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An "Unexpected-holy-places" Sponsored Bike Ride

It's a while since our last sponsored bicycle ride, so you may be glad to know another is now in the offing on an unusual theme. It is planned for 21 – 24 May 2020, travelling between Ford End near Chelmsford and Tunbridge Wells, aiming to raise money for the Tariro charity. (Tariro UK raises money to support orphans or young people whose one parent can't look after them any more. It funds between 45 and 50 such young people in four centres in Zimbabwe, through models which suit the individuals; supporting them through school and then with further education or practical projects until they are able to stand on their own two feet.) More on the fantastic work of Tariro in a minute. Before that, you will be wanting to know the reasons for the route. The ride is in memory of Arthur Shearley Cripps (1869 – 1952). He was born in Tunbridge Wells, was influenced by Charles Gore, became vicar of Ford End, and then a missionary, stirrer for social justice and poet in what is now Zimbabwe. You can find out more about him on: http://www.christiancourier.ca/columns-op-ed/entry/arthur-cripps-maverick-missionary-and-activist-for-african-rights. His grave in Zimbabwe is regarded as a shrine, and miracles have been attributed to this very unlikely character.

Our route starts at Ford End on the morning of Ascension Day, and takes us down to the Gravesend ferry. Having crossed the Thames estuary, we make for Lullingstone and the remains of a famous Roman Villa which includes one of the oldest places of Christian worship in Britain: the foundations of a chapel whose Roman frescoes and mosaics are now on display in the British Museum. On the site of this chapel we hope to sing the midday office. We then make for West Malling Abbey, expectant of another office and a cup of tea, before finally heading to Tunbridge Wells, to take part in the Sunday Mass at St Barnabas', where Cripps grew up in the faith. This 90-mile journey will be spread over 3 days, and we have yet to arrange the intermediate overnight stays. I say 'we', but at the moment only myself is signed up. If you would like to join the ride for a part of it, or even the whole, please let me know, gguiver@mirfield.org.uk.

Elizabeth Wilson (chair of Tariro trustees) recently visited Zimbabwe together with her husband Adam (the Trustees' secretary) and writes:

When I visited in September I was really impressed with the work being carried out by people who are absolutely stellar in the organizations we support. The young people at the Tariro for Young People project in Harare are just wonderful, and it is clear they are being provided with more than just food and a roof over their heads. Tariro House is home to a real family, the members provide support to each other, and those who have left even come back to support and encourage the new members. As Kundai (a Tariro House young resident now studying medicine) told me, Tariro House "transforms young lives", and I saw for myself how young people looking frightened and hunted in old photographs of them were now full of life, confidence and warmth. What was so lovely was to see how each individual was being enabled to meet their potential: from conducting the amazing singing at the Tariro commemoration day service, to studying at university or raising pigs (and the odd lemon tree!) at the Tariro smallholding I visited at Goromonzi outside Harare, built with funds from the Cowley Fathers.

In the rural areas I was impressed by the work of Mr Stan Runyowa (retired head teacher of St Anne's Anglican school) and his board (including Mirfield trained priest and Dean of Mutare Cathedral, Fr Luke Chigwanda) in setting up and running the Tariro project, meeting the needs of 33 children and young people in rural eastern Zimbabwe (around the area of the old CR mission at Penhalonga). It was so impressive to see how each young person's needs are considered individually with each one having an individual plan and being kept under constant review. Wonderful too to see Edwin Komayi (a former Tariro House Harare young resident) working so hard for their benefit, our support enabling him to travel huge distances to see them. When I met some of the young people supported by TFYP it was clear they felt part of a wider Tariro family. They were proud to be supported by Tariro and at a recent meeting of all the young people even came up with their own ideas about the standard to be expected of them! Mr Runyowa hopes one day to be able to buy a plot of land near Rusape to give the TFYP young people a place to grow some extra food, but more importantly to spend time together on a common project. I saw the land. Like so many places in Zimbabwe it is beautiful and full of potential. I so hope we can raise the money to make the dream a reality.

Elizabeth and Adam with some of the Tariro family

Lizzie came back bowled over by it all – there's something worth cycling for!

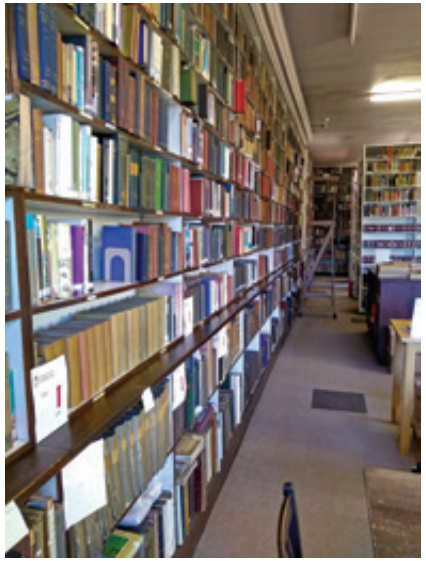
Donations for the sponsored bike ride can be made via this link:
https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Unexpected-holy-places
Or cheques can be sent to CR, payable to Tariro.
For Gift Aid forms & other information see: https://tarirouk.com/donate/

George CR and Lizzie Wilson

Books, Scrolls and Breeches

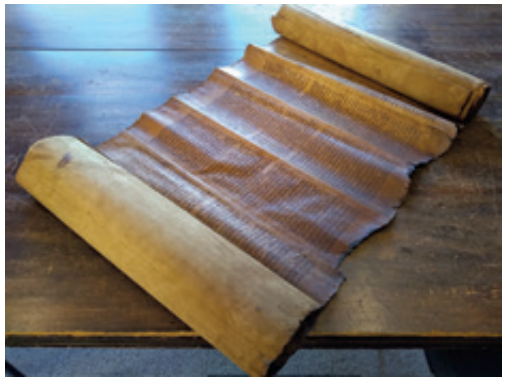
If you have read Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* you will know that its monastery library is a rambling labyrinth of staircases, corridors, small rooms and hidden corners. The library at Mirfield would have made a good set for the film of the novel. There are in fact at least four separate libraries on the site: the Community library of about 80,000 volumes, the College library of about 10,000, the smaller Retreat House library, and that of the Wakefield School of Ministry (housed in a corridor, our buildings being what they are).

The Community library is all you might imagine a monastery library to be: many old and mouldering volumes, ancient manuscripts, old and dusty cases reaching



right up to the ceiling, as well as an ever-growing collection of new books. In the year 1170 a French monk wrote: "A monastery without a library is like a castle without an armoury. Our library is our armoury… See to it therefore that in your armoury of defence is not wanting that great defence of all other defences – the Holy Bible". We have Bibles galore in every language you can imagine, including a "breeches" Bible of 1608, in which Adam and Eve are said to have used fig leaves to make breeches for themselves. Monastic life has in most of its history put a high value on study, our armoury to help in the struggle against all that pulls us down, and to progress towards the truth. Our libraries have been well looked after over the years, but nowadays this whole world has moved into a different ball-game, and we decided recently that we needed to invest more in catching up in this now very specialized business, not least if we are to obtain grants for the various tasks that need to be done. As a result Anisha Christison was appointed to the new post of Academic Librarian, coming to us from the National Coal Mining Museum for England. She has been setting about her task with huge energy, tackling an almost overwhelming situation. The entire library and its books need cleaning from the residue of old West-Yorkshire pollution, long disappeared from the outdoor scene in Mirfield, but still surviving in the Community library. Anisha has been successful in recruiting a large team of volunteers who have been trained on how to clean books, sort, catalogue, and generally put in good order. The priorities are: proper care of books, efficient security, proper conditions and adequate shelving and access. The task will take a long time, but fruits are already appearing. In the process we are making discoveries. Old and interesting books, only half-remembered, have come to light, including unexpected surprises in dark corners. One that recently crept into our attention from the back of a cupboard is a large,

Anisha our Librarian



A scroll discovered

ancient and battered leather scroll – a Torah-scroll from a synagogue, about 40 feet long when unrolled. There are some faint memories of having seen it before, but for most of us its appearance was astonishing. We consulted the Jewish Museum in London and The Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, and from that it emerges that such scrolls looking centuries-old are in fact very common. It is quite damaged at the edges, looking for all the world like a Dead Sea scroll, and we learnt that in this case the proper procedure is to bury it, but keeping it in a safe place is also regarded as acceptable.

