479

CR Review

Michaelmass
Sept 2022

CR

MICHAELMASS 2022 479

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

UK (Inland)	£20.00 (GBP)
OVERSEAS (AirMail)	£25.00 (GBP)

Order from:
The Editors CRQ, House of the Resurrection,
Stocks Bank Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire. WF14 0BN.
companions@mirfield.org.uk

Cover photograph: The Hermit's Cell, Iona

A Still Image

A few months ago, someone I know was diagnosed with cancer. She described to me the moment she heard the devastating news. At that time, she did not know what the long-term prognosis would be, but one always assumes the worst. It took her several weeks to get beyond the debilitating fear of dying and contemplating everything that she would be leaving behind. But then she described how, quick as a flash, things began to become reprioritised in her mind. So many needless distractions were banished and she suddenly found herself in a place of complete peace with it all, and a sense of stillness she had never before experienced. She described how, in this stillness, she felt a profound closeness to the divine. In a strange kind of way, it had taken the diagnosis of a life-threatening illness to enable her to stop and, standing on the edge of eternity, gaze on grace.

We all need to take time away from the ordinary routines of life sometimes. To still ourselves and look back over what has happened, take stock of where we are and to contemplate the future. But more than this, we need time to just *be*. To be properly present with ourselves and with God.

'Be still and know that I am God' are the famous words of the Psalmist (Psalm 46:10). In this verse, the Psalmist first invites us to be still. To still our overactive minds and bodies. Clear the diary. Make space for stillness. Only in the stillness can we become acquainted with the person we are called to be. There we shall meet God and he will inspire in us that peace that so often seems beyond our grasp. It is his 'still, small voice' (1 Kings 19:12) that speaks those comforting, reassuring words deep into our hearts using a language so pure and primeval that it speaks into the most primitive parts of our being; those parts that only God knew even before the creation of the world.

Our notion of God, the Divine, or however we might wish to refer to it, is greatly diminished when we interpret him as only being outside of the created

order. One of the great mysteries of God, as the Christian tradition has properly interpreted it, is that God is within creation as well as beyond it. He is through all and in all. He is everywhere present and in all things. God is active within the created world, whilst ordering it from beyond. This means that he speaks to us from within ourselves and from within everything around us. His divine presence runs through everything. As Rowan Williams recently commented 'in Christianity properly understood, there is no such thing as dead matter. There is no such thing as just 'stuff' lying around. It is all of it carrying the energy of God in some way'.

There is a profundity to realising that whenever I cease the incessant mental chatter and see things the way they actually are, then the whole world becomes a far more beautiful place. Not only do I meet God at the depths of my inner being, but also in everything around me. I become more aware of the colours of the flowers, the scent in the air, the exquisite beauty of the other. Once we cut through all the chaos and the noise, then we rediscover how we are placed in a world of radical allure. A world made of and for love in its widest and most transformative sense. And it is from this place that we discover who we are meant to be.

Rob Parker-McGee
Rector of Boxford, Edwardstone, Groton, Little Waldingfield and Newton

Life in the Decapolis

We live in a secular age. In some sense the notion of actively participating in church life is treated by the broader society as 'unusual', 'quirky' or even, 'out of touch'. I am by no means the first to pick up on the feeling that to be a Christian is to be seen as 'the other'. Indeed, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, was right in his *Introduction to Christianity* to observe the "alienating" feeling one has when talking about the faith with those who are not already acclimatised to it. But today we see something else as well, not just unfamiliarity, but also hostility and blindness to the prospect of discovering Christian life. I intend to set out why this may be, how it might relate to scripture and some thoughts on how we can go about reshaping this misconception of church as belonging to a different time and a different place.

Now if I may, I would like to address the importance of this subject and how I came to be writing on it. As a church, we can get complacent in our acceptance of low turn-outs at Sunday services and downcast that our outreach is not

having the desired results, or even worse, a nihilistic view that the mere attempt to reach out into the world outside the church would be futile. I am writing this because we should never be content with empty pews. I am writing this because it is always our duty to reach out, following in the example of Christ and "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations… to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (*Matthew* 28:18-20). This Great Commission has never been clearer to me than in my own personal reflection on my journey of faith. There have been times where, while dealing with incredibly difficult circumstances, I have had a sense of spiritual dryness, similar to the well documented experience of St. Teresa of Calcutta. At times we may all feel like this. Bear in mind that the good shepherd will not forget a single member of His flock. We must not forget our flock either. I have been blessed in that, during these times, I have always had people ready and able to inspire and strengthen my faith. It is our job to do the same for others.

Picture then, The Decapolis. This was an area to the Eastern frontier of the Roman Empire and as such can be likened to what we would think of today as a secular state, given that divine qualities were conferred upon mortal emperors. These ten cities are outside the land of Israel. This is not the land of God. So, in a sense this is the realm of secularist interests and materialism, focusing on the individual. Being mindful of this context and having made a commitment "unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (*Matthew* 15:24), Jesus goes into The Decapolis. This is fundamental and teaches us as Christians that in ministry we need to be active from without as well as from within.

There are two main places in The New Testament that focus on the work of Jesus in The Decapolis. First is in the Gospel according to St. Matthew (4:23-25). In this passage, Jesus is confronted with much sickness among the people. Various diseases, possessions by the Devil, as well as lunacy and palsy, are cured by the lord. Take two of these – lunacy and palsy – as examples.

The first, lunacy, people literally unable to hold onto their mental stability, perhaps to the point of incapacity. I am reminded here of 1 Kings, where the Priests of Ba'al, practising false worship, "leaped upon the altar which was made" (1 *Kings* 18:26) and then in absolute desperation when their worship proved unfruitful, they "cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them" (1 *Kings* 18:28). Just as the false worship and spiritual anguish of the Priests of Ba'al led to their erratic behaviour, the Decapolis may very well be in the same position of a group in need of spiritual nourishment that comes from right praise. This false worship is what St. Augustine would have called "concupisant desire" and is symptomatic of a land or group who have not orientated their spiritual lives towards Christ and as such will feel the emptiness felt by the woman at the well. In the work of St. Thomas

Aquinas, God is the *summum bonum* – the highest good – and therefore, when someone places something else in the highest place, then the anguish of spiritual frustration and disconnection will persist. In today's culture, what's true and good is typically held to be power, wealth, honour and pleasure, when it really should be the three transcendental values of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. I

would suggest that it is through respect for the *summum bonum* and practice of these transcendental values that we might lead people from the Decapolis and into the Promised Land.

Likewise, Christ is needed among those who have the Palsy – those who do not have the ability to move. Look at the depiction of the Devil in Dante's *Inferno*, perhaps not as we would expect, surrounded by raging flames but rather, "mid-breast forth issued from the ice". This encapsulation of the Devil in ice is an even deeper isolation than that of the flame. We evangelise, just as Jesus did in the Decapolis, to bring all people – not just Israelites – out of secularism and into the Kingdom of Heaven. Indeed, the palsy is analogous to the spiritual immobility felt by those who have separated themselves from God. The Lord healing this palsy in the Decapolis is a profound message and in many ways is a great foretelling of the effects of our evangelism – freeing people from the ice and into a nourishing freedom under the Love of God.

Secondly, in the Gospel according to St. Mark (7:31-37) we see Jesus heal a deaf man, who also has a problem with his speech. May I suggest, that healing a deaf man is analogous to healing someone who is 'deaf to the spirit' and having a problem with speech as well is telling because there is a coherency to articulated speech once the truth has been made clear. Much of our own culture is deaf to the spirit, we have so many influences, from TV, social media, modern music to secular understandings of sex and sexuality. In the same way as Jesus took the deaf man aside, away from the crowd, we too must do the same for others. In order to re-inject the Christian life into our society, we must be able to lead people away from it. However, we will not be able to do this if we do not engage with the culture to begin with. It is always for Christians to take our example from Christ and to do as He did. In this we see a way forward in this age of secularism.

In the words of St. John Paul II "The process of the Church's insertion into peoples' cultures is a lengthy one". It is not a matter of purely external adaptation, for inculturation "means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures." These are words we should heed with care and dutiful obedience and I pray His Will be done as we evangelise the culture and lead people into the fullness of life through Christ the King.

