



# CR

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST JUNE 2024

486

<b>The College, Zimbabwe, students on the move</b>	<b>3</b>	<i>Antonio Joseph</i>
<b>Zimbabwe and the CBS</b>	<b>4</b>	<i>Nicolas CR</i>
<b>St Paul for Anglo-Catholics</b>	<b>6</b>	<i>Dr Dorothea Bertschmann</i>
<b>Charles Gore and Philip Doddridge</b>	<b>11</b>	<i>Bill Hines</i>
<b>Bereavement by Suicide</b>	<b>13</b>	<i>Howard Riley</i>
<b>Reflection following Ascension Day</b>	<b>18</b>	<i>Maggie Jackson</i>
<b>Oblates and St Benedict</b>	<b>21</b>	<i>Nicolas CR</i>
<b>Should we be using plastic water bottles?</b>	<b>25</b>	<i>Nicolas CR</i>
<b>Book Reviews</b>	<b>27</b>	
George Guiver CR: <i>All Christians are monks</i>	<b>27</b>	
Aidan Nichols OP: <i>Apologia: a memoir</i>	<b>29</b>	

*Cover: SS Peter & Paul, 11th-century apse painting, abbey of San Giovanni in Venere, Fossacesia, Italy*

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The Quarterly Review of the Community of the Resurrection is published four times a year.  
Annual subscriptions (inc. postage and packaging):

UK (Inland)£20.00 (GBP)

OVERSEAS (AirMail)£25.00 (GBP)

Order from:

The Editors CRQ, House of Resurrection,  
Stocks Bank Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire. WF14 0BN.  
[companions@mirfield.org.uk](mailto:companions@mirfield.org.uk)

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## The College, Zimbabwe, students on the move

The end of the academic year is always busy for students at any educational institution, and the College of the Resurrection is no exception. Amongst the hustle and bustle of students preparing for their summer placements or curacies, we found some time to come together to hear from Scott Canadas about his time on placement in Zimbabwe. Scott shared his experiences of working with the local community, the challenges they face, and the impact of our ongoing support for Tariro.

During this presentation, we were reminded on a personal level of the enduring and deep roots of the Community of the Resurrection in Zimbabwe, a relationship that we, as students, are a part of and contribute to. We have contributed to this over the past year through our support for Tariro, an organisation dedicated to

providing educational opportunities for underprivileged children in Zimbabwe. We were proud to present a cheque to Fr Nicolas Stebbing CR for £217.54; this was the work of several fundraising activities over the past year under the stewardship of Josh Harris and Alex Walker,



our student Mission and Environment Officers. The key events they organised were Carol Singing outside the Mirfield Co-Op and a student Vestment Auction.

We are looking forward to the next academic year with a new cohort of students and, hopefully, new opportunities to visit Zimbabwe. We wish Scott and all the leavers the best as they start their next step in following their calling from God, and keep them and the work of Tariro in our prayers.

**Antonio Joseph**  
Senior Student

## Zimbabwe and the CBS

Many of our readers will know of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. It is one of the oldest devotional societies in the Anglican Church. Their main focus is to foster devotion to and proper use of the Blessed Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood. Anyone who has been to their Festival, as I did this June, will remember the superb liturgies focused on Our Lord. Yet CBS do much more than that. Nearly fifty years ago, when I was a young mission priest in Zimbabwe, they gave me a much-needed chalice and paten to help me with my work. In recent years they have given me several chalices, patens, thuribles and aspergilia to share with Zimbabwean priests. Zimbabwean Anglicans love good Catholic religion. It is not just piety; tangible ceremonies help to replace the bad elements of traditional religion. Sprinklers are used to sanctify graves and bless tomb stones. Incense is a wonderful symbol of prayer driving out demons. Accessories of catholic worship are not just decorative; they have a profound and powerful impact on people's faith.



More recently CBS have extended their help in Zimbabwe, first with nuns. In Zimbabwe, there are three little Anglican communities of sisters whom I visit whenever I go there. I have known them for over 40 years! The Chita che Zita Rinoyera is the oldest and was founded in 1935. The other two, Community of the Holy Transfiguration and the Community of the Blessed Lady Mary, broke away from CZR about forty years ago. All

three communities struggle to live. They have to work very hard, grow their own crops and cope with a collapsed economy. Yet they are devout sisters who want to pray and do not get enough time to do it properly. Normally when they retreat they have to look after themselves and that doesn't give them



enough time to pray.

This year, with help from the Confraternity (and also the Anglican Religious Communities), I was able to take them to a small Catholic Benedictine monastery, founded from Ampleforth. We went in two batches, one just before Easter and the other just after. The monks were very welcoming and gave us comfortable rooms and plenty of food. The sisters attended all their offices and I said mass each day in their chapel. Every evening, we had Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, sometimes joined by the monks. The sisters loved this time of extended prayer. Although the Sisters do have to work hard to support themselves, they know that prayer is at the heart of their life and relish occasions when they can really give time to it. The monastery of Christ the Word is a beautiful, quiet place and ideal for such retreats.

One of the brothers, Brother Placid, is a Zimbabwean and he shared the giving of addresses with me. This was really good for the sisters as his Shona is much better than mine! The photograph shows one group of sisters along with Brother Placid.

Our second new venture with funding from CBS was to gather about a dozen of our teenagers together at the Holy Spirit Monastery to talk about their futures. Shona kids need a lot of vocational guidance as there are so few jobs and they need to be realistic about their options. We brought in two of our trustees and three of our former children who are now married and employed.

They talked with the teenagers about the realities of life in Zimbabwe today and had a really good impact on them. At the same time they all had teaching on the sacraments from Friar Joshua and his Sisters. Each morning began with mass and the day ended with evensong. The children were happy with this arrangement and learned much of both secular and spiritual importance. They also had a lot of fun. Thank you CBS!

**Nicolas CR**

# St Paul for Anglo-Catholics:

Apostle, Evangelist, Mystic:

*A 3-part series based on talks during the 'Mirfield Gathering' in early May 2024*

## Part one: Apostle

The title 'St Paul for Anglo-Catholics' sounds a bit like certain specifications are needed to make Paul intelligible or perhaps palatable for Anglo-Catholics. It almost sounds as if I have to work a bit to sell him to you. Well, we shall see that there is some truth in that. After all, the re-discovery of Paul and his radical theology of grace were key for Martin Luther's spiritual journey, which brought him into conflict with the Roman church of his day. To this day Pauline scholarship has a clear 'centre of gravity' in reformed, Lutheran and evangelical heartlands, with a strong contingent of US-American voices.

