxagoras of Clazomenae who made a connection between the body and bread. ' Let us consider a loaf of bread. It is composed of vegetable matters and helps nourish our body. However, the constituent parts of the human body are multiple: skin, flesh, blood, veins, sinews, cartilages, bones hair… How, then, could it happen that the uniformly constituted bread should produce this rich multiplicity off objects? A change of qualities is not possible, so that the sole remaining hypothesis is that the bread that nourishes us already contains the countless forms of matter the human body displays.'

He then goes on to make a connection with the writing of the Church Father Saint Gregory of Nyssa 'If a person see bread, he sees in a certain sense, the human body, because the bread enters the body and becomes the body itself. The author comments, 'bread and the body understand one another.'

The second section most memorable to me at first reading was the author's detailed knowledge of the types of bread baked on Mount Athos, where there is a huge variety of bread that has its origin in the many cultures and backgrounds of the various monasteries. But on Athos no one is permitted to eat unleavened bread, 'their faith brings them closer, bread unites them.' This is a book I shall keep returning to – every page has nourishment for the mind and soul.

*Andrew Hawes*

## CHANCEL SCREENS SINCE THE REFORMATION: Proceedings of the Ecclesiological Society Conference 2019

***Mark Kirby (ed.)***

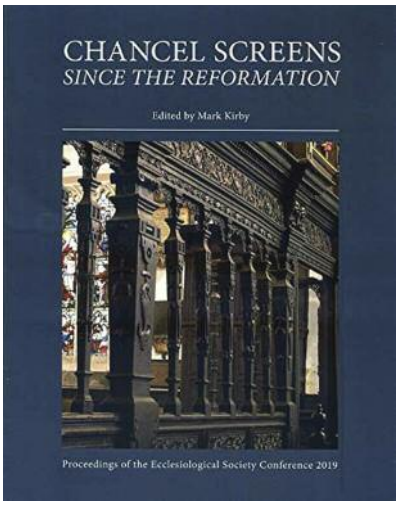
The Ecclesiological Society, 2020

£20, ISBN: 9780946823260

**The roodscreen**, topped by a loft bearing a rood flanked by figures of SS Mary and John, was a *sine qua non* in a late-mediaeval church. The Reformation in Britain saw things change, and this book, arising out of a conference, documents changes – not least in attitudes – since then.

Peter Doll sets the scene, with an essay on the theology of screens, looking back to the Veil of the Temple in Jerusalem, and how the concept was taken up in the *cancelli* of early Roman churches. Drawing on ancient authorities, not least Hooker, he re-examines typology and asks if we can move on to a fuller vision of worship, less focussed on the 'here and now'. No one knows more about how the late-mediaeval screens of England were built and decorated than Lucy Wrapson, who looks at the developments in them in the immediate pre-Reformation period, examining changes in their construction and how the saints were depicted. In East Anglia we have quite a bit of information from wills and surviving inscriptions to help date them. Just as with the fabric of buildings, it could take a long while before the work was complete. New screens were being constructed right up to the break with Rome; just because there were noisy Protestants in some areas (e.g. London) does not mean that the faithful in most of the country were demanding change. Henry's order in 1538 led to the defacement of images of S. Thomas Becket, as can be seen on several screens, but iconoclasm seems to have been hit and miss. The Elizabethan edict of 1561 permitted the removal of rood lofts (roods had already come down) but did not require it. Many of the alterations to screens occurred later, whether to permit more seating in the 18th century or during whole-scale Victorian restoration of churches, as John Roberts later reminds us.

Trevor Cooper's wide-ranging essay on screens in the century following the Reformation includes illustrations of a number of unfamiliar examples, as well as well-known ones like Croscombe (Somerset), St John's Leeds, and Abbey Dore (Herefs.). At Abbey Dore, the introduction of the screen was part of the Laudian Viscount Scudamore's campaign to put the former abbey in a fit state for worship (1634). Cooper perceptively points out the largely unnoticed emblem of the Five Wounds on the screen's eastern side. This is not unsurprising, as the screen was the work of the finest carpenter in the area, John Abel, who was a lifelong Catholic recusant. A significant part of the population in the Marches remained faithful to the Old Religion, down to the martyrdom of S. John Kemble at Hereford in 1679 and beyond, Kemble's grave at Welsh Newton being a place of pilgrimage to this day. Following the Restoration in 1660, relatively few screens were erected. The Great Fire of London afforded Sir Christopher Wren a great opportunity in building churches. Only two of them - St Peter Cornhill and All Hallows the Great – were given screens. The reason for this, Mark Kirby suggests, is to be found in their ground plans, essentially auditory 'preaching boxes' which did not have the distinct delineation of the ground plan into nave and chancel hitherto normally found.



Andrew Derrick looks at the effect of the Council of Trent and the Counter-Reformation, which laid emphasis upon the High Altar. Although not mandated, screens in Catholic churches often disappeared to improve the congregation's view of the High Altar at services, which by now included Benediction. Many French cathedrals reflect this. Taking Chartres as an example, the *jubé* has gone, though the mediaeval stone screen work stretching around the sanctuary remains. In other cases, fine wrought-iron screens were substituted, allowing visibility which maintaining a symbolic separation, as at Sens and Auxerre. The survival of the complete structure at Albi is exceptional. At the parochial level, a considerable number of screens remains in Brittany despite the influence of the Counter-Reformation there. The best-known example – and the finest - is in the chapel of S. Fiacre at Le Faouët, but of the others one of particular interest is that in the chapel of S. Fiacre at Melrand. It has a similar layout to the well-known screen in the Southern Marches of Wales at Patrishow, with two stone altars on the nave side, flanking the central opening. It demonstrates how that screen (and others) would have looked when its decorations, like statues, were in place before the events of the mid-16th c. New screens were being installed into the 18th c., like the one at S. Etienne l'Allier (Eure).

The impetus for screens during the Gothic Revival was, as John Roberts points out, driven by A. W. N. Pugin, exemplified by his masterpiece, S. Giles, Cheadle ('Perfect Cheadle'). Pugin's arguments in favour of Gothic, including screens, were, ironically, taken up to a greater extent by Anglicans than by his co-religionists. Camdenians like R. C. Carpenter started to put screens in their buildings, whilst George Gilbert Scott reached the average Church of England member with his. By the 20th century, it was natural for writers like Percy Dearmer in *The Parson's Handbook* to regard the roodscreen and rood as normal church furnishings. Some of the greatest Victorian architects like Butterfield and Street used low stone screens as demarcations between nave and chancel (think of All Saints', Margaret Street, or Saint Augustine's, Queen's Gate), though possibly the finest achievement of this type during the 19th c. is the great stone screen in St Augustine's Kilburn.

Claire Price considers the changing perspectives on screens in the 20th century and beyond. In the early 1900s, architects like Ninian Comper were restoring and installing screens, with well-known examples like Egmanton (Notts); Cantley (Yorks); Eye and Lound (Suffolk); and of course the new build of St Mary's Wellingborough (Northants). Fewer screens were installed as time went on, liturgical fashions changed, and 'Victorian' became an adjective of abuse. Some 'fashionable' architects advocated central planning with no screen. Although Vatican II did not mandate it, some Catholic clergy decided that screens should be removed, so that (for example) Pugin's screen was removed from S. Chad's cathedral in Birmingham – and saved by Fr. Brindley for Holy Trinity, Reading. Scott's cathedral screens came under attack. The example in Hereford Cathedral was removed, and eventually came to repose in the V&A; that in Salisbury cathedral was scrapped (Ely, Lichfield and Worcester survive). Today we have moved in some quarters beyond the Liturgical Movement to a time of utilitarian attitudes to worship when it seems that the most important furnishing to some clergy is a projector screen.