There is a whole shelf-full of first editions by T.S. Eliot, a sign of his friendship with Fr Geoffrey Curtis CR, many books belonging to or written by the Wilberforce family, a first edition of Newman's *Apologia pro vita sua* signed by the man himself, as well as similar signed works by people like G.K. Chesterton and George Tyrell. In the 1970s about 2,000 of the Community's pre-1800 books were sent on permanent loan to York University library, including some going back as far as the 14th century. The first collected edition of the works of Sir Philip Sidney (1598), are among them, the second edition of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), the first edition of *A journey to the western islands of Scotland*, by Samuel Johnson(1775), and an edition of St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, printed by Nicolas Jenson in Venice in 1475. They are well cared for in York and well used. More information on the York collection can be found on:

https://www.york.ac.uk/library/collections/named-collections/mirfieldcollection/

Conservation

As part of present operations we have discovered many old items that escaped that exodus, and decisions have to be made on the best thing to do. For instance books from the 17th and 18th centuries on liturgical topics would be of use to people coming to study with our Liturgical Institute; if we keep them we need to restore them and invest in proper conditions for their housing.

Some of our wonderful team of volunteers

Old books apart, the Community's library is living and growing all the time, as we seek to keep our main subject-areas up to date. Plans for the future are still fluid, but at some point we will be needing to give the library's home a complete overhaul and re-design to meet the very particular standards of today, and to provide acceptable surroundings for those who come to study in it. Brethren, college staff and students use the Community Library, but external readers can also use it on application to the Librarian on library@mirfield.org.uk.

The College's is a smaller working library, with a smaller range of problems, but there is still much work to be done there. While the Community Library is built on the interests of the Brethren and is an historic, although organic, collection, the College library supports ordinands' study with relevant up-to-date material.

We are often offered donations of substantial numbers of books from individuals. Three problems face us here: firstly, we are only able to accept books that the library does not already have, and that have particular significance; secondly, space at present is limited, making it difficult at the moment to accept large numbers of books; and thirdly, given the huge amount of work to be done on the library, staff time is limited for the processing of such donations. It is a difficult situation to be in, as any library would be glad to welcome books, certainly those of significance, but there is a limit to that side of things at the moment. On the other hand the Community bookshop is always happy to receive donations for their "second-hand" section. When this happens, anything which ought rather to go in one of our libraries is weeded out and passed on.

More information on our libraries can be found on:
https://mirfield.org.uk/mirfield-centre/library-learning-resources/ (Community)
and https://college.mirfield.org.uk/academic-formation/libraries/ (College).

George CR

Oh yes – Reaching Towards

Michael Cook was Artist in Residence with us from August 27th to October 11th. His Manger Gallery, based in Derbyshire, specializes in contemporary British Romantic and Visionary artists, and in works of the imagination. (www.mangergallery.co.uk)

Reaching Towards, with images of the artwork,
will be published shortly by Mirfield Publications.

Michael with some fruits of his stay

The following notes are from Michael's Journal:

I like my room, it is built into a corner overlooking the orchard and the hills beyond. I am looking for places to set a Lazarus image. Walled lanes, a bluebell wood, a pathway between two dry stone walls, barbed wire at a brook. It may be none of these but they all give the right feeling. Maybe the orchard? A dead tree, hollow tree?

I have begun painting a small picture of the raising of Lazarus, just a beginning. But I felt huge tension doing it. Is this because I feel on show (the door is open so visitors can come in)? Or is the pressure to produce good work greater here? I found a tree that could've been the inspiration for the hollow tree my Lazarus is emerging from, went into the church too, my first time alone there. It is a beautiful space.

Have I spent too long thinking holiness is the same as seriousness? There are different ways of course but what is mine? A retreatant today suggested that my paintings might be my prayers. A new Lazarus painting which I started this morning has gone well. A retreatant helped me with problems with my phone

– she also helped with the latest Lazarus image in wondering aloud how he was supposed to 'come forth' when bound in grave clothes. I dismiss and fear people too often. The resulting picture, with Jesus peeling back the wrappings, is much better than my first attempt. Something of Blake about it. Another retreatant thought the gesture was a caress and when I looked again saw that he was right. We need the eyes of others.

I cannot doubt that the lives of the monks are pointed towards something real, something which is not a thing. Trying to spend part of each day looking down at the orchard and the sky, and to put aside questions. How could God ever get through to me if I am thinking about him all the time? Another question!

Ate too much sausage at lunch. Spent some time in church before Evensong, a beautiful space, one that makes sense. In fact, more and more the whole place makes sense. Have put Mary and Martha into one of the window spaces in the cloister, alongside the Lazarus piece, and now working on Lazarus raised, which is proving difficult – am ambivalent about this miracle. Started again with the Lazarus Raised drawing as the one I started yesterday seems too gloomy and enclosed. The new one is full of life and much better. I am very much into the work now.

God recedes as I approach and I'm tired of him playing hard to get. If God is just silence then I am disappointed by him. And yet the images keep coming. Charcoal, not incense. White cotton rag paper waiting to be written on, not prayer books. I am tense at the easel, not relaxed, often painfully stiff when I stop. Like in worship. Modern people far too intolerant of any sadness at all, as though something has gone wrong and needs fixing... there are forms of faith that encourage this – beware of them.

In my art room, various comings and goings in the corridor, a woman stopped at my door, looked at me and said 'Bless you.' Not quite sure what to say back I said 'And bless you too'. Looking puzzled, she said 'It was you that sneezed?' It wasn't, and I said I assumed she was just generally blessing me. She said 'Well, it's that sort of place isn't it?' In the Orthodox liturgies which Thomas has loaned me Jesus is called 'O Wheat of Life' which has suggested a background of wheat, or bales, as in the photograph I took on my walk the other day. All of these things feed into the work even if they do not end up visible. I think there might be something of Thomas in my risen Lazarus. Yesterday at lunch Thomas said he really likes my hands (that is, my drawings of hands). Jesus said the eyes

are the windows of the soul, but maybe the hands are the architecture...

What is it I feel when I stop and just look and listen? The thought comes that it is sadness I feel but if I put that aside then what? A sort of peace, but also a sort of anticipation. Waiting, but what for? Put that question aside and I am back to looking, listening, as though waiting. Expectant, but not of any *thing*. Threshold. On the edge of where I am?

The painting has come on this morning, some new elements coming in. Jesus is holding a stem of wheat, and Lazarus's wrappings will be leaves I think. I feel very free here to produce whatever comes, with no thoughts of whether the subject will be acceptable or whether a piece will be saleable or not. And working from around 8.15am until around lunchtime is unheard of at home. The regularity of meals and worship here means a regular pattern to the day is essential and also quite easy to fall into. Will I be able to keep something like this when I return home? So often the painting gets squeezed in here and there.

After breakfast went to my art room, the painting went well for the whole morning. And several visits from retreatants which included moments that felt significant, moving. I believe in people and their stories. I believe in beauty. I believe in truthfulness. I believe in goodness. I believe – that will do for now.

In the orchard, the ladder is against the apple tree. Kevin came to see what I am up to, I showed him 'Hand Like a Nest' and explained about St Kevin and how he has led to so many images.