Archie Collins
Politics student at York University

In Memoriam Rosemary Mitchell: Hagar and the Angel

Rosemary Mitchell retired early from her post as Professor of Victorian Studies at Leeds Trinity University in order to train for ordination through St Hild's full-time contextual programme. Ordained deacon in June 2021, she died of cancer shortly afterwards, having formed deep bonds of friendship and exercised a ministry of warm encouragement, poetic, artistic and spiritual inspiration both in her placement church and among the St Hild community. She is sadly missed and remains an inspiration to many of us.

Through her time in training, Rosemary chose to undertake an MA in Theology, Ministry and Mission. The last piece of writing that she was to

complete was the MA Dissertation, an exploration of an eco-feminist 'theology of the wilderness', in which Rosemary built her account on the basis of case studies of the biblical story of Hagar, the desert mother Mary of Egypt, and the contemporary hermit and spiritual writer Sarah Maitland.

When a collection was raised in Rosemary's honour, all agreed that a work of art would be the most appropriate memorial. We were delighted when painter and icon-writer Silvia Dimitrova (www.silviadimitrova.co.uk) agreed to create a new piece for us. Silvia had already made a series of paintings of *Women in the Bible* as part of a musical and poetic collaboration with Rt Revd Graham Kings (www.ridley.cam.ac.uk/news/women-in-the-bible-nourishing-connections), but had not yet treated Hagar. We shared Rosemary's story with Silvia and sent her the 'Hagar' section of Rosemary's MA dissertation; in April 2022 I was privileged to meet with Silvia in her Bath studio and collect the wonderful result, a depiction of Hagar's encounter with the angel, a conflation of Genesis 16.7-9 and 21.17-19.

Approaching the story of Hagar through Rosemary's 'wilderness spirituality', Silvia has produced a complex image of considerable spiritual significance. In the lower left corner the bitter flowers of the desert are depicted, reminding us that the God of Life is present even in the hardest places, and of the poignant mixture of glory and grief, gift and loss, that we experience when we give and are given in love, as Hagar was with her son Ishmael.

In the upper left corner Silvia includes her characteristic depiction of the presence of God: golden leaves rustling in the wind of the Spirit.

In the top right, we see the trees and the golden sky of Paradise, in contrast to the arid wilderness of Hagar's experience. Paradise is God's intention, Hagar's yearning and ours. Like the angel, it lies 'beyond the veil', on the other side of the curving golden band that depicts the horizon between earthly experience and heavenly truth. Hagar sees all this by virtue of her encounter with 'the God of Seeing', and now we see it too.

In the bottom right stands Hagar herself; by contrast with the pale glory of the angel, Hagar is the brightest part of our painting. Undoubtedly beautiful, she raises her eyes boldly to meet the divine vision. She is not diminished or abashed in this encounter; her dignity is clear as she responds to the angel's gesture of greeting. Hagar's beautiful raiment, too, echoes some of the patterns of heaven in the angel's robes and the trees of Paradise: she will not be out of place there.

Finally, in the heart-centre of our painting is the well, a sign of the living waters that spring up in the betweenness of an encounter between divinity and the human soul. This is the well that Hagar found to preserve her life, her son, and a future nation; and it is the well of wisdom that is available to us as we pray through this remarkable story of the only biblical figure privileged to name God

for herself, one who hears those resonant words, 'Behold, you are with child, and shall bear a son', who through aspects of her story prefigures Moses, the Blessed Virgin, and Mary Magdalene.

In contemporary language, we would say that Hagar was exploited and abused by the great common ancestor of the monotheistic faiths. Her image comes to us, in the aftermath of the IICSA report, during a season of sustained reflection on the church's failures in regard to protecting and safeguarding victims of sexual abuse. Our ordinands are insistent that the lessons are learned and not forgotten; they continue to challenge one another to listen carefully, to see what has been so often overlooked, and to work to make the churches of their ministry safer places. Hagar is a beloved ancestor of anyone who has felt excluded by the heirs of the promise, of anyone who has been told 'this blessing is not for you', of anyone hurt and harmed by the people of God. God meets her in her weeping, calls her by name, and meets her need; and so her story gives shape to the hopes of many. Hagar is a complicating figure in the narrative of our faith: she anticipates what has been called the 'alternative soteriology' of Christ's kingdom, where it is the *unchosen* ones who are the unexpected recipients of salvation. Hagar matters to God: she sees God, and God sees her, and blessings well up.

Grieving for Rosemary has been a wilderness time for many of us, at St Hild, at Leeds Trinity, in the churches where she had served. But she has left us with a powerful reminder of the graces that flower in the wilderness, and the possibilities of holy encounter to be found there. St Hild ordinands and staff welcomed Hagar to Mirfield at a dedicated service of Evening Prayer on June 17th 2022. We meditated on the story of Hagar, prayed and sang to *The God of Seeing,* mindful of all that Rosemary and Silvia have encouraged us to see, and honoured Hagar as a beloved ancestor of all who have been told they are 'not chosen', but are nonetheless beloved of God. We gave thanks and praise to the God whose eyes are focused in particular on those in distress, whose attentive care and consoling presence is for foreigners and slaves and powerless and vulnerable people, who cares for the Hagar who lives in the wilderness of each and every heart.

By kind agreement of Bishop Mark at the College of the Resurrection, our Hagar will hang in the College Oratory as a stimulus to prayer for members of both Colleges as well as visitors to the site.

Janet Williams
Vice-Principal, St Hild College

Celibate for the Love of God

Fr Reginald Smith was a great missionary priest of CR. He worked for 35 years in the hard, dry country of Marange in Rhodesia. When he retired, in his sixties, he returned to England. A year or two later one of his parishioners asked his successor, "How is Father Smith? Is he married yet?" "No," said Fr Derek. "We don't ever marry in our Community?" "How do you do it, Father?" said the man. "Do they give you an injection?"

People in Britain may not think we celibate men and women are given injections, but most of them are mystified by our celibate life. That is not surprising. We live in a highly sexualised society. A great deal of advertising revolves around sex. It appears on every page of the newspapers and constantly on the internet. Children learn about it at school as something they will all do and enjoy. It is widely thought that you cannot be healthy unless you have sex. In time, having sex will grow into a relationship and maybe into marriage. Men and women must have sexual relationships; they must have satisfying sex lives or their lives have no point and they will be frustrated, or just down right peculiar.

So it is assumed that anyone who chooses to be celibate must be peculiar. He or she is frightened of sex, or physically inadequate. Or maybe celibates hate sex and think it is very sinful. At any rate, you can be sure they will be very immature people. Women will be dried-up spinsters. Men will be self-centred bachelors. It is not only people outside the Christian faith who think this. Faithful practising Christians believe it. Most good Christians are appalled if one of their children wants to be a Religious. It is unnatural.

Then they meet Religious and find they are not like that at all. Some may be odd, but odd people can be found anywhere. Most are quite normal, sensible people. Most seem quite happy with the life they have chosen. They don't seem frustrated, angry or inadequate. They laugh. They understand people's feelings and concerns. They are often warm and friendly. They have a freedom about them which makes it easy to relate to them. How can this be?

The first really important point is that celibacy must be freely chosen, and it must be for God. We choose celibacy because we love God and want to serve him in a particular life. Or we feel God loves us and wants us to serve him in this way. God is more important than anyone else. Most good Christians would agree that God is more important than anyone else, but God doesn't ask them to serve him in celibacy. Why does God ask some and not others? We don't know. God has that right. But those of us who do believe God has called us to this life regard it as a privilege.

Secondly, celibacy is fundamental to monastic life. It is not optional; it is part of its definition. The word monastic comes from the Greek '*monos*' meaning

'alone', or single. You cannot have married monks or nuns. There are many forms of Christian community that married men and women can be part of, but monastic life is not one.

Celibacy is part of the call to monastic life since it expresses the singleness of purpose inherent in the life. Monastic life is not a lifestyle choice, or should not be. Many are attracted to the life by secondary factors: the music, the delightful conversation of the brethren, the beauty of the chapel, the impressive work we do (sometimes!). All those are good things and may lead a person to hear a call to live the life, but the call itself, when it comes, is from God, and it is a call to follow God with all one's heart, soul, mind and strength. This has many implications, one of which is celibacy. Married people can certainly follow God in a single-minded way and many do, very impressively. But God chooses some of us to do it this way. That is the essential point. It is God's choice, not ours. This is the kind of discipleship he wants from some of us. Yet it is not just a demand, a call to obey. It is a gift; a gift we learn to receive with gratitude, for it is a wonderful gift.