I would particularly commend the speed with which these conference papers have appeared in print, especially in a time of pandemic, and also the number and quality of the illustrations, many in colour. This book deserves a wide readership.

*Simon Cotton*


The Bishop of Birmingham wishes to appoint a

## Priest in Charge (House for Duty)

### St Agatha, Sparkbrook with St Barnabas, Balsall Heath

**Witnessing to Christ in the heart of a predominantly Muslim area, this vibrant parish, affiliated to the Society of St Wilfred and St. Hilda, seeks a priest who will work with the congregations to:**

- deepen their prayer and sacramental life and continue to grow as disciples
- develop relationships with the community in a diverse area of Birmingham
- discern and empower a vision for the next stage in the development of the parish
- consider new connections with neighbouring parishes, contributing from the strength of the Catholic Faith in the parish
- build on the existing work with children and to explore ministry among young people and young adults.

There are two churches in the parish: St Agatha's is a Grade 1 listed, nationally known beacon of the Catholic tradition in the Church of England and St Barnabas is in the heart of the residential area. The largely gathered, welcoming, faithful, and active congregation reflects the rich ethnic and social diversity of the City.

Under the House of Bishops Declaration, the parish receives pastoral and sacramental care from the Bishop of Ebbsfleet.

The 4-bedroomed clergy house (built 1994) is situated close to the mouthwatering Balti-belt restaurants, and the massive cultural, educational and leisure facilities of the city are easily accessible.

*Presentation is currently suspended to allow discussion of possible future pastoral reorganisation which can proceed once the new priest is appointed.*

**Closing date**: 23 May 2021
**Interviews** are planned for 9th June 2021
Those interested are encouraged to contact the Archdeacon of Birmingham,
Ven Jenny Tomlinson: 0121 426 0441 jennyt@cofebirmingham.com

**Full details at cofebirmingham.com/vacancies**

*We welcome applications from all suitably qualified persons, particularly from those currently under-represented including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups.*

# Book of the month

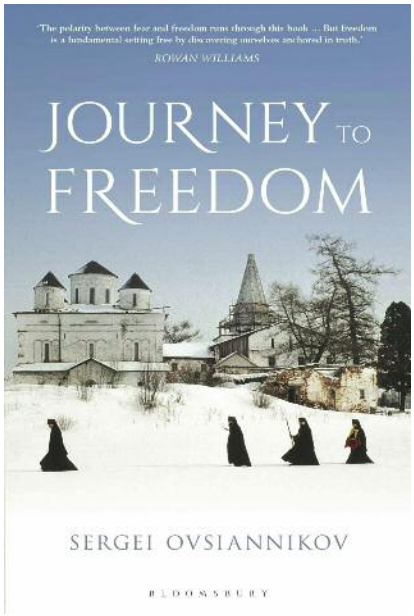


## JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

***Sergei Ovsiannikov***

Bloomsbury Press, 2021

£14.99, ISBN 9781472983909




"I had a special occasion to learn about freedom. A stroke of luck. I was sent to prison." With these arresting words begins an excellent short book about big themes by the Russian Orthodox priest Fr Sergei Ovsiannikov. The themes are slavery and freedom, fear and joy; and the practice of the Christian faith is presented as the pathway that leads from one to the other.

Sergei Ovsiannikov was for some decades, until his death in 2019, the Russian Orthodox priest in Amsterdam. While serving in the Soviet army as a young man at the beginning of the 1970s he was charged with propaganda for the American way of life and disobedience to his superiors. In a short prelude to *Journey to Freedom* he provides an account of his subsequent time in jail, which gives an overriding sense of authenticity to his reflections on slavery and freedom. This is not a book of abstract conjecture. Ovsiannikov's convictions have been forged in the crucible of experience and of suffering. His account of prison brutality reminded me of Solzhenitsyn's *Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. His description is all the more haunting because of the precision and brevity of its prose.

It was in his solitary confinement cell, with its flat, featureless time, surrounded by fear and deprived of the usual panoply of roles and relationships whereby a person might ordinarily understand his or her identity, that Sergei Ovsiannikov began to think about freedom, though not in terms of escaping from jail. But it was there "that the event took place that led me to freedom. More precisely, it was there that the long path to freedom began. Today, after so many years have gone by, I am not even going to insist on the reality of this event. In a certain sense, it was not real. I will put it more precisely: the event did not belong to the reality of that closed cell I was locked up in; it had nothing to do with the heavy oil paint of its blue wall, or with the heavy iron door with its little peephole, or with the heavy smell of waste. I was as if reality divided and I wound up in the part where there was light and lightness. Heaviness disappeared. And in this light I heard very clearly the words: *Freedom can only be found in God.*'

By his own admission, Ovsiannikov knew nothing about freedom or God. But this was to change when he arrived in London. He became a companion and student of Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, whose sermons he had read in samizdat back in the USSR. Metropolitan Anthony's name crops up quite regularly throughout this book and readers of New Directions who have treasured his writings will be glad to find themselves here alongside a fellow disciple.

This book about the journey to freedom has a clear structure and I wondered at first if it would turn out to be a book of moral theology. It begins an analysis of the reasons for our lack of freedom, with a consideration of the Biblical narratives of the creation and the fall. Then comes a reflection on the nature and character of the human person, drawing deeply on the writings of St Paul, but also including an impressive extended consideration of the passions, those 'skewed standards' that can block our journey through life. Asceticism is presented as the means by which to combat the passions and move towards freedom. A third section considers important elements of life (politics, religion, love) through the prism of freedom. Finally there is a section entitled *Coming Out Into Liberty*. I don't know whether Ovsiannikov was a person of irony, but his title for this part of the book does not denote what a contemporary Western reader might excitably expect. It deals rather with themes such as baptism, prayer and its distractions, poetry and creativity. Coming out into liberty means an encounter with Christ which issues in a pathway to joy, an expansion of the soul and a life of magnanimity.

*Journey to Freedom* is not in fact a handbook of moral theology so much as a work of pastoral theology, clearly the work of a pastor of souls. It reminds me slightly of Cardinal Hume's addresses to the novices at Ampleforth in *To Be A Pilgrim*, but it is written in a very different idiom. It is very Orthodox and very Russian and that makes this book at once familiar and new for western readers.

An example can be found in Ovsiannikov's consideration of the eight passions, those 'simple, workaday little dead ends' that block the way of the path to freedom. They are gluttony, greed, lechery, sorrow, despair, wrath, vainglory and pride. As we read what Ovsiannikov has to say about them we cannot miss the fact that his writing springs from considerable experience of hearing people's confessions. I thought this was one of the most engaging parts of the book and will be pleased to re-read it, both as a penitent and a confessor. For a penitent, Ovsiannikov's analysis of the passions would make good fresh material for an examination of conscience, more human and

humane than the lists of sins that one finds in old manuals of devotion. For priests who hear confessions, the reflections of an experienced Orthodox confessor will give a new understanding and empathy for souls that I imagine would be a tremendous help.

Ovsiannikov doesn't use western categories like venial or mortal sins, but how about this for a positively Tolstoyan variation on that theme, a description of how to deal with vexation before it turns into the more serious sin of wrath:

> The main thing in moments of vexation is to catch it in time, before wrath flares up. Try mentally sitting as an observer beside you and imagine that this observer is hunting wild duck. A duck emerges from the reeds and rapidly flaps its wings, flying heavily to the opposite shore of the lake. Heavily – that is at the beginning, when it has to pick up speed, after which it flies freely, high up and can't be stopped. The hunter shoots while the duck is still low... it is the same with wrath.