The creed I keep silent in, but the sung parts, especially the psalms, I feel caught up in. So often the fear of getting it wrong makes wholeheartedness difficult. In my work I positively expect to go wrong and there it is fine – if only I could let that attitude spread to the rest of my life... Sat for a while after Evensong ended and was struck again by the thought that buildings like this are an inevitability, given human longings. We must reach as if God is, whether or not God is*. A moment during the Resurrection Vigil tonight when I felt myself consenting to pray. Just a moment. Can I remain committed to a way that is confirmed only in moments? There is the faith of others of course, which can feed us when there are only crumbs on offer...

Did some work first thing while Mass was on, face of Christ improving. Am thinking the wrappings of Lazarus might become general undergrowth

* I owe the expression of this thought to Nick Cave

and thorns rather than the mummy-like figure he is at the moment. Lazarus is now emerging – or being revealed – from a tangle of dead foliage, and probably thorns by the time I've finished. Need to start preparing text for the exhibition. R S Thomas continues to provoke, I am glad I brought him with me as can't stand the thought of other kinds of religious text at the moment. He feels like the only poet I need. Well, him and Herbert's 'Love'.

Returning to the painting I was quite unsure about whether the new direction has rendered the figures of Martha and Mary a bit redundant. Expressed this to a retreatant but he said it was their figures that made the subject clear to him. Again, we need the eyes of others. More sun than cloud as the day goes on. Crispin and a visitor M came for a look at my work after lunch, and K called in too, lots of genuine interest. And from a young ordinand who is here for a day or two, actual thanks for what I do, several times over. I realise this is not something I hear - in other ways yes, but not in so many words. The painting continued into the afternoon today as M turned up, had a chat with him. Lots of people including M seem to like the abandoned charcoal of the rising Lazarus that I put to one side as too gloomy, so it will find a place in the exhibition.

Sitting in church in the semi-darkness before Compline continues to be powerful and really seems to be about something. Reaching towards. Have just finished the little Harry Williams book on the cross, just the sort of thing I would've devoured at one time, but now feels like words and more words. Only poetry, music and art will do now, for me.

It makes me laugh when people say they wish they could paint 'as it must be so relaxing!' I do get lost in it but this is not the same as relaxation, any more than prayer is. And perhaps for the artist of the imagination what is being attended to is something quite different to what the artist who paints from life attends to… Coming back in from my walk met M one of the St Hild students, it turns out she was bought one of my 'An Idle Tale' prints for her birthday, a really lovely thing to happen.

At breakfast George suggested that the space near the Ascension icon might be a good place to display some work, so this morning have placed one of the Q+A series there on an easel, 'Does what I say disturb you?' At Evensong the numbers of monks so few, plus two ordinands, me and M, that I even joined in and said the creed, which I usually don't say. I may not be able to say it with conviction myself but I think part of me at least wants there to be people and communities that can.

How do we know what we believe? It is not so much what we profess, but what we can't shake off, what we long for, what grips us, moves us, what we can't deny because it would diminish us. In which case I think I must be some sort of christian. Went with P to Yorkshire Sculpture Park, weather sometimes drizzly, but warm. The parkland is beautiful, the Henry Moore's and Hepworth's unobtrusive but real presences – unlike many of the more recent and temporary pieces which shout 'look at me!' but to no lasting effect.

I hide my religious feelings in my work.

A number of people have asked me if I am a christian or if I have faith. Saying 'yes' or 'no' seem equally misleading. Saying 'depends what you mean' seems evasive. It feels real in my work.

The nights are drawing in. I like this room.

Michael Cook

Work done at Mirfield will be shown at The Manger Gallery in the spring; details on: http://mangergallery.moonfruit.com/exhibitions/4594056589.
Michael is also looking for other places (cathedrals, larger churches etc) to show this body of work.
Please contact his website: www.hallowed-art.co.uk

Singing for the Soul: The Joy of Singing Together

"Congregational singing….has the power to create community, form and transform the heart and mind, and transport a person completely into a spiritual dimension unlike any other."

DJ Bull

I've always said that it was singing that kept me in the church. I remember that I never really liked Sunday School as a child and the only way out I knew of was to join the choir! I distinctly remember when I was 7 years old we had a visit from the choir master to our school and he talked about needing new boys to join the church choir, so I went home and pestered my mum relentlessly until she gave in and sure enough, I was admitted to the church choir.

I loved the choir; it was my highlight of the week and the thing I enjoyed more than anything. The thing I found though, was that it was not the type of music

we sang nor the quality of the sermons that I sat through (surprise surprise) that I loved, but it was the sense of belonging that I found which drew me in. We were a group of children bound to each other, yes, through the singing of Anglican chant and the wearing of cassocks and ruffs (not too dissimilar to my experience of being a clergyman in the Church of England, I have to say!) but we were also bound by the times when we passed jokes and mints along the choir stalls during particularly boring sermons, or played football after rehearsals, or shared sweets bought at the corner shop after a wedding. I loved the choir because it was my community and it was there that I was most at home.

Community has always been something that human beings have longed for, we are created to live in community and we need to find places to meet and share our lives with others. It doesn't surprise me that in this age where families are more displaced and traditional community activities like social clubs, music societies and churches are declining, we see other things emerging (very often online like Snapchat or Facebook) to fill the gaps.

It interests me then that in this world of changing community we discover that one area of growth is in community choirs. Gareth Malone is famed for resurrecting community singing but I am glad to say that this has been happening for a lot longer than the BBC like to think and in an ever changing world of community, it is wonderful to discover that people still want to sing together. For a long time we have known that singing is good for our health and that it has the ability to draw us together and create community. Why? Because as human beings we have always sung and a quick look at other cultures reminds us that for many people today, singing is simply part of what it means to be part of a tribe or a nation or a race.

I remember visiting a remote village in Tanzania many years ago. As we approached, the sound of singing could be heard from very far away – it wasn't a choir, it was simply the people of the village welcoming us into their community. The time we spent in that village was filled with a soundtrack of song that not only bound the village together with each other, but also spoke of their hospitality and welcome to us – it was for me a very human experience.

I have been singing all my life; following my time in parish church choirs I have been lucky enough to be able to sing in cathedral choirs, choral societies and opera companies, but it has always been my concern that in western culture, music has become more about performance and perfection and less about community. This has led to the belief that some people can sing and some people can't. My ministry has therefore been one of encouraging everyone to sing and I have always tried to find ways to use singing with everyone rather than a few who have "good" voices.

For many years I have championed the use of simple unaccompanied songs both within liturgical settings and in other areas of ministry (think of the songs of South Africa or the Taizé community and you will know what I mean). There are many great songs from around the world which are good to sing and encourage all to participate – we call this "natural voice singing" or "paper-less song" – as it requires no paper for words or music or instruments and so it is a natural way to sing together.

I recently came across two different networks whilst on my sabbatical, one called the Natural Voice Network which is a UK based organisation that links community song leaders around the country using this type of music. They say, "*We are a network of people who work with voice and song, and who believe that singing is everyone's birthright, regardless of musical experience or ability*". The other is Music that Makes Community, a non-profit organization in the USA that works with ecumenical communities and leaders to empower and liberate a spiritual life through singing.

These two networks have a common thread to use simple, unaccompanied singing as a means to bring people together and create caring, loving and compassionate communities. Music that Makes Community, however, took this one step further and rather than simply making music, they intentionally used song to create a sacred space; a place to encounter the living God, and this was what interested me the most.

I have always been in churches where music is only a part of what we do. Alongside music we have words and liturgy, the preaching, the sharing of peace, the offering of prayer and the partaking of communion etc. Music in my church is something that flows through the liturgy and holds the liturgy together, but it is still something that is incorporated into the bigger picture which is the liturgy

itself. Other styles of worship around the world also use music in a similar way; the Mennonite church or the Church of Christ in the USA have a great emphasis on song but I am yet to find a Christian community that is solely based on song. The Taizé community in France is probably the closest I can think of, but even there it is a balance between word, song and silence.

