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**MICHAELMASS 2020**

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*Cover illustration: The resurrection of Adam and Eve, fresco in the [former] church of St Saviour in Chora, Istanbul*

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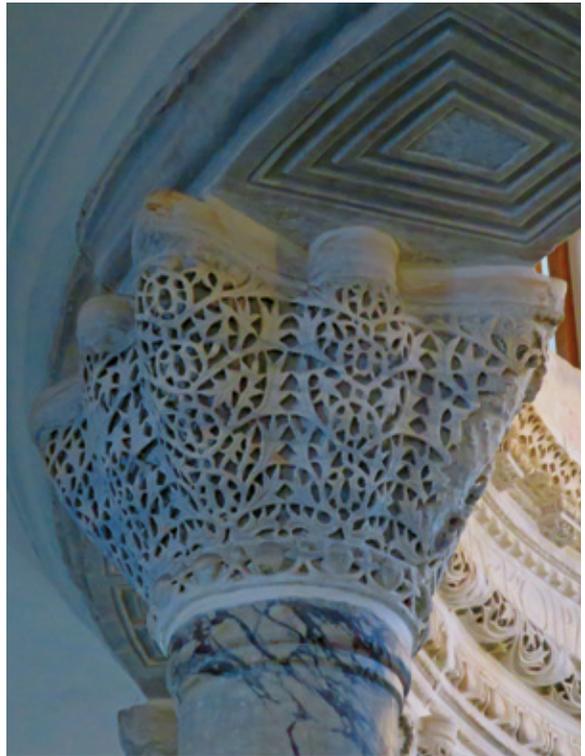
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## The Churches of Istanbul

In a surprise move in July 2020 the Turkish President Erdogan declared that Ayia Sofya in Istanbul, which had been turned into a museum in 1934, should be returned to use as a mosque. This building had been the 'Great Church', the cathedral of Constantinople since 537, when it was built by the Emperor Justinian, until the Turkish conquest in 1453, when it was turned into a mosque. Now it is to be a mosque again.

It is of course, unique, and nothing like it was ever attempted again by Byzantine architects, yet there were several dry runs at the time, and one of these is in the city itself. Not far away, down several quiet lanes, is the mosque of 'Little Aya Sofya' or the church of Saints Sergius & Bacchus, built by Justinian just a few years before Ayia Sofya. Already there are several features later to be seen in the larger church - a central dome with columned semi-circular alcoves, and deeply undercut cushion capitals with monograms of Justinian and his wife Theodora. In 2003 I was in there with a couple of friends, when one of them just happened to sit down in the Mihrab, the alcove indicating the direction of Mecca, not realising what it was. The caretaker, shocked by the careless non-believer, shouted at him and we were quickly ushered out!



*SS.Sergius & Bacchus*

The Roman Emperor Constantine had dedicated his new capital in the east in the year 330 and named it New Rome. He looted statuary and building materials from all over the Empire to bolster its claim to be second only to Rome in magnificence, and diverted the wheat of Egypt to feed its growing population. What had been a small sleepy Greek port called Byzantium rapidly became a bustling imperial

capital. It lacked only two things – sufficient water and sufficient supernatural protection. The first lack was remedied over the years by Roman expertise and ingenuity as a series of aqueducts and water courses brought water from as far as 150 miles away to fill enormous tanks and cisterns scattered around the city. The lack of local heavenly patrons was equally remedied by importing relics of saints from all over the empire to fill the city's growing number of churches. New Rome was rapidly becoming the New Jerusalem, and during the course of the middle ages Cyril Mango calculates there must have been at least 40 monasteries and 500 churches in the city. They guarded an innumerable amount of holy relics, some with more claim to authenticity than others, and they ranged in size from the vast church of the Holy Wisdom – Ayia Sofya - to tiny wayside chapels. They were a temptation to Pilgrims from the West, who in 1204, as crusaders, sacked the city, seized its treasures and sent hundreds of relics back to their favourite churches in their home towns. Sculptures, columns and capitals, from St Polyeuctos, for example, have been recognised built into churches in Venice, Barcelona and Aquileia, and the bronze horses of St Mark's are famous. From then on it was a story of decline and decay and by 1453 when the Ottoman Turks breached the walls they found inside a series of small villages separated by fields and orchards.

Churches were then patched up and mostly turned into mosques for Muslim immigrants, although new churches were built for Christians brought from

other parts of the Ottoman Empire. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century perhaps 50 churches served the Greek, Bulgarian, and Armenian communities, who made up at least one third of the city's population.

One little church, the Myrelaion, was built as the private chapel to the palace of the Emperor Romanus, and became a monastic church and then a mosque. I found it in 2017 with the help of my friend Giannis and his smartphone, as it was completely hidden from view by tall buildings. It had been well restored after a



*Myrelaion*

fire and years of neglect. Inside, the whitewashed walls only emphasized the sophistication of its design. This is one of the first so called cross-in-square churches, built about 930.

Another of my favourites, the Pammacharistos, was built later for a monastic community, probably in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and its side chapel, shown here, later still, about 1320. At some point in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the side chapel had been restored, blocked off from the main church and made into a museum. The mosaics then uncovered proved to be as superb as those of the Chora of the same date. When I first visited Istanbul in 1964 I saw and was impressed by these mosaics but on subsequent visits found the museum shut and inaccessible.



*Pammacharistos*



*Chora*

Also partly inaccessible in the latest visit was the Kariye Museum, the church of St Saviour in Chora as it was. This is the most exquisite of all the late Byzantine churches of Istanbul. It was refurbished and decorated by Theodore Metochites, a high official of the court, who kneels before the enthroned Christ offering a model of his church and wearing a fashionable hat that could never have stayed on in even the slightest breeze. Other mosaics portray the life of the Virgin and the birth stories of Christ with a delightful freshness whilst still keeping reminiscences of Classical tradition. The part which we couldn't see was a side chapel which contained the very best of late frescos including what is arguably the finest painting ever of the raising of Adam and Eve from Hell. This is another church due to be returned to the Muslim community by a Turkish president desperate for the approval of an increasingly strong traditional Islamist party. We can only hope that the mosaics and frescoes will not be permanently covered up.

In 1964 I visited the Pantocrator church and, checking my notes, I seemed to think it was close to being a ruin. Since then it has been restored and at the last visit in 2017 the scaffolding in the picture had been cleared away and it is a



*Pantocrator*

delight to see. It is, in fact, three churches, side by side and sharing one narthex, and built by an Emperor to serve as a mausoleum for his dynasty. It is a perfect example of the late Byzantine taste for complexity – or jumble – depending on whether you like it or not.

Another of similar complexity is the Panachrantos church, found after a long and tiring search with Fr George Guiver in 2002. This again has been well restored after a long period of neglect. It is a complex of two churches, both sharing a narthex, one built in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and one added in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Altogether there are about 20 churches remaining that were turned into mosques at the Turkish conquest or soon after. Only one medieval church remains which was never a mosque – St Mary of the Mongols, so called because it was founded by a Byzantine princess sent to marry a khan of the Mongols in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. I should think there are at least another 20 or 30 churches in Istanbul belonging to various Christian communities built or rebuilt in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and now little used except by Pilgrims from Greece and other Balkan lands, many of whose forbears once lived in the city.