This presentation has a personal and autobiographical aspect (as all theologies have); allow me, therefore, to begin with a few words about me: I was born and brought up in the Swiss Reformed church, which is one of the mainstream churches in Switzerland with considerable theological breadth. I grew up in a vicarage and was an ordained pastor myself in that church for some years. During various stays in England I discovered the beauty and depth of liturgical and sacramental worship and was drawn into Anglicanism over many years. My theological 'mother tongue' remains Protestant and has been honed and sharpened from decades of researching and teaching Paul's letters. At the same time I have been formed, blessed and sometimes challenged by praying, working and teaching at the College of the Resurrection for the last eight years. This is the background from which I write these essays.

But let us turn to Paul now – I would like to structure my inputs along the title: Apostle, Evangelist, Mystic.

*Paul the Apostle: A radical Gospel*

Why is Paul so much the champion in certain theological quarters, especially Protestant ones? Well, as you know, a Pauline slogan 'Justification through faith alone by grace alone' was at the heart of the Protestant reformation. And the negative part of it 'and not by works of the law' is also Pauline (eg Galatians 2:16). The reformers turned it against the medieval papal church of their time

and its finely tuned system of guiding souls to spiritual maturity – from the infused grace of the sacraments, to growing righteousness under the guidance and pastoral care of the church, to the hope of finding mercy before God's judgment seat. It is important to see that the reformers struck at the heart of this system, not just at the perhaps more questionable practices such as indulgences. They said: God's judgment has already happened when Christ died and was raised. God's grace is given to the unworthy; whoever clings in faith to this promise is seen as righteous by God. 'There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus', as Paul says it in Romans 8:1. Paul's 'works of the law' were understood as the whole Torah, not just the ceremonial parts of the Jewish law. Keeping the law was a path which could never lead to salvation because it either made people flip-flop between arrogance and despair (Luther) or because people were simply unable to render the perfect obedience which is due to a majestic God (Calvin).

So this is the first affinity between Paul and Protestantism: A radical understanding of grace as being all-sufficient for salvation and of faith as the only appropriate human response to it.

A lot of Pauline Theology, especially in US Protestant circles still very much deals with the refinement of this formula and the puzzling over the problems related to it. A lot of this work explores the nature of faith and how it relates to good works, which *do* matter after all.



*St Paul, Grotto of St Paul,  
Ephesus*

The whole Reformation reading of Paul has been thoroughly challenged by a movement called 'The new Perspective on Paul', of which James Dunn was an early exponent, and N.T. Wright its most famous protagonist. More recently, John Barclay's landmark study of 'Paul and the Gift' has offered a sophisticated reading of grace within theories of gift-giving. As you can see, I have a certain preference for Durham scholars! But there is another 'Protestant' element in Paul, and this finally brings me to Paul's calling as an apostle.

*Paul the Apostle: An independent ministry*

Paul frequently calls himself an 'apostle to the Gentiles', he opens almost every letter with this introduction. This might seem straightforward and we probably think we know what an apostle is: Jesus had twelve, they took over after the resurrection and began to ordain successors at some point who would be bishops, thus establishing the apostolic succession, to put it a bit flippantly. But as you know, Paul was not one of the Twelve. In fact, he never knew the earthly Jesus. For all we know he was not ordained by one of the Twelve either. That did not keep him from evangelising, preaching, and more rarely baptising folks. In Acts 22:17ff. we see him meeting with a group of elders he addresses as a kind of spiritual father. Far from feeling self-conscious Paul seems to be rather proud about his fast-track to ministry. Especially in his letter to the Galatians Paul passionately insists that he is an apostle 'not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead' (Gal.1:1). The Gospel Paul preaches is 'not according to man', neither received nor taught, but directly revealed (Gal.1:11-12). Only three years after his conversion Paul met Peter at Jerusalem for a brief first visit. Some 14 years later Paul went up again, not summoned by humans but prompted by a divine revelation (2:1). This time he conversed with 'the pillars' of the church, James, Cephas (Peter) and John, and relates how they all reached an amicable agreement (2:9); but not without emphasizing that he is not impressed at all by human credentials or anyone's prestige in the church (2:6). On the strength of this God-given authority Paul felt he was able to stand up to the prince of the Apostles himself, when the said prince, Peter or Cephas, stopped having table-fellowship with Gentile converts to the faith (Galatians 2:11ff.). This so-called Antioch incident was at times an embarrassment for theologians – imagine that, two apostles quarrelling with each other! But for Paul it was a question about the truth of the Gospel, which trumped any other authority or prestige: 'Even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you... – let him be anathema!' (Galatians 1:8). And perhaps we have to add 'and that includes blooming Mr Peter Cephas'. Despite



this conflict, and others, Paul valued the connection to and fellowship with the Jerusalem church. The time and passion Paul poured into his collection for Jerusalem is testimony to this desire to be in fellowship with Jewish Christ-believers (cf. 2 Corinthians 8), and more broadly connected to the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

So this is Paul, fiercely independent, prioritising the Gospel content over Church hierarchies, directly inspired by God with no middle-men – all things which still make a lot of sense to a Protestant mindset. I am of course not saying that Paul was a Protestant. But Paul's defiant attitude to church authority at the highest level deeply resonated with mainstream reformers, who were all involved in finding new arrangements between ecclesial and temporal powers.

Paul was the crazy new kid on the block, deeply controversial in his own lifetime and just about domesticated afterwards.

*After Paul the Apostle: Domestication or maturing?*

One such 'domestication' is Luke's portrayal in Acts, where conflicts between Jerusalem and Antioch are reported but where all the emphasis is on the peaceful solution at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). Paul is clearly the unrivalled star of the second part of Acts, and Luke narrates his conversion no less than three times – but Luke never calls Paul an apostle. Well, almost never (cf. Acts 14:4, 14). For Luke apostles are the Twelve Jesus chose from among his disciples (Luke 6: 12-16), not whoever thinks they can claim that title. When the Twelve seek to replace Judas Iskariot they are looking for a man who was with them 'all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us' since the baptism of John, in order to be a witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). Well, as far as the job description goes, Paul *does* think he is a witness of the resurrection, because he has encountered the risen Lord. He kind of photoshops himself into a long line of resurrection witnesses, beginning with Peter in 1 Corinthians 15:5 and ends his enumeration by saying: 'Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time' (v.8). Though modestly calling himself 'the least of the apostles'(v.9) he definitely thinks he belongs with the original apostles!

Another important later 'domestication' is probably already found in some letters in our canon which bear the name of 'Paul'. It is now widely held across denominations, that the so-called pastoral letters, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, were not written by the historical Paul. The same goes for Ephesians and 2

Thessalonians. In the case of Colossians you have voices arguing for and against authenticity. There are some good reasons to see those letters as mirroring a different stage in the development of the church, especially what we see in the Pastoral letters: tradition and church offices become more important, we hear about something like an ordination ritual (1 Timothy 1:6), and there is a general anxiety to fit into wider society, which is noticeable in a social conservatism that puts women and slaves 'in their place'. However, excluding these letters from the *Corpus Paulinum* and sometimes pretty much ignoring them also feeds a somewhat circular hermeneutics, which suits a Protestant agenda: If it smacks of tradition and offices it is not Paul. Moreover, traditional Protestant scholarship frequently operated with a historical narrative of decline which sees the church moving from the lofty heights of charismatic leadership, freedom and bold social experiments to a more institutionalised and sometimes fossilised Christianity. At times the Pastoral letters were labelled 'early catholic', and this was definitely *not* meant to be a compliment.