My time with Music that Makes Community led me to ask a very important question: can we create a Christian community based on song? In other words, can we create a church that meets just to sing, and through the communal activity of singing together, experience the living God in deep and profound ways? This question takes us deeper, to a place where singing is the foundation of the community and leads us to a sacramental encounter with the living God.

To explore this further I have been gathering a few people just to sing together and see what happens, and we meet regularly now in a group called "Singing for the Soul".

- We meet to sing a variety of unaccompanied songs (some things familiar, others new).
- We are attentive to each other, so the songs are a means to gather us, bind us and allow us to be open to each other and to God.
- We learn to focus on the quality of our listening to each other rather than musical perfection.
- We are attentive to scripture and prayer and creative in how we use singing to include both of these things, listening to how God is speaking to us through that.
- We often talk about the origin of the songs and what that might teach us about how that connects us to a wider world and the issues they reflect.
- We ask questions like "what did you notice when we sang that song?" or "I wonder what is most important about that song for us today?"

One of the most poignant songs we sing is a simple song I picked up in the USA by Amy McCreath called "What we need is here". We teach this song in 3 parts and after we have learnt the song, we invite everyone to walk around the room and sing to each other. What a message that is, "What we need is here" - God is here and we are here, and that is enough.

What we discover when we sing together is that we are far more engaged with each other than when we are in church on a Sunday morning and we are also much more sensitive to each other's needs and concerns. We also discover that we are more spiritually connected and often folk will say that it has been a deeply moving and emotional time.

So far, we haven't shared in Holy Communion together but for me this is the logical next step, to be a singing sacramental community. I don't know what that will look like yet but it will be fun to work this out within our gatherings.

My hope is that in creating these communities of song we are getting closer to the kind of community Jesus was seeking for his followers, and in an ever changing and challenging world, where the very essence of what it means to be community is being challenged by politicians and society, the church needs to reflect on how we bring people together and create loving and compassionate communities that can speak peace into our world. Singing is one opportunity, I believe, to try something a little bit different and encourage faith, hope and love to thrive in us today.

"We believe that the holy act of singing together shapes faith, heals brokenness, transforms lives, and renews peace."

Hymn Society of USA and Canada Mission Statement

Mike Leigh

The World in a Mess

There are times I can't bear to read the papers. Watching the news is no better. Even serious journals such as *The Economist* prophesy nothing but disaster. Among the many disasters there are three which particularly press upon my mind:

1. There is Zimbabwe which has been suffering political and economic chaos for twenty years now, much of it brought on by the Government intent on entrenching themselves in power and wealth regardless of its effect on the people. Look across the Limpopo to South Africa and you get a similar story. South Africa is still strong economically and can still do well at cricket and rugby, but underneath the façade there is massive unemployment, corruption at the highest levels and violence everywhere. Most people are disillusioned and angry. A friend in Pretoria told me recently "The dream has died!"
2. We criticise the Governments of Africa but are Western countries better? It is better not to speak of Trump and the great American dream of democracy and justice. In Britain we have the Brexit chaos and the unhappy sight of our political leaders falling over themselves to offer more and more

disastrous Brexit deals in order to stave off the right-wingers. It seems MPs cannot vote by conscience and belief if it threatens party unity. Party unity is more important than the good of the country.

3. And then there is the environmental crisis which becomes more and more urgent. Of course here there is some sign of hope. People are becoming aware of it; people recycle more, save energy more, invest in solar panels more and this is really good. Lovely Greta Thunberg confronts the politicians and the economic giants with her Extinction Rebellion . But what do governments do? They concentrate on economic growth at any cost when it is the obsession with constant economic growth (and the consumerism that goes with it) which is destroying the planet. The sea is being raped and polluted; mining for gas and oil continues regardless of its destructive effects. Brazil destroys the Amazon forest which are the lungs of the planet. In most countries, including our own, any firm prepared to pay out money can get controls removed. It drives one to despair.

Faced with this I am tempted to withdraw; to say "I am 73 and I shan't be around to see the disaster. I shall just concentrate on God." Many Christians prefer to take this line, get into a holy huddle and worry about trivial affairs while the world disintegrates. That is irresponsible but, beyond recycling, what can we do?

Well first of all, there is one good thing about the holy huddle. It reminds us that God should come first. This is God's world. He made it and loves it. He hasn't abandoned it. He even loves the people in it who have made such a mess of it. God is at work in the world and with the eyes of faith we can often see this. So we must pray, not as a last resort but as a first response. And the more information we have the better we will pray. It is really not enough to say "Lord, sort out the Brexit mess." We need to know why we have got into this mess, why society has become so divided, how sin has caused so much fear and division. Then we will pray with energy and compassion and God can use that in ways we do not know. So on our own and with others **Let us pray**.

Secondly we should remember that this is not the first time the world has been in a mess. There have always been messes of different kinds. Eighteenth Century Britain had corrupt governments and was democratic only to a small degree. They hanged children for petty crimes and great generals like the Duke of Marlborough conducted wars largely for personal profit. When Wilberforce began his campaign to end the slave trade all the Bishops of the Church of England opposed him. And in the Victorian era with all its church building,

church growth and theological debate, poverty existed on a scale undreamed of now. Destitution, homelessness, starvation was seen on the streets of all the cities of Britain. Slowly the Church realised its responsibility to do something about this. It can do it again.

Thirdly, it is not simply up to the Government or the Church to make the running. Governments pretend they lead the nation. Actually, as we have seen tragically over the past few years, they follow the voters. We need to tell our MPs that we will not vote for them if they do not act for the good of the people. We need to vote for MPs who really do care for the things we care about. Then the leading parties will change their priorities. Likewise with the Church. We sit on parish councils. We know other Christians. We can show compassion and understanding towards refugees who are driven from their countries by war or famine (often caused by climate change). In the Hebrew Scriptures that are part of our Bible the Jews are reminded constantly to care for "the widow, the orphan and the stranger for you, too, were once strangers in Egypt" (*Deut* 10:19). The Gospel teaching of the Lord we worship and adore makes it clear over and over again that the poor, the weak, the humble should be at the centre of our Christian lives. How much easier it is to fawn over the rich and powerful rather than talk to the poor. St James has a lot to say about that!

And finally, there is Africa. Despite appearances Africa is getting better. There are fewer wars, stronger economies, better political systems than there used to be. Usually this is because local people are getting on with life rebuilding the broken economies and creating healthy societies. Small charities like Tariro work below the radar all over Africa transforming people's lives. Many of you good readers give money to Tariro and share in this change. Many could give more and then more could be helped.

St Paul in a famous passage (1 *Corinthians* 13: 13) spoke of faith, hope and love. Love gets a lot of attention because love is of God but do we love the people God loves who are suffering in these crises? And do we show that love by acting? Faith also gets a good press because it seems to be at the heart of Christian life. Without faith there is not much point in Christian life. But again does our faith extend to believing God is acting in this world and wants us to find out where he is acting, and join in? It should! And then there is hope. Péguy described Hope as "the little sister of love." Like little sisters everywhere she gets forgotten. Hope, for us Christians, is not optimism. It is a theological virtue. It is nothing less than the Hope of Good Friday, the Hope of Easter: it is Christ himself coming to us from the dark. Whether it is the environmental destruction that worries us, or the political mess we are in, or the suffering of people in Africa we must know that Christ is there where the people are. We do not despair; we hope. And hope gives us the energy to pray and to act.

