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Joy, Hope and Laughter

Introducing our new National Missioner

Also in this issue:

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- Simon Evans on Leaving Ruislip
- Robin Ward on Reading Dante

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COVER IMAGE

Children from St Peter's CofE Primary School prepare to celebrate St Peter's Day in Wapping

An Image of Our Lady of Boulogne sits in the parish church, in the Society parish of St Peter's, Folkestone

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Lead Story

Joy, Hope and Laughter

Tom Middleton meets Father David D'Silva

Tom Middleton, Director of Forward Faith, recently visited Fr David D'Silva SSC in his parish to ask him a few questions about himself so that readers of New Directions can get to know him a little better. Fr David has just begun his work as the first National Missioner to The Society and is undertaking that role part-time alongside being the Priest-in-Charge of St. Leonard's, Scawsby with St. Luke's, Scawthorpe.

Tom: Fr David, can you please tell me a little about your background, particularly where you grew up, a little bit about your family and what your interests are?

Fr David: I grew up in Swinton, in the Diocese of Sheffield, with my Mum, Dad and brother John. I met my wife Laura at university, and we got married five years ago. My chief interests are sport, namely cricket, American football and rugby. I also enjoy science, fiction and cooking. I have also made a couple of attempts at home brewing!

Tom: You mentioned that your younger brother was ordained recently. Where will he serve his title and what does it mean to you?

Fr David: It was a great joy for the whole family to be at Durham Cathedral and witness John's ordination to the Sacred Priesthood by +Paul. He will continue to serve his title at Houghton-le-Spring. It means a great deal to me that John and I get to share the bond which binds priests together, and to be able to truly have him as my brother priest.

Tom: What first got you into church life and what are your reflections on that now looking back?

Fr David: I grew up in a church going family, my Dad is a Roman Catholic, and my Mum is an Anglican. We as a family split our time between the parishes they attended. Looking back on family life I am immensely grateful to my parents for the Christian environment they brought us up in. Christianity was not merely a "Sunday thing" but an ever present part of our lives. Prayers together at night, grace at meals, and an overarching Christian ethic pervaded throughout the whole household, never overwhelmingly so but simply running not too far beneath the surface.



Tom: And how did that lead on to you being called to serve Christ as a priest?

Fr David: I felt called to be a priest aged 17, kneeling at the watch on Maundy Thursday, wondering what on earth I was going to do with my life, did I want to be a P.E. teacher? (They never carried a pen, which seemed like a good thing to me!) And then I knew, I understood what God was calling me to be. It wasn't a straightforward road from that point but that's always the moment I look back on as the catalyst.

Prayers together at night, grace at meals, and an overarching Christian ethic pervaded the whole household

Tom: What would you say have been the highs of your ministry so far?

Fr David: I loved my time as curate in Edington and Hexthorpe, I was lucky to take those first fledgling steps in such a loving and safe environment. However, becoming a Parish Priest in my own right, having a patch, a parish, and a family to lead, grow and love is an immense privilege. It's not always easy and there are certainly lows to go with the highs. But it's varied, fun and humbling.

Tom: And the lows?

Fr David: I think for all of us COVID and the restrictions placed upon public acts of worship have been a real low point. It felt like all the momentum we were building was taken away. But we'll get it back!

Tom: How do you see the Missioner role developing over time?

Fr David: Hopefully in the end we won't need one! I believe the Missioner role is one of support and help, someone to listen to – the fears we all have about mission and evangelism, and the pressure we feel to be successful. I don't for a second think I've got all the answers, but I look forward to working with the parishes and people of the Society as we seek to call our nation and our world to live a better life with Christ.

Tom: What's your initial instinct as to how Society parishes can be successful in mission and how will you be able to help in that?

Fr David: All mission starts with prayer, by asking God what He wants us to do. Asking ourselves the question: "What does our Church family have to offer in the field of mission?" It's not a case of one size fits all; not of "this worked down the road, so it'll work here." We must ask ourselves what talents do we have and build on that.

We as Christians know one thing above all else, being a follower of Jesus Christ is better than not being one

Tom: More generally speaking, what should the Church's priorities be in terms of mission?

Fr David: We as Christians know one thing above all else, being a follower of Jesus Christ is better than not being one. Knowing that God loved the world so much that He gave us His Son to live as one of us, to suffer for us, to die and rise again for us, transforms every facet of our lives: mourning to weepy, tears to joy, despair to hope. Our priority should always be, through whatever way we can, to make that love known to the whole world. We need to find new ways to seek the lost and lonely, the forgotten and those who don't even think they need Jesus and bring them to height of our experience on this earth, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Tom: Finally, where do you go to get inspiration in spiritual matters? I'm thinking about writings or devotions or any other source which you have found useful.

Fr David: The first book I was bought having told family and friends I felt called to be a priest was 'The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality'. It spoke of joy, hope and laughter, of priests who lived to praise God, to bless His people, and to preach the good news to all. Wherever I go looking for spiritual wisdom, it can always be linked back to the themes of that book.

Tom: Thank you for your time, Fr David, and please be assured of all of our prayers and good wishes as you begin this important new role.

Fr David: It's been my pleasure and I greatly appreciate the support being offered to me from across our movement. ND



Fine weather greeted the young pilgrims who gathered at Whalley Abbey in August to honour Our Lady of Walsingham

The Church and the Virus

In the second of two articles Edward Dowler looks back at responses to the pandemic

The theological virtues

The use of fear to drive compliance has been well documented in the current crisis. The tone was set early on by some now famous remarks from the Independent Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Behaviours (SPI-B) in its paper on *Options for Increasing Adherence to Social Distancing Measures*. The group commented that 'a substantial number of people still do not feel sufficiently personally threatened,' and that the 'perceived level of personal threat needs to be increased… using hard-hitting emotional messaging.' This perceived deficit of threat and fear was quickly and effectively made up, and the messaging has, ever since, been abundantly clear and well-aimed.

In the classical tradition, Aristotle was well aware that everyone is right to feel fear at certain times: 'he would be a sort of madman or insensitive to pain if he feared nothing, neither earthquakes nor the waves.' Only, he says, the lunatic Celts are entirely free from anxiety about such things.[1] Influenced by Aristotle, the teaching of St Thomas Aquinas is that if you do not fear, then you cannot truly be courageous. As one of his modern interpreters puts it, 'fortitude presumes vulnerability; without vulnerability there is no possibility of fortitude. An angel cannot be courageous because it is not vulnerable. To be brave means to be ready to sustain a wound. Since he is substantially vulnerable, man can be courageous.'[2]

Whilst it is entirely human to fear a nasty disease, we cannot allow ourselves to be primarily driven by fear and concern about safety

The Hungarian-Canadian economist Frank Furedi argues that what we now see is not simply fear as an emotion which is something that we cannot avoid and which certainly has its proper place, but fear is now the basis of whole a cultural orientation towards the world. 'It provides,' he writes, 'the prism through which we interpret everyday experience. It feeds risk-aversion, a heightened sense of vulnerability, a preoccupation with safety, and a lack of confidence towards the future.'[3] 'This is how freedom dies,' writes the historian and jurist Jonathan Sumption in his recent collection on *Law in a Time of Crisis*, 'when societies lose their liberty, it is not usually because some despot has crushed it under his boot. It is because people voluntarily surrendered their liberty out of fear of some external threat.'[4]

So where I think the Church can and must offer an alternative perspective is that whilst it is entirely human to fear a nasty disease, and entirely right to make prudent assessments of risk in any circumstances we might face, we cannot allow ourselves to be primarily driven by fear and concerns about safety. Here is a well known passage from the first letter of John:

> God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. (1 John 4.16-18)

Following St Paul, Aquinas teaches that the primary motivators in the Christian life are not fear and the desire for safety at all costs, but the moral virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and, crucially in this case, fortitude, and the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. It is these that should primarily guide our actions. These virtues can to some extent be cultivated, but the theological virtues in particular are works of God's grace, which are *infused* into us, so that they move us from within, and enable us to act not under sufferance but gladly and willingly.[5] God's grace acting within us does not take away our more animal urges, such as hunger, fear or physical attraction – since these are part of our created nature and therefore God-given. All of them have their place and all of them are in their ways necessary to us as human persons. But possession of the virtues brings about harmony between our natural urges and the reason that tells us what is right and what is good for us: something that we see pre-eminently in the human nature of Christ, who, though he had full, strong, human passions or emotions, always acted virtuously.[6]

So my third picture is a renewed Christian psychology in which fear is put in its proper place, and its current dominance gives way to motivation by the theological virtues and the accompanying gifts of the Holy Spirit as the proper drivers of Christian life.

Sacramental Life

The penultimate picture I would like to re-frame and re-hang is that of the physical proximity of Christians and more widely the sacramental life of the Church, by contrast with chilling predictions such as 'social distancing is here to stay.'

My wonderful New Testament tutor at theological college, John Sweet, had a story about the time when the exchange of the Peace was introduced into modern Anglican liturgies. If I'm recalling correctly, one of the bishops assembled an anthology of comments that people had written to him about why they didn't like exchanging the Peace at the Eucharist. Each one was illustrated by a cartoonist. The objections were things like, 'the man standing next to me has sweaty hands' or 'my neighbour in the pew has bad breath.' Nowadays without a doubt one of them would be 'I might catch Covid.' But the final comment in the book was that of a lady who had written in to say, 'it's the only time in the week that anybody ever touches me,' and this comment made all the foregoing ones somewhat collapse. Now is not the time to launch into a defence of the exchange of the Peace in the liturgy, about which there are of course differences of view. However, the practice

does emphasise the fact that the body of Christ is most actually and truly present when believers are physically close to one another.[7]

In this regard, safeguarding failures in the Church do of course teach us to be very careful. In my own diocese, to our enduring shame, a number of people, including various clergy, have horrendously abused the opportunities for physical proximity that church life provides in order to perpetrate sexual abuse. On the other hand, I believe that we also have to resist the opposite temptation: to shun the physical proximity of our brothers and sisters on the grounds that they are potential vectors of disease; to accept the line that, even at a time when a serious respiratory virus is circulating, that I am potentially toxic to everybody else and that they are toxic to me.

A key question here seems to me to be the very contested one of asymptomatic transmission, and the extent to which people who are ostensibly healthy are actually likely to infect others. I am not qualified to comment on this, but I believe we can still note that fear of asymptomatic transmission opens up a potentially very frightening way to start regarding our brothers and sisters. Our physical proximity may indeed always put us in some danger of transmitting germs to one another, but we cannot lightly set aside the gifts that we gain by physical closeness to our brothers and sisters in the Christian community. Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us of this in *Life Together*, his classic work on the nature of Christian community (apologies in advance for the non-gender inclusive language):

> **We now need a revitalised sense of the potency and importance of the sacraments of the Church**

The believer feels no shame, as though he were still living too much in the flesh, when he yearns for the physical presence of other Christians. Man was created a body, the Son of God appeared on earth in the body, he was raised in the body, in the sacrament the believer receives the Lord Christ in the body, and the resurrection of the dead will bring about the perfected fellowship of God's spiritual-physical creatures. The believer therefore lauds the Creator, the Redeemer, God, Father, son and Holy Spirit for the bodily presence of a brother. The prisoner, the sick person, the Christian in exile sees in the companionship of a fellow Christian a physical sign of the glorious presence of the triune God. Visitor and visited in loneliness recognize in each other the Christ who is present in the body; they receive and meet each other's benedictions as the benediction of the Lord Jesus Christ.[8]

Closely related to the physical meeting of believers is the wider question of the sacramental life of the Church. There have of course been many debates on social media and elsewhere about the merits of 'in-person worship' (yuk); whether 'online church' is as good as 'onsite church' (double yuk); whether bread and wine can be consecrated over Zoom, and so on. Whilst many people may yearn, as I do, for a past when these subjects were never considered, the greater challenge is surely that we need the picture to be re-framed and re-hung. We now need a revitalised sense of the potency and importance of the sacraments of the Church, celebrated – as they can only be – in the physical assembly of believers. If, as the Bath and Wells document that I quoted earlier is correct, the 'lived experience' of many is that celebrating the sacraments of the Church has become joyless and onerous, the solution is surely not, as the authors seem to suggest, to consign Christ's gifts to the dustbin. Rather it must be to find a renewed and refreshed sense of their centrality, their importance and their life-giving power, of the multitude of believers thronging together to the house of God, 'in the voice of praise and thanksgiving, among such as keep holy-day' (Ps 42.5). For where do we find the Church? In a very particular place, wrote the Danish Lutheran bishop, Bo Giertz (1905-1998):

> The Church is and exists, first and foremost, in that moment when the bishop as a heavenly instrument stands *in his congregation's midst* and celebrates the liturgical mysteries, full of joy and light and life. In this way the Church is for these people the shining city on a hill, whose walls are always brilliant with light... Here I understood better than ever the very nature of the Church: she is not an institution for grievances, not a protest organization, nor a device for social improvements or any other 'goal'; she is the heavenly joy's sanctuary, in which we enter, filled with overwhelming joy...[9]

Eternal Life

The fifth and final picture that I would like to re-frame and re-hang is our Christian hope in eternal life: for a future that lies beyond death. I believe it is striking that various scientific writers such as Karol Sikora and John Lee who have questioned the official response to Covid have commented at various times that death has been the great unspoken reality that our society has been fearful of addressing. Similarly, the historian Tom Holland – a sympathetic observer of Christianity – laments the fact that in this crisis the Church has not spoken more confidently into the public square about the hope of eternal life. 'The welfare state can provide care for the sick,' Holland writes, 'but it cannot provide what Christianity, over the past 2,000 years, has provided to so many countless people, and to such transformational effect: an explanation for the existence of suffering that offers the assurance as well that all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.'[10]

It is not easy to talk about the hope of eternal life, because it is easily derided as 'pie in the sky when you die,' and many people in modern western society have largely not only lost any such hope but, as those who officiate at funerals know only too well, are completely uninterested in thinking about it. And yet our belief in the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come is surely the message that our society desperately needs. For the fact that people perceive physical death as completely final surely lies at the root of our highly anxious, fearful, risk-averse culture. For if this life is the only one we shall ever have, it is only logical to be extremely fearful about losing it. And it is precisely here that the Christian faith opens up a different perspective that is full of hope and promise.

This is of course not to denigrate those who work in to preserve and sustain human life which of course has a God-given value. The gospels show us Jesus throughout his ministry constantly seeking to protect human life; to feed people, heal them

and raise them up; occasionally he even restores the dead to mortal life. And yet, in some stark sayings in all four gospels, the Lord who would rise from the dead teaches his followers that our mortal life is not the only one we shall ever have, and that we do not therefore need anxiously to give it an ultimacy that it does not deserve, for 'those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.' (Jn 12.25, cf. Mt 10.39; Mk 8.35; Lk 9.24)

In a totally planned world, people will find themselves unspeakably lonely

I would like to finish by referring to a broadcast that was made in the late 1960s by the then Professor Joseph Ratzinger, later to become Pope Benedict XVI. In words that seem to me extraordinarily prescient, if not prophetic, he predicts something that I think may be happening now, although it was what he predicted for the somewhat earlier date of 2000AD. 'From the crisis of today,' he writes, 'the Church of tomorrow will emerge – a Church that has lost much.' The Church will, Ratzinger argues, for sure be smaller and humbler, but it will be tempered by suffering, and start to live again out of the purity of its faith. As I have suggested, I believe that this church will rejoice in the beauty and the transparency of the uncovered human face, in the solemn, yet exuberant song that will constantly sustain her worship; in the theological virtues as the true motivators of fulfilled human life which will drive away the pervasive sense of oppression and fear; and in the physical closeness of Christians as they celebrate together the life-giving sacraments of the new covenant. Most of all, perhaps, the Church will never lose sight of her future hope, and find renewed ways to offer it to the world.