Other Christians and Pauline scholars would insist that these developments are far from a decline but rather a necessary process of maturing and consolidating. There is a deep sense of wanting to both affirm and reform creation and societal structures 'in Christ' in the disputed letters. In some places we might already have a reaction to the Gnostic crisis of the second century. It is fascinating to see how Colossians, sitting somewhat in the middle between the undisputed Pauline letters and the Pastoral letters paints a grand vision of 'Christ at the heart of creation' (Colossians 1:15-18) to borrow a title of one of Rowan Williams's books. In Colossians and Ephesians we also see an image of the church emerging, which is not just a minority sect looking for the end of all things, but also a force determined to shape this present world.

*(The next instalment, **St Paul for Anglo-Catholics: Evangelist**, will appear in the September issue)*

**The Rev'd Dr Dorothea H. Bertschmann**  
Tutor, College of the Resurrection

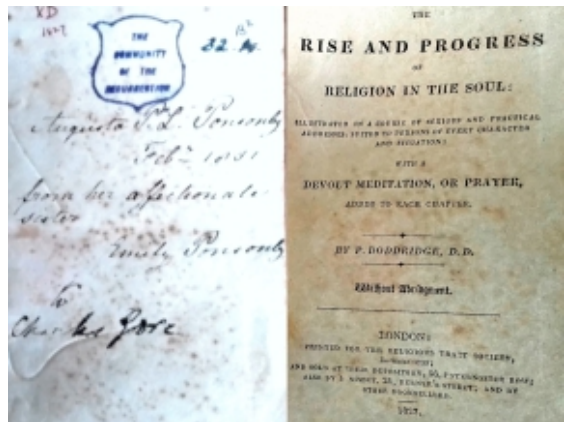
# Charles Gore and Philip Doddridge

From the Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 32: *Whoever fails to keep the things belonging to the monastery clean or treats them carelessly should be reproved.*



When I made passing reference to the nonconformist divine Philip Doddridge in a short piece in the CR Review for Michaelmas 2022 I did not expect to find myself encountering another link through the book collection of Charles Gore. On the face of it Gore and Doddridge seem unlikely bedfellows since Doddridge was a leading 18th-century Nonconformist, while Gore was attracted to Anglo-Catholicism from his youth. However, amongst the books in the Old Library at Mirfield is a cheap 1827 copy of the Doddridge classic, *The Rise and Progress of*

*Religion in the Soul*, republished by the Religious Tract Society. The book is not in great condition, with loose boards, and might well have been overlooked or even discarded were it not for Charles Gore's name in the endpapers. Gore was raised in an aristocratic but low church environment. It seems that the book was originally a present from his aunt Lady Emily Ponsonby to his mother Lady Augusta Ponsonby in February 1831, and then later passed on to a young Charles Gore. Emily proved to be quite a successful romantic novelist with around a dozen books to her name in the mid-century. However, the Doddridge volume was a childhood present to her sister when she was fourteen.



Charles Gore later wrote “I had been brought up in oldfashioned English church ways. I had only attended very low Church services. I had never heard of the Oxford Movement. I knew nothing about Catholicism, except as a strange superstition called Popery”. His education and religious practice was typical for a member of the Victorian aristocracy, time at Harrow school being followed by Balliol College Oxford. Indeed, we can trace his progress through these institutions from a number of gifts and prize books in the Mirfield collections. All in sharp contrast to the young Philip Doddridge nearly 150 years earlier. Philip was born into a nonconformist merchant family in 1702 but lost both his parents while still a child. A new guardian moved him to a private school at St. Albans but squandered his inheritance, leaving him destitute. Fortunately he came under the wing of an nonconformist preacher, Samuel Clarke, who paid for his upbringing and supported him into the ministry. Philip preached at Samuel Clarke's funeral in 1750 noting that “to him under God I owe even myself and all my opportunities of public usefulness in the church”. Doddridge went on to become one of the three great figures of 18th-century nonconformity, probably only slightly less noteworthy than John Wesley and George Whitefield. He wrote many hymns, including old favourites like *Hark the glad sound, the Saviour comes, O God of Bethel, by whose hand,* and *Ye servants of the Lord, each in his office wait.*

The *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* is regarded as Doddridge's most important book, being translated into seven languages. Charles Spurgeon commented that his mother's exposition of the book had been one of the great influences on his development. Did Augusta's gift of her book to Charles Gore exert any similar influence? By chance the library at Aberystwyth University holds a handful of letters to Philip Doddridge, including one written by Samuel Clarke in February 1720/1 which has recently been identified as the earliest surviving correspondence to Doddridge. In this letter Clarke encourages Doddridge in the pursuit of his religious studies and makes practical arrangements on payments of expenses. All very interesting in itself and doubtless material for a scholarly article. However, in the context of a weekend retreat spent at Mirfield in March 2024 it also led me into reflections during the daily examen about how such a couple of chance finds may help to demonstrate God in the detail of our daily round. The daily reading from the Rule of St. Benedict on the Friday of the retreat included the sentence at the start of this article. The community library is an important resource in the daily life of the Community and fortunately this is recognised in the care taken by the brethren and librarian Anisha and her team to catalogue and preserve all the materials, however slight and timeworn they may seem. And then a chance



conversation with Father Nicolas at the supper table about the work and progress of the young people at Tariro reminded me what valuable work is being done with material and spiritual support from the Community to foster the growth and development of young needy folk to this day. Perhaps some future Philip Doddridge or Charles Gore is being nurtured in Zimbabwe as I write these lines.....

“Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me”.

**Bill Hines**

## **Bereavement by Suicide**

**T**he loss of a loved one by suicide is a uniquely painful and damaging experience and categorised as 'complex grief'. The mourner is not just dealing with the tragic loss but also with blame, anger, guilt and deep sadness. All combined, these corrosive mental elements can be devastating for individuals and families.

In 2019 the WHO announced that 1 in every 100 deaths worldwide were a suicide. Within the UK in 2023 there were an average of 11.4 suicides per every 100,000 of the population. Recent statistics show that males are three times more likely to take their own life than females. Males aged 25 to 64 accounted for 76% of suicides in 2023 with 10 – 24 year olds accounting for 9.4%. The rate of suicides in 10-14 years olds has been increasing steadily since 2013. 1 UK student currently dies by suicide every 4 days. Hanging continues to be the most common form of suicide accounting for 56% in 2023. 95% have a history of psychological disorder with conditions such as bipolar, depression, alcohol and drug abuse increasing the risk.