Time has treated badly the churches of Istanbul - only a fragment remains of the many magnificent buildings that graced the city, and the churches that are still used by the dwindling Christian minorities in the city are only kept open by caretakers. The future is bleak, but the one ray of hope is with the increasing group of Turkish archeologists and conservators who are dedicated to caring for the heritage of the city, of whatever period, and who will do so unswayed by politics or dogma. Long may they flourish.

**James Holt**

## ‘Catching God Smiling at Us’

As I write, we are in the first few weeks of the mandatory wearing of masks in shops, on public transport and now in places of worship. I comply with the rules but do so with some reluctance and with a degree of discomfort. I realised while in a supermarket that I felt disconcerted by not being able to exchange smiles with people, or rather that smiling from behind a mask seemed a bit pointless and consequently a bit constraining.

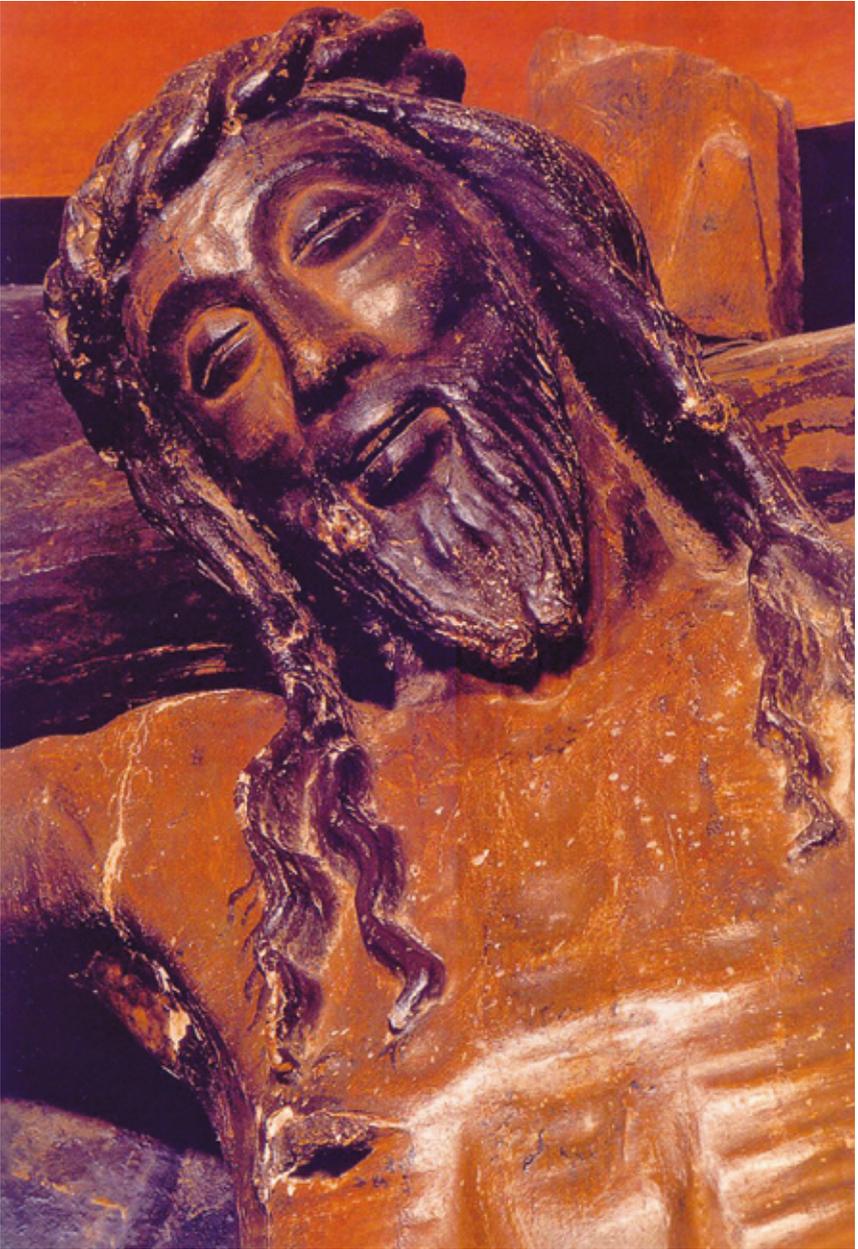
During this pandemic there have been times when I have had to remind myself to smile, even when there is everything to smile about – the courage, skill and care of front-line workers, the kindness of neighbours, the forbearance of children and young people removed from their schools, the beauty of nature, the faithful presence of God, simply being alive.

But there is much to weep about too, and recently when I wept profusely and embarrassingly while in a public waiting room and was shown kindness by strangers all wearing masks, my unease about constraint began to shift. The protective face-coverings didn’t curtail human kindness. Love is shown in deeds, perhaps more so when facial expressions are concealed.

Even a smile can be misunderstood. This thought reminded me of visiting the castle of St Francis Xavier in Spain and being quite perplexed by the crucifix in the chapel which is known as ‘The Smiling Christ’. Christ hangs in agony on the cross, but he is *smiling*. No doubt about it. Is this what is essential for me to appreciate, even many years later? – that there is no doubting God’s promises. One theologian called the moment of death of the smiling Christ “the non-existent boundary between the cross and the resurrection.” I am grateful for this insight.

In her article ‘Catching God Smiling at Us’ ([cacklescorner.com/catching-god-smiling-us](http://cacklescorner.com/catching-god-smiling-us)), Ellen Hogarty links the prayerful habit to ‘catch God smiling at you.’ (“In other words, to go back over your day and look for ways that God was giving you a special grace or mercy.”) with the daily Examen of St Ignatius. Ellen suggests that “perhaps we can ask at the end of each day, ‘Where did I catch God smiling at me today?’”

The months of ‘Lockdown’ brought me some unexpected reminders and reasons to smile, along with many encounters or experiences that have been encouraging or strengthening and have stirred a sense of gratitude that far outweighs grief. I hope you will share my most recent delight described in my poem ‘Apple’. But earlier in ‘Lockdown’ I was consoled and enriched by my mother in a series of dreams that are transposed into another poem I have written. What I didn’t include in that poem was the gift of her wonderful smile, something she was known for and that has been inherited by her children and grandchildren.



*The Smiling Christ. (Crucifix in the chapel at the castle of St Francis Xavier, Spain)*

So I endeavour to smile while wearing my face-mask, trusting that this is worthwhile, that it invites others to smile from behind their masks too. And surely then we will catch God smiling at us.

## *Apple*

Through these pandemic months  
you kept on growing,  
changing from blossom to bud,  
then silently swelling, adding  
blush to your ripening skin,  
staying free from blemish,  
resisting birds and insects,  
absorbing sunlight, drinking rain.  
Your tensile stem kept you firmly  
fastened to the branch where,  
amongst sheltering leaves,  
you fulfilled your purpose,  
not just to be fruitful,  
to sweeten and be palatable,  
but to become iconic -  
futuraity encased in appleness,  
hope revealed in 'lockdown'.