Having said that, the gift of celibacy does not come in a 'one size fits all' character. It is not simply a matter of not getting married. Individual monks and nuns will experience it differently. Celibacy is demanding and will hurt, some of the time. This also is important as it reminds us constantly that offering ourselves to God costs a lot; in the end, it costs everything we have. The pain of celibacy is part of the joy, for it is a joy to offer ourselves to God, and to experience the life he gives us in his call. Some will find it is the companionship of marriage they long for, others a settled home, others children; for some there is an intense longing for sex or a longing for physical intimacy. God, as our creator, knows exactly how we are made, and shapes the gift of his call according to our nature. We must trust that he has done this and that the gift will fit, though it may take some years, or decades, before the fit becomes perfect. We need to grow into the new garment.

Celibacy should shape our prayer. It gives us time to pray and certain ways to pray. It does NOT free us from distractions in prayer! Yet, like the monastic life itself, celibacy simply <u>is</u> prayer. It expresses that single-minded commitment to God, at least in its intention, which we would like prayer to be.

Celibacy is not always easy. If it is easy, it is not very meaningful. Religious life involves sacrifice and sacrifice needs to cut deep if it is going to be something worth offering to God. That is a rather unfashionable thing to say in these days, when even sacrifices we make for God are supposed to be painless. The more costly a sacrifice, the more fruitful it can be, if it is lived generously. Of course, there are people who get it wrong. Some religious do feel angry or resentful. They feel they were cheated and asked to give up sexuality or marriage before they

really understood what it entailed. Living with that sort of anger or resentment is not good. Either, it must be resolved through counselling and prayer, or the person needs to be allowed to go.

Thirdly, celibacy is not unnatural. Many people have chosen celibacy for the sake of careers such as nursing or teaching, where the sheer satisfaction of doing a job well is enough. People in these caring professions find many ways of showing love and receiving love. They learn to give themselves generously and do not become selfish and unloving. Sexual love is very pleasurable and can be very beautiful, but love does not always need to be sexual.

One of the difficulties of modern society is that sex has been given a weight of importance which it cannot bear. Far too many expectations of happiness and fulfilment are invested in it. When people fail to get that, the relationship breaks down. People then look for sex in more exotic or varied ways, perhaps with more and more partners. None of this fosters the sort of long stable commitment which sex is supposed to build in a person's life. Concentration on sex makes real self-giving love difficult; it makes it hard to build a relationship that is more rounded, a relationship that includes things other than sex. Friendship can be very warm and deep without being at all sexual. Love embraces sex, but sex does not have nearly such wide boundaries as love.

In the end we must come back to God. We don't live celibacy for the sake of freedom, or because we like it. We live it for love of God, so that we can 'follow the Lamb with an undivided heart'. That is what makes it fruitful for others. It also makes it joyful for us. What can be better than to have the freedom to give all to God and to know that we are doing what he asks? St Benedict should have the last word. "Love chastity." (RB 4: 64) That embraces celibacy and all other kinds of love. "Love chastity" says it all.

Nicolas CR

A Visit to Iona

I'd been to Iona before, in 2002, with Mary Ann, my wife, she then in the last years of her secondary breast cancer. She wore a hat as something to hold on to in case the wind blew off her wig – she'd just finished the second lot of chemotherapy: it won't do to be seen holding on to your "hair", but holding on to a hat is fine. Iona was a very special place for us both. We had wanted to go there in 1981 when on our honeymoon on Mull, but it hadn't worked out. What emotions would I feel going back on my own? Happiness is what I felt. Just that. Then in 2002; and again now.

One expects Iona to be a peaceful place, a place for solitary, quiet reflection. In fact one's first impression is of lots of people. Enjoying the sun on the first afternoon on the bench outside the Argyll Hotel I met Eric from California, he drinking red wine, escaping from his group which I later saw having an open air communion on the lawn of the other hotel. In the next room to me was Ann, leader of a group from Denmark – a surprise! to find them early one morning seated in the ruins of the nunnery chapter house having a quiet service to themselves. And Marcia from Michigan, an elderly lady with a walking frame, one of four of us attending Mass in the Catholic House of Prayer, she, like me, unable to receive, me there in stocking feet, my muddy boots outside in the porch.

Services in the Abbey, at 9 am and 9 pm each day, were led by ordinary people, I presume members of the Iona Community, not by clergy, with a lot of people attending. The first evening candlelight only. The last evening a communion, conducted in proper Scottish Presbyterian fashion with trestle tables the length

View of the Abbey from the ferry

of the aisle, normal bread, and wine in individual mini-sherry glasses. At 5 pm each day Taizé chant in the Reilig Odhráin, the chapel where are buried the medieval Lords of the Isles. Compline one evening in the Episcopal Church's chapel, the service conducted by Dave, a United Methodist pastor from the Bronx – only the second time he'd done Compline - the congregation of seven or eight all Americans, bar me.

Iona Abbey Holy Table

There was plenty of solitary quiet reflection. Walks to the shore at the north of the island, up Dun I (110 metres) with its magnificent views and its well – the Well of Eternal Youth, to the south of the island to the Bay of the Coracle where Columba landed in 563, to the ruins of the hermit's cell, and more. Sea, sky, hills, wind and weather, and quiet. I already knew about Columba. The person I didn't know much about, but about whom I now learned much more, was George MacLeod, the minister who founded the Iona Community in the depression of the 1930s, bringing together six young trainee ministers and six tradesmen from his deprived former parish of Govan on Clydeside to do manual work together restoring the Abbey buildings. A formidable, highly impressive man, whose outlook still permeates the Abbey and the Community – an emphasis on peace and justice, social justice that is, and a degree of ecumenism – the Abbey, a kirk of the Church of Scotland, has an altar, with a cross on it! One very surprising thing about Iona is that following the closing of the medieval abbey and the nunnery in the 1560s until the early nineteenth century there was no church on Iona and no minister. The church flourishes, the church declines, the church flourishes again. The new parish church of 1828, built by Thomas Telford, was the result of government initiative and government funding. My

The Abbey and the village

St Martin's Cross, Iona (9th cent.)

rich religious experiences were not confined to Iona: on the way home Sunday morning service in Kelton parish church in Kirkcudbrightshire with Eileen Cawthorne, their excellent organist; and on the way there the Gregorian chant of the monks of Pluscarden - the marble facing of the altar in their abbey funded by us, as a memorial to Mary Ann.

Peter Sowden
Academic publisher, and co-cyclist with Fr George on a recent sponsored bike-ride

Mechthild of Magdeburg

When I was working on my doctorate – on the concept of holiness in Mechthild of Magdeburg's *Flowing Light of the Godhead (FLG)*, my grandmother persisted in describing my object of study as "Mystic Meg who wrote a book about saints," which at the time I found incredibly annoying and now look back on with a smile. It is, however, not the most accurate or convincing account of why one should be interested in Mechthild or the FLG.

In fact, both Mechthild and her book (or books) are of considerable interest to the contemporary church – but it can be something of a challenge to explain why pithily. We know little of Mechthild other than what can be gleaned from the versions of the FLG, assuming, of course that that is accurate. The FLG itself is a cornucopia of text types – visions, instruction, argument, and lyric poetry depicting the soul's relationship with God, often with a strong romantic or erotic flavour and an interest in the psychology of longing, despair, and hope. Mechthild is particularly fond of metaphors of liquid and light, which makes the title, selected by an early editor from one of Mechthild's visions, an apt one. But she also explores the imagery of the desert, unsurprisingly given her willingness to talk about the purgative, or negative, way of mystic union, as well as the positive and the bridal. She also had a lively concern in the wider affairs of the church, highlighting both the good – a key passage contains her discussion of five "new saints" representing new forms of the Christian life raised up in her day by God – and the bad. She is unsparing in her judgement of the corrupt and lazy clergy.