It is estimated that 49.5% of adolescents are prone to a mental health disorder. Many children don't appear to understand mental health and shy away from talking about it. Young people bereaved by suicide are at a significantly higher risk of taking their own lives themselves.

Causes for children are believed to include:

- Poor mental health
- Academic worries or pressures
- Personal loss of routine due to moving school
- Bullying directly or via social media

- Social isolation
- Family environment including bereavement
- Relationship problems
- Neglect
- Substance abuse

7% of UK children have attempted suicide by the age of 17 years. Life has changed and is changing rapidly for your children and young people. The hugely increased access to information, communication and stimulation almost appears to be out of control from some perspectives, and despite all the current safeguarding and wellbeing interventions within education, the suicide of 10-14 year old children remains on the steady increase. To be caught in its web is a unique type of agony for the bereaved parents, carers, siblings and friends and that is a driver to do whatever we can to help prevent these tragic acts of desperation.

Organisations such as POPYRUS dedicate themselves to child suicide prevention and offer a range of training interventions at key levels. *Compassionate Friends* have developed bespoke products aimed at parents, siblings, family and friends of the suicide bereaved as do *Child Bereavement UK*, offering joint family counselling. The NHS are acutely aware of this growing problem impacting on the lives of children and young people and a range of academic research programmes having been commissioned. The following is one family's painful story of the beginning of a lifelong journey they didn't want.

### *Freddie - Aged 12*

Like so many other suffering families, the sudden death of our beloved and precious boy by his own hand came right out of nowhere. We just did not expect any aspect of this, it was, and is, like being hit by a devastating bomb! We missed his last breath by minutes one ordinary, routine Tuesday tea time. He had had issues at school the year before which we understood were fully dealt with. He was doing well, had a great friendship group with an active social life and we had only just been remarking how good things were for him the day before he left us. We still can't believe this nightmare has happened.

I cannot articulate the horror, the pain and the depth of total confusion, it was simply unbearable and we were in total shock. With other children to support, it was essential to concentrate as best we could on their welfare. Two children were from home so we had to travel to meet them as soon as possible to avoid

them hearing such painful news via the social media grapevine. It was so difficult whilst we were reeling in shock and agony at the total loss of a cherished child. We got through, living off our nerves without hardly any sleep for days, just the sick agony of our emotions and the constant nagging question of Why, Why, Why? What did we miss? What have we done? How have we failed our boy? I just kept saying 'Sorry, sorry, sorry Freddie' although I didn't know what for.

It was devastation, as if a huge grenade had been thrown into the heart of our home, we were injured beyond words and enveloped in the new normal of complete sadness and grief, bathed in floods and floods of tears, flashbacks and hopelessness. We tried to get help as soon as possible and rang many agencies trying to get specific child suicide support because we were totally bewildered and drowning. The hospital gave us a bag labelled 'BAGS For Strife' which we brought home with us.

After two or three days of trying to contact various helplines, leaving messages and just get any support we could, we were bewildered by the choice of well-meaning charities but were eager for immediate help and advice. We have since been contacted by some of them and received great support. We looked at what was in the bag and found the 'LITTLE BOOK OF HELP'. The content spoke to us directly and just drilled right down into the source of our pain and confusion. None of us are equipped to lose a child in this awful way, and nobody has the natural resources to cope. You need the right help from people who have been through it, who fully get it and understand the horror and the nightmare you are locked into. Just to read and connect was our very first step toward healing and understanding what was happening to us within the poisonous mixture of BLAME, ANGER, GUILT and SADNESS.

From the outset my wife and I were grieving differently, as were Freddie's siblings. Just to read that this is normal and can be addressed was so important and helped us give each other space and diffuse some of the real family tensions that fall out of tragedy. We had differences, tears and occasional arguments but came back to each other because the BAGS book and other material helped us understand what we were going through and why. We have held together and worked together just to keep going each in our own way, all surrounded by the cloud of deep grief and sadness.

The trauma of the circumstances of his death went deep. We received counselling to help us process aspects of our shock and grief. Other questions

arise. What is the impact of children seeing their parents almost out of control with grief? Is it right to sob and call out your lost child's name in front of their brothers and sisters? How should you grieve in front of them or should you keep it in to try and provide some degree of stability for them by trying to control your shattered emotions? We received joint family counselling with *Child Bereavement UK* which was a positive experience that allowed us all to voice feelings and consider options going forward. We are also using the support literature from charity *The Compassionate Friends*, which provides specific leaflets for siblings and sibling suicide. We needed more than just expressing parental concern and a listening ear. Maybe young people need to hear from other sources and it is a relief that our children have something to turn to. I have been haunted by what was going through Freddie's mind that he couldn't share with us. Haunted by his last moments. Was it a spontaneous desperate act or planned over days or weeks? What could have been the indicators? We have to pin this down to help others. All slow torture to comprehend and maybe can we ever know? In the end we suspect we know more than many poor families who never find closure on the WHY? This must be hell for them to deal with and our hearts go out to them.

As Freddie's dad, I feel guilty about not equipping him to deal with the issues he faced. He didn't turn to me or us on any specific issue so we were in the dark but I go over and over how I could have maybe done more with him to enhance feelings of self-confidence and self-worth to help combat negative experiences and the deep pit he fell

- Average of 6,500 suicides per annum in the UK; 74% male and 26% female;
- 5 teenagers per day take their own life in the UK;
- The cost per death to the economy is approx. £1.67m, given the knock-on effect and debilitation of at least 6-10 people;
- Up to 135 people are affected by each death;
- 877,000 are affected by suicide per annum;
- There is a growing rate among 10-14 year olds, those suffering from autism, pregnant and new mothers.

into. I did lots of things with him and always rewarded him with feedback because he earned so many thanks for being such a hard-working, helpful lad. He loved outdoor activities and building things but didn't enjoy the popular team sports. I am drawn into repeatedly beating myself up over what I have missed in his development and it is hard to step around that but I also did so much for him in many ways, offered help and advice and always told him how



much he was loved and respected within the home and family. He knew he could turn to me and his mum but it was his choice not to.

You think you know your children, you think you would pick up the signs and danger alert, but that is often not the case. Many young people may not share their innermost self with parents or siblings; they can carry a dark secret and harbour thoughts of a way out that does not register as an obvious wellbeing and safeguarding issue. Our lives can be so busy these days that unless something jumps out at you, you assume all is well and don't delve further. We can maybe only look at signs of the potential triggers such as change of schools, low moods, lack of friends, moving home, relationship breakdown, response to rejection and the list goes on. If they don't communicate their distress with you then how do you find a way in? We feel this is a key area of awareness within child suicide prevention that needs to be developed with the support of agencies and charities.