In a totally planned world, people will find themselves unspeakably lonely. If they have completely lost sight of God, thy will feel the whole horror of their poverty. Then they will discover the little flock of believers as something wholly new. They will discover it as a hope that is meant for them, an answer for which they have always been searching... (the Church) may well no longer be the dominant social power... but she will enjoy a fresh blossoming and be seen as man's home, where he will find life and hope beyond death.[11] ND

The Venerable Edward Dowler is the Archdeacon of Hastings. A version of this article was delivered as The Peter Toon Memorial Lecture at Pusey House in May, 2021

[1] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 3.7.
[2] Pieper, *A Brief Reader on the Virtues of the Human Heart*, p. 24-5.
[3] Furedi, *Why Lockdown has become a Lifestyle, Spiked Online*, 30 April, 2021.
[4] Sumption, *Law in a Time of Crisis*, p. 231.
[5] Cessario, *Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 205.
[6] Cessario, *Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 203.
[7] See Rom 16.16; 1 Cor 16.20; 2 Cor 13.12; 1 Thess 5.26; 1 Pet 5.14.
[8] Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (SCM), p. 9.
[9] My italics. Unfortunately I cannot find the source of this quotation.
[10] Tom Holland, *Church Leaders should not be talking like middle managers in this time of crisis: Daily Telegraph*, 3 May, 2020.
[11] Ratzinger, *Faith in the Future*, p. 118.



The Richborough Family Mass at St Alban's Cathedral, 7 August

Saving the Parish?

James Walters finds that this new campaign takes us only so far

Three-word slogans have proved powerfully effective in shaping the public imagination in recent years. So the campaign launched at the beginning of August to "Save the Parish" may gain surprising support in the upcoming General Synod elections among those wearied and worried by the current iconoclastic refashioning of the Church of England. But if the campaign's intention is to "take back control" of a Church that appears to be undervaluing local community and inherited tradition, then we should be wary of the appeal of nostalgia for an unsustainable (and quite often mythical) past. Even in the wealthy Diocese of London, the 'priest in every parish' model is on the way out and across the rest of the country adapting the infrastructure of Christendom to the realities of a secularised and multifaith present has been the norm for some time.

In the campaign to leave the European Union, "British Sovereignty" was presented as the rather nebulous solution to a range of social problems from the underfunding of the NHS to the neglect of post-industrial communities. The mistake of the Remainers was not merely to ridicule the proposed solution but more fundamentally to ignore the problems. The mistake of the Leavers was to think that their solution was the right one. There are similar dangers at play in the Church of England where the championing of "The Parish" may be an ill-defined rallying cry in response to other serious problems in our theological and corporate life. Opponents may ridicule the campaign as a paranoid conservatism, but their error is to ignore the problems to which it responds and it is on these that we should focus our attention.



The Bishop of Fulham presents candles to the newly baptised at the Anchorage, a new worshipping community for students.

The truth is that, despite high profile denunciations of "limiting factors", there are very few people in the Church of England hierarchy who despise, and work for the abolition of, the parish system and its hardworking clergy. But there are many who simply have no idea what they are really for. Their ecclesiology is one of an anxious mission agency that must focus exclusively on growth. Many regard the "trappings" of church buildings, holy orders and sacramental ritual as anachronistic obstacles to the goal of evangelism in a secular age. They have embraced what Bishop Richard Chartres recently described as the reduction of "the Christ-given sacramental character of the Church to a thin and insubstantial sociological concept."[1] They instrumentalise the Church for the purpose of spreading the Word. It is not, to them, the mystical Body of Christ so much as an infrastructure of transmission.

> **I worry less about an attack on the parish in the Church of England than I do about a loss of the catholic imagination that makes sense of it**

So I worry less about an attack on the parish in the Church of England than I do about a loss of the catholic imagination that makes sense of it. Anglo-Catholicism enacts a sacramental shaping of time and space that is the Church orienting the world towards its home in the Kingdom of God. The liturgical year is a rhythm for life that enables us to inhabit God's time within the material cycles of the created order. It is the opposite of the breathless missional immediacy that is being imposed on us with (as we have seen in the weekly online national service) its relentless demand for innovation and diversity.

And the parish is an exercise in the sacramental shaping of space. A locality, the land itself, Christians and non-Christians are all caught up in the knitting together of a new humanity for the outworking of his purposes in a particular place. It is redemption at work in real lives, families and communities, and – as we are increasingly aware – in creation itself as we make efforts to live in harmony and sustainability with the non-human world. This is a project worthy of defending. But it is not the only sacramental shaping of space. Chaplaincies, religious houses, new worshipping communities, even the ministry of Walsingham, have all been extra-parochial elements of our tradition. Different forms of church life are not missionary alternatives to the parish. For us any expression of the life of the Church will be apostolic in its own way; it should not be instrumentalised for evangelism and numerical growth.

Renewal and Reform led to several proposals to put more explicit emphasis on the evangelistic role of university chaplains, seemingly oblivious to the hostility this would generate in secular institutions, many of whom fund the post. But over my time as chaplain to the London School of Economics I have sought to navigate delicate relationships within the institution

while fashioning a ministry consistent with a sacramental worldview. This has taken two directions. The first has been interfaith relations. LSE has students from 150 countries, 60% of whom come to London from outside of Europe. It is therefore an unusually religious student body and one reflecting all strands of Christianity and every other world faith. Many come from countries where religion is a critical dimension of national politics and social conflict. The LSE Faith Centre runs programmes promoting religious literacy and interfaith leadership to form future peacemakers.

As we witness to the *intensity* of Christ in the sacraments, we can encounter him in his extensity in the world

This work does not fit within the priorities of the Church of England's infamous vision diagram, but it sees mission as something more than a marketing campaign for God. Within a sacramental worldview we can see the divine present in other religious traditions and work with them for the flourishing and peace of our world. Our strand of Christianity allows people to adopt a faith that is confident of an encounter with God in the Eucharist and is premised on bold truth claims about the centrality of Jesus. But we can say with generosity and sincerity that people of other faiths are not wasting their time or gambling with their eternal destiny. As we witness to the *intensity* of Christ in the sacraments we can encounter him in his *extensity* in the world and we can see both our theologies and our religious practices as starting points for a common journey into the fullness of truth.

The second strand has been the establishing of a new worshipping community, supported with Strategic Development Fund money, that has sought to make worship and Christian formation more accessible to students of an unchurched generation. Working with my colleague at University College London, we learnt a lot from the Bishop of Islington's church-planting course at the Gregory Centre for Church Multiplication but have remained faithful to a catholic understanding of worship and witness. One student who was baptised by the Bishop of Fulham at "The Anchorage" three years ago begins training for ministry at St Stephen's House this Michaelmas.

So let's not allow our belief in the gift of parish life and ministry to detract us from the challenge of innovation in our age. The General Synod may need more people willing to speak up in defence of the Church's historic infrastructure and patterns of worship. But, in my experience, what it needs far more is passionate advocates for a Christian understanding that is deeply rooted in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic faith and applies that rich heritage and wisdom to our spiritually challenging times. ND

The Revd Canon Dr James Walters is chaplain to the London School of Economics.

[1] From the sermon preached at St Mary's, Bourne Street on Saturday 17th July 2021, at a Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of Fr Bill Scott. (see pp 12-13 in this issue)

New Directions congratulates Fr Guy Willis, a member of our Editorial Board, on his appointment to be Vicar of St Benet's, Kentish Town, in the Diocese of London. The institution and induction by the Bishop of Fulham will take place during a Solemn Mass in the Parish Church on Friday, 1st October at 7.00pm



The ordination to the priesthood of Frs John Blackburne and Alan Rimmer at All Saints, Notting Hill

On Leaving Ruislip

Simon Evans finds inspiration on the High Street

The people of St Martin's Ruislip have been very long-suffering, putting up with me as their vicar for 25 years. By today's standards, 25 years is lengthy for an incumbency, but in reality, it is a very short chapter in the long story of this parish, stretching back to Benedictine roots in the 11th century and its connection with the Abbey of Bec, in whose possession it was for about 400 years. As the years have gone by while I've been here, taking my place in choir day by day, at morning and evening prayer, it is that Benedictine strand of 'stabilitas' that has, in my mind, increasingly given meaning to my remaining here as long as I have. It is a happy coincidence that we gather today on the eve of St Benedict's Day. It is also a happy coincidence that I have been a regular visitor to the Abbey of Bec ever since I first went there shortly after my ordination as a priest, 40 years ago.

We are fortunate living here in Ruislip in lots of ways, with so many facilities on our doorstep, not least an abundance of places to do the weekly shopping, among them: Waitrose (part of the John Lewis group) - *Never knowingly under-sold;* Tesco - *Every Little helps* and Sainsbury's - *Taste the difference.*

I invite you now to walk with me up the High Street.
Let's begin at Waitrose
Never knowingly under-sold!
A claim that encourages us to believe we're getting good value, especially if you go for their *Essential* range. In the Christian faith we do have a gift of incalculable value, a gift that some of us realise is indeed *Essential:* essential to being fully and authentically human. As we heard in the first reading from the Book of Proverbs, the Wisdom of God, crying out to all who would listen, that is imparted by faith, is something we should value like "hidden treasure". An echo of this is found in the Prologue to the Rule of St Benedict when he describes the Lord crying out in the marketplace to those who long for life…real life, life with meaning and purpose.

In the Christian faith we do have a gift of incalculable value: essential to being fully and authentically human

A living faith in God is something we should value above all else. Those who have faith in God, who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, have a source of deep, interior strength, an essential anchor that will hold us in the storms of life. I wonder how much of the mental illness and emotional fragility that has been experienced by so many people during the pandemic once the external material props of our secular culture were swept away, could have been avoided if they had the anchor of faith to hold onto. "Prefer nothing to the love of God," says St Benedict. By doing so, we focus our lives on what is ultimately *essential.*

As you, the people of St Martin's enter a time of interregnum, put God first, so that this church will continue to be a real community of living faith. That faith is nurtured and kept strong by our regular commitment to participating in worship together. It is from the deep life of prayer here, especially in gathering to celebrate Mass on Sundays as well as in the daily offering of Mass and the rhythm of the daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, that we draw from the spring of living water, which is the life of Jesus Christ.

Now, let's travel up the High Street to Tesco!
Every little helps!
A well-known image of the Church, that St Paul describes in his First Letter to the Corinthians is that of a human body whose different limbs and organs work together to enable it to function. All have a part to play. So it is with us, who together make up the Church: the Body of Christ. We all have a part to play. One of the things we've worked at here at St Martin's, is encouraging as many people as possible to play an active part in the life and mission of this church.

Let no-one feel they don't have a part to play or that their commitment to the mission of this church is not vitally important. St Benedict makes it clear in his Rule that the contribution of everybody, from the youngest to the oldest is of equal value.

Every little helps: the part played by every single member of this church will be vital, especially during an interregnum as you prepare to welcome a new priest with whom to continue developing a vision for the future. As we heard in the second reading, taken from Chapter 3 of St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians: we are all continuing to build on the work of those who have been here before us. Ultimately, we are building on the foundation which is Jesus Christ. We all matter to God and we all matter to each other, usually more than many of us realise.

And now, to Sainsbury's.
Taste the difference!
My training incumbent at St Jude's, Peterborough, not always an easy character, was fond of challenging people with the question: "If Christianity was illegal, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" Well, Christianity is not illegal, but if we are Christians in any real sense, there will be, or should be, a difference about us, especially as the culture in which we live becomes increasingly secularised. And it is those versions of Christianity that are distinctive: where you can "taste the difference" that have something to offer people today. In today's culture, the rather restrained, respectable "Church of England" version of the Christian faith no longer has much cutting edge. In this country, we are now in a missionary situation in which authentic Christian evangelisation will be challenging and demanding, as well as rewarding.

St Martin's is in a stronger position than many churches

for there is something rich, something deep, something demanding about the way that Christian faith is taught and lived-out here. I realised right from the start of my time as vicar that there would be no need to be apologetic about the spiritual riches and demands of the Anglo-Catholic tradition that is here. It is a powerful and precious gift.

In this country, we are now in a missionary situation in which authentic Christian evangelisation will be challenging and demanding as well as rewarding

So many branches of the Christian church, especially some of the reformed churches of northern Europe and north America, have thought it necessary to embrace the ideologies of secular liberalism in order to appear "relevant", only to discover that they have lost their prophetic voice. Unsurprisingly, these are the churches that are shrinking fastest. I pray that this church will never simply blend into what one of our parishioners recently referred-to as "the bland mediocrity of the Church of England." Let this continue to be a community where it is possible to *taste the difference* of a living faith in Jesus Christ.

The Benedictine movement was born from a desire to stand out in contrast to the society and culture of Benedict's day. He believed that the society of the late-Roman era was decadent and had grown godless. In some ways it might have been similar to the secularised and materialistic, acquisitive society in which we live today. He saw the need to witness to something different; something of spiritual depth; something of real and eternal value; something that is *essential* to being fully human; living in community where *every little helps* – where everyone's contribution to the common life is significant; which is distinctive and different in flavour from the blandness, or the shallowness, or the staleness all around us in a culture that in so many ways bankrupt – a community where you can *taste the difference.*

A good model for us today and as we look to the future.

ND

Fr Simon Evans was Vicar of St Martin's, Ruislip, in the Diocese of London from 1996 until July 2021. This is an edited version of the sermon he preached at his farewell mass on 10 July.

Ghostly Counsel

Andy Hawes

Hanging On

I recently asked someone 'how are you getting on?' 'I am hanging on to my prayer rope,' was the reply. The Prayer Rope in the Orthodox tradition is a thin rope into which knots have been made, anything from twenty-five to a hundred plus. The rope is passed through the fingers and each knot marks the praying of the Jesus Prayer 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.' The Prayer Rope and the Jesus Prayer have their own distinctive and highly developed theology and spirituality. In this respect it is similar to the Rosary in the Western Tradition. The praying with each decade of beads, the introductory and concluding prayers have been developed into a way of prayer of all of its own. Indeed there are libraries of books on both the Jesus prayer and the Rosary.

The most important similarity, in the context of this article, is that they are both something a person can 'hang on to'. Whatever the state of mental or physical health, no matter how confused or distraught a person is emotionally or spiritually, they are both something to grasp hold of and to touch. This way of prayer, or communion with God, is most simply seen in the Holding Cross; this is a simple wooden cross, often carved prayerfully, that a person can take out of their pocket and bag and simply hold in their hand. No doubt readers can think of other examples; the Prayer Shawl is one, but I have seen medallions, and bracelets. These all provide a way of keeping in touch with the love of God.

Our faith is an incarnational faith, we believe that the Word became flesh, we believe we can touch the Lord in the sacrament of the altar, we believe that 'all things were made through him and without him nothing was made'. We are, each of us, incarnate spirit, and in this life our senses are given us to us as a means of enriching and developing the life of the Spirit in us. These ways of holding on to God are a simple and personal expression of what we believe as Christians.

They are also an antidote to any overemphasis on 'mental prayer': the prayer of meditation or prayer that relies on the written word or is any way liturgical. They prune prayer down to the quick: a simple act of will to open the heart to God. This prayer of 'holding on' my friend described springs from the source of all true prayer, a hunger, a desire, a need to experience God's love and mercy. In the case of the Payer Rope and the Rosary the repetition of short prayers accompany each knot or bead. The 'holding on' prayer is perhaps most helpful if the person praying has used these prayers and with accompanying touch and movement of the hand enough for it to become habitual. After a relatively short time the touch becomes associated with the prayer and due course the touch is the prayer: body and soul expressing the same prayer. I have no doubt that my friend, in 'holding on,' was engaged in a deep and active engagement with the Lord

Father Bill Scott Remembered

Lord Chartres on a much loved priest and pastor

"A true shepherd of the flock, a true father of his people will live on in their grateful memory even after death." The words of a great parish priest, St John of Kronstadt. They are proved by our gathering here to honour the memory of Fr Bill.