Mechthild was, it would appear, born around the year 1208, in what is now Eastern Germany, probably in the Diocese of Magdeburg, where she seems to have spent much if not all of her life. She is the first woman writing in German whose name we know. In a brief account of her life in the FLG, she refers to receiving the "greeting" (*Gruos*) of the Holy Spirit as a young woman – a transformative experience that shattered and reoriented her life, and which sent her away from her family to live a life of poverty and chastity, apparently in Magdeburg. She lived as a beguine, a form of life where women and, occasionally, men, aimed to live a life of apostolic poverty, devoting themselves to prayer and

the service of others, but unlike the Franciscans, supporting themselves through labour. It was not monasticism as the church had hitherto known it – though beguines often lived under the supervision of a leader, they did not take life vows, and in particular, were not expected to practice obedience.

The movement was an attempt to adapt to the changing characteristics of urban mediaeval life, and aspired to lead a lay life that was patterned after that of Christ and the apostles, without retreating to the cloister. Beguines did not necessarily stay in that form of life for ever; some left to marry or to return to their families. Unlike the mendicant orders – although beguines often had close ties to them – they were always at risk of official suspicion of heresy or of bad behaviour, and it was this growing suspicion that was to lead to them largely being supressed. But even though the movement did not last, it remains a fascinating glimpse of how Christians of the later middle ages attempted to live out Christ's call. We might, perhaps, also see some similarities with the "new monastic movement."

Mechthild's background is not clear – she repeatedly describes herself as "unlearned," and "simple", but that may mean no more than that she had no Latin. It is not clear whether or not she could write – she clearly collaborated with her confessor, and he might have taken dictation from her, but equally he may simply have acted as her editor. She may well have been able to read German. She certainly had a good knowledge of the tropes of secular poetry, as well as a deep knowledge of the Song of Songs, whether gained by reading or by listening. The FLG seems to have been written over a number of years – there is a Latin translation of it which was made during Mechthild's lifetime, which is faithful in the sense that it strives to render the sense of individual passages, but which radically re-orders the material, and which also lacks the final book of FLG, which seems to have been written when Mechthild was in old age.

Beguines often earned their living by nursing, or by selling embroidery, but Mechthild tells us nothing about what she did with her days. This may (or may not) be connected to the repeated references to illness. One of the most elaborate and significant descriptions of a vision relates how she was lying sick and unable to go to Mass, only to be shown, or transported to, a heavenly liturgy in which Mass was celebrated by John the Baptist. The vision blends a fairly detailed description of a recognisable eucharistic liturgy with a mystical experience of union with Christ in the form of a lamb. It is particularly interesting to reflect on Mechthild's visions of sharing in the liturgy of the church triumphant after the experience of the Covid pandemic and the debate about virtual liturgy; whatever conclusions we come to, it is perhaps helpful to be reminded that the issue of people being prevented from joining the ecclesial body by illness is hardly new. It also raises some interesting questions about the role of visualisation in prayer

Part of the Great Beguinage, Leuven, Belgium

– and reminds us that "private prayer" can never be entirely cut off from the wider prayer of the church.

Mechthild spent the last few years of her life at the Cistercian nunnery in Helfta, which produced its own great mystic writers in Gertrude of Helfta and Mechthild of Hackeborn, who gave the church some of the earliest devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is sometimes suggested that Mechthild went there to escape persecution and charges of heresy, but there is little evidence for this beyond some dark references to criticism in the FLG. Indeed, her references to her confessor and to other churchmen, and the rather remarkable fact that her work was deemed worthy of translation into Latin, suggests that if she had her critics, she also had her admirers and patrons too. It is possible, particularly given the repeated references to illness, that she simply needed to go and live somewhere more secure, where sympathetic people could care for her.

The FLG is a remarkable, if at times frustratingly opaque, work. It speaks with great passion of God's love and concern for the soul, and the soul's yearning for God. Its language can be beautiful and soaring, and it can also be drastic, shocking, and abrasive. Despite its interest in attempting to convey the experience of ecstatic states of prayer, it retains a concern with justice and virtue, and an eye to the state of the world. Although no copy of Mechthild's original text survives, we possess, as well as the Latin translation, a translation

into the Alemannic dialect of 14th Century Switzerland, made by the secular priest Heinrich von Nördlingen, who was part of a loose network of clergy and nuns, connected to the Dominican mystics Heinrich Seuse (sometimes refered to in English as Suso) and Tauler. So the FLG continued to resonate for some time. For the modern reader, it can be a challenging read: in different ways, Mechthild's awareness of her own sinfulness and frailty, which at times may seem somewhat exaggerated, and her readiness to turn to the erotic in describing her prayer life, can both make the modern reader uncomfortable. But those who persist will find a challenging and inspiring teacher in the life of prayer and Christian charity.

The Flowing Life of the Godhead has been translated into English by Frank Tobin, and is available in the *Classics of Western Spirituality* series.

Jo Kershaw
Tutor, College of the Resurrection

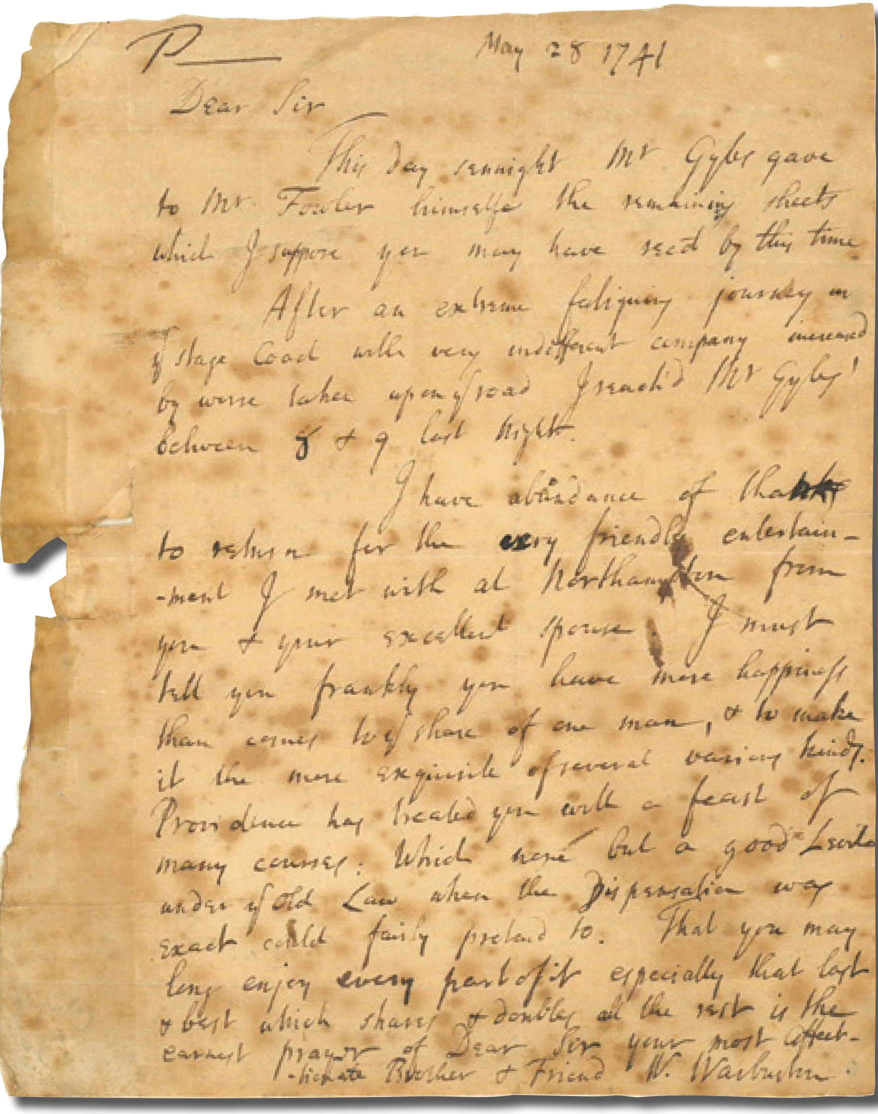
Some More Bibliographic Ramblings

Mention of Henry Hammond in the article on Mirfield book deposits at the University of York in the last CR Review set me off on another bibliographic excursion from my armchair in West Wales. Hammond served as Chaplain to Charles I and was an important defender of the Anglican settlement in the 17th century. His commentary on the books of the New Testament first appeared in 1653 and went through several editions during the century, including this 5th edition copy from1681, held by Aberystwyth University. Dr. Samuel Johnson was a particular enthusiast. James Boswell once asked him whether he would recommend a bible commentary and Johnson replied," To be sure, Sir, I would have you read the bible with a commentary; and I would recommend Lowth and Patrick on the Old Testament and Hammond on the New".