Keeping in touch with Freddie's close friends can hurt but it is good to hear how fond they were of him and how they miss him, plus stories that give you a fresh and pleasing view of his character that stay with you despite the hollowness of the loss. Friends can really suffer and also need professional support in and out of school or the friendship group. We can't help wondering what negative websites or chat rooms he might have got into around suicide. There are some wicked influences out there and so much work to be done to address that growing problem. As a family we want to do something for Freddie, to give something back, to help prevent these emotional atrocities and offer more support to victim families. We have already made contact with two other local families and met with them and are planning ahead to get more involved with fundraising and offering support to others. They are broken-hearted parents as we are and being with them and sharing is such a good thing. It is not easy to address this but it feels right and gives you so much back to feel you can actually do something. There are so many good people in our position already doing great work. Read about their contribution, it is inspirational.

We are so full of love for our precious boy, we feel him near us, and believe we will be reunited with him one day. We respect Freddie so much, and in one way, we respect his final choice as his decision, faulty as it might have been. We are and will always be so proud of our precious, talented, loving boy.

**Howard Riley**

## Reflection following Ascension Day, May 9th 2024

In the Acts of the Apostles we are told that forty days after his resurrection from the dead Jesus made a spectacular exit from the world. This is known as Ascension Day and is observed as a Holy Day in the Christian church.

'... he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

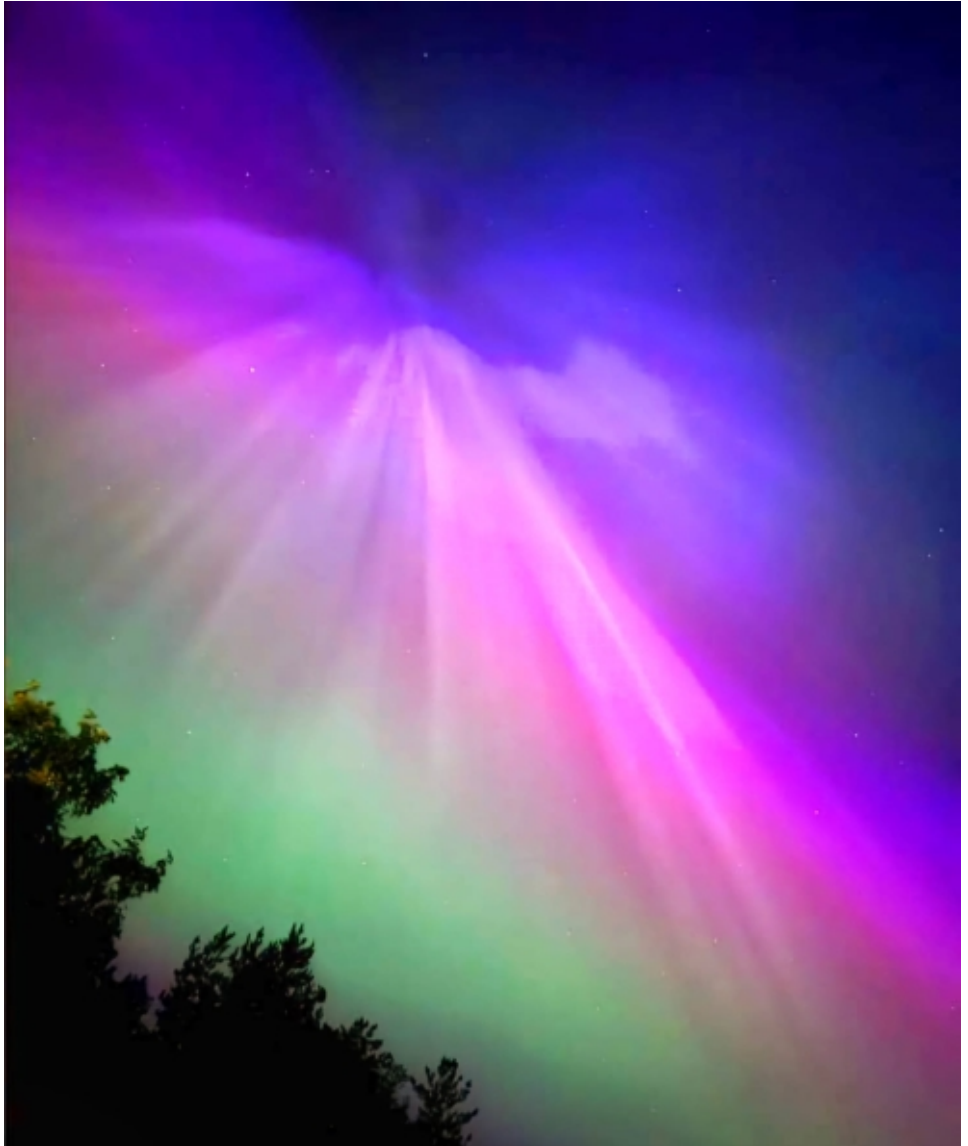
This 'event', if that is what it was, conjures up a cinematic image that challenges my own understanding of Christianity. I can quickly dismiss this, and other dramatic biblical accounts, as being pure fantasy, so far-fetched as to be ridiculous.

But isn't the whole mystery of life, the universe and our ever-expanding scientific discoveries of it, also far-fetched? Not laughable perhaps, but awesome and quite incredible. The 'laws' of time and gravity are beyond my comprehension, as is the capacity of the human brain to envision and apply such knowledge. It is breathtaking and requires imagination to even begin to grasp such wonders.

These thoughts were in my mind recently when people across the world were held spellbound and humbled by the beautiful phenomenon of the Auroras Borealis and Australis. That this should happen immediately following this year's Ascension Day, seemed 'timely' and appealed to my hope that our chaotic, destructive ways of life could be overruled by greater forces in our galaxy. Sadly, and to my distress, I had only a slight glimpse of the Northern Lights from my home, even though there were amazing displays only a few miles away. Family and friends kept sending photos of what they were seeing, but I missed out on it all. I was reminded of my poem 'Ascension Day', written many years ago, that describes a night when my partner Tim and I stood in our garden to observe the comet 'Hale Bopp'. I was awe-struck by the comet's appearance and was surprised that Tim's reaction was a bit subdued. I then realised that, although he was looking skyward, he couldn't actually see what I

was seeing – his sight was so weak. And yet he could believe that the comet was there and was marvellous to behold.

This was indeed a very poignant event, and one that, even now, makes me reflect on the biblical account of the Ascension – an outrageous spectacle to be believed – but perhaps, no less believable than the arrival of a comet or the Northern Lights.



*The sky near Selby May 11th 2024.*

## Ascension Day - for Tim

'Men of Galilee, why are you standing here  
looking into the sky?'  
The angels' rebuke seems harsh,  
given what the men had, in fact, just seen.  
Where else but heavenward would they look, if not  
to the infinite blueness or blackness of skies  
that held mysteries enough to gaze upon,  
and now had absorbed their Saviour in a cloud?