Nicolas CR

Kids and the Wars 1914-18 and 1939-45

For the Armistice this year I mounted a small exhibition in the cloister. I was inspired to do so after reading Rob Bolton's The Boys of the Brigade at War. It is well researched and beautifully produced and the contents will come as a surprise to many people. He lists the five boys' organisations bearing the name Brigade in their title – The Boys' Brigade, The Boys' Life Brigade, The Church Lads' Brigade, The Jewish Lads' Brigade and the Catholic Boys' Brigade. Bolton relates the stories of how these organisations responded to the two so-called Great Wars. He also mentions a little on the Boy Scouts but leaves us without any information on the female organisations.

One of the great sadnesses of the First World War was the blind patriotic fervour that bewitched a generation of youths to sacrifice themselves. I am not objecting to the sacrifices made for the sake of one's country but the kids who joined up were too eager without counting the cost and the powers that be were too eager to exploit such a willing source of manpower.

The Scouts and the Brigades were founded by military men. Drill played an important part in an agenda to strengthen discipline. Of the five Brigades the BLB alone did not drill with guns. The others drilled with rifles that had been rendered harmless. So when the war began there was a mind-set that equated honour and valour with faith. 18 was the age for discharge from the uniformed organisations and when WWI broke out military brigades and squads were recruited from old boys and comrades who had recently been pals in the Hut or the Church Hall. Brigades began to form cadet squads to the armed forces. The BLB – on pacifist grounds – alone among the Brigades refused to recruit for the forces but did form ambulance brigades which served the injured at home and prepared boys for non-combatant roles. There are many church memorials to individuals and groups of these past-member comrades who died in WWI.

There are examples of Boys Brigaders and CLB, too young to join up, guarding necessary installations during WWI and in WWII. The Brigaders and Scouts did essential work on the Home Front. This involved raising money for the war effort and schemes to give comfort to the forces at home and abroad. Young

people acted as messengers for the ARP and did air-raid and fire watch duty. In these roles some boys won the highest awards for bravery in their respective organisations. A post-war boy's comic – the Hornet – in June 1966 carried the story of Ron (Nobby) Orme who was awarded the BB Iron Cross for bravery because of his action in firefighting during the war. I rescued a collection of 1940s editions of The Scout magazine that belonged to Noel Williams CR. They give a moving insight into the emotional and physical involvement of the Scout movement during the 1939 – 45 War.

The suffering of children and young people was terrible. There were bereavements - kids of all ages lost family members, neighbours and close friends. Air raids caused havoc and terror, whole streets were wiped out. Evacuation took children away from all that was familiar to them and while most were well looked after many were bullied and exploited. Then there was misery as toy manufacture gave way to munitions, food became scarce and sweets were rationed. One thing remained to keep kids happy whether they were far from home in some village or spending a night in the shelter as they waited the 'all clear'. Dennis Gifford's 'The Comics at War', published to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Second World War, draws on an amazing collection of ephemera which has preserved the names of well-loved publications now defunct. Hitler, Musso, rationing, ARP, sergeants and other buffoons all go into the mix that kept the home kids smiling 'til their dads came home. Lord Snooty, Desperate Dan, Hungry Horace, Billy Bunter, the Broons and Oor Willie all did their bit to foil the evil designs of Hitler and the Nasties. They were such good propaganda that Hitler had some of the artists and editors on the list of people to be eliminated when he conquered Britain.

In 1955 I joined the BB as an eleven-year-old. The war was 10 years behind us, we were gorging ourselves on chocolates and selection boxes because sweet rationing had finally ended and comics were bigger because paper and ink were no longer scarce commodities. For me it was the casual decision of a youngster. I little thought that it would lead me to a commitment to Christianity, to priesthood and eventually into the religious life. Buoyed up by my dad's tales of army life and the stories about my grandfather – a hero of WWI – I never questioned the rightness of war when I was a youth. I do now and I regret the way in which the youth organisations colluded in sending kids to the battlefield. WWII was a different story – the war came to kids rather than the kids going to war. But in both wars youths and young men gave themselves willingly and valiantly for

the good of others. This was not for a love of war but because at the heart of each of these organisation there was a desire to do go, to serve God, to give for others.

Say a prayer for those youth organisations that carry on the tradition – The Scouts, the BB The Church Lads' and Girls' Brigade and the Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade and (if they still exist) the Catholic BB and all the female equivalents.

John Gribben CR

A Strange Light

"Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo" sounds impressive but it isn't a name from art's mainstream. In the earlier 16th century, he was mostly active in Venice. One of his works is this picture of Mary Magdalene, a free composition inspired by Gospel accounts of the first Easter.

In the Gospels we're familiar with Mary as part of Jesus' retinue at the end of His earthly life. Luke's Gospel adds that 7 demons had been cast out of her and that she was one of a small group who helped financially support Jesus and His disciples. However for many centuries Mary had been confused with one or more women of ill repute in the Gospels who penitently turn to Jesus. Consequently artistic conventions had typically portrayed her with red clothing. Here she is mostly, and rightly, free of these associations but, in a still visual age, note how from her left wrist downward and below her waist there's a trace of red clothing. This gives an extra visual signal of her identity.

We might see her as a damaged person who'd been restored. She knew suffering, had a glimpse of Jesus' new world, then saw it cruelly crushed, her master killed. Here she has made that wretched trip down among the tombs before it's even daylight, perhaps with past miseries welling up as well as present ones. Her posture is that of a frightened, secretive person; well wrapped to help hide and disguise her, ready to cover her face. Tending to the body of someone singled out for execution could draw unwanted attention, best to be cautious. Her pot of spices is on the stone ledge; though so tenderly meant, it stands unused, Jesus' tomb being bafflingly empty.

We naturally look at her face and in so doing follow the incline of her head and see dawn in the background. Note the clouds are shown lit from underneath, evidently the sun hasn't risen yet. Incidentally, being a couple of days after the Passover and so Jesus' death, there would also have been a nearly full but waning moon in the sky, for it probably did not set until after sunrise.

Looking in Mary's eyes, at her whole aspect, there's a soulful but also slightly quizzical expression. Like us, she realizes something strange is happening with the light. With dawn behind her, it's not sunshine, and it's far too strong to be that fading moonlight too. Her face is partly lit, and her satin cloak is strongly lit - by light at her level: it's Jesus. We know what is going on because we are in on the mystery; of course it's Jesus. We are with Mary at the moment when the Risen Christ appears to her, she is on the point of turning face to face with her Risen Lord, the moment when everything changes.

It's a great idea, to show the Resurrection by not portraying, but, rather, by implying Jesus. We are drawn in because we make that identification of Jesus, in a simple gesture of faith we recognize that it must be Him, it is Him, risen on Easter Day. We know it even though we can't see Him directly portrayed. We feel it enough to be almost anxious to reassure Mary that everything's alright. Her imminent joy will be every believer's joy.

All that light; light so often the sign of God's glory in the Bible, when He touches the fringe of creation and sets it aglow. From the Gospels the story of the Transfiguration springs to mind as another sign given with light, a sign of what human life in God's hands might be. Together with Jesus it is seekers and believers like Mary, like us, who will share in the transfiguration of human life present in the Resurrection; we see that foreshown by the brilliant light gleaming on her, especially on the cloak she wears.

As a piece of artistic skill we can admire how well it's done; the modelling in light and shade with the garment's folds so realistically shown. See the shimmering ripples of the light spreading across its surface with a brilliant sheen. Renaissance realism meets the Transcendent. What an uplifting contrast it provides compared with the gloom towering over the right hand side. Is that indicative of Mary's past experiences as well as the general threat to the world of corruption and death? Mary, however, like each believer, is caught up out of this by the light of Christ. Do we get further hints of its overthrow in the patch of sky breaching the walls, the living green plants coming out of the stonework?