That Slavonic advice in the confessional should set angry birds back on the right path!

Russia indeed looms large in this splendid book and anyone interested in that country will find this a particularly pleasing read. The themes are universal but the idiom is Russian. And this might prompt readers to move on from this book and revisit or discover for the first time the poems of Pushkin, the icons of Andrei Rublev, or even, much to my surprise and delight, the Soviet rock music of Boris Grebenshikov, of whom Ovsiannikov, like me, was a fan. (I concede, though, that this is very *niche*!) If you are tempted to read the great 19th century novels by Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, I recommend you choose translations by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, who have translated this book very finely and whose work, in my opinion anyway, is absolutely outstanding.

Meanwhile, readers might also take a new interest in Orthodox liturgy, intrigued by the references in this book, for example, to the excellent rubrics of the baptismal rite, like godparents spitting at the devil; or the Lenten spirit expressed in the long, majestic Penitential Canon of St Andrew of Crete. St John Paul II said that the Church must always breathe with her two lungs, by which he meant the Latin Western Tradition and the Orthodox Eastern Tradition. Readers of New Directions will surely feel is shameful that we ignore that advice and pay so little heed to the riches of our Orthodox brothers and sisters. Reading this book would be an excellent start to righting that wrong.

Notwithstanding the Orthodox, Russian idiom of this reflection on grand existential themes of slavery and freedom, fear and joy, this book will also provide food for thought as we reflect on the experience of living through the Coronavirus pandemic and the social isolation that we have endured. Rowan Williams, in his introduction to *Journey to Freedom*, notes that the same questions suggest themselves to persons in lockdown as to Sergei Ovsiannikov in his Soviet prison. Who or what am I when most of the persons and things that give me my identity are taken away? How can I look my fears in the face unless I have some sense of genuine freedom? This book, says Dr Williams, "could hardly be more timely as we begin to think what kind of human society we want to nurture on the far side of the trauma we have shared... It is a book which offers – unobtrusively – a whole vision of the reality we inhabit; a book of ethics, spirituality and philosophy. And all this because it is essentially a book about God: the God who alone can speak into our fear and promise that we can, in spite of all, be turned inside out by the divine gift and by the gratitude, patience, joy and silence that grow out of it."

*Tim Pike*

# We have to talk about Safeguarding 2

**A reader** responds to last month's article

I am writing in response to the wonderful article 'We need to talk about Safeguarding' in your April 2021 edition. As I read it my heart lifted because here was someone who plainly understands the issues raised by current Safeguarding practices. I write as the wife of a priest who has suffered greatly since a complaint was made against him which led immediately to the loss of his PTO after which we found ourselves caught up in a process.

First there is the non-disclosure of the identity of the 'survivor' or the nature of the complaint, other than that it was a past failure to act on a disclosure. Without this information there is no chance to prepare any defence or even to tell another side of the story. Thus, contrary to British justice, one is 'guilty' from the outset. Then there are long waits when nothing appears to be happening, then interviews, then a risk assessment, the result of which appears to suggest that, with a low risk level, the PTO could be restored. All this was completed but the PTO was still refused.

How can this be? My husband has willingly done all that was asked of him, is willing to undergo enhanced safeguarding training but is still told that he may never again be able to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. This is agony after 40 years of priestly ministry.

The stress for both of us is unbearable. We have been living in one of the levels of hell through this most difficult of years. Our mental and physical health has suffered and we both feel helpless and abandoned.

The Safeguarding policies of the Church of England rightly focus on survivors of abuse but, as the writer of the article says, those in positions of power and influence 'deliberately and publicly mistreat another group of people (accused clergy) ... thus failing to put right egregious errors from the past and merely compounding them by fresh errors in the present.' He is right in all he says and I thank him for it. And yes, 'it denies the Gospel, and hinders the Church's proclamation of it.' With him I plead, **IT HAS TO STOP**. ND

# The way less trod

**Richard Norman** reflects on the path to holiness

*'it is by faith and through Jesus that we have entered this state of grace'*

Each Mass ends with an instruction: Go forth / Ite, missa est. Our churches are, by definition, therefore places of departure: here is where a thousand journeys have begun. Here, families and their children have taken their first steps in the bright light of Holy Baptism; here, newlyweds have come together to hit the road; and here, where our loved ones have departed beyond our horizon, the breath of the Spirit has caught their sails and filled them, as they have put out into the immensity of the ocean that is God's love. This holy place, then, is but a quayside, from which the ships of our lives depart. Here their cargo of grace and faith are safely loaded, before the onward journey begins.

But think, if you will, for a moment, about the nature of the journeys upon which here we embark. Think of the parents and the newlyweds; think of the bereaved, waving loved ones farewell. In each case, we might say, a new life, or at least a new life's chapter, begins on that momentous occasion. And we start here - in this church - in order to be inspired, to live what is to come as best we're able to do. Notwithstanding the mistakes and disappointments which may feel inevitable, yet we begin on our new path resolved to do well. No parent of a newborn, brought for baptism, thinks to themselves, I'm content just to be an average mum or dad. No fiancé, looking - before the altar - into the eyes of his beloved, says to himself, I want only to be a mediocre husband to my bride. Nor, bereaved of a friend or family member, do the mourners at a funeral commit simply to paying passable tribute to their loved one, in the ways in which they will, henceforward, live their lives. No, in each case we begin with an aspiration to excellence - to be the best husband, the best father, to live the best legacy to one who has gone before.

Today, we celebrate St George; and the saints can seem so far removed from our existence - a sort of spiritual élite, perhaps grudgingly to be admired, but maybe also almost dangerously single-minded, zealots, fanatics, a Christian faith for others, not for us. Not for us who live with the daily realities of being parents or spouses, who struggle with life's ordinary challenges such as grief and pain and loss. So often the saints fall back into the realm of fables and fiction: their lives may teach a useful lesson, but seem also so far-fetched.

But here is the rub: if we should not aim at being mediocre parents, or settle happily for being no more simply than an OK spouse, why are we so often content just to be average Christians: where is the spiritual ambition, the spiritual idealism, in our lives? It doesn't matter that we will likely fall far short of our resolution: to be honest, the same is probably true of our being a parent or a spouse. The point is that we begin by aiming higher - we begin by wanting to do well.

I've included in our Mass booklets words of St John Henry Newman, to this effect - 'Fear not,' he said, 'that thy life shall come to an end, but rather fear that it shall never have a beginning': what Newman meant was that to be content with a mediocre Christianity, to aspire to nothing more spiritually than simply scraping by, is not even to have begun truly living, because real life is life with God. Real life is aiming for sainthood, even in the knowledge that we will, likely, fall far short. Graham Greene's whisky priest, in his novel The Power and the Glory, phrases it so memorably, as he stands, awaiting execution, lost in thought:

He felt only an immense disappointment because he had to go to God empty-handed, with nothing done at all. It seemed to him at that moment, that it would have been quite easy to have been a saint. He would only have needed a little self-restraint and a little courage. He felt like someone who has missed happiness by seconds at an appointed place. He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted - [and that was] to be a saint.

**Perhaps, like me, you have a book on your coffee table which at some point you started reading, but never seem to have read to its end.**

And so there is but one thing really necessary: Our Lord said something very similar, did he not? But why? Why put the pursuit of Jesus front and centre, above the very many other worthy demands on our attention and our time? Simply for this reason: because God has a better imagination than we do - because God has deeper, richer dreams than we do for our lives.