Hammond's views on the Episcopacy also influenced later 17th-century theologians like John Pearson, one time Bishop of Chester, with a splendid 19th-century tomb by Arthur Blomfield in the cathedral. Pearson cropped up in a Mirfield context recently with Father John's latest auction, where a 1683 copy of the 5th edition of Pearson's Exposition of the Creed came up for sale. I was lucky enough to acquire this copy, and indeed had the pleasure of meeting the donor at tea in the refectory back in March. Pearson's Creed again received approval from Dr. Johnson – "to every man whose faith is yet unsettled".

I cannot pretend to offer any commentary on the theology of either Hammond or Pearson, but on a secular level I was interested that both influenced Johnson

in his work on the English Dictionary. One of the treasures held by Aberystwyth University is a copy of the Warburton edition of Shakespeare, used extensively by Johnson in the compilation of his work, seeking derivations and examples of usage, with extensive annotation. By chance we also hold a 1741 letter from Bishop Warburton, then a clergyman at Brant Broughton in Lincolnshire, to his friend Philip Doddridge, then in charge of the Northampton Academy. Warburton was at this time working on his Divine Legation of Moses,

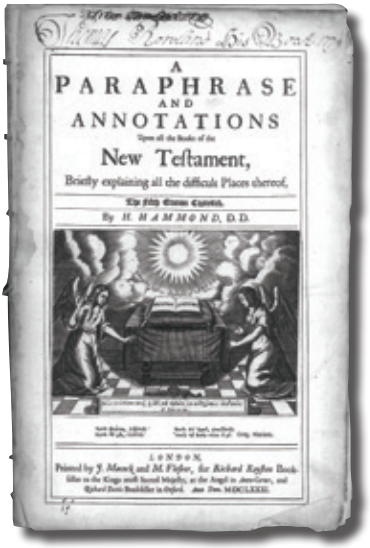


P—— May 28 1741

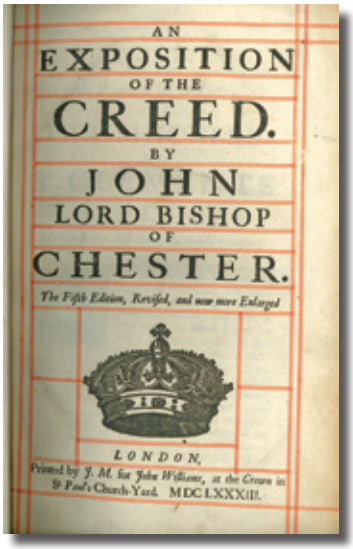
Dear Sir

This day sennight Mr Gyles gave
to Mr Fowler himselfe the remaining sheets
which I suppose you may have seen by this time.
After an extreme fatiguing journey in
y Stage Coach with very indifferent company increased
by worse taken up on y road I reach'd Mr Gyles'
between 8 & 9 last night.
I have abundance of thanks
to return for the very friendly entertain-
-ment I met with at Northampton from
you & your excellent spouse. I must
tell you frankly you have more happiness
than comes to y share of one man, & to make
it the more exquisite of several various kinds.
Providence has treated you with a feast of
many courses: which none but a good Israelite
under y Old Law when the Dispensation was
exact could fairly pretend to. That you may
long enjoy every part of it especially that last
& best which shares & doubles all the rest is the
earnest prayer of Dear Sir your most affect-
-ionate Brother & Friend W. Warburton.

Bishop Warburton's letter of 1741



Henry Hammond on the New Testament, 1681



Pearson on the Creed, 1683

perhaps his main theological work. However, I was amused to note that the letter included reference to a journey by Warburton: "After an extreme fatiguing journey on the stagecoach with very indifferent company increased by wine taken upon the road I reached Mr. Gyles between 8 and 9 last night". It is perhaps fortunate that Mirfield is not yet offering stagecoach retreats but the rail journey from Aberystwyth to Mirfield can seem as fatiguing on occasion and we eagerly await promised improvements in trans-Pennine travel. For the present we look forward to Brother Philip's next planned Railway Pilgrimage this Autumn and take consolation in the memorial lines in Ely cathedral to two railwaymen killed in an accident in the 1840's:

The line to heaven by Christ was made
With heavenly truth the Rails are laid,
From Earth to Heaven the line extends,
To Life Eternal where it ends.
Repentance is the station then
Where Passengers are taken in,
No Fee for them is there to pay,
For Jesus is himself the way.

Bill Hines
Librarian, Aberystwyth University (retd.)

CR Library News

Sponsor a Shelf

The Library of the Community of the Resurrection is a wondrously diverse collection of books occupying rooms on each floor of the house. With over 60,000 volumes, it is vast, and we are privileged to house some volumes that can only be found in the UK in this Library. While its strength is in biblical, liturgical and theological studies, there are extensive sections on history, biography, art and literature. Used by brethren, ordinands, external readers and those staying with CR for a sabbatical or study period, this private monastic library is publicly accessible to a wide range of people.

Funding such a large, important resource is paramount in our wish to look after the collection for present and future generations. We have been successfully applying for grants for the Library, and will continue to do so. In addition, though, we want to give our many individual supporters an opportunity to also 'invest' in the Library with our 'Sponsor-A -Shelf' scheme.

For £5 a month, paid by standing order, you can make a personal and effective contribution to the CR Library, and even choose a particular subject area for your donation. Unless you choose to remain anonymous, your name (and, where applicable, the name of a person on whose behalf you have made the gift) will be on display in the library, as a record of your generous support.

As a sponsor, you will get a photo of the shelf within the subject area of your choice and an annual update of how your contribution is being spent.

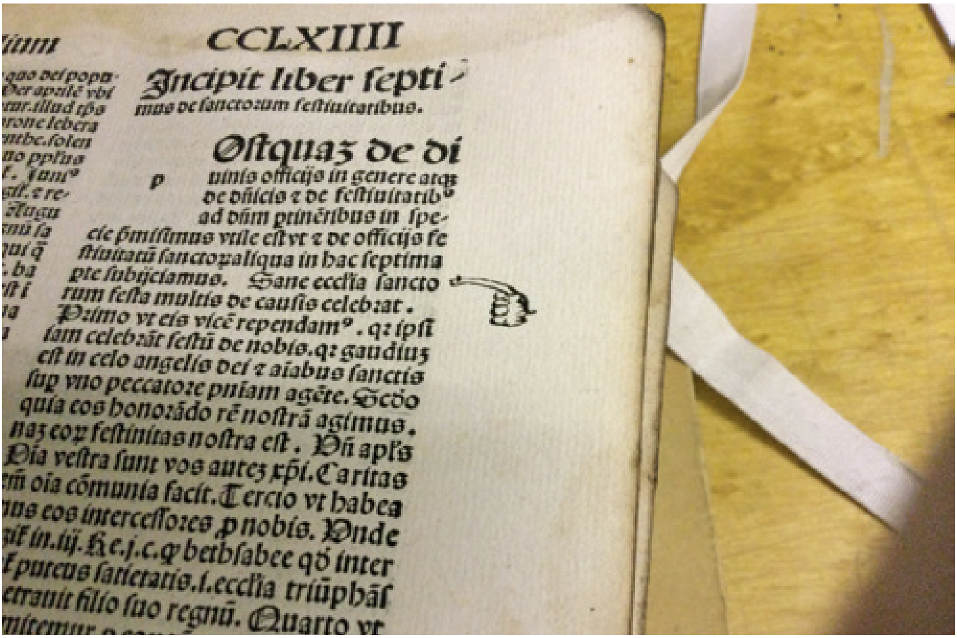
If you are interested in sponsoring a shelf, please contact Barbara Clarke: bclarke@mirfield.org.uk , or 01924 483346.