Today, as I plucked you  
from the tree, and held you  
tenderly in my hands,  
you were a world beginning,  
a promise being renewed.  
In you I could taste the depth  
of eucharistic wine, smell  
the fragrance of holy wisdom,  
see the smile of everlasting love.

Dearest apple, beloved tree,  
most wondrous Creator, I receive  
your pips as blessings to be planted  
in a garden glowing with thanks.

**Maggie Jackson**





## Finding Ourselves at Home in Creation

Everywhere we look our environment seems to be changing for the worse. We see fewer butterflies and hear fewer songbirds than we remember. The colourful meadows of yesteryear are almost gone. Our weather is more unpredictable and sudden fierce storms flood our rivers to overflowing. Further afield, we see more catastrophic droughts, glaciers shrinking and polar ice caps melting dramatically. Persuasive evidence suggests that it is our own sophisticated cultures, needful of energy for industry and comfort, wanting of plentiful foods simply produced and from wherever we can get them – that it is this way of life that is causing these things. Some of this change, a warming climate, habitat loss, species extinctions, is catastrophic, maybe already irremediable. What does Christian hope say about this? What can you do?



*There is ample evidence that intensive industrial development in the western world since the mid-1800s has been responsible for a vast increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and the rise in global temperatures.*

### **The Creation is not green scenery for our Christian life**

Christians care about the environment because of what we believe. In Jesus, we believe that God takes upon himself the burdens of a human life, opening his arms to a world that can – and does – try to damage the love which He offers us. It is an invitation to share a new life in His continuing presence. We

see that very same generosity in the way God called life into being at the outset, called us and all that there is out of nothing other than His own imagination, and for nothing other than to enjoy Him for ever. God makes room, as it were, for something that is not himself, but is His. On this costly generosity, and on nothing else, do we - and all that has evolved - depend for our very existence. Before we were made new in Jesus Christ, we were made.

And the Spirit of God which claims us as members of the community of the redeemed in our baptism, this is none other than the same Spirit which brooded on the face of the waters before the start of time, moving back and forth, telling of the extent of God's yearning that we and all that there is might know Him. Before we are forgiven for our sins, we were made for perfection.

The Creation is therefore not some kind of green scenery against which the drama of our Redemption is played out. And it is not just a backdrop against which our Christian life is lived. That is why the Fifth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion - To strive to safeguard the integrity of Creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth - is meant to be seen as an integral part of proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom.

This is a challenge which we undertake in a spirit of celebration. Of course, we repent of all the damage that we ourselves do to the environment but we have to find again that gratitude for the gift of life which we share with all that there is. That shock of realising God's generosity is what should jolt us into a Christian response - of repentance, of a commitment to change our attitude and style of life, to lessen the damage we do to Creation and live again in peace with other creatures.

### **'Dominion' is not tyranny**

We are necessarily dependent upon the natural world for what we eat and wear, for energy, for refreshment. We thus engage with Creation in places where wonder and need collide. Yet, lording it over Creation - exploiting resources selfishly, destroying species, short-cutting natural processes, even turning nature into some sort of 'experience' or entertainment - this is always done at a certain cost, though the accounts may not be settled for some time, as we see with climate change.

In the biblical account of how things came to be, humankind is given 'dominion' over other creatures (*Genesis 1, 28-30*), made 'masters' of all that there is, as it says in another translation. And Christianity has sometimes been blamed for thus legitimising the exploitation of nature, urging us to take from it just what we want. But it is clear from the psalms, from the prophets, from Wisdom literature that the Judaeo-Christian heritage sees our relationship with the rest of Creation as richer and more nuanced than that. 'Stewardship'

is often thought to be a better word to describe proper care for Creation, though in parish life this idea is often interpreted narrowly as to do just with financial giving. However, when Jesus talks of a steward (eg. *Matthew 21, 33-46; Mark 12, 1-12; Luke 20, 9-19*), it is a person who cares for the estate on behalf of a master, and that is how we should see our Christian responsibility.

### **We should lead Creation in a song of praise**

Humankind is unique among all living things in being able to proclaim that the natural world which we perceive with our senses is a Creation that is dependent upon the love of God and exists at some cost to him. Creation itself does not know this and realising ourselves what that cost is, we can proclaim that it does not groan in futility (*Romans 8, 19-23*). On behalf of Creation, the Church thus has a responsibility and privilege to give voice to this through celebration in worship and prayer, proclaiming ‘O all you works of the Lord, bless you the Lord .....’ (*Daniel 3, 52-90*).



*In this lovely painting of Tuscan biodiversity by Taddeo di Bartolo, St Francis tells the birds to sing of their gratitude to God for their existence.*

Yet how often now is the full version of that canticle, the *Benedicite Omnia Opera* said or sung in our worship? In fact, in Common Worship you can opt if you wish for a shorter version which just has an impoverished choir of angels, priests and people singing the praises of God for his generosity in Creation. St Francis of Assisi in his ‘Canticle of the Sun’ had it better, urging Sun, Moon, Stars, Water, Fire and Earth, as our brothers and sisters, to praise God. It is this stance which Pope Francis takes in his wonderful and challenging encyclical of 24 May 2015, *Laudato Sí, On Care for Our Common Home*:

Our Sister Earth now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her ... The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid

waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor ... We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

See, in the eucharist, the fragments of bread which are torn for us; the wine, there, poured out for us! These creatures of bread and wine, they promise to make of us the Body of Christ, risen to proclaim liberty to all that God has made. Yet, outside, the rhythms of life that sustains the land are stifled by our greed. Which one of us, then, will not give voice to these dumb creatures, to the silent pleas of the corn and the grapes that they might grow free of poisonous chemicals, free of the tyranny of the bar-coding of their genome as corporate property, free to grow from Sister Earth and under Brother Sun, that the valleys might stand so thick with corn that they do laugh and sing (*Psalm 65,14*)?

### **Land is a gift**

From our faith perspective, we do not own the land on which we find ourselves. Land is not something which we deserve to inherit or which is some kind of reward for our careful tending of it. We are tenants here (*Deuteronomy 8, 17-18; Leviticus 25, 23*). Land is not as tradable commodity, managed as if by owners of property rather than heirs to a gift. When Ahab demands Naboth's vineyard to turn into a vegetable garden for himself



*My grandson Joe obviously finds himself at home near his house in Manchester.*

(*I Kings 21, 1-16*), the king sees power and possession as the hallmarks of land management. Naboth, by contrast, regards land as held in trust from generation to generation. In his parables, Jesus likewise challenges our notions of what ownership, tenancy and security mean here on earth (*Matthew 20, 1-16/Mark 12,1-12/Luke 20, 9-19*).

For Christians, the notion of Sabbath rest challenges us to limit the intensity of our exploitation of land, relentlessly managing it only for our own well-being. Just as God is seen to rest from His own creative effort, we need also to stand back and see whether what we do is good (*Genesis 2,1-3, Amos 8, 4-6*). In

an often coercive world, we should remember to give the land a break, letting it have a life of its own apart from the uses we can put it to. We need to leave space for nature to breathe and manage places to discern natural rhythms of seasonal change. People without any sense of Sabbath will not protect land's assets from being put to work for purely human ends. It is after the Sabbath rest, that we see life in a completely new way, in the light of the Risen Christ (*Matthew 28, 1-8; Mark 16, 1-8; Luke 24, 1-12; John 20, 1-13*).