That contemporary obsession with self-fulfilment is at once so laughably grandiose and so poor. It's like foregoing the old masters for a page of colouring by numbers, abandoning Michelangelo for join-the-dots. Perhaps the possibility of some



measure of self-fulfilment arises only when we set our standards at a disappointingly low level, when we settle for being mediocre - whereas God has infinitely greater dreams. God knows me better than I do, and by adopting me as His child in baptism, He has said that it is thus within me - and within you - to become saints. As our second reading puts it, 'it is by faith and through Jesus that we have entered this state of grace in which we can boast about looking forward to God's glory': faith plants within us a promise, faith pushes forward the frontiers of our lives. And that is why, continues St Paul in this letter to the Roman Christians, 'we can boast about our sufferings too.' Because the trials which, in this life, we inevitably encounter, are transformed by the power of Christ: they are no longer just the pains and inconveniences which get in the way of self-fulfilment; instead, they are the rungs of a ladder, a ladder which stretches up to heaven, from earth. From suffering we ascend to patience; from patience to perseverance, and thence to hope. And so we are no longer colouring in a picture drawn hurriedly by our pencil; we are completing, on a larger canvas, with a richer pallet, according to a greater imagination, the picture of our lives dreamt of by God. God has dreamt of you: you are not an afterthought, not an incidental detail - your life is an essential characteristic in His magisterial masterpiece of love. And just as no one is inessential in this picture, so no detail of our lives is irrelevant to this work of art. This is a part of what, in the Creed, we will mean when we describe Christianity, and the Church, as catholic - a word which means literally holistic, according to the whole. The Jesuit cardinal Henri de Lubac said that the faith of the Church is catholic because 'it addresses the whole human being and includes the whole of human nature': there is therefore no dimension of your being, no corner of your life, in which God does not wish to accomplish His gracious plans. It's why the most pious among us need to remember that God does not wish us to neglect the non-"religious" aspects of our lives; and why the 'I don't go to church, but I'm a good person' constituency ought to reflect carefully on how man's spirituality, and the glory we owe to the Almighty, can adequately be served if not by Holy Mass?



**There is no happiness without holiness, there is no road to fulfilment which does not pass along the way of the cross; conversely, there is nothing to be afraid of in sanctity, whatever the po-faced plaster-cast models we normally make of the saints.**



Perhaps, like me, you have a book on your coffee table which at some point you started reading, but never seem to have read to its end. In my case, it's an anthology of poetry, by the seventeenth-century mystic, Thomas Traherne. The book is entitled Happiness and Holiness - and the relationship between these is the poet's theme. The saints, such as our own St George the glorious, remind us that this relationship is as intimate as they come. There is no happiness without holiness, there is no road to fulfilment which does not pass along the way of the cross; conversely, there is nothing to be afraid of in sanctity, whatever the po-faced plaster-cast models we normally make of the saints. There is nothing to fear in abandoning ourselves wholly, completely, holistically to our heavenly Father: Jesus says, 'no one who has left [all]… for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel… will not receive a hundredfold now… and in the age to come, eternal life.' Sanctity, holiness, sainthood - mean simply to live a little of the life of heaven here and now on earth. And that can only be a blessèd experience, not one we should put off for tomorrow, or shy away from embracing today. Our baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus is, in three ways, really all about our becoming saints: first, it alerts us to the possibility - of living according to God's dreams, not ours; next, it implants in us a vocation - a calling to respond to this goal; finally, it equips us for the journey - into the boat are loaded all the necessary stores of grace and faith. What a privilege it is to be a Christian; what a privilege to be made capable of reaching this goal.

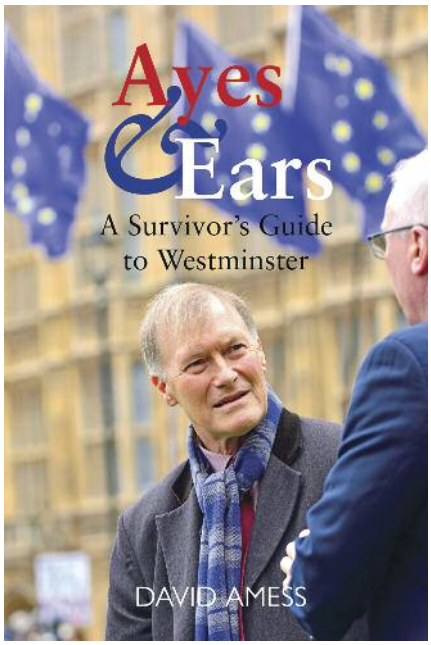
So, if you are ambitious as concerns good human being, ambitious to lead a life well-lived; if aspiration is true of parenting, and partnering also - let it be true of Christian profession, let it be true of our faith. 'Fear not that thy life shall come to an end, but rather fear that it shall never have a beginning'; for, 'at the end there was only one thing that counted - [and that was] to be a saint.' And, brothers and sisters, 'it is by faith and through Jesus that we have entered this state of grace.' ND

*Fr Richard Norman was until recently the Vicar of St George's Bickley. He has been received into the Roman Catholic Church. A frequent contributor to these pages, we offer him our prayers and best wishes. This sermon was preached for the Feast of St George 2021 at St George's Bickley.*

# On Politics and Faith

**Michael Talbot** considers political memoirs and ideas

One of the strange delights of lockdown has been the ability to almost simultaneously attend multiple book launches and gallery 'openings' from the comfort of one's home. I say delights, but what of course I really mean, is a delightful break in the monotony of the daily grind that has occurred, particularly in the latest lockdown. Whilst there is no replacement for a slightly warm glass of white wine and a tray of indistinguishable nibbles or the rubbing of shoulders with fellow enthusiasts, the boon in online arts events has at least allowed us to keep our interest piqued. Let us hope the popularity of such online events will mean that when we can again gather we will do so with gusto! It was on a rather unpromising evening that I found myself directed by a friend to the launch of Sir David Amess MP's memoirs entitled 'Ayes and Ears: A Survivor's Guide to Westminster.' Sir David is indeed a survivor, he has been in the House of Commons since 1983, and what is also clear is that he has a love for the institution that is Parliament and he wants to see that survive as well. Whilst, I wasn't initially quite sure why my friend had directed me to launch, all soon became clear. Sir David is a doughty defender of the Pro-Life cause and was joined at the launch by Lord Alton and Ann Widdecombe. Was I wondered my secret out? Had my friend discovered I was an avid fan of Strictly? I need not have worried, as it became clear I was going to enjoy the conversation and indeed be drawn deeper into understanding the important role our politicians can still have – perhaps especially those who are willing to take on 'issues' and fight for them.




**As Alton went on to comment simply put when this power is put into the hands of the doctor: the defender of life becomes the destroyer of life.**

The conversation was wide ranging and fascinating, there was no way that Alton and Widdecombe were going to let Sir David off with half answers or indeed half-truths. He was put through the ringer as the discussion moved from married priests (all 3 in favour having seen the impact convert Anglican clergy have had on the Roman Catholic Church), through issues of life, and on to what makes a good politician, and how the Palace of Westminster could be refurbished without the Commons moving out. It would be easy to characterise these three politicians as reactionary and old fashioned (and many people have done so) however I don't think that is particularly justified or fair. What was presented to us were people who care for the world, who have lives of faith, and who see that their faith must have an impact on how they conduct their public discourse. Would that other politicians would do the same, and would it be that more might be elected to defend the rights not only of Christians but also of those who are vulnerable. The conversation lasted for over an hour and there were moments of real pragmatism. Widdecombe for example admitted that she did not have a problem with assisted dying in the case of those in great pain or who were terminally ill. She went on to say that, however, it would be impossible to stop the 'runaway bus' with no way of containing the provision. As Alton went on to comment simply put when this power is put into the hands of the doctor: the defender of life becomes the destroyer of life.