The memories we represent go back to the very beginning. Irene Reid remembers Bill as a baby arriving from the hospital. Then there are representatives from almost every stage of Bill's ministry. Some indication of the esteem in which Bill is held is conveyed by the presence of Lady Susan Hussey representing Her Majesty the Supreme Governor; the Earl of Rosslyn representing the Prince of Wales; Captain Sir Nicholas Wright representing the Princess Royal, Mrs Diana Duke representing Princess Alexandra and Bishop Christopher Hill, the former Clerk of the Closet. They are an honoured part of a festive gathering of friends who loved him and were faithful to him right to the end of his earthly pilgrimage and beyond.

So what was so special about him? He was certainly not an icon of ecclesiastical management. Engagements were recorded in pencil, not always legibly in a small black diary to which only he had access. One of his curates lent him a book on time management, planning and paper work but when after the passage of a month he asked for it back, Bill had to confess that he had lost it.

The gift of administration is doubtless very useful but it is not the heart of the priestly life. A mystery worshipper from the Ship of Fools web site reported on one of Bill's sermons delivered at Evensong here in St Mary's, "Father Bill spoke very movingly of how love makes the beloved see beauty within himself and how this in relation to God can enrich our prayer."

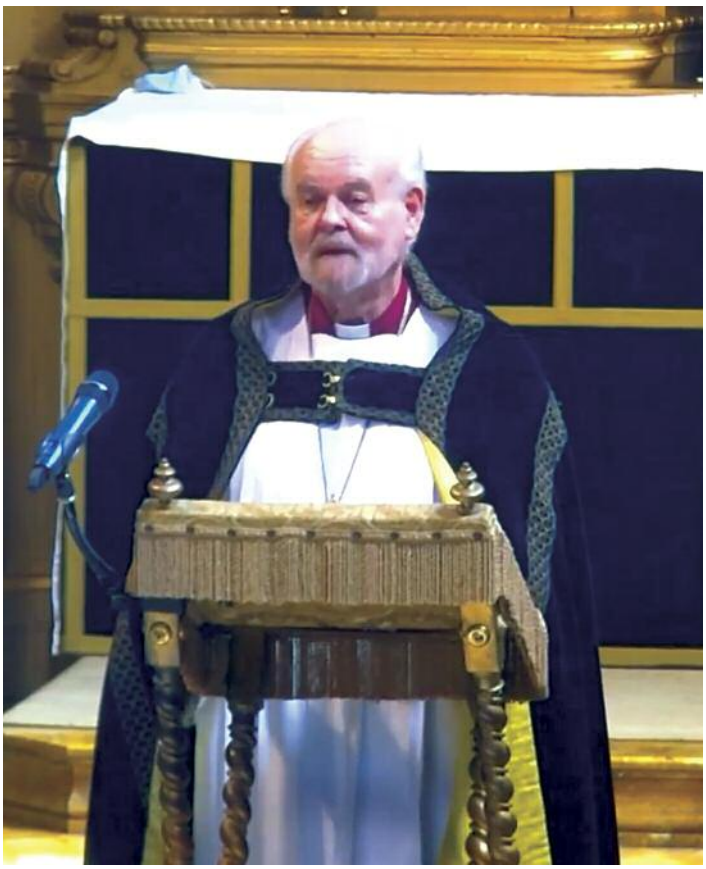
So what was special about him? He was certainly not an icon of ecclesiastical management

It was a theme to which he constantly returned. One woman recalled how, after a painful divorce, her life had been transformed by Bill. "I asked him what I needed to do to please the Lord and in one sentence he said, Allow him to love you. What he said healed me."

Bill was a great priest, glad to be with God for the sake of the people he served and glad to be with people of all sorts and conditions for the sake of God.

Paul in his second letter to the Christians of Corinth, writes [2Cor.II: 17] "Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary in Christ we speak before God with sincerity like men sent from God." When I ponder those words I think of Bill.

Priests are not called to be salesmen for God. He does not need our merchandising. Christian priesthood is not a profession; it is a vocation, a covenant, a kind of possession by the



holy and eternal God. As it says in the letter to the Hebrews [V: 4] "no man taketh this honour to himself but he that is called by God as was Aaron". Bill experienced this calling from an early age and despite periods of dryness and anxiety he never lost it.

But a genuine calling is always tested and deepened by suffering. The true priest is one "who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way for that he himself is compassed with infirmity". The letter to the Hebrews goes on to say that although Jesus Christ was the Son of God "yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered".

Bill was very sensitive and felt the trials, the slights and conflicts of church life very deeply but by prayer he turned pain into gifts for those many people who came to him for spiritual direction. The insight which he was given was never oppressive but experienced as a channel of healing. As one of the sisters at All Hallows Ditchingham said, "Bill was never taken in by any pretence he might meet in we sisters, because he was utterly without pretence himself. Often I found with him very little needed to be said."

Our partnership began when he was called to St Mary's to succeed the justly revered Fr John Gilling. I have always cherished Fr Gilling's advice to preachers here – "make it brief and highly superstitious". I recall Cardinal Basil Hume saying in those days that Bourne Street made his own Cathedral "look like a Wesleyan preaching shop".

Bill rapidly established his own gentle authority. St Mary's continued to be what it is now, unapologetically Anglo-Catholic but everything was done, in Bill's words, "decently and in order".

He was never happier than when he was at the altar caught up in the divine mystery and drawing people into communion with God. And out of the sanctuary he was the life and soul of innumerable parties. His fabled Christmas lunches in the ample dining room of the presbytery always assembled a colourful cast of characters, both priests and lay people who would otherwise have been alone. He was not a noisy person, thank God, but I can still hear his infectious laugh and distinctive Glaswegian tones.

There was never a wrong note. In this respect Royal service is a very severe test. Courts are full of temptations to pretence and gossip but Fr Bill from the kitchen to the drawing room to the throne room was unfailingly gracious and always the same to one and all. He was known and loved not as a courtier but as a priest first and last.

The memory of Bill is a reminder of essential things which we are in danger of forgetting as a Church. We live at a time of disorientation. There is a malaise which even afflicts some priests who seem to have no idea of who or what they are; no clear idea of what they are trying to do or why they are trying to do it.

This has tempted some to describe aspects of our church tradition including priestly ordination as "key limiting factors" as they search to connect with "young people".

We are in danger of reducing the Christ given sacramental character of the Church to a thin sociological concept

It is true that we have been overtaken by very rapid social change in which we can expect the Holy Spirit to reshape the Church. As an era in which perhaps we felt too much at home, passes away, it is right to look expectantly for the living forms that Jesus and his Church will take in the Christian centuries to come. But alongside this proper expectancy there is an insidious temptation to believe that we can abbreviate the birth pangs of the new age by drastic surgery when we really don't have the spiritual insight to understand what we are doing.

It seems to me that we are in particular danger of reducing the Christ-given sacramental character of the Church to a thin and insubstantial sociological concept. The Wesley brothers were well aware of the potential of lay led cells for praise, mutual encouragement and study of the bible. Such gatherings are as relevant and fortifying today as they were in the 18th century. But as the Wesleys would have been the first to point out they complement but cannot replace the Church. The Church worthy of the name is brought into being by baptism and nourished by the eucharist it grows into the place where we can be incorporated as very members of the body of Christ.

The reality of the Church is constituted not by the prescriptions of some committee but by the celebration of the transformative eucharist by an ordained priest in the presence of the community of the faithful. The priest is the representative of the Diocesan Bishop and together they are knots in the net which maintains the unity of the church in faithfulness to the teaching of the Apostles. This is how it has been over many centuries and in many different cultures.

As Richard Hooker said the eucharist properly celebrated is "performative and not merely illustrative". The Eucharist builds the Church and is not something the Church "puts on" to cater for our religious needs and tastes. It is the way appointed by Christ in which the world itself is re-membered through the growth of his body.

No doubt the impatience with inherited forms reflects a disappointment with so much church life that many people currently experience. It has always been so. As Origen wrote in the third century "If Jesus had good reason to weep over Jerusalem, he will have much better reason to weep over the church". The church should be a restorative cell capable of neutralising the cancers that are gnawing at our society but as we know the reality is so often depressingly anaemic. But demolition is no answer.

Andrew Brown, one of the shrewdest commentators on the religious scene in our day, observes that one of the symptoms of extreme hypothermia is the urge to remove all one's clothes even in a blizzard. Panic is a faithless and fruitless response to the challenge we face. It was not Bill's response. In remembering him we return with renewed thanksgiving to the life and prayer of an utterly credible priest and witness, Fr Bill.

Jesus said "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world". We give thanks for the way in which Fr Bill enacted this truth among us day by day. We honour his faithfulness and his profound humanity. We miss his presence and friendship but we rejoice in his intercessions for us now and our future communion with him in the life of the world to come. May light perpetual shine upon him! ND

A Sermon preached at St Mary's, Bourne Street on Saturday 17th July 2021, at a Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of Fr Bill Scott by The Right Reverend and Right Honourable The Lord Chartres, GCVO ChStJ PC FSA OBE FBS

PARISH DIRECTORY

Please note that the parish directory will return for the November 2021 edition of New Directions. Mike Silver, Advertising Manager, will be contacting Society parishes shortly regarding their inclusion in the directory. If you would like to register your parish's interest at an early stage in that process, then please feel free to contact Mike via

silver43mike@gmail.com

Thank you.

ROYAL ARMS - 2



The peak time for production of Royal Arms (ND November 2016) would seem to be the late 17th and 18th centuries. Many Stuart arms must have been erected after the Restoration. A fine example of the arms of the Merry Monarch is found at **Ludlow** (**1**: Salop), inscribed CIIR and 1674.

Another fine set of arms, from the Reign of George III is at **Repton** (**2**: Derbys), dating from 1772.

More unusual is the set at **Corby** (**3**: Lincs), from the reign of King George I, which bears the date 1726 and forms a lozenge-shaped display, after the fashion more normally associated with hatchments.

At **Bircham Newton** (**4**: Norfolk) the arms hang above the chancel arch – which would have been the position of many arms two or three centuries ago. They bear the inscription: 'Painted by J Bloss Groom at Hunstanton-Hall Aug 7 1788.'

The church at **Burnham Norton** (Norfolk) has two sets of arms. For many years the George IV arms (**5**) on canvas, of 1826, covered up the earlier arms, painted on board (**6**). These have the initials of William III and are dated 1697, but the shield bears the simple Stuart arms, without the Nassau shield for William, so are probably Caroline arms given new initials (and date) - churchwardens liked to save money! The George IV arms again bear the 'signature' of the painter: 'Zech. Fenn 1826 Painter Walsingham.' ND











Southern Cross

Fr Alan Cole reminds us of the search by All Saints' Brisbane for a new incumbent

Assuming the post filled, l went quiet about offering bridging relief while the search was live. I may not be the only Aussie priest in UK ready to help for a short time. ND readers may be aware of catholic parishes (often with SSC priests) managing determinedly under unsympathetic diocesans and with no 'mutual flourishing' support as in England.

Society bishops here may not be unsympathetic to catholic parishes abroad; but they are loath to spare slender resource of new ordinands for valuable pastoral experience outside Britain.

Knowing Brisbane and All Saints' well from seminary days, when thoroughgoing catholic primates and archbishops in Queensland taught and lived the Faith, I know also of another All Saints.' This one is in East St Kilda (Archdiocese of Melbourne). Under its present vicar and his staff of vigorous parishioners across the age spectrum, this All Saints' would provide outstanding pastoral experience for a visiting assistant curacy (up to three years) to any catholic deacon or priest keen to extend his appreciation of inner suburban parish ministry.

Gone are days when recently ordained catholic clergy might hope for 'plum' appointments in the grand old Anglo-Catholic strongholds of England's greater cities. Under such constraints as the present cohort of well-formed priests, the earnest prayer,"Lord give us priests" is no longer a local call, but global.



My prayer and call is for Christ's Cross to be replanted in support of catholic parishes down under. The Faith is as vital there as it is here. What value can be put upon a term of catholic witness in the antipodes? It can do no less than to bring back strength to the established church in what was once "The mother country, Our Lady's Dowry".

Remember in prayer churches of All Saints,' one in Brisbane, one in Melbourne and many here. May the Lord enrich and nurture them in faith and mission, who have been true to the apostolic heritage at least since Tractarian times. ND



David Talbot ordained deacon at St Katherine, Bournemouth, on 5 July

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Editorial

The Director of Forward in Faith contributes this month's Editorial

The forthcoming General Synod elections bring with them mixed feelings. We want to be represented at debates, to have our distinctive voice heard, to support the Church we belong to in all its activities as best we can, but we do so in the full knowledge that some of those debates are likely to enter territory which we assert are not matters for this corner of Christendom to decide on its own.

Alien though it is to many a contemporary ear, the sacraments do not belong us – we are their custodians on behalf of the universal church, and we are not free to improvise in the manner of their administration. Presidency at the Eucharist, the nature and form of marriage and the seal of the confessional are at the core of our understanding of the sacraments and their nature and character cannot be amended, any more than altering our understanding of priesthood 30 years ago could be, without causing a diminution of our own standing as a church and an associated worsening of our ecumenical relationships with the wider church.

This does not mean that we should be downcast, however. We are inheritors of a joyful faith and for those of us who have had the good fortune to attend familiar liturgies of the fully re-opened Shrine at Walsingham in recent weeks will have experienced that joy at first hand. Others will have felt that same joy as parish life begins to return to something like normality.

We cannot and should not turn our backs on current developments in the Church of England, but we can delight in those aspects of church life which we know to come from God, and we can be confident in proclaiming why that is the case.

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Staying with the theme of the General Synod elections, it may be tempting to see that at least some of the answers to the challenges we face lie in a recently launched campaign to 'save the parish.' It is undoubtedly a well-meaning initiative, and we can share in its ambition to preserve the parish as the fundamental basis for pastoral and sacramental care. And we can certainly align ourselves with one of the underlying sentiments of the campaign that parishes must stop being seen as a financial burden to dioceses and to the national church and instead be supported as the basic units of the Church's mission and evangelism.

However, we also know that, in our calling to be Catholic Christians, the approach being advocated is not sufficient in and of itself. We need to preserve parishes, naturally, but we also need to be mindful of what is taught and practised in those parishes, including adherence to the sacraments of the Church and its historic order.

Further, we have become ever more conscious in these straitened times of the need for diocesan structures, and groupings of parishes within those structures, which allow for succession planning so that there is a long-term future for Society parishes and for Society clergy. Without that guarantee of succession planning, the preservation of parishes for their own sake means little to traditional Catholics in the Church of England.

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The Covid-19 pandemic has been shocking in its unexpectedness and in its impact. Tens of thousands of our fellow citizens have died prematurely, many more are suffering from the longer-term health effects of contracting Covid and still more have had employment and education opportunities ruined by the huge disruption which a pandemic of this kind has caused.

It is only natural that many of us are reflecting on what it means and what we should say or do in response. We know that there are no easy answers, but we do know that our priority as Christians is to pray for the dead and to care for the sick.

It is premature to reach firm conclusions as to which of the temporary changes will become permanent either in our wider society or in the Church. In church circles there has been much talk about streaming, live and recorded of both devotional material and liturgies. We shall have to wait and see which of those outputs will persist and prove to be of long-term value.

In the meantime, there is an emerging thought that the trauma of the pandemic will help us focus on what really matters – what really matters and what constitutes peripheral noise. It would be a valuable strengthening of our witness if, as part of that focusing, we can recommit ourselves to regular attendance at Mass, prayer and devotion at other times of the week, and care for our neighbours, wherever they might be.