### **Creation is where we learn well-being**

A little while ago, I was part of an exchange funded by the Arts & Humanities and Economic & Social Research Councils concerned with human happiness. Essentially, we were tasked with the question as to whether Christian faith has anything to contribute to human happiness, whether there is a kind of 'religious capital' that can be added to the mix of the other riches that we might gain in life and so assure our happiness. But I wanted to question whether what faith does can be conceived as any kind of religious 'capital' at all, when our quality of life as Christians is built entirely on gift, on grace. Nature too is not a form of capital, but also a gift.



*Children on an outdoor lesson in meadow flowers planted among the high-rise communities of Kirby, Liverpool.*

For me, the closing vision in the biblical book of Job (*Job 38,1-42,6*) provides a clue as to where our well-being lies, suggesting that Creation is the proper context for pondering our human predicament, the realm of other creatures and the cosmos beyond: alongside Leviathan and the hippopotamus, where winds are born and snow is stored, among the circling planets. Again, we see that Creation provides more than a scenic backdrop for the kinds of questions about the human condition such as 'Why are we here?', 'What kind of life should we lead?' and 'What paths lead to happiness?' It provides a wider perspective, a more radical vision of the difference religious belief can make to our humanity and whether we might be happy or not.

## **What can we do?**

In March this year, the Church of England General Synod passed a motion calling upon all parts of the church to work together to achieve year on year reductions in the damaging emissions of greenhouse gases, so that by the year 2030, our church buildings, cathedrals and schools are at 'net zero'. What this means is that we must look for greener sources of energy which do not consume fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas; reduce energy waste by insulation and more efficient heating and lighting; and assist the capture of carbon in supporting healthy forests and boglands. This will help tackle climate warming at source.

We all have a part to play in this by urging our own parish and diocese to commit themselves to the General Synod target. That means encouraging our parish priest, parochial church council and church school head teacher to measure the energy footprint of the buildings we use for worship, community life and learning. That will make this task part of our life and learning as Christian people. And we have much to do as individuals and families, looking to how we heat and light our own homes, how we travel, how far our food comes to get on our table.

One very good way to work as a Christian community is through the Arocha Ecochurch scheme. What this does is encourage us to reflect on the environmental implications of (1) our worship and prayer, (2) our buildings, (3) the land we own, (4) our wider community and global engagement and (5) our personal lifestyle. And it provides a useful frame to measure progress and see whether we score bronze, silver or gold in the challenge to change. Find out about this on <https://www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>.

Most dioceses in the Church of England have an Environmental Officer who can help you and your Christian community to find ways to change and help in Creation Care. You can find the name and email of your Environmental Officer at <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/our-views/environment-and-climate-change/deo-map>.

At Mirfield itself, I have been working with the Community of the Resurrection to see how the life at the monastery, the hospitality and learning which the brethren offer, can celebrate the Common Home which we share with the rest of Creation. We all of us have a part to play, making the Christian hope for ourselves and our fellow creatures real and effective.

**John Rodwell**

## Judges then and now

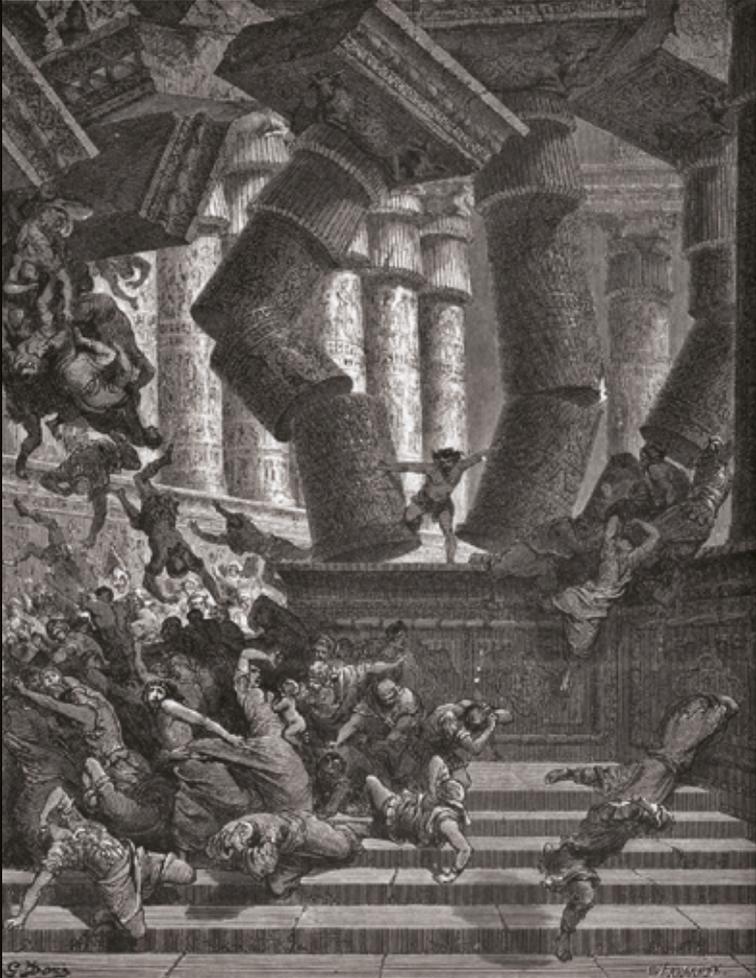
**F**or a long time Judges has been one of my least favourite books in the Bible. It contains, of course, the story of Samson which most of us read as children and probably enjoyed then, though even then we could see that Samson is incredibly stupid. Later we find Samson less and less a role model as he makes his violent way round Palestine, consorting with prostitutes, killing Philistines indiscriminately, setting fire to 300 foxes and all the fields. It is never clear in what sense he was a Judge. He never even tried to bring justice to Israel. The only thing he appears to get right is at the end of his life when he kills 3,000 Philistines at one go, and we today are far less sure than his contemporaries were that killing Philistines was a good thing.

Then you have Gideon, under God's direction, defeating the Midianites with only 300 men. That sounds good. But read on and you find Gideon provoking violence against Ephraim and taking vengeance on his own people. Whatever good he does delivering Israel from the Midianites is undone by his actions against fellow Israelites. Then he manages to father 70 sons all but one of whom are murdered by Abimelech, his son by a prostitute. That story ends in a mess.

On the good side we have, also, the story of Deborah stirring up Barak to lead the army against Sisera who is defeated and then killed by the woman Jael. Apart from this Judges appears to be a rather chaotic collection of stories describing much violence, Baal worship, chaotic families, tribal divisions and the disintegration of Israel. Near the end a Levite, who is by virtue of his tribe a priest) allows his concubine to be raped to death. What can we learn from all this? Taken on its own Judges seems to have nothing to commend it. However, Laura Smit in her commentary in the Brazos series of commentaries has changed my view.