Library Open Day

3rd October, 1.30pm – 4.30pm – we will be inviting our Sponsor-A-Shelf subscribers (free entrance) to spend the afternoon with us – there will be a tour of the library rooms, a peek at the special collections, chat with library volunteers, staff and Library Brother about our work and how the reading rooms can be accessed by readers and researchers. An opportunity to meet brethren and library volunteers while enjoying a cream tea. Plus the grounds and church will be open to explore. **This event is also open to non-Sponsor-A-Shelf subscribers for a fee of £5.00.** If you would like to join us on this day, please book a place with Barbara – contact details above – by **14th September.**

Recent discovery

Sarah Griffin of York University Library has recently discovered amongst the Mirfield Collection (most of our pre-1800 books are kept there) a book printed in 1494 in Nuremberg by Anton Koberger, the most successful German printer of the 15th century. She comments that it has some lovely manicules (small hands pointing to significant passages written in by a reader) such as the one shown in this illustration. "It made my week", she comments.



Anisha Christison
CR Librarian

St Augustine's Penhalonga

I first visited St Augustine's in March 1965. I was 18, about to go to University and my priest had sent me there. I was stunned by what I found: beautiful scenery with high hills all around, a majestic church, schools, hundreds of children, two convents and, above all, the ten CR Fathers with whom I was staying. In their white cassocks and grey scapulars they seemed to me to be already halfway to heaven. I was a romantic! Coming from White Rhodesian suburbia I found myself in a different world.

The story of St Augustine's began nearly 80 years before I got there. St Augustine's was one of the very first centres for Anglican Christianity started by Bishop Knight Bruce in 1891. Some heroic missionaries worked there in very difficult circumstances laying the foundations. Two of the priests, Cuthbert Hallward and Harry Buck, later joined CR. The Community took over the mission in 1915 and sent out Fr Bertram Barnes and Fr Robert Baker. Fr Barnes had already worked with the UMCA in East Africa and was a good linguist. Before long he published one of the first Shona dictionaries. Fr Baker, very practical, started a clinic. He had some entertaining methods of 'bush medicine' and was responsible for planning and building the magnificent church. Together with Frs

St Augustine's church

Buck, Aidan Cotton, Denys Shropshire and others they steadily built up the schools, teacher training college and rural mission work. Fr Matthew Trelawny-Ross, a delightful eccentric and fine musician, managed to produce a Gilbert and Sullivan with an entirely Shona cast way back in the Twenties. Today the area they covered is one of the strongest Anglican areas in the country. In 1939 Fr Alban Winter started the first Secondary School for Africans in the whole country. He did this in the teeth of Government opposition which was finally resolved over a game of golf between the Governor, Herbert Stanley, a devout Anglican and fine classicist, and the redoubtable Bishop Edward Paget. At the heart of all this was the daily worship of the CR Community, later joined first by CR Sisters from Grahamstown, and then by the OHP Sisters, and, of course, the African CZR Community which is still there.

Fr Bertram Barnes providing transports of delight

What I found in 1965 was a classic missionary model which could be found all over Africa and India too: education and medical work providing a foundation for the slow building up of a strong church of indigenous converts. What made it different was the religious communities that inhabited it – particularly the CR Fathers who ran it for nearly 70 years. People get forgotten as the years pass by, but in the CR family we need to keep memories alive. Forgotten people were often great people, much loved in their time. Who were these?

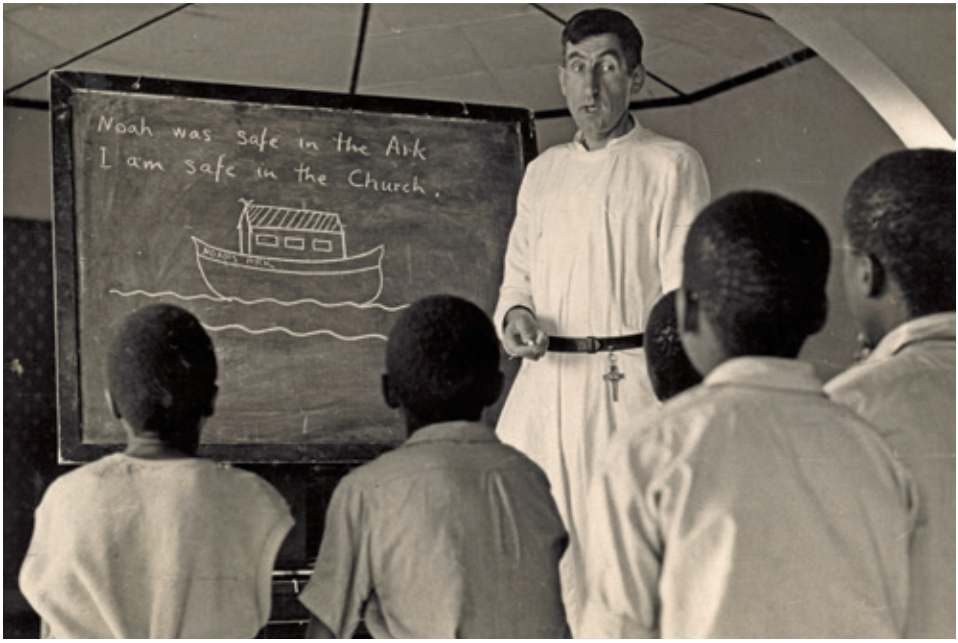
Benjamin Baynham was the Prior. He had come to South Africa to teach at St Peter's School, Rosettenville and had joined the Community there, doing most of his novitiate in Johannesburg as the War was on. In 1951 there was a crisis at St Augustine's and he was sent up to Penhalonga to take over as Prior and Principal of the whole establishment. He stayed 17 years, giving stability to church and school. He loved the students and they loved him. They quickly found that his rather severe appearance hid a very soft heart. He did a great work in the school. He allowed brethren to get on with their respective responsibilities. When he left St Augustine's he moved for some years to Community houses in S Africa and finally returned to Mirfield where he gardened vigorously with a pipe in his mouth and died 25 years later of a rather nasty cancer.

The oldest in the house was David Downton who had arrived in Johannesburg in 1926. Together with Raymond Raynes and Matthew Trelawney-Ross he had

begun the work in Sophiatown for which CR became so famous. In 1948 he moved to St Augustine's. In 1965 he had just turned 80 and shortly after my visit went to England on leave and died there. Maurice Bradshaw must then have been in his fifties. He had come to St Augustine's in 1938 and trekked around the northern churches until 1945 when he was moved to Sekhukuniland as Prior. He didn't like it there and in 1951 returned to Penhalonga. He was a good linguist, chairing the Shona Translation Committee for the diocese. He was a good confessor who, in those days when lots of people went to confession, had quite a busy ministry in this field. He ended his life in the house of prayer we had in Sunderland. At the age of 80 he died in the bank of a heart attack. When they came to his room they found all his personal papers, including his passport, neatly on his desk. It is a real grace to die like that!

Next was Fr Jacob Wardle. For over twenty years he cared for churches and schools to the north of Penhalonga and down into the Honde Valley. He was greatly loved by the people. He never really learned Shona but that didn't seem to matter. Keble Prosser thought the reason St Augustine's was not attacked in the Liberation War was that Jacob was so greatly loved; the guerrilla fighters never dared to touch the St Augustine's people.

Contemporary with Jacob in Community order was Donald Patey. He was only there for two years, chiefly looking after the accounts until he was recalled to Mirfield to be Prior. By contrast Fr James Woodrow came out in the early fifties



Fr Jacob Wardle in class

to be Principal of the Teacher Training College, a job he loved and did superbly, training teachers who could also be catechists in the schools where they worked. Few people realise how important this ministry was in building up the Anglican Church in rural areas. Cledwyn Evans was the school chaplain. Like both Benjamin and Derek he sported a ginger beard. Unlike them he was very Welsh. My main recollection of him was the way he seemed to know every boy and girl who had passed through the school. He prayed for them long after they had left.