Tom Middleton

the way we live now

Christopher Smith has been back to the British Museum

This business of having a social life again is exhausting, isn't it? It has been good to be out and about again, and, among other things, to be back in the galleries. I was keen to catch the *Becket* exhibition at the British Museum, the Becket in question being St Thomas of Canterbury. Because the return to normal is being rationed in certain quarters, I had to stand 15 feet back from the chap in front of me as he showed his ticket to the woman behind the desk, then seconds later, he and I were standing inches away from each other looking at the first exhibit. Work that one out.

The exhibition comprised some familiar objects from the British Museum itself, and some from further afield, including some panels of mediaeval stained glass from Canterbury Cathedral. But there was a panel of text at the very end of the exhibition which set a train of thought running for me. It read: 'To this day Becket divides opinion. For some he remains a martyr and a saint, for others a traitor and a villain. Either way his is a remarkable life, the story of Thomas of London born in Cheapside, who defied a king and paid the ultimate price.'

It is, I suppose, the GSCE-style dichotomy that I find irritating. It is the mindset which finds it necessary for someone to 'divide opinion.' I shouldn't think St Thomas of Canterbury really divides opinion in twenty-first century Britain, does he? He is undoubtedly a saint, having been declared one by the Church, which is the competent authority to make such a declaration, as the king was the competent authority to declare him Chancellor of England. But a villain? The worst insult that he had previously endured in recent years was being described as the 'founder of gesture politics.'

I love the British Museum, but nowadays it tends to be given to a bit of historical revisionism. The *Nero* exhibition, which is still open, purports to show that the Emperor Nero was unexpectedly cuddly. In the words of the 'plain English guide,' 'Nero looked after his people. He built houses and markets. He provided food. He entertained them. Nero even performed on stage.' Mmm. Nero murdered his step-brother in AD 55, his mother in 59, and his wife Octavia in 62. He kicked his second wife, Poppaea, to death in 65, killing their unborn child as well, then 'married' a boy called Sporus because he looked a bit like her, and had him castrated. And in 64, Rome burned, Nero blamed the Christians, and the first state persecution of our brothers and sisters began. It may be perfectly true that his reign started well under the guidance of Seneca, but Nero forced Seneca to commit suicide in 65.

As rebellions against his rule began to break out in various parts of the empire, Nero killed himself in 68, by which time he was already regarded as a tyrant. I'd have thought that one of the things people visiting the exhibition might have known about him was that Nero had set the ball rolling for the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire on-and-off until Constantine's Edict of Milan in 313. But in the labelling of the exhibits—and the texts are available on the British Museum's website—Christianity is only mentioned once: 'One of the defining events of Nero's reign was the great fire of Rome in AD 64. It raged for nine days, devastating the city. Nero led the relief effort and supervised reconstruction. Despite fires being common in Rome, he was later accused of starting the blaze. To reconcile the gods, Nero blamed a new sect of Jewish origin. Its members later became known as Christians.'

Clearly, we are meant to see Nero as the luminary who 'led the relief effort,' even though it was widely believed that he had started the fire himself in order to rebuild Rome in accordance with his own mighty ego. But somehow, in the revisionist world of the B.M., the 'new sect of Jewish origin' was worth blaming in order to appease the gods, and thousands of Christians died on Nero's orders.

As Newton said, 'For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction,' and I suppose we see something of that here. There are always academic brownie points to be earned by suggesting that the truth about a particular historical event is different from the received view. It's all well and good if correct, but it can be misleading and counter-productive, and prone to personal ideology. Just to take one small but relevant example, why did Geoffrey de Ste Croix, who was an Oxford historian and a fellow of my old college (though before my time), seek to downplay the suffering, and indeed number, of martyrs under the Roman persecutions? Because he was a Marxist atheist. We should never assume that there is any such thing as 'pure' research.

Having said that, I don't doubt that it would have been possible to have had a courteous disagreement with Geoffrey de Ste Croix, who would never have gone out of his way to offend. (Towards the end of his life he is said to have lamented, rather endearingly, that 'my memory has preceded me to the grave.') The problem in public discourse now is that the tendency is always to push outwards, and to ignore the complexities and subtleties of a situation. And that leads to a perceived need to caricature other opinions and demonise them as extreme. And the result of that, of course, is an ever-increasing polarisation of opinion, to the point where two people of different views can't even have a conversation about a subject on which they differ. Perhaps the Faith and Order Commission have a point when they advocate the art of 'disagreeing well'!

views, reviews and previews

art

PAULA REGO

Tate Britain
until 24th October, 2021

Paula Rego DBE (1935-) was educated at the only Anglican school in Portugal. Which is to say quite a lot. She went to St Julian's in Lisbon because her beloved father was both anti the Catholic Church and an Anglophile. It's not clear that any English cool rubbed off on her. Rego's work is famously passionate, anti-clerical, anti-authoritarian and is rooted in the folk tales of Iberia.

And it is correct to say Iberia. True, it is always Portugal which she paints just as her women are often a part of herself. Yet Rego is greatly in debt to Velasquez and to Goya. Goya especially in her bleak, unsparing view of humanity (leavened by a sense of humour not found in Goya) and in her love of illustration and her great skill in etching and printmaking.

After finishing school in the UK – the curators laud her as 'transgressive' and there's no higher praise in the vocabulary of the Arts Establishment, but it's hard not to think that she is very much an haut bourgeois rebel — Rego went to art school at the Slade. She chose not to follow the fashionable New York driven abstract modernism, preferring collage and surrealism. She later said that etching and printmaking were among the few parts of the course which she enjoyed. In her early years she was also an artist's model (later she would claim that models had an equal share to the artist in the creation of artworks), only becoming a full-time artist in the early sixties.

As the catalogue exhaustively repeats, her career upto the mid-seventies was marked by fierce opposition to the Portugese Estado Novo, the Salazar dictatorship based on country, church and family. So ferocious was her opposition to the regime – in this she followed both her father and grandfather – that some of her work was considered too excessive to be shown in this country. However, she was able to move to and fro freely between Portugal and the UK before finally settling in London in 1972.

The sixties and seventies were difficult for Rego at the personal level. Her husband (Victor Willing) had been diagnosed with MS in 1966, the family business was seized by the Leftist revolutionaries in 1974 and she herself had begun 40 years' of analysis for depression (from 1966). The depression and the cure which involved bringing out the shadow side of her experience, the relationship with Willing both in what had been an open marriage (the transgression loving catalogue tiptoes around this) and in his growing dependence on her, were reflected in the themes of her work in what was to be her most fruitful period, the eighties and nineties. With Willing's encouragement – the catalogue recognises that the UK art scene was not a bad place for Rego – she moved away from collage to paint (and eventually pastel) and to story-telling, a move crystallised when in 1990 she became in effect the first Artist in Residence at the National Gallery.



This period is the heart of the exhibition (Tate had the wisdom to buy her works early). And these works are psychologically demanding in the way Goya's are. But first, and this is largely ignored in the presentation of the show, they are powerful in their colour and the skill with which that colour is applied. The room in the show devoted to the 'Possession' paintings is breath-taking not because of its subject matter but first and foremost because of the colours of the painting. The same goes for the 'Angel' (1998) and 'Bride' (1994).

Rego is a stunning colourist and her attitude to colour is typical of her approach. She has said that she uses pastels because she is a drawer rather than a painter, a good, technical description of her narrative style. And the critics say that pastel allows her to be more aggressive in her subversion of the male dominated art world. Which may be true, but Rego also says the advantage of pastel is that it stops her from smoking all the time because she has to use both hands when applying the pastel colours. So, we have the slightly rackety bohemianism, the painting out of her love of narrative and the ferocity of her feelings. All this maybe more playful than the catalogue article which suggests men deserve everything that's coming to them from Rego's disproportionate off stage, hinted at revenges.

And to say that is not to take away from the political causes in Rego's work – its support for abortion, possibly based on personal experience, and her concerns about female genital mutilation and the ill treatment of women by men. But Rego is a complex person and these are complex works which cannot be reduced to the purely political. It would be interesting, for instance, to know how much of her anger is a reaction to her own inner demons, something which her therapy might have dealt with. Or, ironically, how much of her anger is in the spirit of psalm 137, often bowdlerised by the powers that be but very much an expression of suffering and the anger it provokes.

This comprehensive show is rarely comfortable. It provokes and unsettles. The illustrations of nursery rhymes are not for children. But it is well worth the visit.

Owen Higgs

books

DELIVERANCE

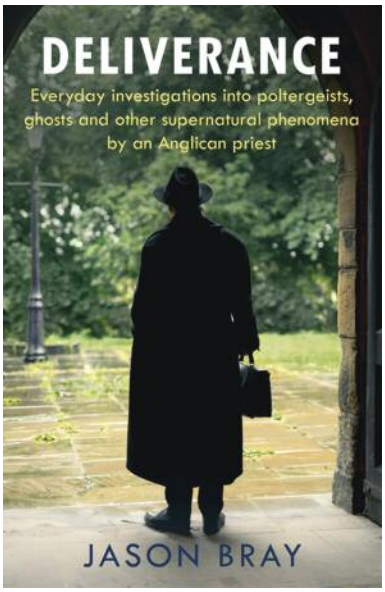
Jason Bray

Coronet 2021 £20

ISBN 9781529336252 304pp

It can still surprise people to learn that Anglican dioceses have experts appointed to deal with the ministry of Deliverance, meaning cases which appear to involve the paranormal. The Revd Dr Jason Bray fulfils that role in the Welsh diocese of St Asaph, and this book aims to give an account of his work, written for a general readership. Such a work is useful, because it is one of the odder features of our secular or neo-pagan society that people may dismiss the possibility of God while displaying a ready belief in spirits, good and bad.

The nearest most parish priests are likely to come to such matters is the occasional request to bless a house where something is "not quite right", or dealing with teenagers who have scared themselves playing with Ouija boards. The author explains that the remit of deliverance ministers goes wider than this. They are the ones called to investigate cases of poltergeist activity (well documented, and not to be confused with anything ghostly), houses with unexplained troubles like "cold spots" in them, hauntings due to place memories or sometimes the unquiet spirits of the dead, and instances of possible human possession by evil spirits.



Fr Bray, most commendably, tries to defuse the Hollywood-inspired glamour surrounding such things. (Extravaganzas such as *The Exorcist* bear hardly any likeness to reality, where the full exorcism of persons is rarely carried out.) Like most of his fellow workers in this area, he brings to his task a healthy degree of scepticism. Those trained for Deliverance ministry always consider medical and psychological reasons to explain reported unusual phenomena before they accept the presence of the supernatural. Also, they are on the look-out for hoaxes. (Claiming that your council accommodation is haunted can be quite a good trick for obtaining a move to somewhere better.) The author accepts the paranormal, of which he has experience, but does not automatically look for bogies round every corner.

As I have said, this is very much an introductory book. It would have benefitted from some more stringent editing. Given the anecdotal nature of much of its content, extended reported conversations become repetitive and wearisome, and there are pages taken up with unnecessary details about such matters as Benedictine life and the filling in of marriage registers. Also, the author occasionally slips into that kind of jokey talk which we clergy can adopt when trying put non-churchgoers at their ease. "I am the person at the front of the church on a Sunday dressed in a white robe and a coloured poncho who sings weird chants at you and tells you how much God loves you" might (but only *might*) raise a giggle in conversation, but in print it grates, giving the impression of treating one's priestly work flippantly, which Fr Bray clearly does not do.

Given the book's purpose, deep theological reflection on paranormal phenomena and the possibility of demonic possession is not to be expected. Those seeking fuller treatment should turn to the older book edited by Michael Perry and also called *Deliverance*, which is still available. It is clear, however, that we should not dismiss such matters too quickly.

Fr Bray knows the effectiveness of blessing houses and people, and of saying a Requiem Mass where appropriate, and he makes absolutely clear that this is no "white magic", but bringing disturbed situations into the orbit of the healing work of Christ and his conquest of evil. This presents an interesting question. As Fr Bray points out (and my own experience confirms what he says), some church buildings, not necessarily old, have "bad vibes", and exert an unhealthy influence on those who serve in them. Why should this be so, if the sacraments are celebrated there regularly, and what is the source of the trouble?

The book leaves us with two points to note. The first is that the Deliverance ministry – at least, beyond the house blessings mentioned above — is emphatically work for trained professionals who are under the authority of their bishop. Secondly, we need to ask ourselves whether we take seriously enough the truth that as Christians we are involved in a conflict with spiritual wickedness. Too many clergy appear uncomfortable with teaching the reality of the Holy Angels, and are therefore inclined to play down the possibility of corruption in the spiritual realm. Our Lord and the writer of Ephesians had no doubts about the matter, and it will do us good to learn again that the petition "deliver us from evil" is a form of exorcism prayer and means what it says.

Barry A. Orford

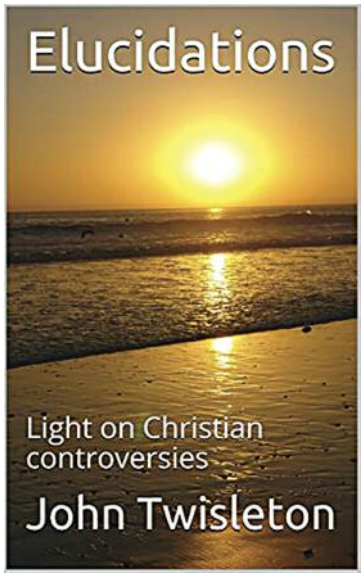
ELUCIDATIONS
Light on Christian Controversies

John Twisleton

ISBN 9798718788198 £4.99

Fr Twisleton gathers together here a series of brief essays (few longer than four short pages) on topics which are controversial among contemporary Christians. Among them we find Anti-Semitism, Evolution and the Bible, Hell, Experience of the Holy Spirit, Marian controversy and the Ordination of Women. We must commend the author for tackling such issues head-on.

A self-confessed Anglo-Catholic, Fr Twisleton's writing fits clearly into the balancing act of Scripture, Tradition and Reason which has distinguished Anglican theological method, and it is refreshing to engage with a Christian writer whose background lies in the sciences. Would that more scientist-theologians would put their heads above the parapet



to challenge the shallow scientism which is pedalled enthusiastically in the media.

The author provides concise material for those who might be wondering whether they can with intellectual honesty commit themselves to Christian belief, and he does a valuable job in clearing away some of the ludicrous and ignorant travesties of Christianity which have common currency. No reader is likely to agree with him at all points (I do not), but anyone looking at these pieces honestly will have to accept that being a Christian is not a guarantee of being stupid or superstitious.

Does the brevity of presentation work? Yes and no. The essays frequently give the basis for thought and discussion, as in the excellent chapter on Reasonable Faith. On the other hand, there are some topics which are frustrating because they require lengthier treatment. For example, the question of euthanasia cannot adequately be dealt with when crammed into a chapter also dealing with abortion. The question of Assisted Dying is a pressing one, given that secular humanists are relentlessly pursuing their case to see it permitted by Parliamentary legislation. Informed Christian engagement with this is essential. Perhaps *New Directions* might like to devote an issue to the subject.

Fr Twisleton's commitment to the scriptures is welcome, though he is sometimes less critical in his approach to them than he might be. Occasionally he tips over from valuing tradition into traditionalism. Tradition is not static and cannot avoid the legitimate challenges of widening scientific knowledge and increasing human understanding. Also, the book is a slightly uneasy mixture of doctrinal matters and Church practice. But it packs much solid thought into a limited space, and shows that Catholic Anglicans have a significant contribution to make to Church reflection if they are given the opportunity to do so.

Barry A. Orford

LET US BREAK BREAD TOGETHER! Recipes from All Saints Notting Hill

All Saints Notting Hill £10

My last review for New Directions dealt with politics and faith, this month I am taking a different turn to focus on another one of my passions – food! This wonderful collection of recipes has been collected together to mark the 160th Anniversary of the consecration of All Saints Notting Hill; a parish known to many readers as a centre of hospitality and pastoral care for Christians in this country and around the world. The international, and in particular Caribbean, flavour of the book pays tribute to this. There are of course recipes from Sweden as well where All Saints continues to have links with Sister Gerd Swensson.