The Brazos Theological Commentaries do not simply do a historical analysis of the books of the Bible; they try to see the books through a theological perspective which is both true to the Hebrew Writings and also to the later part of the story, the Christian New Testament. The Bible is not a random collection of books, but a series of writings put together first by Jewish scholars and then by Christians to tell the story of God's interaction with his people on earth. Put in context Judges begins to make sense.

The first five books of the Bible are known as the Law of Moses, the story of the Covenant which God made with Israel, part of which were the specific laws that Israel was commanded to keep if they wanted to keep the



*Judges – death of Samson (Gustave Doré)*

Lord's favour. Joshua does keep the laws. He does not go after other gods. He obeys the Lord's injunction to drive out the Canaanites and so is largely successful in bringing Israel into the Promised Land. (We may not like his violent tactics but that is another issue.) At the end he sends the tribes off to their appointed territories telling them to keep the law of the Lord. This they do not do, as the book of Judges shows us.

The book does actually start hopefully with the Judges Othniel and Ehud who do successfully deliver Israel; it moves on to Deborah who is magnificent, but then the stories steadily decline from Gideon, through Abimelech, Jephthah, Samson and the unnamed Levite who himself breaks the law against idolatry and abandons his concubine to gang rape. The message is clear. Despite all that the Children of Israel saw in the wilderness, all the teaching of Moses and Joshua, all the law that was given them, they cannot do what they were told. They turn away from worshipping the Law; they follow other gods; they ally themselves with Canaanites; they fight amongst themselves and end up in chaos, being ruled by Canaanite tribes. This pattern continues to repeat itself over and over again throughout the Old Testament writings. Again and again the Israelites fail, despite the teachings of the prophets and the many times when God punishes them to bring them back to their senses. In the end, as we know, it required the Coming of Christ to change the course of the story.

However, Judges also has a surprising sub-theme: the position of women. The first woman to appear in Judges is Achsah. She is treated with great respect by her father Caleb and her husband Othniel. Othniel and Caleb are both good, devout leaders of the people of Israel and for that reason they treat their women well. In the last chapter of Judges we hear how the men of Benjamin acquire wives more or less by communal rape. Just before that we have the revolting story of the unnamed Levite who pushed his concubine (also unnamed) out of the door to be raped to death by a threatening mob. In between we have the good woman judge Deborah and Jael who killed Sisera with a tent peg. Some consider this to be an offence against hospitality rules but in fact Sisera was a nasty piece of work whose own mother rejoiced that he would be raping and bringing home foreign women. Later in the book we see the murderous Abimelech killed by a woman who dropped a millstone onto his head. In the following story Jephthah sacrifices his beloved young daughter who accepts her fate with a heroism worthy of a Greek tragedy. Samson's women, being Philistine, are loyal to their own people. Samson's dealings with them certainly do him no credit. It can be said that all the women in Judges are better than the men (with the happy exception of

Othniel and Caleb) but women's lot in Israelite society certainly gets worse as the men move further and further away from obedience to the Law given by Moses.

The book ends with a refrain repeated several times in the text: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (21:25). This is interestingly ambiguous. The story we have heard suggests that Israel needed a good strong king to keep them in order and make them obey the Law. When they got such a king (Saul) or a series of Kings after David they turned out not much better than the judges. The books of Samuel and Kings do not really approve of kings. The ideal was that God was king and the people should simply obey His law and all would be well. Then it would be good that there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes. That sounds like freedom. In fact, it became destructive licentiousness. Something else was needed. People needed to know the law and keep it. Joshua had tried to teach them the law. Caleb and Othniel had meditated on the law and they turned out good. In fact, Israel never did learn really to understand and keep the law. The world had to wait until Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, one of the few good kings of Israel.

The story does not end there. We look around us today: Covid-19, wars in Yemen and South Sudan, drug dealing and corruption in Central America, exploitation of the poor throughout the world, corrupt, incompetent governments in Western countries, and the destruction of the planet's environment through carelessness and greed. There are billions of Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus whose teaching are clearly opposed to this. Are we, or they, following the laws of our own God? Are we really any better than those people described in the Book of Judges? It is a book which is only too horribly relevant today!

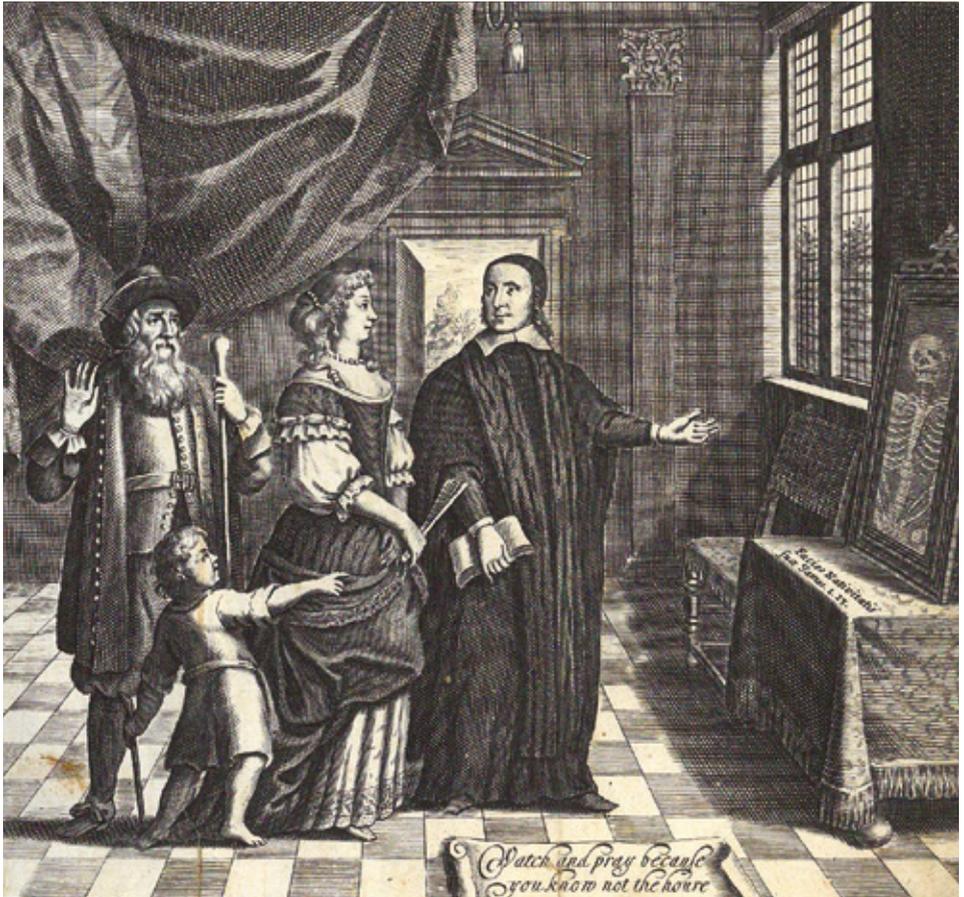
**Nicolas Stebbing CR**

## Jeremy Taylor and his illustrators

In his dedicatory preface to *Holy Dying*, Jeremy Taylor wrote to his patron Richard Vaughan, Earl of Carbery, “My Lord, I have lived to see religion painted upon banners and thrust out of churches”. Although he was writing in light of the tumultuous events of the Civil War those words might have their parallel in the dreadful circumstances of the past few months, where we have seen our national churches closed to the public for the first time in centuries, and substitute banners offered through electronic media like Zoom and Facebook. And yet despite the vicissitudes of life during the terrible times of the Civil War Taylor was able to produce some of his best and most important writings then and these still provide guidance and consolation for us in the difficult pandemic-riven world of today, along with some interesting illustrations.