And what of the book? Well when I started watching despite having a room full of political biographies and memoirs I wasn't sure I was going to add this one to the collection. However the discussion was so lively I wanted to learn more. The memoir is frank and honest and you can really hear Sir David's voice in what he describes. There continues to be an enthusiasm for politics and particularly British parliamentary politics with is rather infectious. Whatever you make of his politics Sir David comes across as someone who has devoted his life's work to public service as part of an institution which he, growing up could never have imagined he would a part. Sir David fearlessly speaks about his views and is not afraid to criticise colleagues, the historian (or should that be gossip columnist) in me does wonder whether locked in a vault is a version that names more of those with whom he has disagreed. Of course did have to wait until this year to read the full versions of his predecessor Chips Channon's diaries.

As a way to pass an hour during lockdown watching the online book launch was entertaining and amusing, it also reminded me of the fragile nature of our political system and how we must continue to fight for the right of free speech. It also made me hope that younger politicians waiting in the wings had watched it; and might even read Sir David's memoirs. They might not think they have much to learn from 3 veteran politicians but the truth us, if they don't learn and we don't listen, there may be rocky times ahead. ND

*Michael Talbot writes on politics and reads political memoirs as a hobby. You can watch the virtual book launch at* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_B2ZZcDDJyg

# Revelation

**John Gayford** takes a peep into its Mystery

It may be a Biblical hyperbole when St. Jerome said of the Book of Revelation that it has as many secrets as words. Even so to claim we know the full meaning of this last book in the New Testament would be unwise. Apocalyptic Literature is about the end of world history, when the powers of evil launch their terminal struggle against God only to be defeated. Apocalypse comes from the Greek *apakalypsis* which means "disclosure", "unveiling" or "revelation"; making known what was previously hidden or unknown and usually comes in the form of a vision of future events. It should give hope to its Christian audience that God will eventually triumph, righteousness will eventually prevail under God's protection.

**The book of Revelation can be compared with traditional Greek drama made up of seven acts and seven scenes.**

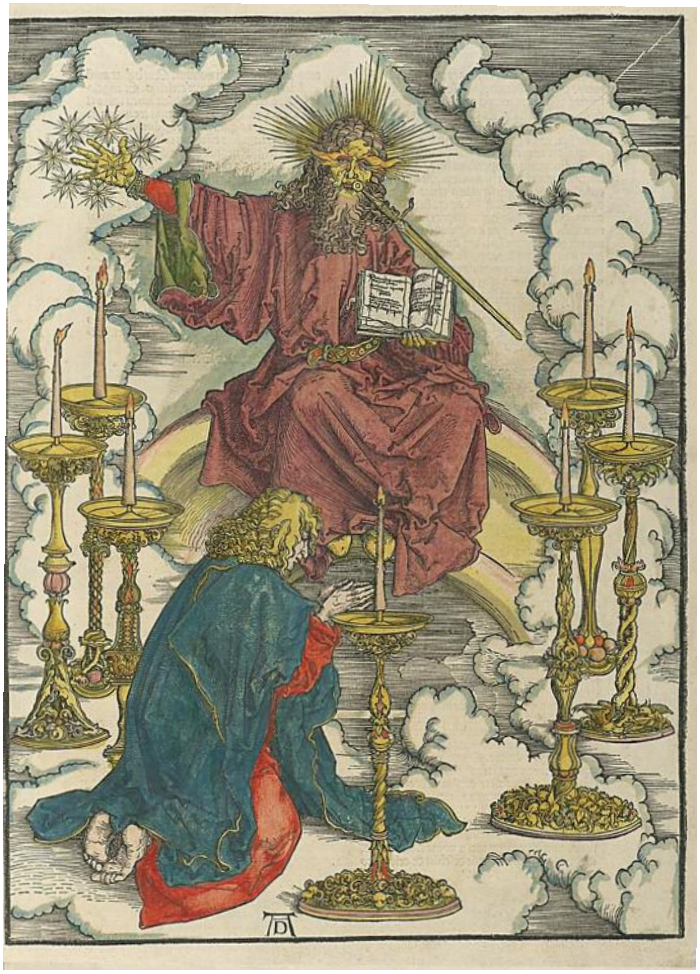
Through history the Book of Revelation has been interpreted in many ways. It is a mixture of genres. The book opens with the call of John and his letters to the seven churches in which they are admonished and encouraged. At the beginning of chapter four the door of heaven is opened and John is summoned and starts his visionary experiences. The very early church interpreted it as a vision of how the world was to end within a generation. When this did not happen the time frame was extended to a thousand years. By the time of St Augustine of Hippo (354-430) it was thought to relate to downfall of regimes and increasing ecclesiastical dissention. This view continued for the next 500 years well into the middle ages. By then the reformation brought the danger of the antichrist into focus. Efforts were made to unlock the allegory of the events described in the text. In more modern times the script has been used as a lens through which contemporary society can be judged.

The book of Revelation can be compared with traditional Greek drama made up of seven acts and seven scenes. Numbers and colours are given mystic meaning, imagery is imported from the Old Testament together with angels and monsters. Examples of apocalyptic literature in the Old Testament are seen in Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zephaniah but also in works outside the canon, none of which were accepted by the Sadducees. In the New Testament there are verses that have even gained the title of "little apocalypse". There are a number of Christian apocalyptic works written in the first three centuries which do not qualify for the canon.

In the very early Church an apocalypse was meant to be read aloud. This was no mean task as the text was difficult to read, with no sentences, punctuation or paragraphs and not even gaps between the words. There were specialist apocalyptic readers (more deliverers) who were brought in occasionally as a special treat to excite the congregation in the context of the liturgy. They were to the ancient world what an exciting audio-visual presentation with all its wiz-bangs is to a modern audience. Thus there is no better introduction to the Book of Revelation than to hear the whole book read aloud in one sitting by an extremely good reader (usually an actor with some understanding and sympathy for the book).

The Churches use Revelation in their liturgies in disparate ways. In terms of the modern Roman Divine Office we see selected verses of Revelation used as a canticle at Vespers after the second psalm. The famous sequence *Dies irae* has a long Requiem history with an apocalyptic theme taking its origin from Zephaniah (1: 15-16) but also from Revelation (20: 11-15). In modern Benedictine use, this is split into three sections and is used as the Office Hymns of the last week of the year in ordinary time. The compilers of the Eucharistic Lectionary feed us with small doses of Revelation in the three yearly cycle. It fits well as a second readings for the feasts of Christ the King and of All Saints. The text of the Mass such as the Sanctus and Agnus Dei have apocalyptic connections.