We feel the balance of the work, the line of Mary's shoulders forming a diagonal in line with the gloomy portal, her head turned though so that the darkness is totally left behind her as she faces round to meet the light of Christ. Again, follow the tilt of the head indicating the dawn and note the way that light builds from there onto Mary herself and then on to Jesus in a brilliance left to the imagination. There's also room for humour; the geographically improbable

waters by the dawn are a nod to the artist's patrons: it's the Venice lagoon no less, with some ships looking more 16th than 1st-century. The tower-like structure may be a reference to St Mark's.

As already indicated, this isn't about us looking on from some detached, neutral standpoint. Looking at the lighting we trace a line from the left moving diagonally and forward out of the picture to the right so that the Risen Christ is standing in our world, today, even though we can't point him out. We are involved, it's about us too. The picture speaks to us; equally our world is connected with another world. Christ is the link. It is a picture of faith, for we can't point at the Risen Christ today - or even in the picture - but in some way we believe He is objectively real, that He's here and is in each one of us today. We can tell He's in the picture because of the *effect* He creates in it. Similarly we see something of the Risen Lord today *by the effect* he has on people; it may not be obvious like the light we see on Mary Magdalene, but the *effect He has* is still a witness to the world of the presence of the Risen Jesus. As you look at the picture try imagining that the light is coming from someone near you.

As we consider that, perhaps we can add extra interpretation to other features as we engage more fully with the picture: that lagoon could be symbolic of the many 'Sea of Galilee' stories of Jesus; or the Resurrection appearance there when the disciples were fishing. Let the ships remind you of the call to become 'fishers of men' - do the structures by the water indicate St Mark's in Venice and hence the fruit of mission?

Here's another approach as we draw toward a close: hold the picture in your left hand and hold it a little to your left. The perspective means you are now in the position of the Risen Christ. How does that feel, what might it mean? Let your imagination unfold. The light playing across Mary Magdalene is coming right from where you are, from Christ in you. In her world the light of the Risen Lord is visible. She turns to recognize you as a fellow-believer, discerning the living presence of Jesus in you. This world – past, present and future – and the heavenly realm, are linked by Christ. He may be at prayer in us now, as members of His body, to make that real for each of us.

In a time of quiet reflection we might ponder these words from New Testament writers:-

"God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying 'Abba! Father!'" (*Galatians* 4:6) and could that refer to Jesus praying the Lord's Prayer in us which we can pray with Jesus praying in us?

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." (*Colossians* 1:27)

"If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him" (*Romans* 8:17)

"Jesus said to them...behold I am with you always, even unto the end of the age" (*Matthew* 28:20)

Neil Rundle

A Letter

Kevin Sims has written to express his disagreement with an article published in our last issue. Below is a summary of his 10 points. You can read the full text of his letter on: http://rfmaulden.co.uk/letter.htm.

1. The number of daily maximum temperature records peaked in the 1930s and they have been generally declining ever since.
2. The proportion of human activity resulting in changes to our atmosphere is comparatively small.
3. There is no empirical evidence whatsoever to suggest that Carbon Dioxide is determining global temperatures. Its small rise is in fact helping many who have hitherto lived on the margins of subsistence.
4. There is no evidence of a "Denial Movement" … "fuelled by oil and gas companies".
5. Without fossil fuels, civilization would collapse and billions would die … the activities of climate change activists in limiting energy consumption is responsible for the deaths of an estimated six million people a year.
6. Regarding the weather, there are no "immense changes" being brought about by "climate change".
7. Southern Hemisphere and tropical oceans currently have sea temperature anomaly measurements essentially the same as those found in the period 1997-1999. In the northern hemisphere, arctic sea ice has expanded 20% over the last seven years.
8. It is wrong to exploit children in "climate strikes" to advance a political agenda, sacrificing their education and promoting massive civil disruption.
9. "Global warming" is driven by tens of billions of dollars in government funding which has corrupted science.
10. It is wrong to suggest that anybody who, quite sensibly, denies there is a climate crisis cares not a fig for the planet.

Sources backing up all the above assertions can be found conveniently grouped together in two places, as follows: www.realclimatescience.com and https://tinyurl.com/y5aqv8lw.

Kevin Sims

Any response to this should be directly to Kevin Sims on kevinsims158@yahoo.com. We are unable to continue this exchange in future issues, and are not in a position either to defend or challenge evidence put forward by either side but, like most people, rely on our judgement of what we hear and see.

Society of the Resurrection News

The following have recently been admitted as probationers:
Marc Ingram
+John Flack
Aleck Chikomba
Luke Chigwanda
Anne Young
Keith Battarbee

And the following have made their first three-year promises this year :
Von Watson
Isaac Otoo
Edward Gunn
Cliff Bowman
Malcolm Drummond
Kathia Shoesmith

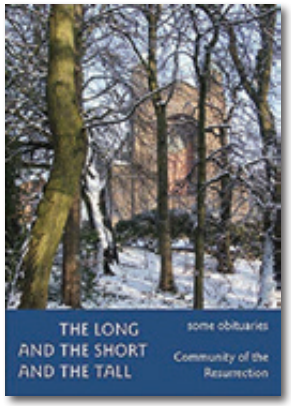
Companions' Notes

New Companions
Julia Mann
Richard Owen
Judith Gallagher

RIP
Yvonne Sell
John Lewis
Dorothy Curtis
Janet Edge
Graham Oakes
Cecily Worrall

Book Reviews

The Long and the Short and the Tall – Some Obituaries.
ed *Robert Mercer CR.* Community of the Resurrection.
ISBN 978-0-902834-50-7. Mirfield Publications. Price £7.50



In the 1930s Michael Ramsey visited CR to discuss whether he should join the community. Some fifty years later he recalled it as 'a rather charming gentleman's club'. Yet whilst at times in its history the ethos of CR might in appearance have been 'of a slightly aristocratic kind', its essential quality has always been deeply human at heart. This delightful little book, edited by Robert Mercer CR, is a collection of obituaries of Brethren (most written by members of the Community) published over time in the CR Review. We read of fascinating eccentricities and foibles alongside wide-ranging charisms and experiences, and of the very diverse work of the Community, not only in England and Wales, but in South Africa, Zimbabwe and for a time in the West Indies.

In the life of Ralph Bell (1884 - 1967) for example, we read of a rather gaunt yet distinguished figure who revelled in meeting local farmers and tradesmen to talk about crops and the Cup Final and who also went to Parliament for a licence enabling the Brethren to keep pigs! In its long history, CR has been hugely blessed by many with an artistic temperament – Peter Hewitt (1890 - 1974) with his theatrical background and Gerard Beaumont (1903 - 1970), who counted Donald Swann among his close friends and whose popular songs and hymn tunes we still sing today.

John Gribben's obit of Jonathan Critchley (1930 - 2006), who was Bursar of the College when I was a student, recalls that 'Neatness and tidiness were second nature to him and in the kitchen, the sacristy and the Church, there was a place for everything, and everything had to be in its place. Of course, each of us has been irritated by this at times, but we all appreciated the smooth running of the services and the speedy appearance of meals.' There are outstanding obits of Jonathan Graham (1911–1965), Superior of the Community, who was deeply committed to CR's sense of the 'common life' and whose premature and sudden death at the age of 54 led to a strong sense of personal bereavement within the Community. Who could forget Martin Jarrett–Kerr (1912–1991) with his remarkable ability to 'pursue three or four activities simultaneously.....with apparently equal attention to each'; or Christopher Lowe, who, in an incredibly busy life as Master of the Royal Foundation of St Katherine, managed to maintain strong and sustainable ecumenical links across Europe (he died in Warsaw) yet also found time to 'create the small but beautiful garden' at St Katherine's, an oasis for guests.