These same men must have stared, as we did,  
over many starlit nights, at a stranger star,  
a comet that crossed their horizon  
and then vanished, out of ordinary sight.  
When our life's turn came for this celestial show,  
I eagerly scanned the sky with lenses, checked  
astronomical charts and broadcasts, trusting you  
would stand with me as the unique event drew near.

But you patiently waited indoors, responding politely  
to my nightly reports of the position of the Pleiades or Plough,  
and I mistook your reticence as unusual disinterest.  
Then the comet appeared, hanging like a lantern above the rooftops,  
like a thumbprint, a pale smudge on the nocturnal palette.  
As I gazed, awe-struck, at this galactic guest,  
you came alongside, quietly marvelling,  
but looking in an entirely different direction.

I saw then, the tears fall from your clouded eyes,  
betraying your reluctance to join my observations.  
You looked on darkness and praised God's creation.  
As Galileans were once advised by admonishing angels,  
though now you could see nothing, you believed that one day, or night,  
perhaps from an entirely different place or a distant perspective,  
your faithful eyes would witness a wondrous return,  
more heavenly than comets; brighter, and more certain, than all stars.

Maggie Jackson

## Oblates and St Benedict

Is it time to revise the CR oblates' Rule? There is much in it that is good, but some of it is a little tired. I am no expert in writing rules but I wonder whether looking at it through the lens of St Benedict's Rule may be a helpful way of going about it. CR has adopted St Benedict's Rule as our own. It might be appropriate for oblates to do the same.

The first point to make is that the Rule of St Benedict is not a set of rules, like the rules of cricket, or the rules of parliamentary behaviour. The Rule does not impose a whole lot of rules that we must obey. Nor does it try to turn everyone into identical monks. In fact, although it was intended for monks, many lay Christians and even non-Christians have found it full of wisdom and guidance, as the popularity of the books by Esther de Waal show.



*St Benedict - Monastery of Tamié*

St Benedict wrote his Rule for a particular monastery in Italy 1500 years ago. Ever since then it has served as a Rule for monks in different countries and ages. Strict Cistercian monks follow it, monks engaged in teaching and pastoral care follow it, missionary orders of monks and nuns follow it. It has shown itself astonishingly flexible and, with a bit of thought, can be very relevant to those trying to live monastic life in the twenty-first century.

The key to this is that we don't 'obey' the Rule. We are in constant conversation with the Rule. It is this conversation which shows us which parts particularly illuminate our lives, and which do not. St Benedict says badly behaved children and recalcitrant monks should be soundly thrashed. We don't do that. Nor, in Britain at least, do we provide a daily measure of wine at meals. The wisdom of the Rule goes much deeper than that and reveals itself slowly as you study it, or talk about it. At first sight it may seem pretty boring and concerned largely with trivial details, yet it is the details of life which really show its significance. Let



us look at three of these:

1. Great literature in the ancient world was very carefully constructed. The first words told you much of what the book was about. In Homer's Iliad, for instance, the first word is 'anger', and the entire book is framed around the anger of Achilles. Homer's Odyssey begins with a single word, 'man', and is the story of one remarkable man, Odysseus trying to get home from war. Virgil's famous Aeneid begins with a phrase "arms and the man"; the man, of course is Aeneas, and the story begins with the battle that destroys Troy and ends with the battles that established the Trojans in Italy

So when we come to Benedict we find his Rule begins: "Listen, my son..." You could say that the seventy-three chapters which follow are simply commentary on that phrase. Listen – if we are honest we will admit we don't listen. How many marriages break up because the partners do not listen? We don't listen to each other in the monastery because we have heard it all before, because we are not interested in each other. We think we are listening, but in fact we are constructing an answer in our heads. The first rule of successful life together in a monastery, in a family or in the workplace, is to listen.

Then the two words "my son" tell us of the relationship in which this listening takes place. St Benedict is not a teacher, hammering on the desk and shouting at his pupils. He is a father anxious to instruct, support and show love to his son. The son needs to see him not as a fierce disciplinarian but as a loving father. The same can be said of our relationship with God. It should also inform the other relationships we have in the monastery, or family, or workplace. The chief markers of our life together should not be discipline, or rule-keeping, but respect and love.

2. A second passage I really value comes also in the Prologue: Benedict flings out the question "Who is the man who desires life and would like to see good days?" We say "I am" expecting maybe some amazing piece of teaching as to how to get there. It turns out to be simple: "keep your tongue from evil and your lips from deceit, turn away from evil and do good, look for peace and pursue it. (Ps 33: 13-34)" Simple. Anyone can understand it. Anyone can do it, but not easy to do all the time. It is really just a summary of the Sermon on the Mount. We may come to Benedict expecting the spiritual equivalent of rocket science and find instead that we are simply directed back to the Gospels. Our teacher really is not Benedict but Christ.

That is a good reminder for all of us who live the monastic life. We may be tempted to think we are a special, different, higher form of Christian life. Benedict reminds us constantly that we are not. We are simply Christians, trying to immerse ourselves in the Gospel and follow the teaching of Christ. That, of course, is special enough for anybody. We are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven (cp. Eph. 2: 19) but citizens have to work at being citizens and that is the whole story of Christian life. What matters is not the great ideas we may have about ourselves, but how we relate, day by day, to the people around us, and to God.

3. My final favourite is a phrase that was in the old Rule of our Community: **Ne quis contristetur.** “So that no one will be made sad.” (RB 31,19)

For a long time I was not very impressed by this. It seemed rather a low ideal of religious life – that people should simply not be made sad. Could we not do better than that? Could we not aim to show love, joy and peace? Should we not be aiming to build the Kingdom of God on earth? More recently I have realised the wisdom of St Benedict's approach – to start with the possible rather than the ideal.

What would have been the effect if he had said “that everyone is always happy in the house of God”? That would quickly lead to despair! What is happiness? Does it include pain and sorrow? Whose responsibility is it to be happy? Is it mine, regardless of what is going on around me? Or is it the Community who must make me happy? That leads me to focus on myself and anxiously to ask if I am happy, and blame others, or myself, if I am not. There is also the question of how to make people happy. Should we give them what they want, or what we think they should have? Must we always be smiling, laughing, cracking jokes and showing endless jollity. That wouldn't last very long!

Benedict's approach is wiser: if I ask myself whether other people in the community are unhappy I have to stop thinking of myself and think of others. That is a big step forward in the Christian ascetical life. If I realise someone is unhappy I must ask why? I must use my imagination to enter into his life and see things from his point of view. That, I think, is the beginning of charity – caring about a person for his own sake, not for mine.