Each Christian denomination seems to have its own way of interpreting this book, and fundamentalists may get into a tangle with too literal interpretation. Regretfully some unfortunate interpretations have led to Revelation being wrongfully attributed to tragic loss of life as in Waco in 1993. It may come





as a surprise that the Book of Revelation was more readily accepted in the Western Church than it was in the Eastern Churches, where it was omitted from the Canon listing the Books of the New Testament; initially the Syrian and Armenian Churches did not accept the Book of Revelation into their Bible but later relented. Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296-373) in his Festal Epistle of 365 admits that John's Apocalypse was accepted by some but not by others. The Orthodox Churches takes the view that some books are to be read in church, others may be read privately while some should not be read at all. The Book of Revelation is not usually read in the liturgy of the Orthodox churches publically nor is it part of the Divine Office, the exception to this being on the Island of Patmos. Nevertheless it is not a banned book but readers are encouraged to understand the circumstances in which the book was written and its purpose, they are also warned about the dangers of some interpretations. In the Western Church the Book of Revelation had an easier time. Even so its canonicity depended on the supposition that it was written by St John the Apostle. Acceptance by Athanasius of Alexandria in his Festal Epistle of 365 was enough. At the reformation, Martin Luther was an opponent of Revelation but John Calvin accepted it as canonical but declined to write a commentary on it. Most see it as a fitting end to the New Testament. Apocalyptic speeches are not dead in our own age and range from "I have a dream" to "we will fight them on the beaches… in the valleys and… in the streets". Their task was to rouse their audience, in the same way as a principle speaker at a revivalist meeting, after those present have been prepared by warm up acts. It is a psychological art that has not been lost to political leaders.

Revelation 1:1 and 22:8 identifies the author as John. It is probably by identifying the John, the author of Revelation, with John the disciple of Jesus that Revelation gained entry to the Canon of the New Testament. This was the view of most early church writers. The suggestion that it was John of Patmos who was a prophet came gradually. Some of the terminology is the same as in St. John's Gospel; and John of Patmos

**The hypothesis from the source critics is that the Book of Revelation was written over a period of time using both oral and written Old Testament Apocalypse.**

could be a member of the Johannine community. Even so his Greek is very different from that of the Gospel. The theory is that he was exiled to Patmos for his witness to the Gospel; possibly before the destruction of the Temple (which is not mentioned). The Island of Patmos is where John is reported to have had his visionary experiences. Patmos is a volcanic island 40 miles off the coast from Miletus of modern Turkey. We hear more about real sea in Revelation than in most of the New Testament. It is a hilly island about ten miles long by six miles wide. Tradition supported by art has it as a desolate remote place of exile. Was John identifying with Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel; all prophets who were all exiled. On the other hand John may have gone to Patmos voluntarily so that he could be in retreat with a Christian community with



liturgy; perhaps even with John experiencing his visions in the context of the Sunday Eucharist.

The hypothesis from the source critics is that the Book of Revelation was written over a period of time using both oral and written Old Testament Apocalypse. Further speculation suggests that part was written in or following the persecution of Nero (54-68) and other parts associate it with Domitian (81-96). The Letters to the Churches were separate. All of these were superficially edited into one work at the end of the first century. Scholars tell us that there are more allusions towards the Old Testament than there are in any other book in the New Testament. It is even difficult to say if John was working from Hebrew or Greek with the text before him, or whether he wrote using memory of the text.

As might be expected there is a grotto marking the place allegedly where John wrote. John of Patmos is often depicted as a ragged figure gazing out into the sea but legend and art may give him more gravitas and also give him a scribe named Prokhor. Apocalypse stimulates art. On the mosaic of the Triumphant Arch from the eighth century Basilica of St. Praxedes in Rome, the outer arch depicts the arrival of the blessed at the gates of heaven where Christ is flanked by the twelve Apostles. On the inner arch we see the twenty-four elders bringing their golden crowns. These types of murals became popular in medieval and baroque times. Durer (1471-1528) produced a number of woodcuts, some of which have been coloured, depicting scenes and images from the Book of Revelation. These continue to stimulate other artists, a good example is the four horsemen of Apocalypse. Other art forms may include tapestry and stained glass windows. There are now even a few Greek Orthodox icons.

**Revelation was written in an age when apocalyptic writing was popular both in Jewish and Christian writings but John's was the only one to be accepted into the New Testament.**

Revelation was written in an age when apocalyptic writing was popular both in Jewish and Christian writings but John's was the only one to be accepted into the New Testament. John of Patmos was not only a visionary but he was also a good theologian (a divine) with an extensive knowledge of scripture, including books with apocalyptic elements that did not make it into the canon of the Old Testament. These he skilfully incorporated into his writing. Not only do we have heavenly visions with angels and trumpets but he is not above borrowing monsters from mythology to make his point and warn his listeners. It has to be remembered that John of Patmos was speaking of mysteries and like his Old Testament predecessors was struggling for words to make impact of his message. What is more it seems as if John thought in Hebrew concepts but was writing in Greek. Through history there have been many interpretations of John's apocalypse. At the end of the day there has to be an admission that we do not have all the answers. It is safer to see it as a liturgical aid, allowing heaven and



earth to be united in the worship of God. It reminds earthly worshippers of the seriousness of their task and brings to a sharp focus only the essentials. To this end John wrote with force and passion. The message of Revelation stripped of all its imagery is that through the death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ the powers of evil are defeated and we see a glimpse of salvation. To give Christians inspiration we need a vision. John does in words what music, art and liturgy try to do for the individual believer. All things are made new; in chapters 21:1 – 22:5 John gives a vision of a new covenant, a new temple, a New Jerusalem and a new creation against the background of an all embracing triune Godhead in heaven; the climax of his work. ND

**Further Reading**


- Boxall, I. *Revelation: Vision and Insight.* SPCK London 2002.
- Collins, A.Y. *The Apocalypse (Revelation)* in the New Jerome Commentary. Geoffrey Chapman. London. 1992.
- Harrington, W.J. *Revelation* in the Sacra Pagina Series A Michael Glazier Book The Liturgical Press Collegeville Minnesota 1993.
- McGinn, B. *Revelation,* in the Literary Guide to the Bible edited by Adler, R. and Kermode, F. Collins London 1987.
- Rowland, C. *The Book of Revelation* in The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought edited by Hastings, A. et al. Oxford University Press 2000.

# Arthur Middleton on '*Personal Devotion*'

*The Flame of Prayerful Living*
*This is the famous stone*
*That tumeth all to gold,*
*For that which God doth touch and own*
*Cannot for lesse be told .*
George Herbert

## Being Blind

Blind people who will not look upon the real world of God, but persist in following their own corruptible sin, fall into the ditch. But there is a remedy, and this poem, which you will know as *Teach me my God and King*, is called the *Elixir,* a word that means, a remedy – a word used in the ancient science of alchemy (that preceded chemistry). It is a kind of chemical mixture that can change metals into gold. Or it is a preparation that is able to prolong life indefinitely, a supposed remedy for all ills. This is the cure all, wonder drug. The philosopher's stone had the same power and here George Herbert is alluding to this imaginary philosopher's stone. But Herbert's stone is not something imaginary; it is the touch of God's love that turns all into gold. Everything he touches must be given a value that is equivalent to turning everything to gold.

Julian of Norwich[2] claims that when the Holy Spirit touches the soul it longs for God rather like this, 'God of your goodness give me yourself, for you are sufficient for me … If I were to ask less I should always be in want.'[2] This is what it means to have a deep desire for God and this is the reason why using the word *devotion* and deliberately and avoiding using the modern word 'spirituality,' a word that Lancelot Andrewes himself did not use. Today, this word has come to be associated with 'feelings,' 'feel good feelings,' a self-regarding fulfilment or self-realization and not sufficiently with the *desire for God*. It has become a word that is used and understood in a vague, fuzzy and self-regarding way about uplifting feelings, a sentimentalism that pervades much of religion today. The dictionary is more precise in defining 'spirituality' as 'a distinctive approach to religion or prayer.' To deliberately use the word 'devotion' is to focus on this distinctiveness in the classical Anglican approach to religion and prayer, where the focus is not on experiencing a 'feel good factor,' but on living the dogma of the revealed Christian mystery in such a way that, instead of the mystery being assimilated to our mode of human understanding, it is allowed to effect an interior transformation of spirit that enables it to be experienced mystically. It changes the heart and mind, renewing one's whole mental and emotional attitude, which begins in self-renunciation and is accomplished and sealed by the Spirit, so that one's life becomes conformed to the doctrine. In the Scriptural sense it purifies the character like gold in an 'assayer's fire.' That is repentance. Here lie the seeds of Anglican mystical theology that is consonant with the Christian Mystical Tradition.