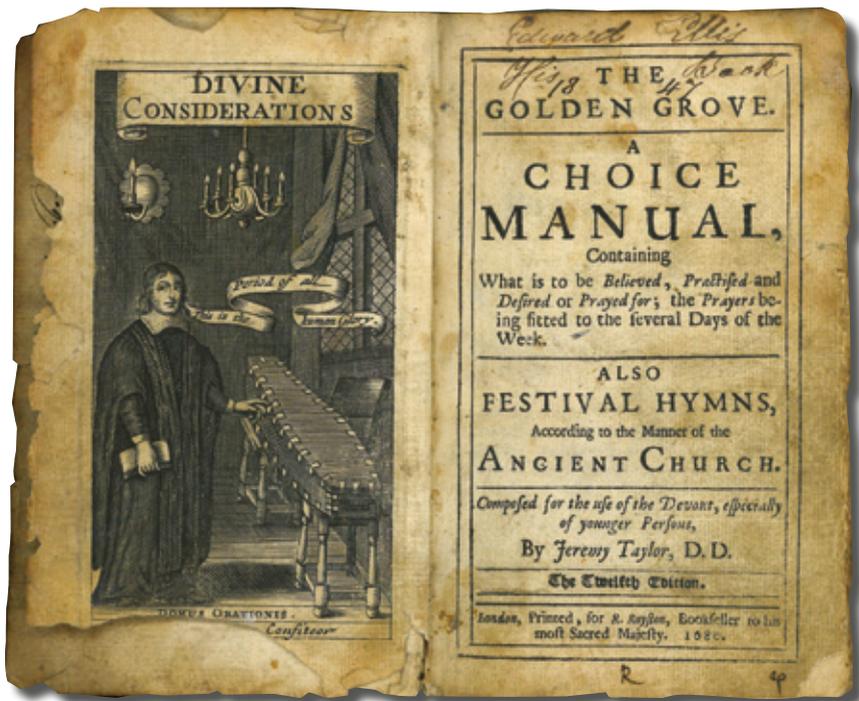
Taylor was born and educated in Cambridge and became a priest in the 1630’s. However, he was associated with the Royalist cause during the Civil War and captured by Parliamentary forces outside Cardigan Castle in early 1645. Later that decade he became chaplain to Richard Vaughan at Golden Grove in Carmarthenshire, the house providing the title for one of his popular manuals of devotion, which first appeared in 1655. *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (1650) and *Holy Dying* (1651) were two of his most influential works, reprinted across the centuries. Reflections such as – “God has appointed one remedy for all the evils of the world and that is a contented spirit”, or “there is some virtue or other to be exercised, whatever happens”, will provide consolation and inspiration for many today.

It is also interesting to look at the way in which artists and engravers have worked alongside Taylor’s writings to offer insight into his ideas. Many of the early editions of his books, published by Richard Royston, featured engraving work by Pierre Lombart, a Huguenot who trained in Paris but who did much of his work in London. Lombart provides illustrations of Taylor, also of his patrons the Earl and Countess of Carbery to accompany *Holy Dying*. In these the Countess views her reflection, as a skeleton, in the mirror, above a reference to *James 1:23*, “If anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who observes his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like”. There is also a caption based on *Matthew 25:13*, “Watch and pray because you know not the hour”. Frances Vaughan, Countess of Carbery, died in 1650 so this is likely to be a direct reference to that event. A painting of Frances by Mary Beale, possibly based on work by Peter Lely, hangs in the County



Countess

Museum just outside Carmarthen. Another important Lombart engraving features Christ as the Good Shepherd carrying the lamb on his shoulders, and this plate features in the title pages of both *Unum Necessarium* from 1655 and the second volume of *Ductor Dubitantium* from 1660. Another unsigned plate as the frontispiece to *Golden Grove*, probably also by Lombart, features Taylor alongside a coffin with the words, “this is the period of all human glory”, coming from his lips. These illustrations will have helped a wide audience to gain ready access to some of the key points of Taylor’s argument. It would however be wrong to suggest that Lombart was the only illustrator of Taylor’s writing, since his important contemporary William Faithorne was commissioned to work on books like *The Great Exemplar* and examples of his prints are held by the NPG and British museum.



Alongside a coffin

Artists were still gaining inspiration from Taylor two centuries later. *Holy Dying* was reprinted by William Pickering in 1847, and the Aberystwyth University copy, expensively bound by James Hayday, features an original artwork by J.J. Laing showing a deathbed scene above a funereal inscription which had been referenced by Taylor as a footnote in his book. Evidently there was a marble memorial in Faversham church, long since hidden under pews, bearing the legend – “whoso him bethoft [sic], inwardly and oft, how hard it were to flit, from bed unto the pit, from pit unto pain, that ne’er shall cease again, He would not do one sin, all the world to win”. Alongside this inscription is a figure of death with his scythe and the name J.J. Laing Edin[bo]r. This seems to be John James Laing, a minor Scottish architect and illustrator, who was a pupil of Ruskin in the 1850’s. If he is the same figure then he also produced a *Manual of Illumination*, published by Winsor and Newton, which appears to have enjoyed a long publication history. Ruskin found him a wonderfully accurate draughtsman and thought he had genius, but he wore himself out “in an agony of vain effort” and died in 1862. Two apparently unrelated deaths of minor artistic figures two centuries apart but both touching on Taylor and both indirectly serving in showing God’s great purpose if we only take time to study the detail.



*J.J.Laing*

Further reading. Jeremy Taylor is covered at great length in several important websites and the full texts of his work is available online e.g <http://anglicanhistory.org/taylor/>. Henry Kaye Bonney gave a note about some other illustrations in Taylor's work in pp369-372 of his *Life* published by Cadell and Davies in 1815 and now available online [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=tr5JTaq1KUAC&dq=%22this+is+the+period+of+all+human+glory%22&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=tr5JTaq1KUAC&dq=%22this+is+the+period+of+all+human+glory%22&source=gbs_navlinks_s).

Pierre Lombart's life remains elusive but is summarised by the National Portrait Gallery at <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp15504/pierre-lombart> alongside reproduction of some of his engraving. See also the BM website at <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG36115>.

John James Laing has a short biography at [http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect\\_full.php?id=201911](http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=201911) and there is a summary of his connection with Ruskin at <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/media/lancaster-university/content-assets/documents/ruskin/36-37Letters.pdf>.

**Bill Hines**

## **It's good to be part of something that proclaims 'Resurrection!'**

**T**hese are uncertain times; the ecclesiastical landscape is changing, and even the robust can experience moments of despondency. Yet in the face of all this, the Mirfield family, not least the Society of the Resurrection, continues to grow. Why? Not out of nostalgia but because at the heart of who we are is our mission to proclaim that God is a God of resurrection.