Whilst the Community has consistently been in essence a community of Priests, it has for many years welcomed lay brothers too. One of the earliest laymen to join the Community was Brother Giles Ormerod (1902–1993), who whilst 'he found living among so many clergy a sore trial' became a huge asset to the Community, both on parish missions and in his faithful ministry at the Parish Church of Christ The King, Battyeford (next door to HR) where he was greatly loved and admired, not least for his 'very sweet spirit'.

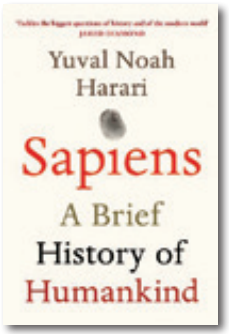
The Community has consistently engaged with the pursuit of worship, faith, education and mission, and this is evidenced in every single page of this small book, which provides a wonderfully informal and fascinating introduction to the life of CR, even for those who have never been there or who have never met one of its members. The reader can open it at any page and find interesting reading. If I have any disappointment, it is in the absence of some key names from the Community's 'obit list', but perhaps it is intended in due course to publish further volumes, which, to those interested in CR would most certainly be welcome!

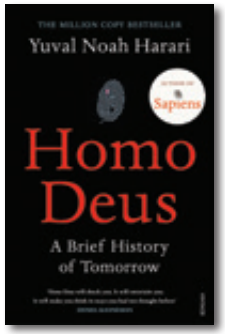
In the days before the re-ordering of the Community Church the Brethren used to sit in rows in Quire in order of seniority. "I see you've been moved up to

cemetery row", one would wryly say to another. That characteristic CR humour permeates this little book, which at a mere £7.50 is very good value indeed. It would make an excellent stocking–filler!

Dominic Fenton

Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind (2015; 498 pp.; ISBN: 9780099590088) and **Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow** (2017; 513 pp.; ISBN: 9781784703936) by *Yuval Noah Harari*. Published by Vintage (Penguin Random House). Price: £10.99 (each).





These thought-provoking books explore the potential effects of rapidly developing information technology and unprecedented mass data availability on what it means to be human. Harari's central interest is in the effect these might have on the evolution of consciousness. The Jesuit priest-scientist Teilhard de Chardin (1959, *Phenomenon of Man*) wrote: 'consciousness … transcends by far the ridiculously narrow limits within which our eyes can directly perceive it'; a sentiment that Harari clearly shares as he delivers an energetic look at the development of consciousness up to the present and beyond.

Harari is an intelligent and immediate communicator. Both titles are highly readable, almost domineering in their style and certainly polemical, and are aimed at a wide audience. They present a fluent 'history' of human evolution and a rather unnerving projection of a potentially hopeless future. The first of the two, *Sapiens*, summarises the evolution of *Homo sapiens* from our origin on the plains of East Africa through agricultural, scientific, religious, political and industrial revolutions to our current location within a dazzling technological revolution. It predicts a potentially bleak end of humanity if artificial intelligence develops the ability to replace us. Harari suggests this is something that 'Most people prefer not to think about' as 'We may be fast approaching a new singularity, when all the concepts that give meaning to our world – me, you, men, women, love and hate – will become irrelevant. Anything happening beyond that point is meaningless to us.' The second, *Homo Deus*, simply picks up where the first book stops. It would be financially naïve not to publish two potential bestsellers, even when one might have been sufficient to address the topic! The sequel

develops what might happen should technology give *Homo sapiens* the ability to attain those characteristics associated with the concept of the superhuman (*cf*. Nietzsche's *Übermensch*; Teilhard de Chardin's *ultra-hominisation*) or even 'deity' in a competitive world of data processing where humans (biochemical algorithms) could ultimately be supplanted by electronic algorithms. At this point, Harari suggests *Homo sapiens* could become an obsolete algorithm.

These widely-acclaimed bestsellers reinforce the prevalent dystopian view of life that currently has wide cultural expression, from 'zombie-apocalypse movies' to concerns about our over-exploitation of the natural environment. As the books have an undoubted ability to influence current ideas, they are likely to compound this pessimism further. Harari's convincingly prophetic voice will challenge those who are actively seeking meaning at the same time as confirming the fears of those who despair of ever finding any. Many people's cosmology has already been narrowed by our increasingly secular society. Harari's books, themselves, should perhaps be understood as a by-product of this society! There is a widespread acceptance, at least superficially, by many in the western world that humans may be soulless biochemical algorithms existing in a potentially meaningless universe. This paradigm of hopelessness, together with social isolation fuelled by our current obsession for social media, must surely be playing a part in today's society-wide mental health crisis.

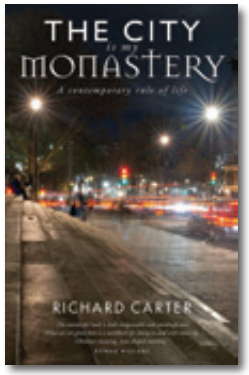
Harari deals with religion alongside other anthropological phenomena and his view of history could be used by some to support further a view that 'scientific' atheism has intellectual supremacy over theology in attempting to explain our existence. One of the review statements included on the cover of *Homo Deus* declares that the book: 'Shows us where mankind is headed in an absolutely clear-sighted and accessible manner'. This type of certainty should be challenged. Readers must remember that Darwinian evolution, like return on financial investment which can fall as well as rise, has no pre-ordained beneficial or detrimental end-point (*telos*). There is no 'negative' or 'positive' direction of travel (teleology). Harari understands this and writes: 'Humans might degenerate into subhumans or evolve into superhumans'. However, many others do not have such a clear understanding of the apparently aimless process of evolution through natural selection. Those seeking meaning in life would be well advised not to pin their hope, or their despair, too firmly to the mast of muddled 'evolutionary' projection, which has no congruent intellectual foundation.

As a military chaplain, I am particularly interested in those things that can positively enhance or negatively affect our mental and spiritual health. Easily digestible books of this style when read uncritically and too acceptingly (the concept and reality of artificial intelligence are still being widely debated),

can help reinforce unhealthy monomania. 'The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven' (Milton, *Paradise Lost*). As an ordained scientist, I firmly believe that we should not restrict ourselves in our investigation of life's wonders. Science and religion should not be seen as two conflicting hypotheses, which cannot be savoured together. They are both less than perfect models when considered in isolation. '[To] enjoy two mythologies … fully aware of their differing flavours, is a balancing thing, and makes for catholicity' (Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*). Together they become greater than the sum of their parts; life is most affirmed when viewed through the mystery of faith. Especially, faith that allows hope to be nurtured within Christian eschatology and the redemptive joy of the Resurrection.

Andrew Wakeham-Dawson

The City Is My Monastery. *Richard Carter.*
Canterbury Press 2019, 271pp. Paperback £16.99



This book is an unusual combination of poetry, stories from daily life (always rich, sometimes searing), and imaginative teaching on a range of Christian basics (prayer, silence, service, use of scripture, sacraments, the Church, keeping Sabbath, steadfastness and community), as a contemporary rule of life. There is reference both to the 'Nazareth Community' which has formed at St Martin-in-the-Fields, and also to the Melanesian Brotherhood, with which Richard spent some years of his life. The poetic passages, more like blank verse or poetic prose, make the connection between the teaching that accompanies it, our experience of being human, and our intuitions. The stories all tell of the nitty-gritty of everyday life, especially in the big city. They will speak to everyone and would be a treasure-trove for preachers. By turns funny, touching, heartbreaking, shocking, they stop us in the tracks of our complacency, revealing much of the human suffering that goes on behind the scenes in our society as nothing less than pure gold: God present in everybody, searching us, and coaxing us to see with new eyes and be changed.