I have on my shelves a large collection of cookbooks, perhaps an obsessive collection of them to be quite honest. My favourites are never those by famous chefs, like Nigella Lawson or Fanny Craddock, but by local community groups and churches. 'Let us Break Bread Together!' is certain to become a favourite of mine. Primarily, the interest lies in the recipes collected by parishioners of the parish, but the compilers gave done a great work in soliciting contributions from people in all parts of British society. So there are recipes from several bishops, politicians (including the Prime Minister), members of the House of Lords (as a Playschool Baby my favourite being from Baroness Benjamin!), as well as various figures in the life of the church.

Perhaps the contributions of interest to many will be those from members of the Royal Family. There are recipes from HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, HRH The Duchess of Kent, and HRH Princess Alexandra. It is wonderful to think that members of the Royal Family and their households are willing to take the time to contribute to these collections which will help the ministry and mission of one of our parishes.

So where will I begin when it comes to cooking: I think I'll begin with a negroni from the Bishop of Fulham, follow it with Lockdown Lentil Soup from William Nye, then feast on some Bobotie and finish off with some Scrummy Tucks. I could spend the afternoon with a large glass or three of rum punch from Allyson Williams MBE. All in all this recipe book is a joy to read and to contemplate cooking your way through. Get yourself a copy, and why not buy one for someone for Christmas!

Available from All Saints Notting Hill for £10 including P +P. E-mail philippetercorbett@googlemail.com to order a copy

Michael Talbot

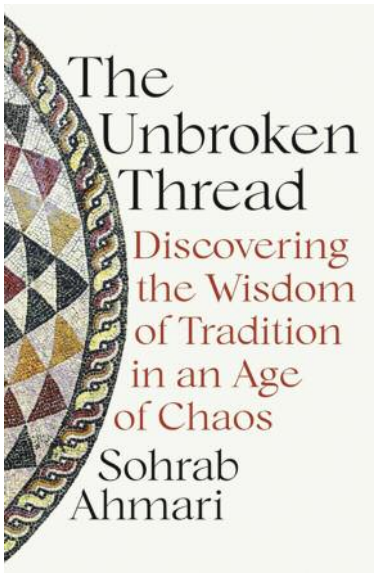
THE UNBROKEN THREAD Discovering the Wisdom of Tradition in an Age of Chaos

Sohrab Ahmari

Hodder & Stoughton 2021 £14.75
ISBN 978-1529364507 320pp

Is new-est true-est? Not always, but it takes a brave soul to assemble the evidence against. With the benefits of economic and technological advance comes a price tag linked to illusory emancipation of intellect and will from constraints upheld by age old wisdom across faith traditions. Sohrab Ahmari outlines the price we are paying from such unshackling from the past across western society. His parents fled religious oppression in Iran and their son is concerned for his son, Maximilian, to escape the more subtle oppression of 'Me-first' contemporary liberalism. A Roman Catholic, Ahmari draws on great minds in his own and wider faith traditions in challenging the cult of the contemporary, especially where it undermines the common good. His starting point is the graphic self-sacrifice in Auschwitz of St Maximilian Kolbe, his son's namesake. Kolbe exercised his freedom in giving his life on behalf of another prisoner in imitation of Christ. Such use of freedom for the good of others is set forth as a core ideal applauded down the centuries.

'For millennia, philosophical, ethical



and theological reflection was commonplace among the intellectually curious. But the wisdom that some of the greatest minds across the centuries continue to offer us remains routinely ignored in our modern pursuit of self-fulfilment, economic growth and technological advancement… To be or do whatever we want, subject only to consent, with everything morally neutral or relative - are at odds with the true freedom that comes from the pursuit of the collective good. Rather than the insatiable drive to satisfy our individual appetites, this collective good involves self-sacrifice and self-control. It requires us to diminish so that others may grow. What responsibility do we have to our parents? Should we think for ourselves? Are sexual ethics purely a private matter? How do we justify our lives?… By plumbing the depths of each question, the book underscores the poverty of our contemporary narratives around race, gender, privilege (and much else), exposing them as symptoms of a deep cultural crisis in which we claim a false superiority over the past, and helps us work our way back to tradition, to grasp at the thin, bare threads in our hands, while we still can.'

Sohrab Ahmari is a high profile journalist and edits the New York Times. As a storyteller he speaks truth laterally and powerfully as for example in his telling the tale of Alexander Solzhenitsyn. This is a tale parallel to that of his own family. Solzhenitsyn, on escaping Soviet totalitarianism, shocked everyone by raising the question: 'Could it be that the liberal West, having reduced freedom to a bare legalism and the absence of natural and traditional barriers, was also unfree, only in a different way? This was Solzhenitsyn's early intuition, and the more time he spent in the West, observing its ways and attempting to navigate them, the more the thought gathered strength in his mind. The loss of many barriers against the individual will, he concluded, had paradoxically robbed Western life of its true freedom. An excess of rights had paved the road to a new serfdom.' In his book Ahmari draws on similar countercultural figures such as John Henry Newman, C.S.Lewis and feminist Andrea Dworkin's whose life and thought exposed how our ideology of sexual freedom masks a deeper unfreedom. More widely the author presents the wisdom of Confucius in relation to family life and Thomas Aquinas on the rationality of faith. In addressing twelve questions he exposes strands of age old wisdom designed to stay unbroken or unfrayed. From these he weaves advice for his son, including 'to read old books before new ones. To make all your big decisions by the light of sound authorities, above all that of the Holy Church… to recognize that the moral precepts you expound demand to be acted upon-by you, in your immediate, everyday surroundings, rarely in some lofty domain of the mind.' As its subtitle implies, this book opens up a vision of life lived in an age of chaos yet anchored in solid ideals secured by owning the wisdom of tradition.

John Twisleton

STILL LOVE LEFT
Faith and Hope in Later Life

Michael Jackson

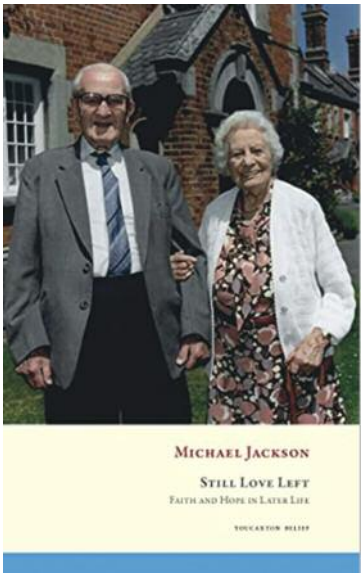
YoUCaxton 2021 £9.99

ISBN 978-1913425685 155pp

'What is the secret of your long innings? Have you any tips to pass on to us? Try and grow used to the place of every star and forget your own dark house' (KW Gransden). It is indeed true that the wise are those who have learnt to see the bigger picture in a 'long innings' and value it in their lives. For those of us who are Christians, that bigger picture is framed by the incarnate God who loves us to the end.' Such conviction about the call of love permeates this book by Michael Jackson which seeks to engage with the challenges and encouragements that surround ageing. Framed by three obvious perspectives - our past, present and future - the book draws on the author's experience in serving the elderly as a priest in Hampshire and Yorkshire. There are numerous quotations but they feed into the book's clear structure: addressing how we make the most of our life experience, grow in contentment and engage with the certainty of death.

Reaching outside of ourselves, from 'our own dark house,' to others and to God is set forth as the key to healthy ageing. I was particularly struck by examples of people growing in patience, resilience and humility through hardship and the call to build gratitude for the riches we can see in life if we choose to do so. 'The practice of gratitude provides the nursery slopes for contemplative ageing' (Ann Morisy). Taking the rough with the smooth is a grace, especially the need to depend on others which can be alien to many of us. 'There is an art to knowing when to let some of the independence of spirit go, and acknowledge we need help and accept that graciously. If we can do that we can achieve what one writer in her eighties calls 'heroic helplessness'. As WH Vanstone outlines in his classic 'The Stature of Waiting,' devotion to Christ in the helplessness of his passion complements devotion to Jesus in the active ministry we share with him by the Spirit. 'Revealingly Vanstone says… 'The word 'passion' does not mean, exclusively or even primarily, 'pain': it means dependence, exposure, waiting, being no longer in control of one's situation, being the object of what is being done.'

Outside of the Gospels the scriptural focus of the book lies in Paul's candour about bearing hardship expressed in 2 Corinthians 4:16: 'So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.' Michael Jackson draws out the power latent in these words in the face of ageing, especially deterioration of body and mind. 'At the heart of living well as we age is a realisation that spiritually we can remain as active as ever, renewed daily by God's grace. Being aware of this can give us the understanding that we can continue to grow.' In one of several autobiographical passages Jackson writes of his mother



contracting Alzheimer's disease. "Does she still know you?' they would ask. I know that this was well meant. They were in a sense empathising with how awful it must be not to be recognised by someone you love. But I came to find this an unhelpful enquiry which grated because I felt it carried a sort of sub-text along the lines of 'I do sympathise because if she doesn't know you then there must be no ongoing relationship.' To that sentiment I wanted to protest 'well actually it doesn't matter because I know her.' I had such knowledge and love of her as to be able to continue to sustain the relationship even if she was unable to articulate that for herself. It was my calling to enter into her passion and be her memory.'

Ageing has a future perspective where there is the gift of faith. St Francis de Sales explains preparing for death as akin to transplanting a tree to another soil. 'One must dexterously disengage each little root one after another, and since we are about to be transplanted from this world in death, we must withdraw our affections from the earth.' Acceptance of the loss of physical and mental faculties, naturally seen as regrettable, releases us for our great forward journey. Jackson presents cultivation of the spiritual life as a vital complement to such acceptance since it deepens love and 'over love's depths only the surface is wrinkled' (RS Thomas). Ageing brings with it the spiritual challenge to tackle the fear of death in which putting faith in Christ's resurrection is key. 'The timeless — if only we can let go, and open ourselves to receive — can heal our past, make our present rich and full, and give hope for what is to come.' As the book's title and subtitle affirm, through keeping faith and hope in God, contemplative ageing guarantees there is love left at and beyond the end of life. In contentment we are invited to 'let our last thinks be all thanks' (WH Auden).

John Twisleton

VICARS OF WALSINGHAM 1921 – 2021

William Davage

Little Walsingham PCC, 2021 £10
ISBN 9781527292895

Such is the centrality of Walsingham to Anglo-Catholicism that just the title of this attractively produced book will immediately appeal to all those with an interest in the movement. And nor do its contents disappoint; a series of fascinating insights emerge from its pages into the lives and ministry of eight parish priest resident in the pretty North Norfolk village of Little Walsingham and its parish church of St Mary's. It is all the more admirable for being a piece of research intensely focused on a place, its people and associated events and yet produced during a period in which access to contributors was severely restricted.

The book has been released to mark the centenary of Fr Alfred Hope Patten becoming the incumbent. Readers will be well aware of the significance of this appointment to the Anglo-Catholic movement for it was Fr Hope Patten who went on – ten years later in 1931 and thus an anniversary in its own right this year – to restore the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. The Shrine developed in such a way that Fr Hope Patten was the first and last priest in modern times to hold both the Shrine and the parochial roles in tandem. The splitting of the role set up a succession of parish priests whose ministry in that place has formed a worthy parallel to that of the Priest Administrators based at the Shrine. It also inadvertently provided the opportunity for this book to be written.

While the Shrine has a national and international profile, those outside Anglo-Catholicism might well wonder how the interest in the parish church arises. The best answer, I imagine, would come from the many thousands of pilgrims who, as part of their pattern of pilgrimage over the last 45 years or so, have attended Mass in the parish church on a Sunday morning. So what can readers hope to take away from this book? I would say three things: a sense of the people, a sense of the place and a sense of the changes – often dramatic – which the Church experienced during the century in question.

On the people, it is of course entirely to be expected that the book provides biographical details of the eight parish priests and accounts of their period of ministry in Walsingham. Elements of the chapter on Fr Hope Patten, who we learn – among other things – should really be referred to as Fr Patten, may already be familiar to readers from other published material or from their own pilgrimages to the Shrine. However, you will need to buy the book to find out which incumbent managed to rebuild St. Mary's just over three years after a fire which wreaked terrible damage, which two of the incumbents also acted as preachers on the local Methodist Circuit and which incumbent always carried a purple stole in his pocket in case of immediate pastoral need.

The author quite rightly does not shy away from charting not only the highs

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Email : stephenbellion@yahoo.com
Telephone : 01590 671733 Mobile: 07706347577

but also the lows experienced by the subjects of his work. Not only does this make it an authentic account – there would inevitably have been a temptation to romanticise events given the location and its place at the heart of Anglo-Catholicism – but it also reminds us very firmly that *"Domine, non sum dignus."*

On the place, the book sets out the challenges faced by Anglo-Catholic clergy, often accustomed to ministering in towns and cities, adjusting to rural life, albeit bolstered by the seasonal influx of pilgrims to the Shrine. The role played by the parish patrons, the Gurney family, is another theme running through the book – at times supportive, at other times puzzled by the churchmanship on display. Readers will also gain an understanding of the development of the benefice and the shifting level of support available for the churches in the benefice outside Little Walsingham.

On the changes in the Church, we gain insights into the impacts "on the ground" of the initial rise of Anglo-Catholicism, and often Anglo-Papalism, of the edicts following Vatican II, and the Church of England's decision to ordain women to the priesthood. This weaving together of the life of the parish church in Walsingham with wider developments in the life of the Church is at the heart of the book and will appeal to readers, many of whom will have experienced the reforms described at first hand.

Our thanks should go to Fr William Davage for this fine documentation of this important aspect of Anglo-Catholic life and witness. I thoroughly recommend it, particularly for the way in which it tells a good deal of the story of one hundred years of the Church through the life of a prominent parish church. Perhaps others, on reading this book, will be inspired to write on other issues of common interest?

Tom Middleton

Available from St Mary's, Little Walsingham and pilgrimgifts.co.uk

St Michael & All Angels

St Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defence against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

It was Pope Leo XIII who ordered this prayer to be said at the end of Mass in 1886. He had written it himself after, according to varying accounts, having gazed upon something indiscernible whilst celebrating the sacrament, and later collapsed – so moved and terrified was he by a terrible vision of the coming century. He died in 1903 and the ensuing 100 years proved to be a time of war, bloodshed, and enmity. His prayer to St Michael, recited by the faithful as part of the conclusory rite, was a call to holiness and a recalling of how the Church Militant is both sinless and ultimately victorious. (It was suppressed in 1968 by Pope Paul VI's *Novus Ordo* of the Mass, along with the Final Gospel.)

Unsurprisingly, St Michael has also figured largely in exorcism rites. 'Most glorious Prince of the Heavenly Army, Holy Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle against the princes and powers and rulers of darkness in this world, against the spiritual iniquities of those former angels.'

His iconography features a dragon This too has echoes in some images of Our Lady as the Second Eve, bruising the serpent's head which so shamefully brought about the Fall. For the Church Fathers, Michael stood at the gate of paradise after the banishment of Adam and Eve, and he continues to be depicted as both a warrior-knight with a sword, vanquishing the powers of hell, and standing for justice with scales or the Book of Life.

There is perhaps a further contemporary resonance to St Michael. In 590, Pope St Gregory led a penitential procession through the plague-stricken streets of Rome. Arriving at the tomb of Hadrian, now the Castel St Angelo, he prayed for healing and forgiveness. St Michael appeared and sheathed his sword; the plague was over. The thankful Holy Father erected a chapel to the archangel and a large statue of St Michael remains there to this day.

St Michael is considered to have four main responsibilities: to fight valiantly against Satan and other fallen angels; to save faithful souls from the clutches of Satan most notably at the time of death; to protect the holy people of God, both Christians and Jews; and to present the souls of the faithful for judgment and at the Last Day. He is something of, in modern parlance, a 'bridge ministry' and popes as 'pontifex maximus' in every generation will have been acutely aware of this, *pontifex* coming from the Latin for bridge builder.