Our confidence stems from the resurrection. On Good Friday when God stood by and did nothing, the disciples had been plunged into confusion and disillusionment. God had abandoned Jesus. Nothing made sense. Their confidence was destroyed, their faith was shattered, and their own futures lay in ruins. Then something happened. Huddled together in the upper room the disciples looked up and saw Jesus standing there looking at them. No one had carried him in, he was not the bleeding wreck of a man who had somehow survived execution. It was the risen Christ who came and stood among them.

After the joy and celebration there came the growing awareness that what has happened is enormous. Something transformational has taken place. Yes, Jesus is alive, but the fact that he has been resurrected means that everything that has gone before needs to be reassessed. They need to reassess who Jesus is, what he said and what he did, even the terrible things that happened to him now need to be seen as part of something bigger. The question is, what does it all mean?

For disciples, then and now, the resurrection is a massive vindication of Jesus. It is a declaration, a royal seal of approval. Through it the Father confirms the mission and authority of Christ, "This in my son, the beloved, listen to him." It is also a display of power. The power of life overcoming death but also the power of love overcoming hurt. We broke not only his body but also his heart and yet God refuses to give up on us. Instead of smouldering anger at our latest, most heinous offence, the outflowing love of God remains. Putting all this together there is the gradual realisation that the resurrection is part of something bigger. God is up to something. The arrival, the death and the resurrection of Jesus are part of it but even these momentous events are only the first fruits. These are the things that make the next stage possible.

The resurrection is not just an event in the life of Jesus, it is an event in the life of creation. God is creating a new set of possibilities for humankind. He

does heal us from a distance but from inside the very fabric of humanness. This is why Paul called Christ the second man, the second Adam (I Cor 15.45-49). The Word, who became flesh, became so much part of us that the things that happened to Jesus touch all of us. Humanity's status and possibilities have been altered by his incarnation and by his death and resurrection. Christ both recreates, and is, our future. The resurrection is not just proof that there is life after death, it represents the clearest possible signal about the value that God places on humanity. The effort he has put into resurrecting our possibilities is astounding. God's commitment to us is even deeper than we dare believe.

This is the source of our confidence. The times may be grim, but humanity has a future. 'Neither death nor life...nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God.' The resurrection also gives us enormous confidence for the future of the Church. Because 'God is for us' and at work amongst us, we can know with absolute certainty that there will always be communities of faithful people who will gather to listen to Jesus and welcome him as he comes to us in and through the bread and wine of the mass.



What external form the Church of the future might take is harder to predict. The long months of Lockdown have further damaged the financial viability of already struggling Dioceses and churches. But this could be a blessing in disguise. Crises act as catalysts for change. Who knows, we might even have arrived at the point where we finally stop shoring up the ‘medieval’ version of the parish system and move to a more adventurous and more clergy friendly model of being church. Things do need to change. In the past diminishing income from the parishes has always resulted in the reduction of clergy but not in a reduction of parishes or buildings. Non-viable churches are seldom closed, they might not even lose their PCCs, they simply become part of a multi-parish benefice and someone else’s workload. The result is that even thriving churches then begin to decline because their Incumbents are too thinly stretched.

Why do we continue to do this? Three reasons. The first is that we are afraid of being accused of abandoning the congregation of churches that are no longer viable. The second is that we don’t know what to do with the church buildings that we close. The third is that we are philosophically in bondage to the ‘image’ of the medieval parish. We are frozen in time. The truth that we take care to avoid is that God is eternal. He has watched great empires come and go, he has seen the great temples of Jerusalem rise and fall. Judging by the priorities of Jesus, God does not seem to be overly concerned with the external shape of human institutions. Who knows, perhaps we’ve finally arrived at the point where we’re brave enough to close the churches that are no longer viable and sell the buildings back to a town or village trust or whoever voices concern and wants to maintain them. If there was a revival in that town or village, we could always rent a session in the church or, if not, rent the village hall.

Of course, the church of the future will have to up its game. One of the unexpected results of lockdown has been that thousands of the faithful have now sampled worship streamed on YouTube. They have sampled more of what’s on offer and have no qualms in changing channels. Why should they sit and watch a lifeless mass droned over by a priest with no obvious love for our Lord? After months of ‘surfing’ services I have a new sympathy for those who self-designate as ‘spiritual but not religious’. I confess to you, my brothers and sisters that there have been Sundays when I have found the offerings so lifeless that I have watched clips from Mock the Week instead.

So should we despair? By no means! I have spoken to people who long for the offering of worship that enables them to experience moments of joyful openness and union with God. There is a genuine spiritual hunger. What we need are holy, humble clergy who will celebrate mass with joy and love for Jesus. For his part he will always honour our invitation. The setting doesn’t



*A parishioner with a laptop inside Liverpool Parish Church (Our Lady and St Nicholas), watching a virtual service at the beginning of lockdown.*

bother him. It could be a church, an attic or even an open-air mass in the Dales. He is risen and at work amongst us so there will always be a 'church'. That church needs to hear more of the Mirfield family's celebration of resurrection because the reality of resurrection has something profound to say to us as individuals. Part of the confidence we have in the future stems from the fact that that the source of life has gone into death and created resurrection. We are now technically unstoppable. We know that we will 'survive' death and, like Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration, we will have personal continuity and conversation to share with others.

But there is more. In a way the historical resurrection of Jesus is a sign and type of something that God is constantly doing in the here and now. Resurrection is not just a past or future event, it is also an on-going dynamic. God is constantly resurrecting us. Sometimes it is through the mass or the healing sacrament of reconciliation, sometimes it is simply as we are praying we simply become aware that he is constantly picking us up, giving us new beginnings and creating new pathways and possibilities for each one of us. This is the cause of our Joy. We begin to perceive a deep connection between creation and resurrection. What we see is God rescuing, renewing, and creating new possibilities both in us and in the lives of those we meet and accompany. God is good at resurrection. His love for us will never falter or diminish. No wonder we have confidence in the future!

**Cliff Bowman**

## Companions

**New Member:** Malcolm Kemp  
**RIP:** Nona Harvey

## Society of the Resurrection

**New Probationers:** Lois Ward, Alexander Crawford, Jonathan Kester.

**Corpus Christi annual gathering:** 35 members took part this year via Zoom, and 15 renewed their promises for a further 3 years.

## Sponsored Cycle Ride



You won't be surprised to learn that the sponsored cycle ride in aid of the Tariro charity, planned for last May, will now have to wait until next spring. We had hoped to do it in October, but the situation has remained too uncertain. Many thanks to those who have supported it so far – my own eager anticipation will have to stay alive for a little longer.

**Fr George**

## A Letter

I was flattered by the kind comments with which Fr Nicolas Stebbing CR opened his remarks about my *Cowley Fathers* in the June edition of the *CR Review*. I share his frustration that so much of the story of the SSJE could not be included in the volume.

Some of Fr Stebbing's comments about my book, however, strayed into the realm of reminiscence. I have no doubt that he found Fr David Campbell SSJE and Fr Christopher Bryant SSJE to be "lovely men", but my task was to construct an assessment of their impact through their words and deeds such as appeared in their correspondence, in their public statements, and in the minutes of the meetings of the SSJE Chapter.