Then we must recognise that *contristetur* is passive. Benedict is concerned that we should not actually *make* our brethren unhappy. So if someone is

clearly unhappy I must ask myself if it is something I am doing or saying which is making him unhappy. If it is, should I go on doing it? That also raises another rather uncomfortable question: do I care enough about this brother to change my own behaviour towards him? Realistically speaking there are people we like more and less in community. Ideally, we learn to like people more as we go on in the life. At least we should be learning to care about them more. Benedict's rather low-key approach to this actually makes it more likely that we shall grow little by little to care more about people as we get to know them better, to enter more imaginatively into their lives and to wonder if it is us who are causing the sorrow. This would also chip away at the self-centredness that dominates most of our lives. We don't become less self-centred by trying not to think of ourselves, but by thinking more about others. And as we think more about others and less of ourselves we shall be moving more into what humility is about – not the self-abasing and bogus humility of a Uriah Heep, but a natural instinct to think more about others and less about ourselves, because really other people are much more interesting and much more worth thinking about.

Is all that relevant to how a CR Oblate may live his life? Is it appropriate to others living a Christian life? Perhaps you would like to write in and tell me.

**Nicolas CR**

## Should we be using bottled water?

Some good reasons for drinking water from a water fountain and a refillable sports bottle instead of buying bottled water! ....



1. Britain consumes 3bn litres of bottled water per year
2. Typically bottled water retails at up to 500 times more than the price of tap water
3. The bottled water market is the fastest growing drinks market in the world
4. Tap water in developed nations is transported from treatment works in underground pipes and requires much less embodied energy than the production, distribution and 'disposal' of bottled water
5. The UK bottled water industry is worth £2bn per year
6. The majority of bottled water is sold in PET (polyethylene terephthalate) bottles. All PET bottles can be recycled.
7. For 2007 it is estimated that 13bn plastic bottles of water were sold in the UK of which only 3bn were recycled
8. Most plastic bottles for bottled water are produced using a virgin petroleum feedstock

9. 162g of oil and seven litres of water are required to manufacture a single one litre volume disposable PET bottle and this amounts to the release of 100g of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) a major greenhouse gas (GHG)
10. Some research has claimed that drinking 'a bottle' of water has the same impact on the environment as driving 'a car' for one kilometre
11. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) campaigns strongly that bottled water is not only environmentally unfriendly but also a waste of consumers money
12. 50% of bottled water contains added minerals and salts. This does not mean that it is more 'healthy'
13. The UK bottled water industry has made some changes recently. PET plastic bottles have been redesigned so that they are 30% lighter than 15 years ago and increasing amounts of recycled plastic are used to manufacture the bottles themselves, *but there is a litter problem with many discarded PET bottles and other 'waste' plastics.*
14. Recycling rates, though improving, are still low in the UK as a whole. Today nearly 35% of PET plastic bottles in household waste streams are now collected for recycling. In 2001 it was 3%. Hence the majority of used water bottles are disposed of to landfill, which is not sustainable. Fewer are incinerated with some energy being recovered. Many 'discarded' bottles become environmental pollution and can be found in hedgerows, parks, streams and rivers. Via rivers they can be transported to the open seas.
15. The Eastern Garbage Patch is an area 6 times the size of England, where plastic outweighs plankton by 6:1. It is the world's largest waste dump. The Plastiki project is helping to change attitudes towards the world's oceans, the whole idea of 'waste' and the increasingly unacceptable reality of pollution.

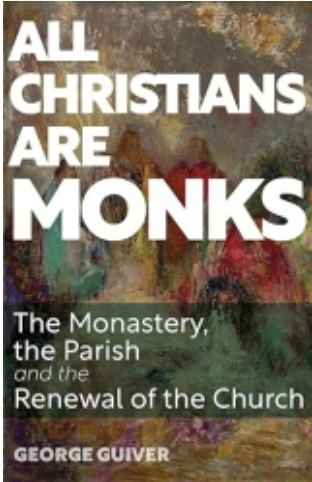
**Nicolas CR**



## Book Reviews

### All Christians Are Monks – The Monastery, the Parish and the Renewal of the Church

George Guiver (Sacristy Press, 2024) £14.99 – CR price £12.99



In the recent Lady Day CR Quarterly, Nicolas CR starts his review of Rowan Williams' *Passions of the Soul* with the sentence: 'At the heart of monastic life is the life of prayer' and closes it with: 'The Church desperately needs us *all* (my italics) to pray with the greater depth and maturity to which Bishop Rowan invites us'. Nicolas writes: 'In the wider church, prayer seems to have become largely subjective, self-centred and focused on 'good feelings' ... This is no basis on which one can live the Christian life ...'.

So what is a sound basis for the Christian life?

George Guiver's approach is, rightly, gentler than to state bluntly 'unless folk in parishes wake up to smell the Christian coffee in their daily prayer and practices and in the vitality of their Eucharistic community, they hardly qualify as folk who live the Christian life'; yet, however diplomatic George's language, I find this challenge implicit in the book. He doesn't condemn. He analyses, describes, encourages and makes constructive suggestions. He paints a picture of authentic Christian life to match the secular dominance of the mid 21st Century. He draws on resources inspiringly to portray what, lived to the full, Christian life can and should be. He finds striking, almost Wodehouseian, metaphors and comparisons to bring home his points. This book is sorely needed by the Church in 2024.

The glory of this book is that the reader steps into the monastic world and feels something of its compelling attraction. As most Quarterly-readers know, there is something transformative about staying in a monastery. Its 'microclimate' (p.53.) of dedicated, disciplined spiritual seriousness and lifestyle simplicity balanced by hospitable human warmth and light humour is captivating. We may have experienced something like this. But could we describe it? Guiver says of this world: 'It is a big and experienced world, full of amazing riches, but it never proclaims itself, and its nature is quietly to get on with the everyday without fanfare'. True. But I have never read an account of the monastic life

that so well draws the reader into the attractive holiness, prayer and practice of a religious community. More important and significant for its purpose, I don't see how an ordinary parishioner can read it without being brought up sharp, prompted to connect what they read to their own Christian discipleship in prayer and practice or, as Guiver puts it, 'the holistic approach to following Christ' (p.25). 'Every Christian is called', he writes, to put 'Christ ahead of everything else that has a call upon us' and to 'living simply, having a care for the poor, not taking ourselves too seriously, living with generosity' (p.15/16).

I have noted 48 themes. Other readers may note more. There is overlap and repetition, or, more positively, reinforcement. I am loathe to summarise; better to read the book yourself.

Guiver's portrayal convincingly shows that 'a strongly shaped life of prayer and worship is perfectly possible for modern people' (p.86). He wants to restore, indeed, to root, parish practice in a corporate *koinonia*, a family connected by action, prayer and worship. He suggests concrete ways to achieve this, for example, with a network for parishioners to keep in touch with each other, the world and God. He touches on 'the New Monasticism' emerging in some places as a possible model for parish renewal. He emphasises the importance of training in Christian practices.