The readings for the Feast of St Michael often include Genesis 28 and the story of Jacob's own vision:

> He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying." (Gen 28.12-13)

John's Gospel describes Jesus as 'the One who comes from above' (8.23), and as Jesus is essentially not of this world he is the bridge to the next, connecting earth to heaven and our way, truth and life to God the Father. This ladder is referenced in the Gospel reading (Jn 1.47-51) – "You shall see greater things than these. Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Jesus is the stairway to heaven upon which those winged evangelists (*angeloi* being Greek for messengers) operate, and an unbroken communication between the two realms. ND

CATHÉDRALE NOTRE-DAME DE CHARTRES, FRANCE

The first French cathedral I ever saw was Chartres; did it gave me a taste for more, or did it spoil me for all the rest? Perhaps both. There were four of us in the car heading south down the *Route Nationale*, the N154, from Dreux that early January day in 1984, fine and not too cold. A female nursing tutor, who happened to be several months' pregnant; a young curate; his 75-year old housekeeper; and myself. Only one of us had driven in France before, on the 'wrong' side of the road for people from the UK, and only two of us spoke French, neither *couramment*. We'd crossed the Channel on a lunchtime sailing from Dover to Calais the previous day, then driven for three hours down the N1 to enjoy the hospitality of the Benedictine nuns at le Bec Hellouin, and now we were starting on our long drive to the south. Some optimist entrusted me with route planning, and so we were heading for Chartres. I can still recall the moment when we crested a rise, and there was a spike on the horizon ahead. A little nearer and the spike resolved itself into two spires; as we neared the little city, I realised that the spires are not identical. It was shortly before noon as we parked close to the south side of the cathedral (you could in those days) and we hastened for the western entrance, in case it was one of those cathedrals that shut for lunch at noon (it doesn't).

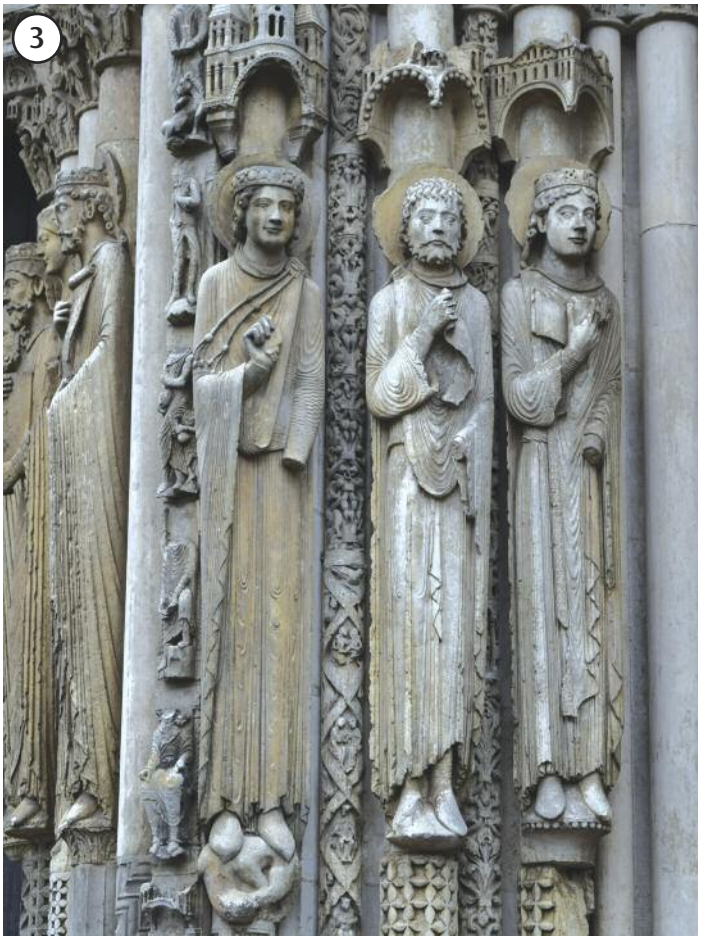




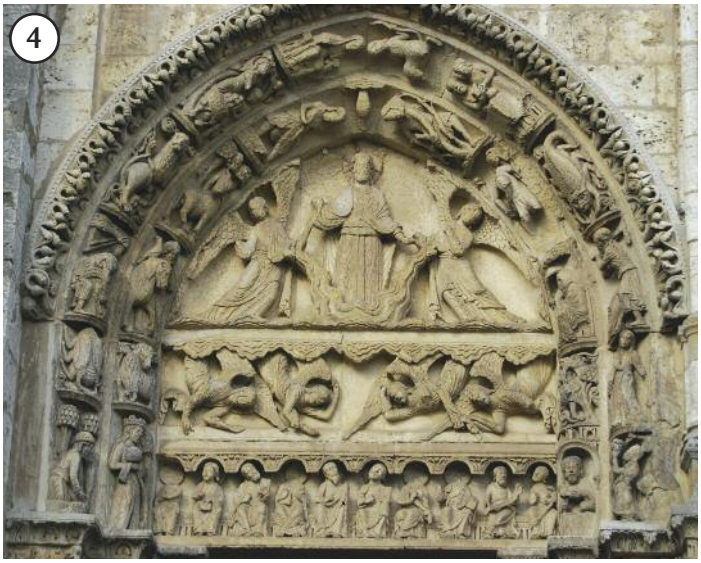
The west entrance is the best place to begin at Chartres, for the great Gothic cathedral has an important western portal in the Romanesque style, a reminder that the present cathedral is at least the fifth on the site. A fire in 1134 had devastated the western part of the 11th century cathedral, which was largely inspired by the great scholar-bishop Fulbert (we sing his hymns today). Soon after the fire, a great popular building campaign began, with the construction of the northwest tower we see today (its present spire was built by Jean Texier, after its predecessor had been struck by lightning in 1506) and a decade later the southwest tower was begun (**1**). Soon the façade was built between them, the *Portail Royal*, whose sculpture marks the transition from Romanesque to Gothic, with figures that seem to come from the great age of streamlining, the 1930s. (**2**). Fine sculpture is also found on the north and south portals (**3**).

Each of the three western doorways is topped by striking Romanesque sculpture.

On the north side (**4**), Christ ascends to Heaven, flanked by Zodiac signs and the Labours of the Months; in the centre (**5**), Christ in Glory is shown as judge, surrounded by the symbols of the Four Evangelists and with the Apostles beneath His feet. To the south (**6**) is the *Portail de la Vierge*, with the Virgin and Child marking the coming of Christ. Below is a Nativity scene, where a recumbent Virgin looks upwards to her child, lying in swaddling clothes on an altar, prefiguring His destiny.

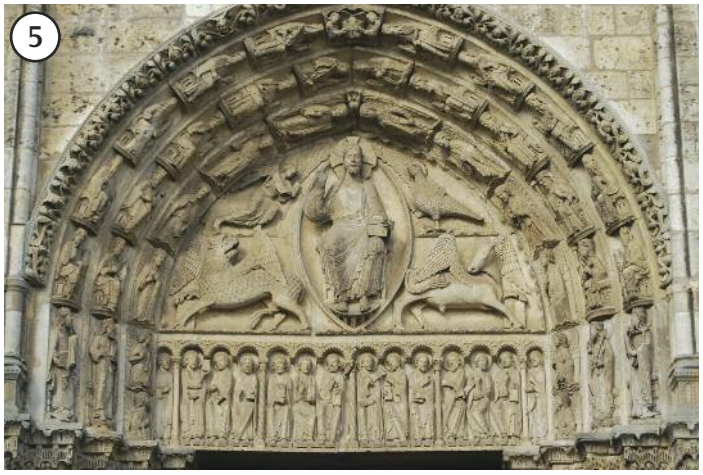


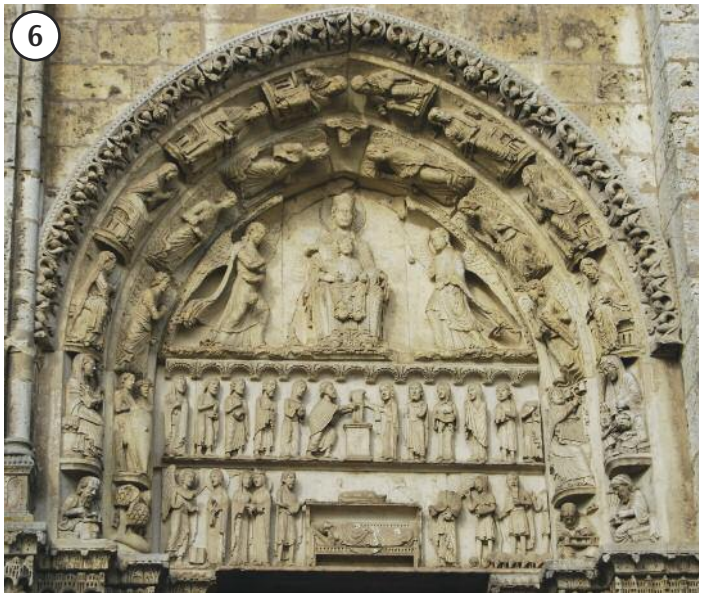
When you pass through the *Portail Royal* into the nave, you move into another world, from Romanesque to Gothic, as well as from light into darkness (*we'll come to that presently*). Chartres cathedral was formed by fires. On June 10th 1194 an immense conflagration destroyed nearly all the building, save the very western part – the *Portail Royal* and its two flanking towers. The ruins smouldered for three days, then the clergy who had been trapped in the crypt with the great relic of Chartres, the chemise of the Virgin Mary, emerged to great rejoicing, bearing the relic. The rebuilding of the cathedral began immediately, it gripped the population. The new building was to be both beautiful and strong, with a stone framework held together with the help of flying buttresses. This Gothic framework was designed to support huge windows which even today retain most of their original 800-year old stained glass. The local population participated enthusiastically in the building campaign, pilgrims harnessed themselves to the wagons bringing the stone from the quarries. People seeking donations (*quêteurs*) went round France with holy relics, asking for contributions – and to England as well. England was at war with France, but that made no difference – the Catholic Church is universal - they were welcomed by King Richard the Lionheart (who was to die in 1199 besieging a castle in the Dordogne). King Canute had similarly contributed generously to Fulbert's campaign in 1020.

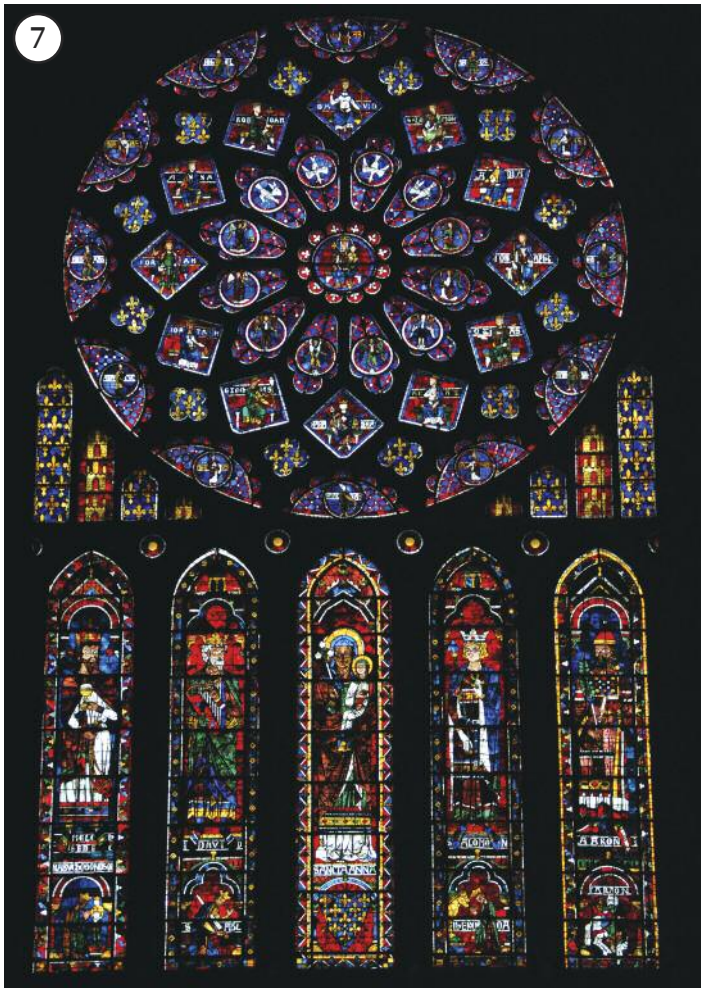


The immense rebuild was achieved in less than 30 years, creating the highest cathedral then in existence – Notre Dame in Paris had a nave 108 feet high, Chartres' nave was to be 120 feet, a height later to be exceeded successively at Reims (125 ft.), Amiens (139 ft.) and finally at Beauvais (157 ft.). We know that some of the vaults were completed in 1220 and choir stalls were in place in 1221; the great building was consecrated on October 24th 1260 as the Cathedral church of the Assumption of Our Lady of Chartres.

The glazing was complete by then, with over 120 large windows, full of rich colours which glow vividly with light behind them, contrasting with the darkness inside the building. They contain around 4000 figures - from the Old and New Testaments as well saints and donors. After seeing them, Rudyard Kipling wrote to Rider Haggard: "Colour, old man, is what, *au fond*, clinches a creed. Colour and the light of God behind it." A little of the glass, like the West window, with the







Last Judgement as a theme and centred on Christ the Judge, predates the fire of 1194, but most of it is early 13th century. Among the most striking are the two great rose windows in the transepts. The Northern Rose (**7**) is centred on the Virgin and Child, surrounded by doves and angels; the five figures below are: the priest-king Melchisidech, David, Saint Anne carrying the young Virgin Mary, Solomon and Aaron. The male figures below are four antagonists: Nebuchadnezzar, Saul (committing suicide), Jeroboam and the Pharaoh of the Exodus. The Southern Rose has the Risen Christ, and a chorus from Revelation; below are lancets with the Four Evangelists.

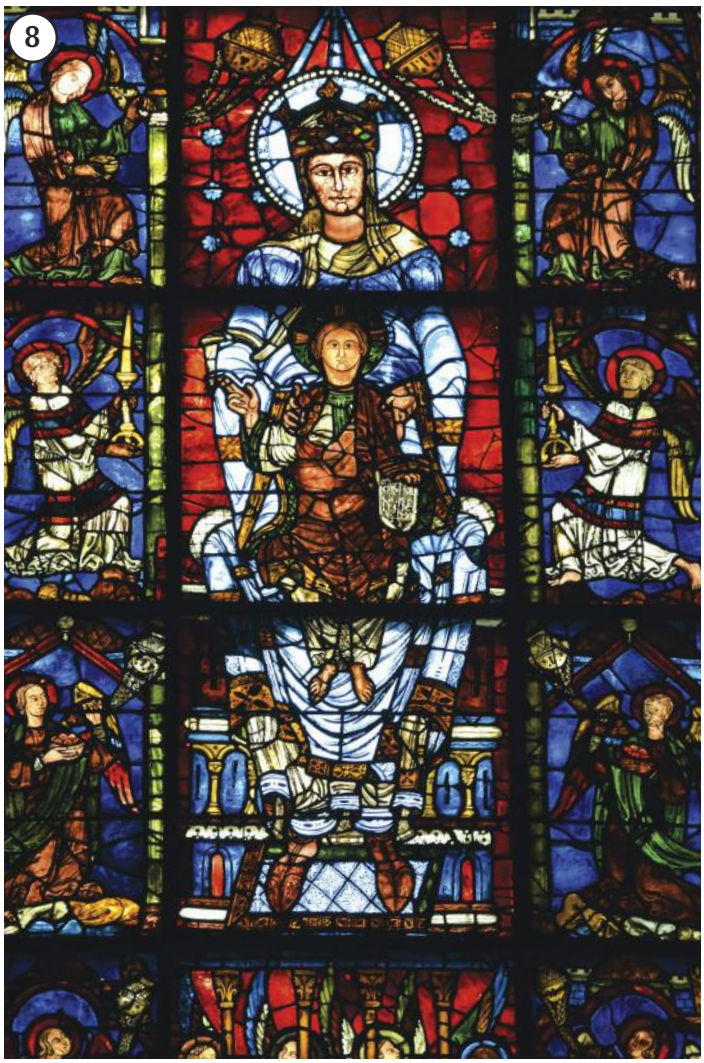
As a building dedicated in honour of the Virgin Mary, it is no surprise that the cathedral contains many representations of her (people who have counted say 175).