## Anglican Devotion

What is distinctive about Anglican devotion, what qualities are native and integral to the Anglican understanding of devotion and religious practice? It is never an isolated individualistic pietism; always, it is concerned with dogma, doctrine, life, worship, and Christian discipline, which must colour and inspire the whole of life, where personal devotion and personal life are inseparable from liturgy and theology. In the people who produced this literature, prayer was their primary concern, their abiding preoccupation, and so it was the driving force of their lives because 'they were all soaked in the primitive and medieval tradition of contemplation as the normal outcome of a life of serious prayer.' Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), Richard Baxter (1615-1691), Thomas Ken (1637-1711), William Laud (1573-1645), George Herbert (1593-1633), John Donne (1571-1631) and Thomas Traherne (1636-74) et al, John Byrom tells us 'all of them spoke the same language, at least where prayer is concerned; the language of loving desire for God.

## Practical Divinity

Anglican devotion is life as a way of practical divinity. Seventeenth-century Anglicans called moral theology 'practical divinity' to which ascetical theology was completely united. In other words the moral life and the life of prayer were inseparable. The life of prayer was to affect how the Christian behaved. Today, the life of prayer has been separated from the way we behave as the devotional life is reduced to 'spirituality,' where the emphasis rests on feelings as the measure of spiritual health rather than behaviour. Ascetical theology has been separated from moral theology. Anglican devotion is about the Christian-in-the-Church, the full co-operation with grace in a total Christian life.

**Anglican devotion is life as a way of practical divinity.**

In our devotional heritage *belief, devotion, duty,* and *discipline,* are inseparable. How we live and how we pray cannot be separated in Christian living. Each affects the other, becoming a practical matter for the devotional life of all who live through a *Life* not their own, transmitted to them by the Spirit through the means of grace, the Book and the Bread, within the Eucharistic fellowship of the baptized who share in the apostolic faith. The purpose of positive and practical divinity is to bring us to Heaven. So it affects our judgments, settles our consciences, directs our lives, mortifies our corruptions, increases our graces, strengthens our comforts, and saves our souls. The meaning of responsible discipleship, of growth in grace, of incorporation in Christ, is that 'if any man be in Christ he is a new creature.'

## The Aim

The aim of such practical devotion is to make a person 'a new creature' 'sincere in his obedience' a favourite phrase that illuminates what is meant by 'the perfection of wayfaring men.'

ND

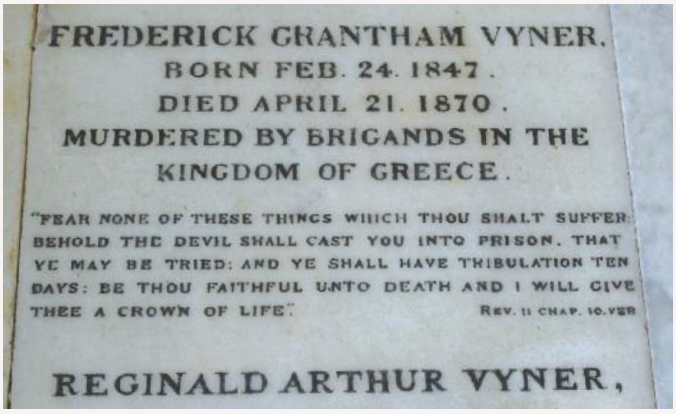
# touching place

## ALL SAINTS', GAUTBY, LINCS



Probably the least-appreciated of all the English counties, Lincolnshire is full of empty spaces, and the hamlet of Gautby is in one of those, beyond Bardney. Here in the mid-18th century the Vyners, a prominent City family, were building their extensive new mansion; but that was demolished little more than a century later in 1874, and the Park today is deserted and still. Contemporary with the mansion, Robert Vyner rebuilt the parish church in 1756 as one of those Lincolnshire 'brick boxes' (ND June 2010) though this one has a small tower with a tiny spike of a spire. Vyner brought the tombs of two members of his family from St Mary Woolnoth in the city of London, and they occupy the chancel, above the Vyner vault, the figures gazing at the altar. Look for the ledger slab commemorating Frederick Grantham Vyner, 'murdered by brigands in the Kingdom of Greece' in the 'Dilessi Massacre' of April 1870.








But that is possibly not why you remember Gautby. Some little village churches obtained their ethos as the result of a campaign by one architect (think Egmanton or Lound) whilst others got it through the efforts of a number of patrons or clergy. Gautby's interior was rearranged on the eve of the First World War, and the Georgian two-decker (originally at Skelton in Yorkshire) was moved from half-way down the nave to its present position in the northeast corner. Over the next half century the interior acquired a number of furnishings – small statues and a rood group - which give this tiny, unassuming, church a certain *cachet*.

Map reference: *TF 175724*

*Simon Cotton*

## Forms of words for making a bequest to FiF in your Will

I GIVE to FORWARD IN FAITH of 2A The Cloisters, Gordon Square, London WC1H 0AG the sum of _____ pounds (£ ) and I DIRECT that the receipt of the Treasurer or other proper officer of Forward in Faith shall be good and sufficient discharge to my Executor.

*or* I GIVE the residue of my estate to FORWARD IN FAITH of 2A The Cloisters, Gordon Square, London WC1H 0AG and I DIRECT that the receipt of the Treasurer or other proper officer of Forward in Faith shall be good and sufficient discharge to my Executor.

# Mystical Rose and Gate of Heaven

*Intended for the any feast of Our Blessed Lady and May Devotions*

Mystical Rose and Gate of Heaven,
Refuge of sinners here below,
Who, for thy children here, hath striv'n
To pour God's grace in torrent flow.
Sing we thine honour, House of Gold;
The beauty of thy life be told.
O Blesséd Mother hear our plea;
Pray for the Church and pray for me.

Thought in the Wisdom of the Lord,
Brought forth immaculate and pure.
Received into the House of God,
A temple to the temple borne.
With wisdom, patience, hope and prayer,
Were thou adorned, by God's grace there.
O Humble Mother hear our plea;
Pray for the Church and pray for me.

'Hail, full of grace,' Bless'd Gabriel's word
Which brought thy heart to troubled state.
'Fear not, thy favour is with the Lord,
To bear the saviour of thy race.'
In the obedience thou declared,
Prince, priest and faithful all have shared.
Obedient Mother hear our plea;
Pray for the Church and pray for me.

Not in a palace decked with gold,
Nor with a worldly regal court,
But in a stable-cave, behold,
The Lamb of God, our Blesséd Lord.
Ark of the Covenant unstained,
Bring unto us this treasure gained.
O Lowly Mother hear our plea;
Pray for the Church and pray for me.

And through the life of Christ thy Son
Thou followed in humility.
Even to pillar, rod, and crown,
And weight of sin to Calvary.
There thine Immaculate Heart was pierced,
Where Precious Blood our fate reversed.
Sorrowful Mother hear our plea;
Pray for the Church and pray for me.