Practice and practices are a major theme of the book. Personal faith is by no means what we depend on. He strongly critiques as 'enthroned' the modern emphasis on an 'utterly personal' faith. His own experience is that a wide range of practices and bodily involvement in worship can be 'a bridge to God' (p.19).

In chapters 3, 6 and 7 he richly develops this theme of Christian life as embedded in practices. In monastic life, 'all the practices that make up the life become more and more like the milk mingling in a cup of tea, a suffusing in you of skills for living, an unselfconscious walking with God's people in all areas of your life' (p.24). In the monastery Guiver sees 'our Christian practices shaping our spirituality'. With this striking image he writes: 'The family of the Church is like a thronged force field where Jesus is in one sense the heart, and in another the whole body. We have an open invitation ... to join Christ in the great divine panorama, and this is a key to prayer' (p.42). Even when we pray alone, 'the Church is in the room' (p.43). Here we are at the heart of Guiver's critique of a Church 'without wind in its sails' (p.87) and also of his counsel: 'Either a Christian group is a *koinonia* or it is sub-Christian. The divine *koinonia* is ... the only thing of any serious worth that Christians have to give people. In

many parishes and individual worshippers, this is a shadow of itself' (p.46). Ouch! But fundamental. And surely spot on.

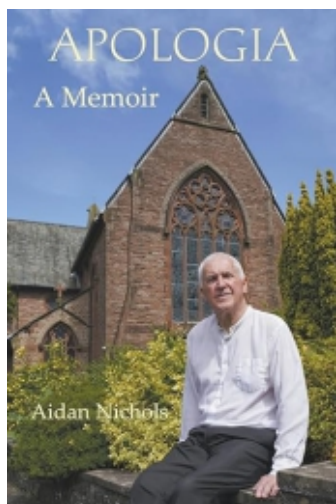
Guiver lays out the ground for living 'the Christian life' to the end that we may hear 'the thrilling voice of God' as 'a source of life abundant' (p.137). There is much more to this eminently readable and compelling book than I have touched on. I enjoyed the images like 'pickled in silence' or monastic prayer as 'like a pilot light in a gas appliance'. He eloquently describes singleness of heart as critical, concluding: 'Either we can be single-minded about ourselves...or about God found in our neighbour. You cannot have both' (p.137).

Neither, perhaps, in spirituality, can you have both depth and breadth. This book offers Christian depth. Yet in 2024 the world also needs a richer global spirituality across the great religions. Thomas Merton OCSO worked on this front. Might George Guiver CR pick up the challenge?

**Nicholas Bradbury**

### **Apologia: A Memoir,**

Aidan Nichols, Gracewing 2023, 150pp, £12.95.



Arithmetic is not my strong point but by my reckoning this RC author has so far published 47 books on a wide variety of topics. This entertaining and sad memoir is his most recent. As he's a Thomist philosopher I suspect some will be above my paygrade, such as his five volumes on Balthasar, but his warm and sympathetic appreciation of Eastern Orthodoxy and Anglicanism are widely enjoyed, as is his wit.

Our Thomas Seville, for example, is full of praise for his explanation of Anglicanism, *Thè Panther & thè Hind*, and commendation from Thomas is praise indeed. Whenever I think, "Can any good thing come out of broad churchery or liberalism?" (cf John 2.46), Fr Aidan reminds me about thè

Cambridge Platonists, an enthusiasm of our late Godfrey Pawson who published a book about them. Which is not to say Fr Aidan is uncritical. In his book *Thè Realm* he says of Anglo-Catholics, "Beyond doubt as to doctrine,

worship and devotion a displaced portion of Catholic Christendom". He dedicates *The Panther & Hind* to Eric Mascall, "Magistro catholicae veritatis." Yet he describes other Anglo-Catholics as "Liturgically decorous but doctrinally challenged". The argument of Panther is that a communion so inclusive as the Anglican is of limited ecumenical value. Whatever goal one third of Anglicanism works towards, the other two thirds will do their best to stymie. In other words - though these are not his words - the cowboy who jumps on his horse and gallops off in all directions at once, goes nowhere. (Though if I may be permitted a personal opinion, I'd say the liberals are clearly winning.)

In this memoir the author tells of an unhappy childhood in Lancashire, the death of both parents while in his young teens, working among Street people in Dublin. He's had adventures in Austria, Ethiopia, France, Moscow, Rome, Sikkim, Scotland; he's taught in Birmingham, Cambridge, Oxford. He was raised without any sort of faith, though from childhood on he did have a sense of Deity in nature. In a moving chapter headed "Via Geneva to Rome" he tells of his conversion to faith in Jesus Christ. "It was a moment of graced illumination, not a miraculous provision of information. " His father's secretary had taken him as a lad on a visit to Switzerland. There in a Russian Orthodox church he had popped into, an icon on the screen did it, the God - bearer with God incarnate in her arms did it. "It was a conversion experience as dateable as any comparable claim by an Evangelical to report the day and time when they were justified by faith alone". A leading RC intellectual first hooked not by words either spoken or printed but by the Word made visual.

I can not end this book review without an example of his appreciation of Anglicanism and without two examples of his wit: After his reception into the RC church, "I became a regular attender at evensong in Christchurch, Oxford. I came to think of evensong as the most perfect non-eucharistic action ever devised. Prayer Book Catholicism indeed, though liturgy can not simply be paper religion: it must be enacted in quires and places where they sing". As assistant chaplain at Cambridge university he says of the chaplain, " It was the happiest professional collaboration of my life and the start of a friendship which has been a great boon and consolation. The chaplain, a former Anglican, exemplified the maxim that while Anglican orders might be invalid, they are certainly indelible. Everything in the liturgy must be just so, and the table of hospitality likewise. He "emphasized the need for English Catholicism to live up to both the adjective and the noun."

"I invited Cardinal Ratzinger to give the annual Fisher lecture. Judging by the numbers it was a roaring success. At Westminster Cardinal Hume was uneasy. He asked why the lecture was wanted. He said that if what was desired was a splash of colour, he could think of other cardinals. Certainly he would not ask Ratzinger to speak on certain subjects. In retrospect the conversation sounds like a preface to Julia Meloni's book, The St Gallen Mafia, but at the time I was simply disappointed that somebody I so revered (Basil Hume) could be so negative about somebody I so admired (Joseph Ratzinger)."

Incidentally, Fr Nichols has published a book about the theology of Pope Benedict XVI, but personally I prefer the one by a former Presbyterian minister Scott Hahn, Covenant and Communion: The Biblical Theology of Pope Benedict XVI.

"Ignorance of Scripture is Ignorance of Christ" (St Jerome).

**Robert CR**

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