The oldest of these is *Notre-Dame-de la belle Verrière* (**8**) in the first window of the ambulatory on the south side of the choir, a miraculous survivor of the fire of 1194, where the serene Virgin supports her Son on her lap. On the other side of the choir is *Notre Dame du Pilier*, traditionally a Black Virgin, but recently 'cleaned' (**ND May 2017**).

You can spend days in Chartres, not absorbing more than a fraction of its wonder, and will understand why many regard Chartres as the greatest cathedral ever built. Eight hundred years ago, people saw it as a foretaste of the eternal city. On entering it for the first time, Napoleon Bonaparte remarked *"Un athée serait mal à l'aise ici"*, usually paraphrased to 'Chartres is no place for an atheist'. Perhaps the last word on Chartres should be left to Émile Mâle, the great French historian of mediaeval art: *"Il n'y a rien qui puisse se comparer à Chartres"*. ND

Key to pictures:

1. Chartres cathedral from the west, showing the two west towers, the NW rower with a later spire c. 1506.
2. *Portail Royal*. Central bay, three Old Testament figures, a queen and two kings.
3. *Portail Royal*. Southern bay, three figures.
4. Left (northern) bay of the *Portail Royal*. The Ascension of Christ, surrounded by angels.
5. Central bay of the *Portail Royal*. Christ in Majesty, surrounded by the Four Evangelists. Below is a frieze of the Apostles.
6. Right (southern) bay of the *Portail Royal*. The Virgin in Majesty, with angels giving homage. Below is a Nativity scene, together with the Purification. In both these scenes the Christ child is symbolically exposed upon an altar.
7. The Northern Rose window, centred on the Virgin and Child, surrounded by doves and angels. The central figure below is Saint Anne carrying the young Virgin Mary; she is flanked by Melchisidech, David, Solomon and Aaron, with antichrist figures underneath – Nebuchadnezzar, Saul (shown commiting suicide), Jeroboam, and the pharaoah of the Exodus.
8. *Notre-Dame-de la belle Verrière*: early 12th c. glass in the ambulatory on the south side of the choir.



September Diary

William Davage has taken up his pen

My 70th birthday party on a Saturday afternoon in February 2020 now seems something akin to the long, languorous summer of 1914 before the deluge of the Great War. By some miracle of nature, my guests were able to enjoy a buffet luncheon in a spacious garden in warm sunshine, and I was able to enjoy their company. A month later it already seemed a distant memory, a dream before the nightmare of Covid-19.

A week before the first "lockdown" I finished the preliminary research in Walsingham for a book on the Vicars of St Mary's from 1921 to the present. It was the idea of the present, estimable Vicar, Fr Harri Williams, to mark the centenary of Fr Patten's Induction. It was launched on Trinity Sunday in May. I preached and signed books after Mass.

The book is not intended as a history of the parish but a series of portraits of the Vicars. Of the eight Vicars, six are still alive, quite a high percentage in comparison with many parishes. Sadly, the pandemic meant that I was unable to meet any of them in person but was able to speak to some by telephone or communicate by email. Those who felt able to assist did so with grace and helped enormously.

Fr Patten has been written about so many times and has entered into the mythology as well as the Pantheon of the Catholic Movement that there was little or nothing new that I could say.

I had known Bishop Norman Banks for many years, although we never met on our native heath in Newcastle upon Tyne. We had several lively and amusing conversations by telephone. Not everything made its way into the book. It was very good to meet Frs Barnes, and Haydon remotely and I hope that circumstances will allow meetings in person. Fr Barnes had been curate at S. John Baptist, Newcastle, but before the time when I worshipped there. He had, however, prepared one of my best friends for confirmation. I had been to Fr Haydon's church when he was in Oxford as one of those on the preaching course from S. Stephen's House. Fr Rear I met for the first time at Mass on Trinity Sunday and look forward to seeing him if and when I am next there.

Fr Roe, the second profile in the book, was the only one of the post-Patten vicars of whom I knew nothing before I began the project. He was the one that I came to know primarily through the papers and documents, the written record on which historians rely. Trawling through the papers, magazines, press reports, memoirs to meet him for the first time was rewarding when, as I turned a page, to find some gem, some story or comment that illuminated his character. Those moments usually came after page after page which produced no harvest. His health suffered, perhaps precipitated by the destructive fire only a few years into his incumbency.

The manuscript was completed at the beginning of summer last year. After a brief respite, I began the next task. Fr Philip Corbett invited me to write a history of the two churches now in his care; All Saints' Notting Hill and S. Michael and All Angels' Ladbroke Grove. The former was dedicated 160 years ago and the latter 150 years ago. This was a much larger task: two churches, twenty-five parish priests, curates galore, countless faithful laity. It took a year to research and write. The manuscript was delivered at the end of July.



All Saints, Notting Hill, London: en fête

All Saints' had a large archive and an almost complete run of parish magazines from 1867 to the 1970s, plus PCC Minutes plus many and various others paper. S. Michael's had sent much of its material to the London Metropolitan Archive decades ago. The pandemic meant that it was closed for some time and once opened only a dozen readers were allowed tag any one time and only once a month. That was impossible. Fortunately there was some good printed material, such as Prebendary Denison's memoir and, another incumbent, Fr Anthony Andrews, having trawled the material sent to the archive, produced a series of pamphlets. Some had to be treated with a degree of caution but were more help than hindrance. And I had the benefit of the assistance of Tony Middleditch whose knowledge of the history is unsurpassed.

Fr Corbett marshalled material and pointed me in the right direction several times; and produced documents with just the right amount of colour and anecdote that books such as this need. As with the Walsingham book, so with this, every word was read chapter by chapter as they were written by Fr Hugh Mead. His meticulous eye, erudite scholarship, capacious knowledge, and expertise on the use of the comma, saved many a slip or ambiguity. A new foray into a parish history beckons.

As an incentive to buy the books: nearly twenty years ago Fr Barry Orford and I edited and contributed to a volume of essays on the Principals of Pusey House to mark Fr Philip Ursell's retirement after twenty years as Principal. I was gratified to see on a recent foray into Amazon UK that it ranks 5,405,853 on the best sellers' list. Even more gratified that there was a copy for sale at £913. Sadly, no cut for Pusey House, or the editors. ND

Thurifer is away

The Order of St John

Lionel Jarvis Prior of the Order in England, takes us on a journey across 900 years

The Order of St John of Jerusalem came into existence as a pilgrim hospital in Jerusalem the late 11th Century. The early visitors adopted as their symbol the 8 pointed cross of the Benedictine monks from Amalfi who had travelled to Jerusalem from Italy; this cross is now known variously as the Amalfi Cross, the Maltese Cross and the symbol of both the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and the Venerable Order of St John. Over 900 years after the founding of the Order, today's home of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem sits at St John's Gate in Clerkenwell, London, the residual estate of the Priory of England which was founded on the site in the 12th century. The Venerable Order is an Order of Chivalry of the British Crown, a Christian and charitable Order spread across the world, and the parent body of the operational charity St John Ambulance.

Under the leadership of the first Master of the Order, The Blessed Gerard, by 1080 a hospital had been established in the Muristan of Jerusalem near to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and today the Order owns part of that site in the Old City of Jerusalem where an out-patient eye clinic operates as a part of the Order's subsidiary charity the St John Eye Hospital Group. The Order was a caring organisation, but which had to transform through the 12th century to support the defence of Christianity, with the Knights of St John both defending the city, and caring for its sick and poor, until the city fell to the forces of Sultan Saladin in 1187. The early knights adopted the motto *Pro Fide Pro, Pro Utilitate Hominum* (For the faith and in the service of humanity), these words retained by the Order nearly 1000 years later.

The Venerable Order is an Order of Chivalry of the British Crown, a Christian and charitable Order spread throughout the world

Expelled from Jerusalem, the knights moved via Acre in modern day Israel, and then Cyprus, then to Rhodes which they held from 1309 until 1522 when eventually defeated by Suleiman the Magnificent. In 1530 Emperor Charles V of Spain granted the Knights permanent residency on the Islands of Malta and Gozo (for the price of one falcon per year), where their reputation grew as they built the City of Valletta, established the great Sacra Infirmeria, and defeated their opponents in the Great Siege. When Napoleon eventually defeated the Knights in 1798 they scattered through European Commanderies before the catholic order was able to re-establish itself in the 19th century, and now has its home in Rome as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Meanwhile, a great palace of The Priory of St John had emerged in Clerkenwell, London, supporting and serving the



work of the knights in the Mediterranean, thriving as a place of great wealth and influence in medieval London. A new Gatehouse was commissioned by Prior Sir Thomas Docwra in 1504, but sadly only 36 years later, after an impressive 400 year history, the Priory was sacked by King Henry VIII in 1540, falling into disrepair over the years, but used in the interim variously as, inter alia, a coffee shop owned by Richard Hogarth (father of William), and the home of The Gentleman's Magazine (of which Dr Samuel Johnson was an employee).

The work of the latent, now Protestant, Order of St John in England re-emerged in the mid 19th century to help those who were suffering injury and illness in industrial Victorian England. Sir Edmund Lechmere, one of those critical leaders of this revival, purchased the surviving Gatehouse in Clerkenwell in 1873, renovating, and providing a headquarters for the nascent order. A remarkable group of men, recognising deficiency in civilian healthcare, established the first ambulance service in Staffordshire in 1872; an Ambulance department was formed at St John's Gate in 1874, and thence the St John Ambulance Association in 1877 with the aim of organising instruction in first aid and nursing, and in dispensing items such as bandages and stretchers. The early designs of ambulance were developed by these pioneers, including the Ashford Litter, one of the earliest patient transports designed by Sir John

Farley, an example of which is currently in the museum in St John's Gate. Over the next decade training centres were set up around the country, and then more widely around the Commonwealth, the increasing number of those trained becoming members of the St John Ambulance Brigade. The St John Ambulance volunteers had contributed alongside members of the Red Cross to delivering care in the Franco-Prussian War in the 1870s and the Boer War in the 1890s, and were more than ready to combine forces again for World War 1, with the most famous 750 bed fully staffed hospital in Etaples in France, at which many were killed and injured when bombed in 1918.

In 1931 the Order was able to purchase the old Priory Church of St John, its crypt being one of the few remaining structures from the 12th century, the church having been started in the 1140s, and understood to be the site on which in 1185 the Patriarch of Jerusalem pleaded unsuccessfully with King Henry II for additional funding for the crusades. The church has undergone many changes over the centuries having succumbed to the Peasants Revolt in 1381, and more recently to bombing in 1941. The present external structure was rebuilt in the 1950s, with the large open space used today for services of the Order and investitures into the Order on behalf of Her Majesty The Queen. The medieval crypt is used for worship by members of the Order much as it was in the 12th century.

The Order of St John today is spread across 41 countries, including the work of the St John Eye Hospital Group in the Palestinian Territories. A Royal Charter was granted by Her Majesty Queen Victoria on St John's Day 1888 formally reconnecting the Order with the Crown after 342 years. The Order now oversees the work of St John Ambulance around the world, committed to supporting young people, with a huge cadet network, delivery of healthcare and humanitarian support, and training in first aid. The Priory of England, still based at St John's Gate in Clerkenwell remains the parent body in England, overseeing the work of St John Ambulance, retaining an ambulance service, supporting people in communities and at events, training in first aid, and developing young people. As the predominant charity supporting the NHS during the covid pandemic over 1,000,000 hours of volunteering have made a massive difference to the national effort, along with the recruitment and training of over 30,000 new volunteers to support the national vaccination programme. Nearly 1000 years after its conception, the Order of St John continues to care for all that need us, regardless of their faith, race or background, ever committed to care for the sick poor.

Surgeon Rear Admiral Lionel Jarvis CBE KStJ DL FRCR
Prior of the Priory of England & the Islands
St John's Gate, London



On Reading Dante

Robin Ward celebrates the author of the *Divine Comedy*, who died on 14 September 1321

This year is the 700th anniversary of the death of Dante, the poet of whom T S Eliot said, 'Dante and Shakespeare divide the world between them. There is no third.' But the unprepared reader who picks up the *Divine Comedy* is perhaps more likely to end up agreeing with the 18th century critic Horace Walpole, who described the poet as 'a Methodist parson in Bedlam.' Of course, anything written seven hundred years ago is remote to us and asks of us a particular sort of preparation to appreciate. This is particularly true of the *Divine Comedy*: we need to be told about the extraordinary topography of Dante's journey through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, and we need to know the names, places and stories of the myriad individuals he encounters, some contemporaries, some heroes and villains of the past, whom he encounters as first Vergil and then Beatrice guide him towards the concluding vision of God. Fortunately for English speakers, we have the outstanding three-volume edition of the *Divine Comedy* edited by Robin Kirkpatrick and published by Penguin, which gives us all this and the benefit of a fine translation of the Italian as well.

And as the human form of Beatrice guides the poet towards the heart of divine love, so the human form of the incarnate Christ concludes the vision of the poem

How to start? The important point to make first is that Dante is both completely confident and familiar with the conventions of the great epic poems of antiquity – Vergil is his guide after all – but also hugely creative and original as a theologian, thinker and indeed spiritual guide. His great poem begins with a descent into the underworld, familiar to any reader of Vergil's *Aeneid*, but in this Christian poem we see the Hell of the mediaeval imagination transformed into a place of moral reckoning, a moral reckoning in which the damned in their sufferings give account against themselves.

The Dante scholar John Took calls the Comedy as a whole a 'Song of Ascents': in Hell we see 'journeying under the aspect of seeing,' a spiritual mirror we hold up as much to ourselves as to those who are in torment. The *Inferno* contains some of the great set pieces of the poem: the adulterous lovers Paulo and Francesca over whom Dante weeps in Canto V (Gladstone similarly moved had a statue made of their first kiss); the wretchedly corrupt Pope Nicholas III in Canto XIX, upside down in his fiery tomb awaiting the arrival of his hated successor Boniface VIII; the grim fate of Ugolino in Canto XXXIII, who starves to death with his children, whom he eats in vain.

Dante's Hell we can recognise, like some Doom painting in a church over the chancel arch. Dante's Purgatory is much more extraordinary: there was no consistent iconography of purgatory at all when he wrote, and yet he creates the mountain of purgatory which is at the same time an actual physical inversion of hell, and a spiritual inversion, as it shows the souls of the saved ascend from the place of waiting at its foot, through the thorough and painful purgation of the seven deadly sins – symbolised by the seven 'P's marked on Dante's forehead by the angel at the entrance to purgatory proper – to the earthly paradise at the summit. Once again, we see pains fitted to sins: gluttons starve, the lustful burn and the slothful are forced to run. Whereas in Hell Dante consigns the damned to an ordering of punishments which is classical in shape, in purgatory the saved inhabit a universe of asceticism which is self-evidently Christian.