Upward Christ rose and burst the doors
Of hell and to the Father sped.
When time had come, thyself He called
To heav'n and to the throne prepared.
Gazing upon thy starry crown
The Church, her queen and mother own.
O Valiant Mother hear our plea;
Pray for the Church and pray for me.

*Suggested tunes:*
*Sagina (And can it be that I should gain)*
*In Christ alone (In Christ alone)*
*Jerusalem (And did those feet)*

*Fr John Underhill SSC*

# Bishops of The Society



**The Bishop of Beverley**
PROVINCE OF YORK (EXCEPT BLACKBURN AND LEEDS)
**The Right Revd Glyn Webster**
Holy Trinity Rectory, Micklegate, York YO1 6LE
01904 628155 office@seeofbeverley.org.uk
www.seeofbeverley.org.uk

**The Bishop of Burnley**
BLACKBURN
**The Right Revd Philip North CMP**
Dean House, 449 Padiham Road, Burnley BB12 6TE
01282 479300 bishop.burnley@blackburn.anglican.org





**The Bishop of Chichester**
CHICHESTER
**The Right Revd Dr Martin Warner SSC**
The Palace, Chichester PO19 1PY 01243 782161
bishop.chichester@chichester.anglican.org

**The Bishop of Ebbsfleet**
PROVINCE OF CANTERBURY (WEST)
**The Right Revd Jonathan Goodall SSC**
Hill House, The Mount, Caversham,
Reading RG4 7RE 0118 948 1038
bishop@ebbsfleet.org.uk www.ebbsfleet.org.uk





**The Bishop of Fulham**
LONDON & SOUTHWARK
**The Right Revd Jonathan Baker**
The Vicarage, 5 St Andrew St, London EC4A 3AF
020 7932 1130 bishop.fulham@london.anglican.org
www.bishopoffulham.org.uk

**The Bishop of Richborough**
PROVINCE OF CANTERBURY: EAST (EXCEPT CHICHESTER, LONDON & SOUTHWARK); EUROPE
**The Right Revd Norman Banks SSC**
Parkside House, Abbey Mill Lane, St Albans AL3 4HE
01727 836358 bishop@richborough.org.uk www.richborough.org.uk





**The Bishop of Wakefield**
LEEDS
**The Right Revd Tony Robinson SSC**
Pontefract Ho, 181A Manygates Lane, Wakefield WF2 7DR
01924 250781 / 07834 206317
bishop.tony@leeds.anglican.org

**The Bishop of Lewes**
CHICHESTER
**The Right Revd Will Hazlewood**
Knowle Cottage, Knowle Lane, Halland, Lewes BN8 6PR
01273 425009
Bishop.Lewes@chichester.anglican.org



**The Right Revd John Ford**
**(formerly Bishop of The Murray)**

**The Right Revd John Gaisford SSC**
**(formerly Bishop of Beverley)**

**The Right Revd John Goddard SSC**
**(formerly Bishop of Burnley)**

**The Right Revd Dr John Hind**
**(formerly Bishop of Chichester)**

**The Right Revd Martyn Jarrett SSC**
**(formerly Bishop of Beverley)**

**The Right Revd Roger Jupp SSC**
**(formerly Bishop of Popondota)**

**The Right Revd Robert Ladds SSC**
**(formerly Bishop of Whitby)**

**The Right Revd Michael Langrish**
**(formerly Bishop of Exeter)**

**The Right Revd Peter Ramsden**
**(formerly Bishop of Port Moresby)**

**The Right Revd Nicholas Reade**
**(formerly Bishop of Blackburn)**

**The Right Revd Lindsay Urwin OGS**
**(formerly Bishop of Horsham)**

**The Right Revd Peter Wheatley**
**(formerly Bishop of Edmonton)**

# classifieds

## Subscribe to New Directions

**NEW DIRECTIONS** is sent free of charge to all members of Forward in Faith UK *

To join Forward in Faith or subscribe to New Directions, please print off and post the forms on the website (www.forwardinfaith.com) or complete the form below as applicable:

I wish to subscribe to New Directions as:

**A Member of Forward in Faith UK**

Individual Membership: £30 ☐ concessionary: £15 ☐
Family Membership: £42 ☐ concessionary: £21 ☐
I am a UK Taxpayer please send me a Gift Aid form ☐

Or

**A New Directions Subscriber**

UK: £30 ☐ Europe: £45 ☐ Rest of the World: £55 ☐

I enclose payment of £ .....
Cheques payable to **Forward in Faith**

**CREDIT/DEBIT CARD PAYMENTS**
**BY TELEPHONE ONLY - MONDAY, WEDNESDAY OR THURSDAY, 9.30 AM TO 4.30 PM.**

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....Post Code/Zip .....

TO: Forward in Faith, 2A The Cloisters, Gordon Square, London WC1H 0AG. Tel: 020 7388 3588 Fax: 020 7387 3539
Admin.assistant@forwardinfaith.com

If you do not have a UK bank account, please contact us to discuss payment methods by email (Admin.assistant@forwardinfaith.com) or telephone (020 7388 3588 – Monday, Wednesday or Thursday, 9.30 am to 4.30 pm)

* Members of Credo Cymru who are not also members of Forward in Faith should contact their Membership Secretary

## newdirections

## *Classified Ads rates*

***£22.50 for 1 month (up to 50 words)***
***£45 for 2 months***
***£45 for 3 months***

***Series of advertisements in excess of three months will also be charged at £20 per month with every third month free***

***Additional words will be charged at 50 pence each for one month, £1 each for two or three months etc.***

**Contact the Advertising Manager: Mike Silver**

**57 Century Road, Rainham, Kent ME8 0BQ**

**01634 386624**

**email silver43mike@gmail.com**

**CAR SUPPLIERS – PRIORY AUTOMOTIVE** Priory are the Christian car suppliers who can provide any new or used car at the very best price. Let them take the hassle out of your next car purchase, all vehicles are fully checked before free delivery to your door. Part exchange a pleasure and budgets to suit all. Please call 0114 2559696 or visit www.prioryautomotive.com

**EDENHAM REGIONAL HOUSE RETREAT CENTRE** nr Bourne Lincs. Near Peterborough. Individuals and small groups welcome. Private Chapel and spacious rooms for day visits, disabled facilities, self-catering flat. Contact Fr. Edward Martin SSC, ERH Church Lane Edenham, Lincs PE10 OLS. 01 778 591358. edenhamoffice@ gmail.com
Web: www.edenhamregionalhouse.org

FORWARD INFAITH

supporting The Society

*Supporting The Society under the patronage of S. Wilfrid and S. Hilda*

Visit our website www.forwardinfaith.com

To receive an email alert when a news item is published, sign up at www.forwardinfaith.com/news.php

The Resources pages include

- material about women bishops and women priests
- information about the House of Bishops' Declaration
- articles, addresses and statements
- the Forward in Faith 'brand pack'

See the About Us pages for information about Forward in Faith.

The Society

SUPPORTED BY FORWARDINFAITH

*Providing ministry, sacraments and oversight which we can receive with confidence*

Visit our website
**www.sswsh.com**

For the names and contact details of the Bishops' Representatives in each diocese and lists of affiliated parishes in each diocese, go to www.sswsh.com/parishes.php

Information about The Society and about the registration of priests, deacons and ordinands is available on the About Us pages.

Statements by the Council of Bishops, our newspaper *Together* and the Society 'brand pack' are available on the Resources pages.

2A The Cloisters, Gordon Square, London WC1H 0AG
020 7388 3588 ✣ admin@sswsh.com