The last three brethren sadly all left the Community. Derek had come to Penhalonga from St Francis Sekhukuniland which he had loved. He worked hard at Shona and spoke it fairly well. His responsibility was the Southern Trek down into Marange. It is hot, dry country and he loved the work, talking to the people, walking long distances, supervising the schools. Derek cared very much about being a priest and a pastor but unhappily he had a knack of getting across people. After three years he had to be moved, was sent to England to train as a teacher and came back in 1968 to teach physics which he did excellently for the next 10 years. Unfortunately, his vocal opposition to the tactics and the politics of the guerrilla fighters made it dangerous for him to live on the mission in the later part of the war and he was asked to leave. This upset him and he never returned to the Community, leaving it finally in 1984. For a while he was priest in charge of the little town of Chipinge. He died in Mutare in the late nineties.

Daniel Pearce was a charming young American. He taught in the Secondary School and developed an amazing talent for writing and producing plays. In Zimbabwe at the time there was an annual competition among dramatic societies

A packed congregation

of several towns and cities. The amateur actors were white adults. One year Daniel and his black teenage actors carried off the prize with a play written and produced by Daniel, "A Credit to the Family". He became Principal of the mission when Benjamin left. Unfortunately, this was not a success and after a few years he was recalled to England to be the last Warden of the Hostel at Leeds. He was replaced at St Augustine's by Keble Prosser, who is still venerated in Zimbabwe and on the mission for the great work he did keeping the school going through the Bush War. Unfortunately, the cost of this was that he couldn't bear to return to Mirfield when the work at St Augustine's came to an end. Instead he became vicar of Pocklington in Yorkshire. There were several lay teachers too. Some came and went, but Donald Darling, Norman Mitchell and Harold Buckley gave much of their working lives to the school and shouldn't be forgotten.

What impressed me about all this was not just the scenery! Nor was it just the work. It was the prayer. "Seven times a day do I praise you, O Lord." (Ps 119:164) They prayed the seven daily offices and said mass each day, usually each priest at a separate altar. The Church was full of prayer. More than ever before in my life I was really drawn to pray, to spend time looking at God. Yet something was lacking. CR in Zimbabwe never drew Zimbabweans into its ranks. Only two of us joined, both of us White. In S Africa, too, where the work was more public and impressive, only a few South Africans tried their vocations in CR. Only a handful remained to the end. This was generally true of the Roman Catholic orders too in both countries. Only in recent years have some of them begun to get significant numbers of local vocations.

There are many possible reasons for this failure to attract local vocations. One would certainly be that to be a member of CR you had to be well educated and already a priest. A few Shona priests have told me they wanted to join CR but were told they did not have enough education. Only towards the end of CR's time in Zimbabwe was there a significant number of well-educated Africans in the country and by then it was too late. More deeply though, CR Brethren in Africa saw themselves as missionaries from England. They valued the religious life but they didn't intend to make CR an indigenous community. They were themselves very English (or American) and much as they loved Rhodesia/Zimbabwe and the work there, they saw Britain as home. It was hard for White English-speaking Zimbabweans or South Africans to join CR. It was that much harder for one so culturally different as a Black or an Afrikaans speaker. In some ways for CR it was their very success as a missionary order in Africa that made it impossible for CR to become African. It was always a little outpost of Britain! Having said that, Zimbabwe is part of our story; primary mission is part of our DNA. Those Brethren loved the people and the land and they loved God more. It was because of God they did that great educational and Church work. It was God who brought them to CR.

Nicolas CR

Libera nos a malo: The Legacy of Dom Robert Petitpierre O.S.B

Dom Robert Petitpierre O.S.B, third from the right c.1962.

The ministry of deliverance is often grossly misunderstood by the general population. As shaped through the lens of 20th century media, it is seen as a fringe Christian ministry. At best, it is a suggestive faith healing owed only secondary status, and at worst a backward Medieval practice condemned in the light of modern medico-psychological advancements. And frankly, a generalisable consensus on its usage, *within* the Anglican church, is often no clearer, as due to the varying degrees of liturgical conviction and theology, a myriad of deeply held beliefs arise.

This fraction occurs because, since both the Charismatic renewal into mainline denominations in the 1960's and 1970's (the time at which our subject was writing), and the 19th century and onward influence of explicitly Anglo-Catholic thought, both traditions claimed exorcism as a tool of their own. And thus, the reformation idea of deliverance as "Romish" and therefore not belonging in the Church of England was, to some degree, called into question by its inclusion in new and flourishing incarnations of the Anglican faith. (Having written that, ironically enough, however, I am reliably informed that Dom Robert had a proclivity, not only for the Latin Mass, but for speaking conversationally in nothing but Latin.)

However, this revival in interest also gives us cause for concern, as not only were these ministrations sometimes being explored by questionable authorities, and were not yet regulated uniformly, but it was synchronous with a mid-20th century zeitgeist which was fuelled by popular and elite Occult experimentation in Britain. These issues were brought to the fore with the infamous 'Barnsley case', in which a Mr Michael Taylor viciously savaged his wife after undergoing exorcism.

Yet, from this maelstrom steps a voice of reason, apparently unaffected by the sensationalism of the field in which he operated. Amid the media backlash that followed the 'Barnsley Case', deeply damaging public relations with the Church, promoting calls for the defrocking of clergy, the situation even being

mentioned by Archbishop Coggan in his Easter morning sermon, Dom Robert Petitpierre O.S.B was called as an 'expert witness' in the ensuing inquest.

He was described by a student who encountered him on Taplow Train Station, as customarily wearing a "long black cloak and cassock" being "barefoot" in "battered brown sandals" with a "brief case to match", having "no hair, pebble glasses and a bit of a stoop". He managed somehow to challenge the status quo of his office by being far from sensationalist or blind to reason in his outlook, not seeing "'principalities and powers" as the cause of every situation, whilst perfectly filling it in appearance, looking much the same as one would expect of his fictional fratres.

Yet, back to the case. As reporters were eager for the next instalment of the story which had so gripped the nation in 1975, Petitpierre took the stand and sought to reclaim a good name for deliverance, in the midst of madness, by employing the theological knowledge, tact, decades of experience and concession to reason which the situation demanded.

He did this by brokering a relationship between the psychological and the spiritual. And, by deconstructing the imagining of exorcism as a fringe ministry, by correctly framing it as a form of intercessory prayer, drawing allusions to the confessional, and therefore showing it as belonging to part of wider Christian Reconciliation. He sought to clarify the church's stance, as he pointed out that the words of the Rite were not the power, for that is to make the Priest a magician, but that the power comes from Christ's sacrifice freeing the individual concerned from their sin, and thus just judgement, which is the root of demonic troubles.

He further appeals to the Gospels, recognising that humans suffer bodily and mental ills, and that these are more often than not temporal in nature. Though, *sometimes* they are spiritually engendered, forming a theory of "inhuman minds" pressuring human wellness, thus developing thinking around demonic oppression. This development necessitates varying scriptural understandings of the relationship between health and the spirit, and in a dissertation I am writing I have sought to further this line of enquiry. This results in the adoption of a holistic understanding of human health.

But more than the purely theoretical and theological side of the ministry, he challenged the exclusively spiritual nature of deliverance by placing great emphasis on pastoral care. He did this by caring deeply for his subjects, and frequently dropping in on past clients for a sort of spiritual health check-up. In doing so he inverted non-believers' criticisms based upon sensationalism, by being consistent in his ministry outside of the throes of interest, and well into the not infrequent mundanity of tea and cake.

He manages this deconstruction also through his spoken words, by formulating

his own terminology, turning "minor exorcism" into "antiseptic" or "clearing the muck", and through a demeaning of the demonic to "little devils", which is more in keeping, he argued, with translated Gospel sensibilities. And through his actions and written words, shaped by humility, he conveys a transference of power away from himself as the minister, which some do not, to God, through a laying of the issue upon His divine mercy. We can see this intercessory, rather than always assertive nature of prayer evident in the Rites which were authored under his guidance in 1963, but did not come into effect until post- the 1974 troubles.

But most importantly he averted sensationalism through his background and character. Petitpierre initially studied Chemistry at Oxford beginning at Merton College in 1921, thus developing a mind sharp in scientific thinking, which he continued through his teaching of sciences at Durham. This levelheadedness is represented in his conviction that only 1% of psychic phenomena brought to his attention was genuine, and the rest a mixture of natural causes or psychological issues. And this is further strengthened by his headstrong personality and lack of fear to moderate his true thoughts, which is evident unto death in his command for his gathered brethren to leave the room, so he could "die in peace".