If as John Took writes the *Inferno* is 'journeying under the aspect of seeing,' and the *Purgatorio* 'journeying under the aspect of striving,' then the Paradiso as 'journeying under the aspect of surpassing' asks of us an imaginative engagement beyond anything that has gone before. T S Eliot said that the *Paradiso* was either intensely exciting or wholly incomprehensible: here the reader is helped by some of the most insightful visual art ever to have been made to accompany a poem, the illuminations of Giovanni di Paulo and the drawings of Botticelli. Leaving Vergil behind, Dante ascends through the various orders of the blessed guided by Beatrice, the woman for whom he feels a human love that becomes the means by which he will encounter divine love. And as the human form of Beatrice guides the poet towards the heart of divine love, so the human form of the incarnate Christ concludes the vision of the poem: as Dante experiences the vision of God, 'Eternal light, you sojourn in yourself alone. Alone, you know yourself. Known to yourself, you, knowing, love and smile on your own being,' so Dante sees within this Trinitarian revelation 'our human form,' at the heart of divine love.

Why should we make the imaginative and intellectual effort of learning to read Dante now? First, he completes the work of St Thomas Aquinas, his near contemporary, by working out in poetic image what Thomas expresses through scholastic method in the *Summa Theologica*. Second, he holds up to us a mirror of the human condition, and most especially the fundamental insight of Augustine that evil is the absence of love, and then makes of this a uniquely powerful account of the fulfilment of human nature in the gift of divine love. Last, he lends a uniquely lay voice to the achievement of medieval theology, a man of the city and the home, an exile and a courtier, a married man and a father, whose humanity touches us with pity at the plight of the damned, urges us on with the penitent in purgatory, and carries us forward to learn to love for ourselves the vision of light that the blessed in Paradise receive. ND

A review of John Took's book Why Dante Matters *will appear in next month's issue*

The Golden Legend (Legenda Aurea)

John Gayford on a medieval treasury

The *Legenda Aurea* originally called *Legenda sanctorum* (Reading of the Saints) was written by Jacob de Voragine O.P. in 1259-1266. The word "legend" has changed its meaning over the years; it was originally from Medieval Latin (*legenda*) "thing to be read". Golden (aurea) refers to its estimated quality and worth. It was a common refectory reading in monasteries and convents but also a source for priests and friars for preaching and catechesis for almost 300 years: during this time it became an important pastoral resource. This work was to become one of the most popular works of the Middle Ages, but also controversial with its lives of saints and events in the life of Jesus and Mary exaggerated for effect. Its text was not original and was certainly added to and even contracted over the years. In all probability it owed much of its compilation to works like Jean de Mailly's *Abbreviatio in gestis miraculis sanctorum* (Summary of the deeds and miracles of the saints) which was written in about 1220 and Bartholomew of Trent's *Liber Epilogorum in gesta sanctorum* (epilogue of the deeds of the saints) written in the mid-1240s. Both of these writers were fellow Dominicans, their works are now difficult to trace.



Jacob was born about 1230 and died in 1298. He entered the Dominican order in 1244 and became prior of three different priories and was a very successful teacher. Eventually he was made Archbishop of Genoa in 1292 where he continued to write and his position as archbishop did much to enhance the popularity of *Legenda Aurea*. It was originally written in simple to understand Latin and went through a number of editions and there are about 1000 texts still remaining. These were originally hand-inscribed documents, very expensive with individual and variable illustrations making them into treasured items. It was translated into most European languages including English. Originally it was supposed to be a tool for the clergy to make sermons more attractive and exciting to the listeners. Its wide circulation was through the Dominican network in Europe. Laity demand became so great that vast numbers of copies were produced many with exquisite artistic craftsmanship. It remains an important monument to the culture of the Middle Ages and suited the spiritual mores of the time. The earliest English translation is dated 1438 signed as being by *a synfulle wrecche.*



In some ways Jacob looked backward in time. St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) lived at the same time as Jacob and was a fellow Dominican and champion of the feast of Corpus Christi, proclaimed a Catholic feast by Pope Urban IV in 1264. So it is surprising that there is no mention of this feast in *Legenda Aurea*. Jacob was a man of his own times and his own region which earned *Legenda Aurea* the nickname "the Lombardic History".

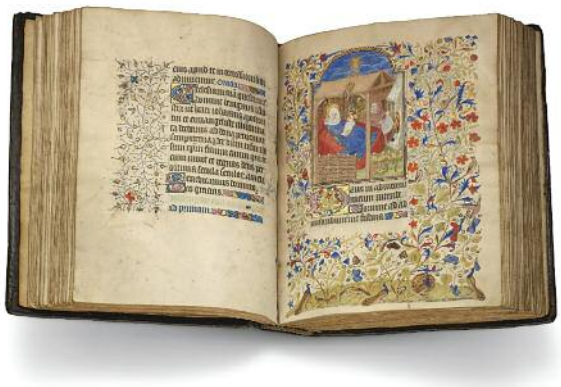
The *Legenda Aurea* is divided into four parts corresponding to four phases of spiritual development; a time of deviation or turning from the right way, a time of renewal or of calling back, a time for reconciliation, and a time of pilgrimage. After this prologue and its explanation we are taken through the church calendar that begins with Advent and proceeds through the Christian year offering advice and comments on festal events. This part also includes the history of prominent figures from the Old Testament. Then there is a calendar of Saints' days. Originally there were about 150 in this section but that was expanded or abbreviated in subsequent editions often augmented by local variation. To each saint there was prefixed an imaginative etymology on the saints name. Then came an account of the saint's life and death, designed to project them as heroes of the Christian faith. Even Jacob had to admit that there was exaggeration for effect. He has a belief in the devil who can only be conquered by the virtues of the saints and the work of avenging angels. Attempts were made to give provenance to his text with Biblical or patristic reference. Jacobus was a moralist and not a historian, thus the stories of the saints are those of fortitude and endurance not primarily of historical accuracy. The key to unlocking the *Legenda Aurea* would be more obvious to clergy and monastics of the 13th century, who used the Graduale for Mass and the Antiphonale for their offices, where the contents were divided into Temporarium and Sanctorium (saints' days). For All Saints' Day there is a reflection that to attain salvation we need the prayer of the saints. For All Souls' Day there is a long and complicated discussion on purgatory. It is to be noted that many of the saints discussed in *Legenda Aurea* are no longer

in modern Church calendars.

The *Legends* were the inspiration of a number of other local variations like *The South English Legendaries* that were written in the 13th and 14th centuries, some in Latin and some middle-English verse. We still have about 50 copies and a number of manuscript fragments, demonstrating it was a medieval best seller. This and other legendaries have been the subject of modern academic research and include saints of local interest. In the *South English Legendary* there is an account of the martyrdom of St. George written in old English verse dated from c.1270-1280.

William Caxton (c. 1422-c. 1491) who introduced the printing press to England also made a translation of the *Legenda Aurea* from Latin into English in 1483 calling it *The Golden Legende* and published several editions illustrated with wood-cuts produced by his own artists, some coloured by hand. It sold at times more than the English Bible.

Right from the beginning the work had its distractors even among Dominicans, but these were muted when Jacob de Voragine became an Archbishop. By the mid-fifteenth century there were authorities' voices that did not approve of the fables of the *Legenda Aurea*. Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) used his knowledge of mediaeval literature to oppose views expressed in the *Legenda Aurea* and when he became a Cardinal forbade his clergy to use it in preaching. These condemnations were followed when Erasmus (1466-1536) the distinguished Augustinian canon expressed in very strong terms his view that the work being full of strange lies and feigned miracles. Those trained by Erasmus were encouraged to look back to the pure sources of early Christianity, and to ground their religion on sound historical truth and solid moral worth. Thus Jacobus's book, with its far-fetched miracles and martyrdoms, came to seem anathema. The lives of the saints should be sober and credible, exemplars of virtue rather than chronicles of wonders. The Spanish humanist Luis de Vives (1493-1540) a pupil of Erasmus articulated these views forcefully on the continent and in England. To these voices was added the chorus of expected disapproval from protestant reformers who would condemn the *Golden Legend* as superstitious and idolatrous. It became the embodiment of things they despised and rejected in medieval Christianity.



The Counter-Reformation saw that the more bizarre accounts of the lives of saints needed revision in the breviary lections in monastic communities. Hagiography (a branch of literature that deals with lives and legends of saint) needed to be changed and there needed to be a search for more authentic material that did not contain what was seen as feigned miracles. There was even the claim that hagiography needed to become an exact science. Alban Butler (1710- 1773) a catholic priest at Douai, the English College in France, after 30 years of study produced his lives of about 1500 saints of the Church. This was revised by Thurston and Attwater in 1956 and now exists in a twelve volume edition with multiple authors including Anglicans. They used historical criticism to purge the text of extremes found in the original *Golden Legend* and other similar works that were being removed from religious libraries.

In the 19th century Romantic admiration for the Middle Ages and an interest in the sources of medieval and Renaissance art by men like William Morris would send them back to the Golden Legend. To them this was a repository of ancient folklore, and as such it was a distillation of both the imagination and the soul of the Christian Middle Ages. This excited an interest in the art and iconography produced by the *Golden Legend* and works of this genre, and extended to the legend of the Holy Grail.

There are a number of modern English translations of the Golden Legend including one by William Ryan and one online from Fordham University's Medieval Sourcebook. They are each quite long thus the suggestion is you choose one legend and read it to get the flavour of the whole work. Academic theses on the art within copies of the Golden Legend are available throughout academic libraries in Western Europe and even Melbourne Australia.

Historians are more relaxed now about the *Golden Legend* and can see it as a valuable window into the Medieval Mind. In its day it was a "medieval best seller", its purpose to give spice to sermons; that it did. One can imagine people leaving the church, going to the tavern and discussing the stories they had heard over a glass or two of alcoholic beverage. It is possible in this context that the legends would be discussed, and even expanded in a light hearted discussion. This impressed the words of the sermon beyond the dreams of any modern preacher. The puritan reformation stopped all this when the ale house was closed on Sunday. Clergy were encouraged to preach long sober sermons full of moral teaching. In some ways the excitement and joy had gone out of religion. In our own age this has been replaced by exciting historical fiction which can receive literary prizes and be serialised on television before discussion in the pub, possibly in the way stories from the various mediaeval legendaries were hundreds of years ago. But modern accounts can make saints of the profane and attempt utter destruction of the saintly integrity of others. We should not view the mediaeval legend and our historical fiction as the same: for the legends were written for moral and holy purposes, and not for a mass accolade of slanders. ND

Suggested Further Reading

- Boureau, A. *Golden Legend in* Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages. Edited by Vauchez, et al. Translated by Walford, A. James Clarke & Co. Cambridge 2000.
- Duffy. E. *The Golden Legend* in Royal Books & Holy Bones, Essays in medieval Christianity. Bloomsbury Continuum. London. 2018.
- Ryan, W.G (translator) Jacobus de Voragine's The Golden Legend. Princeton University Press Oxford 2012.

Arthur Middleton on Dogma, Devotion and Life

In 1939 Canon Demant pubished an important book *The Religious Prospect.* but because of the outbreak of war it did not attract the attention it deserved. In it he stated that the forces that are making history in Europe are not merely political, economic or moral; they are involved in conflicting assumptions about the nature of reality and of human existence in particular. It is on this plane of dogma about existence that the Christian faith has to meet the struggles of our times. The message of religion has been weakened because it has been confined to issuing moral warning and exhortation while reflecting the dogmas which underlie its philosophic rivals.

The question he sets out to answer is, whether Christianity is to oppose itself or ally itself with this anti-liberal drift, or whether it has a third position which is both interpretive of what is happening and constructive for the future. He argues that only along the road of the recovery of its own dogma will Christianity push into the future, because therewith alone can men interpret and direct what is happening to them. It will be seen that we are dealing with the springs of faith and action. The question is what is the real message for a religious renewal of Christendom?

It is on this plane of dogma about existence that the Christian faith has to meet the struggles of our time

Just before the war began and the occupation of France, Jacques Maritain gave a lecture that was published in 1946 as *The End of Civilisation* He claimed that the great defect of classical humanism since the Renaissance lies in what one might call an anthropocentric concept of man and culture. The error boils down to affirming human nature as closed in upon itself or absolutely self-sufficient. Instead of a human and rational development in continuance of the Gospel. Man has sought this development from pure reason as a *susbstitute* for the Gospel .And for human life, for the concrete movement of history, this means real and very serious amputations. Prayer, evangelical virtues, supra-rational truths, sense of sin and of grace, the necessity of self-sacrifice and ascetic discipline, for contemplation, for the means of the Cross – all this has been stuck between parantheses or finally denied divorcing human life from the suprarational. He claims that the forces in the presence of which we find ourselves are anti-Christic, which is an existential opposition to the presence and action of Christ in the bosom of human history.

He calls for a new humanism which we may call the humanism of the Incarnation. He sees it as the only force capable of offering a remedy against the evils from which we are suffering.The task is intimately linked with a renewal of religious conscience. Between Christ and the the Pagan Empire there is no compatibility. The Neros of old and the new Neros know that Christ alone can overcome the Pagan Empire. This Empire makes of the political the supreme rule and measure, superior both to the eternal law and to the Grace of God.

Maritain maintains that a new humanism must assume again and lift up into a purified atmospher all the work of the classical period. It must remake anthropology. It must open up the creature to the universe of the divine and the supra-rational which implies a work of the sanctification of the profane and the temporal. Consquently man would rediscover himself rediscovered. Such a humanism that considers man in the integration of his natural and supernatural being and which sets no *a priori* limits to the descent of the divine into man is what Maritain means by the *humanism of the Incarnation.*

Within such an integrated humanism there can be no conflict between the vertical move- ment toward eternal life (begun and existing here and now) and the horizontal movement through which are revealed progressively the substance and the creative forces of man in history. These two directions must be pursued simultaneously and neither can be excluded. Nor can the horizontal be excluded from the vertical without the destruction of man for it prepares the way in human history for the Kingdom of God. George Addleshaw in his book, *The High Church Party,* said that dogma, prayer and life have been isolated; and in isolation their power and glory have vanished and withered away. The Church, if it is to win the fight against modern paganism, and not only win the fight but heal he wounds inflicted on man's nature needs a re-integration, a new wholeness in which the dogma, the prayer and the life form a living unity. He sees a way forward in the liturgical ideals and principles of the High Churchmanship of people between the age of Lancelot Andrewes, Thorndike, Ken, Cosin and the Oxford Movement. ND

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touching place

S KYNEBURGA, CASTOR, HUNTS



Few places in England have such evidence for the continuity of human settlement and of Christian worship as does Castor. In Roman times, the garrison town of Durobrivae stood nearby. In 1975, ploughing at Water Newton, just down the road, unearthed what is simply the earliest Christian silver discovered anywhere in the Roman Empire, dating from the 4th century. Some Roman bricks from the settlement are reused in the N transept of Castor church, which stands on a site associated with the convent established here by the 7th century Saxon princesses Kyneburgha and Kyneswitha, the church later becoming a Saxon minster. The church itself sits on top of a Roman palace.

The core of what we see today is Norman, dominated by the splendid central tower (**1**); the dedication of the building on April 17th 1124 is commemorated in an inscription over the priest's door in the chancel. Not as important historically, but finer as sculpture is the Saxon carving of Christ in Majesty over the entrance to the porch (**2**). Inside the spacious and uncluttered church you look up to the recoloured angels of c. 1450 in the roof and then cross over to the end of the N aisle for the altar and reconstituted shrine of Kyneburgha. Right next to them is an 8th century carving of St Mark (**3**), itself once possibly part of the shrine.

We all know about St Augustine leading his mission to England, landing in 597, which provided the springboard for its reconversion. We often hear about the Celtic church he found in parts of the country on his arrival, but it is easy to overlook the fact that Christianity came here much earlier through individual Christians who were Roman traders or soldiers.





Map Reference: *TL 125985*

Simon Cotton

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All Saints, Margaret Street, hosted its annual procession of Our Lady on the Feast of the Assumption (photos by George Reynolds)









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