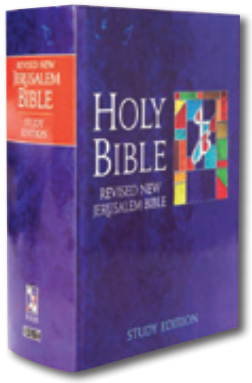
We hear something about the life of the Nazareth Community, and an example is given of its weekly informal eucharist. Care needs to be taken here, as the heart of the eucharist is the giving of thanks for the incarnation, cross and resurrection of the Lord, into which living realities we step, as onto an escalator.

This needs to be the unambiguous focus of any Eucharistic prayer. Quite rightly, there is an attempt here to strip away all formality, 'performance' and clutter, in the context of the small group and the dominating city, and be the ordinary selves we are rather than something else. The challenge is to enable this Mystery to be 'normal' and un-foreign, while yet drawing us out of our ordinary 'us' by the expectation that it will be Other, and bigger than us.

The book is offered in grateful memory of Fr Simon CR, and I am sure he would revel in it if he could see it. It is a book that can be a lifetime's companion, holding before us what we are here for: *Life*, nothing less.

George CR

Revised New Jerusalem Bible. Study Edition.
DLT. 2400 pages. Hardback. £39.99



'Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God, translating and giving the sense; so the reading was understood.' (Ne 8:8) In that single verse Nehemiah sums up what a good translation should achieve - to give the sense so that the work translated is understood. And that is exactly what is achieved by this third iteration of the Jerusalem Bible, following the 1960s original and the New JB in the 1980s.

Ostensibly the initial impetus for this revision version was Pope Benedict's acceptance that the Church should not use the vocalisation of the divine name, printed as *Yahweh* in previous versions of the JB, but this could have been achieved by a simple 'find and replace' on the text of the OT, changing it to THE LORD as has been done in the Roman Lectionary from the start. But not one to do things by halves, Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB decided that this was an opportunity for a thorough revision, indeed more of a fresh translation, which he duly set about more or less single handedly this time. And what an achievement it is!

Having plenty of time to prepare this review as this magazine is quarterly, I decided that rather than jump to my favourite passages I would simply use it in my daily prayer for a month or two and let that guide me as to what to read. Thus I began with the Elijah cycle and went on to complete Kings and continue into Nehemiah before moving to 2 Peter and then the prophecy of Amos, and finally Luke's Gospel, before I did look up a few of my favourite passages. The decision to use the Revised Grail Psalter rather than make a new translation of the Psalms means that there is no need to have a separate psalter if using this Bible in worship as this translation is designed for prayerful recitation.

The English language of course has a bias towards male terminology, but Dom Henry has done his best to render this translation inclusively wherever this is possible without spoiling the flow. An unusual (and to me welcome) feature is the use of metric units for weights and measures – thus we read that Goliath was 3 metres tall, while Nicodemus brought an astonishing 50 kilograms of myrrh and aloes for the burial of Jesus! Sensibly he does not do the same with monetary values as these can change quite quickly and would potentially date the book (and which currency from the English speaking world would you use anyway?).

Any translation has to include a degree of paraphrase to make it work. If you translate the French *chemin de fer* literally (as would the current Roman Missal which sadly fails to grasp this) you would get the rather clumsy 'I went to London by the way of iron.' A semi-literal, but better translation might render it 'railway' but to make real sense in English you would say, 'I went to London on the train' as an English person would. Though not a literal translation this is entirely faithful to the original while being more correctly English.

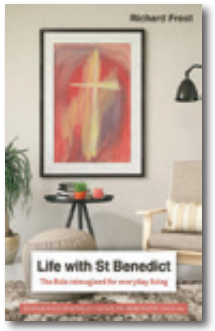
And that is really what this translation of the Bible is – it reads like an English book, as though written in English by an English writer, and what better commendation is there than that?

Briefly to deal with practicalities, this is a large book, perhaps a strange size (slightly smaller than A5 page size but 7cm thick and weighing 1.5 kg). Two ribbon markers are included which is helpful, but of necessity the paper is quite thin allowing some show-through from the page behind. The text size is only just large enough to be read comfortably by this reader, but it is set out in a single column per page like a normal book (why are Bibles so often printed in double columns?) which enhances its readability. If a penny short of £40 seems expensive for a Bible (though at the time of writing you can buy it for a fair bit less online), this edition includes introductions to each book and copious notes, making it almost a one volume Bible Commentary as well as a Bible itself. You can also buy the New Testament and Psalms for £12.99 (or less) and in due course I expect other versions will be released with fewer notes – indeed currently a pocket version is planned, though it remains to be seen how big a pocket you might need to carry it in!

Bruce Carlin

Life with St Benedict – The Rule Reimagined for Everyday Living

Richard Frost, BRF, 2019, 206pp, £9.99/ebook £8.33



Richard Frost, who is an Anglican Reader and an Oblate of the Anglican Benedictine Community at Alton Abbey, Hampshire, has written a short but very practical book that takes the reader through the traditional four monthly cycle of reading of the Rule of St Benedict, with an invitation to reflect on the teachings and instruction contained in the Rule and to consider how that could apply to the reader's everyday life.

The Rule of St Benedict was written in the sixth century by a layman who had resolved to live the religious or monastic life. Despite early opposition to the seriousness with which Benedict approached the religious life, he went on to establish a community and a rule for life within that community that came to form the bedrock of monasticism in Western Europe. The influence of his Rule in shaping the future development of Western monasticism and the contribution that Benedictine religious were to have on the development of European society and its emergence from the bleakness and chaos of so-called "Dark Ages", came to be later recognised with St Benedict being declared "principal patron of all Europe" by Pope St Paul VI in 1964.

The Rule starts with a prologue setting out its purpose and is followed by 73 chapters that deal with a wide range of topics related to the life of the individual monk (or, reading the Rule in an inclusive way as Frost does by using an inclusive-language translation, the individual nun) in his or her particular community. It contains both very detailed instruction as to (for example) how exactly the daily office should be prayed and more general instruction about such virtues as obedience, restraint of speech and humility.

The prologue shows clearly why the Rule has for a long time been seen as a valuable source of guidance to "ordinary" Christians in their everyday non-monastic lives. Thus, Benedict says: "we intend to establish a school for God's service. In drawing up its regulations, we hope to set down nothing harsh, nothing burdensome" and, earlier, "God waits for us daily to translate into action, as we should, [his] holy teachings".

It is important to understand what Frost's book is *not*. It is not a commentary on the Rule. There are a number of excellent commentaries on the Rule and the short list of further reading at end of the book refers to some of these, including Esther de Waal's notable "A Life-Giving Way". Instead, what Frost does offer is, as de Waal is quoted as saying at the beginning of the book, "an introduction to the writing of a man who will change your life". Frost does this by providing some brief introductory comments on St Benedict, his Rule and Benedictine spirituality, how his book may be used and a useful glossary of some of the technical terms used in the Rule.

The bulk of the book comprises the text of the Rule itself, broken up into daily portions that are traditionally read over a fourth monthly period (three times a year). Following the extract of the Rule are very brief suggestions for reflection, either on what the extract may mean for our own daily life or more generally on the spiritual teaching that it offers. There then follows a psalm or psalms that can be prayed, allowing the entire psalter to be prayed over the fourth month cycle, and then a very simple one-line prayer. The book ends with a simple rule of life that might form the basis for an individual's own rule of life if she or he does not already have one.

While some might worry that they could be somewhat undernourished by the very brief reflections offered in the book, that may be to miss the point of what Frost is giving us. We are being encouraged to draw out of ourselves our own interior reflections on how a focus of the Rule on an aspect of monastic life can throw light on an aspect of our everyday spiritual or communal life. By prompting us into our own self-reflection and self-examination and at the same time offering us the discipline of reading one of the greatest Christian spiritual classics on a regular daily basis (as well as the entirety of the psalter), Frost has given all of us, and particularly those of us with already very busy daily lives, a welcome and valuable tool with which to develop and enrich our spiritual life.

Michael Scargill

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

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