It is not necessarily the job of an historian to assess his subjects' loveliness; I think that had Fr Bryant, and not Fr Campbell, been elected Superior General in 1976 then things might have been very different. My analytical assessments may jar with Fr Stebbing's happy memories, but I do not think it was "unfair" of me to have drawn the conclusions that I did based on the available evidence. It is true that I regard the SSJE's destruction of the magnificent high altar of its community church as an act of wanton and unnecessary barbarism; nevertheless, I do not bring my "own axe to grind" as Fr Stebbing states. I simply present the following indisputable facts. The English Congregation of the SSJE jettisoned the absolute necessity of apostolic succession and episcopal ordination through its tacit acceptance of the South India Scheme; it introduced modern innovations into its formerly traditional liturgies; it treated women's ordination as an open question; it drastically reordered its community church; now it is dead.

**Serenhedd James**

## Another letter on the same subject:

### War Songs of the Prince of Peace

Dr James' superb history of SSJE is so mammoth that it's easy to overlook these few sentences:

“Fr Raynes CR approached the Society with the request that Fr Geoffrey Curtis CR might write a study of Fr Benson's theology. Frs Dalby and Bryant SSJE were enthusiastic but Chapter disagreed - Fr Wallis recoiled from the idea of a member of another community undertaking such a work and urged that Fr Wain undertake the work”.

Perhaps Geoffrey CR felt compensated by his other two studies, *William of Glasshampton* and *Paul Couturier, Apostle of Unity*. To *Mirfield Essays in Christian Belief* he contributed a chapter called *Baptism and the Quest for Unity*. In it he quoted Fr Benson with approval: “ In Western Christianity the Holy Eucharist has so overshadowed Baptism that the nourishment of our life is presented as a gift greater than the life it sustains. Yet by Baptism we receive the Christian character, the substantive gift of the indwelling Christ which is to be the vivifying and formative principle of our being. We are incapable of feeding on Christ at His Supper without having received the supernatural faculty that is ours through Baptism”.

All Christians, not just SSJE and CR, can be grateful for Fr Benson's understanding of the baptized and the Psalms. In *War Songs of the Prince of Peace* he wrote: “No prayer of ours would reach the ear of God unless His voice filled it with the anointing power of the Holy Ghost by whose fellowship we are called to be members of Christ. We must therefore be careful not to speak to God as if we were external to Christ. Christ is not a third party between us and the Father. We are truly one with Him by regeneration as He is one with His Father by eternal generation. We must therefore use the words of the Psalter, not as formularies which He has written and sanctified for our sakes, but as utterances which He himself makes for us, His members, that we may join with Him by the indwelling Spirit of life. We appropriate to ourselves his intercession while we use His words. So then he speaks the Psalter as Head of the church”.

**Robert Mercer CR**

## Book Reviews

### **In Concert Sing – A Mirfield Bedside Book.**

*Community of the Resurrection, ed Robert Mercer CR.*

Mirfield Publications. ISBN 978-0-902834-51-4. Price £8.50



**IN CONCERT SING**  
**A Mirfield Bedside Book**

When I was a young curate, we had a wonderful lady in the congregation who often described the many and varied aspects of her long and happy life as ‘A cornucopia of delight’. It is a phrase well-suited to this latest offering from Mirfield Publications and it could not have arrived at a more apposite time when our spirits need a lift and our souls seek inspiration!

For here is a rich medley of articles (some from CR’s Quarterly Review) sitting happily alongside both contemporary and historic photos, recollections, quotations, obituaries – spanning the Community’s long and profound influence – not only in West Yorkshire but across numerous countries and continents. It’s the sort of book you can simply dip into and find something to interest or entertain.

From its origins the Community’s inclinations towards what Gore’s biographer, G.L. Prestige, called ‘social agitation’ arose out of a radical concern for political and social justice. Its undoubtedly Tractarian ethos, with its dignified, ritualistic worship, was, from the beginning, rooted in care and concern for poor and marginalised communities, especially those stigmatised by reason of colour and race. CR will ever be strongly associated with its work in South Africa and Zimbabwe where Robert Mercer CR, was Bishop of Matabeleland, during a time of intense civil war. Historically no fewer than a dozen of the Brethren have been raised to the episcopate. At least a similar number have held university doctorates. Scholarship and prayer have gone hand in hand with political conviction, yet also with good humour and faithful discipleship. Described as a ‘*gallimaufry*’ of the Community of the Resurrection, this wonderful little book testifies to all of the above, thus providing a rich and accessible compendium of CR’s life.

Every community has its eccentrics. Particularly endearing is one

recollection of Martin Jarrett–Kerr, who, when not stripping off to sunbathe on the Sacristy roof would drive the Brethren mad by slamming other people’s open doors shut and by practising the piano and clarinet (*not simultaneously!*) at inopportune moments! Music has always been one of Mirfield’s essential charisms as Peter Allan’s excellent chapter on Plainsong makes clear. Indeed, the Chant is right at the heart of each and every one of the Community’s liturgies, subliminally inviting the visitor to become pilgrim, as the Brethren offer the daily rhythm of prayer and praise. George Guiver’s equally fascinating article on the renewal and refurbishment of the Community Church reminds us that a religious community is not a static entity – but a vibrant, living organism, called to live the mystery of the Resurrection whilst telling its story to an ever–changing world.

We read of Princess Margaret’s visit to Mirfield and of her abiding affection for the Community; of the work of the Hostel in Leeds (1908–1976), founded by CR, which helped Ordinands and others (often from poor backgrounds) to experience the routine of a disciplined and ordered life, prior to completing training at the College. Mark Sowerby, College Principal, writes on the challenges facing the College today – a microcosm of the challenges now facing the Church as a whole.

Every picture tells a story and many of the articles in this compendium are accompanied by photographs from the Community archive. There are others too, in glorious colour, showing the re-furbished Community church at the time of its re-dedication. My favourite has to be a beautiful water-colour of St Augustine’s church, Penhalonga, where CR ran the mission from 1915–1983. The mission became the centre of CR’s activities in Zimbabwe, where the Brethren ran a school for children alongside theological education and pastoral work. Indeed, historically, the influence of CR at Penhalonga, during the many years of Zimbabwean civil conflict, cannot be over-emphasised.

But whether you have known CR for many years or only recently discovered its charm, you really must read this little ‘Bedside Book’. I found here an abundance of interesting, amusing, informative and often reflective cameos encapsulating CR’s rich and diverse life and evidencing its undoubted impact over generations in a multitude of settings. For less than a Tenner – buy it! You won’t be disappointed!

**Dominic Fenton**



Please direct all materials, enquiries and comments to the editor, Fr George Guiver CR, at [gguiver@mirfield.org.uk](mailto:gguiver@mirfield.org.uk)

Articles for consideration should be sent at least 5 weeks before the issue date.

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Are you able to support our CR Future campaign? This seeks to give the Community the tools for the job, and to transform the way we welcome guests. For more information, see our website ...

[www.mirfield.org.uk](http://www.mirfield.org.uk)

To speak to someone about supporting the Community or College, please contact:

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