His deliverance ministry, as recorded in his writings, is characterised by a serious, yet unostentatious charism. This is often retrospectively comical, such as one account when he recalled that with a Rector, he quietly and unobtrusively performed an "antiseptic" exorcism on a church, whilst a group of ladies arranged the weekly flowers, all done without disturbing them. Or, with his companion Fr Gilbert Shaw, they prayed and exorcised a prehistoric barrow in the centre of a village, thought to be responsible for disconcertion in the area, whilst pretending to be a pair of tourists, map and binoculars covering the *Rituale*, no doubt. Though when chatting on a train in 1974 about the release of *The Exorcist,* a student asked him his opinion, to which he replied, "*The real thing is more frightening", intimating of his encounters with more sinister cases, such as one in East London in the 1920's.*

Petitpierre is responsible for an injection of twentieth-century parapsychological thought into exorcistic parlance. An example of this is his fine tuning of psychic theory to include place imprints, as distinguished from "ghosts *proper"*. Or his passion for studying and tracing ley lines. This is all likely impacted by his family's turn-of-the-century topics of conversation, and experiences they recorded, and these contributions are still felt in the modern ministry.

Therefore, he can dually be credited with developing the spiritual understanding of supernatural issues, and also upholding natural and psychological explanations. By this he created a *via media* between what can, in

some instances, for some individuals, be a spiritually blinkered ministry, and a society which is unquestionably mastered by the medical and scientific.

As anyone devoted to a great ministry, his ministrations consumed not only his time, but also his health, having two strokes whilst performing his work, and indeed Father Nicolas CR remembers him returning to Nashdom after a call out to some disturbance, looking much drained. His thinking came at a critical time. When interviewed for a documentary in 1974, Petitpierre expressed concern about the lack of meaningful relationships and a decline in the *depth* of the prayer life of the Church. He argued that such social and religious issues led to a turning away from faith, and a seeking of alternative spiritualities which led people into spiritual turmoil, often without truly understanding it. We can see this happening again today. His voice, therefore, is one of Christian witness in a time of counter-religiosity. His ministry is thus not only reactive, to situations brought to his attention, but proactive, in guiding people to the faith through his public witness.

How does any of what I have written relate to you the reader? His message is one broader than that of merely deliverance ministry, but through that shines a message that speaks to the everyday. Dom Petitpierre's concerns still resonate today, to issues of materialism, obsessive social media usage and ever-growing secularism. His pastoral care is a model for the brokering of meaningful relationships. His call for intercessory and contemplative prayer, the living of a sacramental life, and placing Christ front-centre in all that we do represents a call to action, and a challenge to complacency in faith. Because of this, Dom Robert was not only a pioneer in the revival and reformation of Anglican deliverance, but should be recognised as an Anglo-Catholic role model to all, and someone whose work is well worth reading.

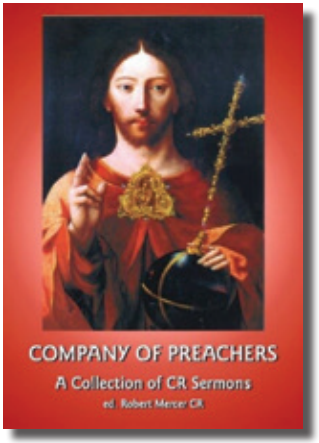
The 20th of December 2022 will mark four decades since Dom Robert's passing, and thus we pray, in his favoured tongue: *Requiem aeternam dona Dom Robert, Domine; et lux perpetua luceat ei.*

Edward Parker
Ordinand, St. Stephen's House, Oxford.

Dom Robert Petitpierre

Book Review

Company of Preachers: A Collection of CR Sermons
ed. Robert Mercer CR, Mirfield Publications, 2022. 103pp, £7.50



Perhaps inevitably, this charming little book of sermons from the Community of the Resurrection includes an extract from John Keble's Assize Sermon of 14 July 1833, lamenting "National Apostasy", which John Henry Newman considered to have been the beginning of the Oxford Movement. It is a position from which I dissent, preferring to see its origins in Charles Lloyd's shake-up of Theology at Oxford in the 1820s and a growing contemporary emphasis on the study of the early Church Fathers, but only one of us has been canonised by the Pope.

Keble's broadside against Erastianism (the desire of the Church to conform itself to the whim of the state) did at least set the tone for the religious movement out of which the CR later grew. Its most evocative expression here comes with one of Robert Mercer CR's own contributions: witty, provocative, and profoundly poignant under its title "Deportation Sunday" and an explanatory note that it was delivered at St Mary's, Stellenbosch, shortly before he and Bernard Chamberlain CR were expelled from South Africa. It stands in the long tradition of CR's ministry of speaking out in dark days, and complements well another South African sermon preached by Jonathan Graham CR at Rosettenville in 1958: "We *should* know better; but some of us forget."

Preaching as a means of speaking truth to power finds its voice here, but not exclusively. Personal spiritual development very properly looms large; furthermore, the extracts are short, which make them appealing as reading for morning mediation or a staycation-retreat. A line from the recently-departed Eric Simmons CR's "Going in the Opposite Direction" cuts like a hot knife through butter: "Sin is evil and destructive, but I need to make room for the grace of self-understanding and insight so that I can see where the sin is coming from within my own depths." The accompanying photograph of him in conversation with Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother is presumably a coincidence.

Harry Williams CR is absent, but I suspect only because his sermons need little more exposure than they have already received. The inclusion of pieces from both the CR's founder, Charles Gore, and the community's youngest professed brother at the time of publication is a nice touch; so too is an anecdote told against himself by Paul Bull CR, of a valiant if futile attempt to preach to sailors on his way to India in 1911. "I began by unrolling one of my charts and getting four men to hold

it, but the wind ripped up the chart and its parts were blown into the sea. At this point a bugle sounded for a ration of beer and my crowd immediately dispersed." Did St Paul have an easier time in the Areopagus at Athens?

There is a homely quality to much of this preaching, but one showpiece delivery stands out above the rest: Trevor Huddleston CR's sermon in the University Pulpit at Oxford in 1983, on the 150th anniversary of Keble's Assize Sermon in the same spot. After the turmoil of the last forty years one line rings like a knell. "It would be the height of folly and an expression of arrogance for the Church, particularly the Church of England alone, through its leaders, or its Synods or its commissions, to imagine it could pronounce with authority, on any of these issues if it attempts to do so alone."

The issues that Huddleston envisaged were not necessarily those that have since torn the CofE apart, but his point stands. The book is richly and enticingly peppered with quotations about preaching, both from the classical canon and from more apocryphal sources, and even from Martin Luther. The Welsh woman who complained that "you didn't scold us enough" sits well with John Newton's exhortation that preaching should break a hard heart and heal a broken one. As for John Jewell's reflection that "a bishop should die preaching", I daresay that there are many reading this who have on occasion yearned that one would.

Serenhedd James
Tutor in Ecclesiastical History, St Stephen's House, Oxford

Please direct all materials, enquiries and comments to the editor, Fr George Guiver CR, at gguiver@mirfield.org.uk
Articles for consideration should be sent at least 5 weeks before the issue date.

Contacts

Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield, West Yorkshire, WF14 0BN

Website:		www.mirfield.org.uk
Phone and email	01924 494318	community@mirfield.org.uk
Guest dept. / Reception	01924 483346	guests@mirfield.org.uk
Fundraiser:	01924 483302	appeal@mirfield.org.uk
Companions Office:		companions@mirfield.org.uk
The Shop / Mirfield Pubs:	01924 483345	theshop@mirfield.org.uk

College of the Resurrection, Stocks Bank Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire WF14 0BW

Website		www.college.mirfield.org.uk
Phone & email	01924 490441	alewis@mirfield.og.uk

St Hild College, Stocks Bank Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire WF14 0BW

Website		**www.sthild.org**
Phone & email	01924 481925	enquiries@sthild.org

We are very grateful to our friends and well-wishers for their support.

There are various other ways you can support us such as:

- One-off donations online or through the post
- Regular donations by Standing Order
- Gifts of Shares or Securities
- Leaving a legacy

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

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

The Bursar
The Community of the Resurrection
Stocks Bank Road, Mirfield, WF14 0BN
01924 483300
bursar@mirfield.org.uk

Registered charity number 232670